

Book Three

THE KING CROWNED

Chapter Nine

Preparations

By Stephen H. Funck, September 14, 2014

James the Righteous heard reports that Yeshua had been seen by His followers rising into heaven. Now James would never have his questions answered. So powerful was the desire to believe. Just as powerful was the question. "A righteous man is righteous in all his doings." He could not be blind to what was unrighteous. Yeshua's followers seemed not to care but it was a major problem with those who did not accept Him.

The house was going to fill up with people coming back from Alexandria. Yeshua's followers were having to move out. James was on his way to tell Mother Mary, she would need to go. Someone touched his shoulder and called his name. He turned. Yeshua!!!

Terrified! He fell on his knees, his face to the ground and sobbed. He wept and wept and wept for a long time. So much was inside his heart, his mind, his soul. He finally realized how long he had been crying. Had Yeshua given up and left? He opened his eyes. Feet, hunkered down in front of him. Luminous feet, luminous robe. He shut his eyes. Terrified! He was unrighteous, in the presence of the Divine essence. Who was he to question anything. His heart was evil, his mind rebellious, his soul dark.

"James, my brother. They call you righteous. It is right that they do so. You have been zealous for the righteousness of God. You have been deeply troubled. You have carried, with your brothers and sisters, deep pain from what seemed unrighteous. You want to know how I came to be. How my mother conceived me. You shall know. Go ask my mother." The voice was like pure light, clear, bright, gentle, soothing.

"You are troubled by the unrighteous in this world. Troubled by unrighteous worshippers of Yahweh, creator of all heaven and earth, My Father. The unrighteousness of His people blasphemes His Glory. Evil will be removed forever. You are filled with zeal for His Name and contend for all that is righteous. You have seen Me gather sinners, the ignorant.

"I have broken the power of Satan, of sin, even death. All who come to me are children of God. They live in this evil world. The bruised reed I will not crush. They see the light of truth, dimly. Love bears all things, hopes all things, endures all things, love believes the power of My spirit. I will gently restore my people to perfect salvation as they believe trust in me.

"Some try to force the erring to be righteous. The Kingdom of God is in Me. I have and am saving, healing. I call all to come to Me. Welcome those who are weak in faith. Do not quarrel over opinions. Do not pass judgment on another. Never hinder one coming to Me. Unite them in Me by love and the spirit. Galilean will remain Galilean, Judean - Judean, Greek- Greek. My presence is revealed in their love for one another.

"Love cannot be seen in power. I walked humbly. Power tempts the good to do evil. You have seen that among the "pious ones". Those who follow me, the first of all is the servant of all. I alone am Lord and servant of

all. Be zealous for yourself. Encourage your brothers and sisters to be zealous.”

Silence. James realized that the voice was no longer speaking. The words burned into his mind. He slowly opened his eyes. The luminous feet and robe were gone. With his face still on the floor he looked around. Alone. He inhaled. He could still breathe. Now what to do. He cautiously stood up. Looked around. Looked around again. He had been wanting Yeshua to appear to him. It it a fearsome thing to have the Divine Presence appear. He felt loved. He felt pure love. His little brother came to him as he wanted Him to. A consuming fire. Nothing was as he thought. He was both lifted up by the majesty of glory and cast down by his own unworthiness. He rested by a wall.

Mother Mary found him there. She touched him. Gentle. “James, my son. It is always so good to see you. How are you?”

“I was coming to see you. I am supposed to tell you, it is time. They are coming back. I was supposed to ask you. Where are you going to go from here?”

“I was expecting you. My things are ready. Clophas and Mary are too far away. I need to stay in the city, close by everyone. Joseph of Arimathea invited me to stay with him.”

“I will carry your things.”

“No bother. It is just a small bundle.”

“I need to be with you.”

After Joseph welcomed them to his grand house, they went to where she would be staying. The room was empty. In a few hours it would be filled with pilgrims returning for Shavuot.¹ James lingered. He needed to talk with her. He told her his brother had appeared to him. He had been in the presence of the Divine. It was terrifying. It was glorious. He knew he had no reason any more to question, but Yeshua, Messiah, Lord, God, told him to ask her.

Mother Mary nodded her head. It was a long story. She was a woman of few words. She understood. As she talked, those events of years ago were vivid, present, within her. Her eyes were closed. Her voice even more gentle. When she finally finished, James said she must tell everyone what she has just told him. She said she would pray about that. James reminded her what a deep problem it is for those who have not accepted Yeshua as Lord, Messiah.

“I could not tell anyone before, it would have made it all worse.”

“Yes, but now we have seen Him. crucified and raised from the dead. Now the report has gone to the whole world. That story is unbelievable but true. Your story, the story of His birth, Son of God, helps, makes sense. It will encourage and support those who follow Him.”

“I will seek the Lord.”

“I will find my brother and sisters. They need to hear these things themselves. We were there. We saw. We know. There were so many questions. It looked so evil but we felt no evil. Even your mother and father, Joseph, his brother, all rejoiced over you and your child. They should not have. We did not know why, what they knew. I do not think we would have believed it if we did. After I find them I will bring them to you to hear for themselves.”

¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shavuot>

“Our Lord, my son, told you to ask me everything. You have carried with your brothers and sisters deep pain from what seemed unrighteous. They will know how He came to be. How He was conceived. I will seek His word about telling all the others.”

James knew they would all be in Jerusalem for the festival. They would be with the people of Nazareth and Kokhaba². He knew where they usually camped. It was just a few days to Shavuot before they all arrived. He told them their brother Yeshua had appeared to him too, and Mother Mary would tell them how He had come to be conceived. They were not all eager to hear, add to the confusion, recall the pain.

James went back and forth talking with Mother Mary and the family. She did not want to repeat the story over and over. Once would be enough. Mother Mary talked with Peter, with the twelve. They were all very excited to hear that she would recount the events of Yeshua’s birth. They all knew bits and pieces; the birth of John, the wise men, the slaughter of the little children, the stay in Egypt and abandoning the Joseph’s children in Nazareth. They knew Joseph, his brother and her parents welcomed her and her son. There was much missing. When and where to tell the story?

Jerusalem was overflowing with pilgrims. Just a few less than had been there at Passover. All the followers could not get into the Temple courts for Sabbath worship. They were meeting for worship in the great room at Joseph of Aramathea. They expected to finally get into the Temple for worship the next day, Shavuot, after the morning crowd left. It was agreed Mother Mary would speak at Joseph’s during the evening after Sabbath prayer, before Shavuot.

The Evening after Sabbath

The great room would be too crowded, so they gathered in the courtyard. Even that was packed but they filled all the windows above and they looked over the edges of the roof. John the Disciple said the opening sentences “Bar’chu et Adonai ham’vorach. Baruch Adonai ham’vorach l’olam va’ed! Blessed is Adonai, the blessed one! Blessed is Adonai, the blessed one, forever!”³

“Blessed are You, Adonai our God, Source of all being, by whose word the evening falls. In wisdom You open heaven’s gates. With understanding You make seasons change, causing the times to come and go, and ordering the stars on their appointed paths through heaven’s dome. Creator of day and night, who rolls back light before dark, and dark before light, who makes day pass away and brings on the night, dividing between day and night: the Lord of hosts is Your name! Living and enduring God, be our guide, now and always. Blessed are You, Adonai, who makes evening fall.”

The people prayed together. “Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One. Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom forever and ever. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you today shall be upon your heart. You shall teach them thoroughly to your children, and you shall speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for a reminder between your eyes. And you shall write them upon the doorposts of your house and

² [Jesus family hometowns according to Julius Africanus, who lived in Emmaus in the early third century. From http://katachriston.wordpress.com/2011/06/07/richard-j-bauckham-on-the-relatives-of-jesus/.](http://katachriston.wordpress.com/2011/06/07/richard-j-bauckham-on-the-relatives-of-jesus/)

³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maariv>

upon your gates.

And it will be, if you will diligently obey My commandments which I enjoin upon you this day, to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, I will give rain for your land at the proper time, the early rain and the late rain, and you will gather in your grain, your wine and your oil. And I will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be sated. Take care lest your heart be lured away, and you turn astray and worship alien gods and bow down to them. For then the Lord's wrath will flare up against you, and He will close the heavens so that there will be no rain and the earth will not yield its produce, and you will swiftly perish from the good land which the Lord gives you. Therefore, place these words of Mine upon your heart and upon your soul, and bind them for a sign on your hand, and they shall be for a reminder between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, to speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the road, when you lie down and when you rise. And you shall inscribe them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates - so that your days and the days of your children may be prolonged on the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give to them for as long as the heavens are above the earth.

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: Speak to the children of Israel and tell them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to attach a thread of blue on the fringe of each corner. They shall be to you as tassels, and you shall look upon them and remember all the commandments of the Lord and fulfill them, and you will not follow after your heart and after your eyes by which you go astray - so that you may remember and fulfill all My commandments and be holy to your God. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God; I, the Lord, am your God."⁴

Peter then introduced James the Righteous, the oldest brother of Yeshua.

James the Righteous began, "Shalom, may the blessings of the King of Heaven be upon us, may we always live in His presence." He paused. "You all know me. I know many of you. Many of you know my brothers and sisters here. We have never been part of your company. We have been around the edges. We watched, listened, observed everything. We saw our brother grow up in our home after he returned from Egypt. Our father strictly charged us we should never despise Him. He was God's doing. God had entrusted Him to us. He was both a normal child and unusual. He was always kind, always loving, always helpful, always pious, always pleasant. Everyone in Nazareth always loved Mother Mary. To their faces, they could not be mean. Still they never forgot. We all had questions.

"You question, why am I here now? Why is my family here? My brother, my Lord, Yeshua, Messiah, the Lord God, appeared to me also, the last. Part of His words were to ask Mother Mary about the circumstances of His birth. After she recounted that to me, I asked her to tell my family, to tell all of you. It is very important to know. It is a story that could not have been told before. Mother Mary, could you come and speak to us all."

Mother Mary rose and stood surrounded by a sea of faces, gazing intently. She closed her eyes. She began by singing. "O Lord, open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall declare Thy praise. For Thou delightest not in sacrifice, else would I give it; Thou hast no pleasure in burnt-offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."⁵

4 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shema_Yisrael <http://www.jewfaq.org/prayer/shema.htm>

5 [Psalm 51:15 - 17](#)

They had often heard her sing and play the Psaltery.⁶ Her voice was clear, pure, even when it was soft, it carried a long way and was easy to understand.

“Shalom, may the blessings of the Lord God almighty, creator of the heavens and the earth, King of kings, the Father of us all, who orderest our days and the lives of all for His glory, be with us all.

“It is good to begin at the beginning. My marriage to Joseph had been arranged. One day as I was praying the angel Gabriel came to me. He said, ‘Greetings, blessed one, the Lord is with you. You are blessed among women.’ My heart was troubled and I wondered what kind of salutation this should be. The angel continued, ‘Fear not, Mary, for you have found favor with God. Behold you shall conceive in your womb and bear a son and shall call Him Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest. The Lord God will give unto Him the throne of His father David. He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever and of His kingdom there will be no end.’⁷

“I said, ‘How can this be, since I have not known a man?’

“The angel said, ‘The Holy Spirit shall come upon you and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you, therefore that holy thing born of you will be called the Son of God. Behold, your cousin Elizabeth has also conceived a son in her old age. This is the sixth month of her who was called barren. With God nothing shall be impossible.’ What could I say? ‘Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord, be it to me according to your word.’ The angel was gone. I went to see Elizabeth. Joseph consented. I was gone much longer than expected.

“When I greeted Elizabeth the baby leaped in her womb and she was filled with the Holy Spirit, she knew. She rejoiced and proclaimed. ‘Blessed are you among women. Blessed is the fruit of your womb. How is it that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as I heard your salutation, the baby leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed what was spoken to her by the Lord would be fulfilled.’

“As you all know we are a family of singers. Some of you may have heard me sing this song to myself quietly and wondered what it was about. While I was with them I composed my song. I would like to sing it for you all, now. It has meant so much to me.” She picked up her Psaltery.

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for He has looked on the humble estate of His servant. For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for He Who is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His name. And His mercy is for those who fear Him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; He has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate; He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent empty away. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever.

“I had to leave just before Elizabeth delivered her son. After my son, our Lord was born, we met again and they told me of the events of John’s birth and their song. When the time came for his circumcision the relatives wanted to name him Zechariah after his father but she said no, his name was John. They objected that

⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psaltery>

⁷ [We live in a culture where we do not do remember accurately. We record, document, what needs to be remembered. Since we do not, we think others did not, could not. The Talmud, Mishnah and in many other places shows this was not so. People remembered with accuracy far beyond what we can imagine. It could have been possible for these conversations to have been remembered accurately. We can believe or not believe, there is no way to “prove”. See the essay in the supplements on the accuracy of the records.](#)

none of the relatives were called John. His father wrote 'his name is John'. Immediately his tongue was loosed and he praised God.

"I should go back and tell about John. The important part was not known. They told me while I was with them. All know Zechariah was not able to speak after he came out of the Temple from burning incense. They did not know what happened inside. He met an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. The angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. He will be great before the Lord. He must not drink wine or strong drink. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. He will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. He will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.'

"Zechariah asked the angel, 'How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is advanced in years.' The angel answered him, 'I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and I was sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. Behold, you will be silent and unable to speak until the day that these things take place, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time.'

"When we visited later, I learned the prophecy, Zechariah wrote. I will sing it for you also.

"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us; to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath that He swore to our father Abraham, to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people in the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.' Whatever you may think of his slowness to believe the angel, this prophecy should be remembered, sung by us forever.

"My husband Joseph, as you can well understand was deeply disturbed that I was carrying a child. I could not tell him about the angel. He was going to divorce me quietly. My parents put me out. That night the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. After the child was born he told me the angel said 'Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.' He did as the Lord commanded and I moved into his home, taking care of the children as had been planned.

"He had to register in Bethlehem. I could not be left in Nazareth. He expected we could stay in a guest room. There was none. A stable was nearby and the baby was laid in the manger. That night the angel of the Lord appeared to some shepherds watching their flocks in the field. They told me the glory of the Lord was all around them and they were filled with fear. The angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.' Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!'

"They ran to Bethlehem. They didn't even leave someone to guard the sheep. They told everyone. They

would come back from time to time and worship. It meant so much to Joseph and me. We took Yeshua, my Son, our Lord, to the temple on the fortieth day. From our little place to the House of the Lord, His own house. We met Simeon, righteous and devout. He had been waiting for the consolation of Israel. The Holy Spirit was upon him. The Spirit revealed to him that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. He came in the Spirit into the temple, and took Him up in his arms and blessed God. We put music to what he said, 'Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.'

"Simeon blessed us and said to me, 'Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed. A sword will pierce through your own soul also, so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.'

"There was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She lived in the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. She came up and began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem. We left before she could attract a crowd.

"We were going to return to Nazareth, but before we did Magi came. As soon as they saw the child, they fell down and worshipped Him, offering gifts, gold frankincense and myrrh. We were astounded. We asked how they had found us? They told us they had seen His star when it rose. They went to Jerusalem and asked, 'Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?' The King, Herod, everyone in Jerusalem was troubled and they were brought before the king. The king asked the chief priest and scribes where the Messiah was to be born? They said in Bethlehem of Judea as prophesied by Micah. Herod privately asked them when they saw the star? Then he sent them to look for us, saying 'Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, that I too may come and worship him.' The star they saw in the east appeared again, led them to the place the child was and rested over it.

"We were deeply troubled that Herod knew of the child and where He was. The Magi were warned in a dream not to return to Herod and departed another way. That same night the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, 'Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.' You know what Herod did to the children of Bethlehem. We stayed in Egypt until the angel appeared again and said, 'Rise, take the child and His mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead. Joseph still did not feel we would be safe in Judea and we returned to Nazareth."

Mary closed her eyes and rested. She had finally told the story. She had carried it all these years in her heart. All the years of questioning eyes, whispered accusations, fears, opposition, grieving for her son that He should be insulted, when the truth was so glorious. Joseph grieved for his children, she grieved, that there was such pain, such distance between them and their brother. They should be proud of Him, love Him, follow Him.

James, the Righteous arose and spoke. "Simon, Jose, Salome, Jude, Mary, family, for four years we were alone in Nazareth. Wondering. Hurt. Angry. Puzzled, Mary's parents watched over us. They seemed no longer upset with their daughter. They seemed eager to see her son. As if they were proud of Him. Our father who should have cast her out, took her into our home and protected her. He endured a great deal of ridicule as we all

did. He allowed no insult, no criticism.

“We watched our brother grow up, examined Him as He grew up. We could not have asked for a better little brother. Our mother was wonderful, wise. She picked Mary to follow her, to take care of us. We have always called her Mother Mary. She surrounded us with love. We watched our brother in His ministry. We knew John our cousin, the prophet of God. John called Him the ‘Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world’⁸. We have seen miracles. We have heard the word of God and felt His Spirit.

“The question of his birth always held me back. I felt I should know. I was wrong. There is no reason The Lord God of heaven and earth owes me any answer. The Almighty owed no answer to Job. But He did answer Job out of the whirlwind, and my brother came to me.

“I will say here. Yeshua is Messiah. Messiah Yeshua. My God, Lord, King of kings. I will never again call Him rabbi. I will not be so bold to even call the Lord of all my brother. I would suggest all of us use the title Messiah when we speak His Name. Furthermore, I have another suggestion. We call our mother, Mother Mary. All of you have adopted that. She is mother to us all. The accusation will continue. It must be answered. I suggest we no longer call her “Mother Mary”. Instead we should give her the honor the Heavenly Father has given her. She is the “Blessed Virgin Mary”. She is the one the prophet Isaiah spoke of ‘the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.’⁹ Yeshua Messiah is the eternal Son of God and son of Mary born in the flesh. Those who attack her, attack our Lord. When they hear us refer to her as the Blessed Virgin Mary they may scoff. Impossible. Yes, but we proclaim a miracle just as impossible the resurrection of Messiah Yeshua from the dead. Not a revived human body like Lazarus, but a glorious heavenly body, eternal. The body He promises to all who believe in Him as Lord and Savior.”

They all knew James the Righteous had an impressive reputation. They had never experienced the power of his presence. They were stunned, quiet, began to speak softly to each other, considering his words, recalling the words of Mother Mary. Blessed Virgin Mary? Not much harder to say than Messiah Yeshua. He is. She is. The disciples discussed what to do next. Finish the evening prayers. While they were talking, James’ sister Mary asked, “Mother Mary may I call you Blessed Virgin Mary?”

“I never thought of it. I suppose, if you want.”

“I always loved you. You are even more wonderful than I ever imagined. Thank you, thank you for telling us the story of our brother. Son of God. Who could believe. Yet He always has been.” The two Marys wrapped their arms around each other.

The rest of Joseph’s family, grandchildren, all gathered close around. Telling her how much they loved her. How proud they were to be her children. Thanking her for telling them the story. Finally Jose asked, “I was wondering. The Magi gave you gifts. I realize you sent the gold to Nazareth to care for us. We wondered where it came from. What happened to the myrrh and frankincense?”

“You were correct about the gold. I kept the myrrh and frankincense. The myrrh I finally used when we

8 [John 1:29](#)

9 [Isaiah 7:14 ESV](#)

wrapped my son, our Lord's body, for burial. The frankincense¹⁰ I still have with me. There never seemed to be the right time to offer it as a sacrifice of prayer."

Peter and some others overheard. "Yeshua said, he would be sending the Holy Spirit." "We are to wait here until the Spirit comes." "We have been praying for the Spirit to come ever since we saw Him depart."

Mary overheard pieces of their conversation. She rose and came over to the disciples and said, "Perhaps this evening worship would be a fitting time to offer the frankincense the Magi gave at our Lord's birth. I have kept it with me all these years. We pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit that is promised."

The disciples were all astounded, amazed she had kept the frankincense. Filled with gratitude that she would offer it for them all now. Mary's story and James' speech came in the middle of worship. Everyone was talking quietly waiting for the worship to continue. It was time.

James, the disciple, brother of John, arose and addressed the group. First he thanked Mother Mary, the Blessed Virgin Mary, for sharing her story with them all. It would make a tremendous difference to them as followers of the Lord Yeshua Messiah. The question had always been buried in their hearts under their faith. It would be helpful as they shared the Good News of their Lord. His death and resurrection was more miraculous than anyone could believe. The story of His birth would not make it any harder. It shows this had been God's plan from the beginning. They went to the Master of the House, Joseph, and asked him to prepare and bring his best incense burner.

Thaddeus¹¹ began the closing prayers.

"Help us to lie down in peace, Adonai our God, and to arise again to life. Spread over the world Your sheltering peace. Direct us with Your guidance and save us. Protect and keep us from enmity, illness, violence, want, and sorrow. Remove envy and recrimination from us. Shelter us in the shadow of Your wings, for You are a protecting, redeeming God. You are God, our source of grace and mercy. Guard our going out and our coming in, for life and for peace, now and forever."

He invited Mother Mary, the Blessed Virgin, to join him. He reminded them that she spoke of the three gifts the Magi gave when they came to worship the infant Yeshua Messiah. He explained that she had kept the frankincense until this day. She was offering the frankincense now as prayer for the coming of the Holy Spirit that Messiah Yeshua had promised to send. They were all hushed as she spread the frankincense on the burning coals. They had heard tales of the sweet smell, but few had known the odor. Thaddeus waited a bit as the odor filled the space. He then began the Kaddish.

"Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, Who chose us from all the nations, and elevated us above all tongues, and sanctified us with His commandments. And You gave us, Lord our God, with love, this Festival of Weeks, the time of the giving of our Torah. Because You chose us, and sanctified us from all the nations, and Your holy festivals in happiness and in joy You have given us as a heritage. Blessed are You, God, Who sanctifies Israel and the holiday seasons." The people responded: "Amen." ¹²

¹⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frankincense>

¹¹ [Also identified with Jude http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jude_the_Apostle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jude_the_Apostle)

¹² <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiddush>

“May His great name be exalted and sanctified in the world which He created according to His will! May He establish His kingdom and may His salvation blossom and be near. during your lifetime and during your days and during the lifetimes of all the [House of Israel](#), speedily and very soon! And say, [Amen](#).”

The whole assembly responded, “Amen. May His great name be blessed for ever, and to all eternity!”

Thaddeus repeated: “May His great name be blessed for ever, and to all eternity! Blessed and praised, glorified and exalted, extolled and honored, adored and lauded be the name of the Holy One, blessed be He above and beyond all the blessings, hymns, praises and consolations that are uttered in the world! And say, Amen.”

The whole assembly responded “Amen.” and joined in saying the Amidah.¹³

“My Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare Your praise.

“Blessed are You, Lord our God and God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob, the great, mighty and fearful God—God Most High—who bestows bountiful kindnesses, who creates all things, who remembers the love of the Fathers and brings a redeemer for their children's children for the sake of Thy name in love. King, Helper, Savior, and Shield. ”

The people responded, “Blessed are You Lord, Shield of Abraham.”

“Thou art mighty forever, O Lord: You resurrect the dead; You are powerful to save. Sustaining the living in loving-kindness, resurrecting the dead in abundant mercies, You support the falling, heal the sick, set free the captives, and keep faith to all that sleep in the dust. Who is like You, master of mighty powers over life and death. Who may be compared unto You, the King who brings death and restores life and causing salvation to spring forth. You are trustworthy to revive the dead.”

“Blessed are You Lord, who revives the dead.”

“You are holy and Your Name is holy, and holy beings praise You daily for all eternity.”

“Blessed are You Lord, the holy God.”

“You graciously bestow knowledge upon man and teach mortals understanding. Graciously bestow upon us from You, wisdom, understanding and knowledge.”

“Blessed are You Lord, who graciously bestows knowledge.”

“Cause us to return, our Father, to Your instruction; draw us near, our King, to Your service; and bring us back to You in whole-hearted repentance.”

“Blessed are You Lord, who desires penitence.”

“Pardon us, our Father, for we have sinned; forgive us, our King, for we have transgressed; for You are a good and forgiving God.”

“Blessed are You Lord, gracious One who pardons abundantly.”

“Behold our affliction and wage our battle; redeem us speedily for the sake of Your Name, for You God are the mighty redeemer.”

¹³ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amidah> This prayer has been said to the present day every morning and evening in the synagogue. There it is said only by the leader without responses.

"Blessed are You Lord, Redeemer of Israel."

"Heal us, O Lord, and we will be healed; help us and we will be saved; for You are our praise. Grant complete cure and healing to all our wounds; for You, Almighty King, are a faithful and merciful healer."

"Blessed are You Lord, who heals the sick of Your people Israel."

"Bless for us, Lord our God, this year and all the varieties of its produce for good; and bestow blessing upon the face of the earth. Satisfy us from Your bounty and bless our year like other good years,"

"Blessed are You Lord, who blesses the years."

"Sound the great shofar for our freedom; raise a banner to gather our exiles, and bring us together from the four corners of the earth into our land."

"Blessed are You Lord, who gathers the dispersed of His people Israel."

"Restore our judges as in former times, and our counsellors as in the beginning; remove from us sorrow and sighing. Reign over us, O Lord alone, with loving kindness and mercy, establish our innocence by the judgment."

"Blessed are You Lord, King who loves righteousness and justice."

"May Your mercies be aroused, Lord our God, upon the righteous, upon the pious, upon the elders of Your people, the House of Israel, upon the remnant of their sages, upon the righteous proselytes and upon us. Bestow a goodly reward upon them who truly confide in Your name; and assign us our portion with them forever; and may we not come to shame for that we have trusted in You."

"Blessed are You Lord, the support and security of the righteous."

"Return in mercy to Jerusalem Your city and dwell therein as You have promised; speedily establish therein the throne of David Your servant, and rebuild it, soon in our days, as an everlasting edifice."

"Blessed are You Lord, who rebuilds Jerusalem."

"Speedily cause the sprout of David Your servant to flourish, and increase his power by Your salvation, for we hope for Your salvation all day."

"Blessed are You Lord, who causes the power of salvation to flourish."

"Hear our voice, Lord our God; merciful Father, have compassion upon us and accept our prayers in mercy and favor, for You are God who hears prayers and supplications; do not turn us away empty-handed from You, our King, for You hear the prayer of Your people."

"Blessed are You Lord, who hears prayer."

"Look with favor, Lord our God, on Your people Israel and pay heed to their prayer; restore the service to Your Sanctuary and accept with love and favor Israel's sacrifices and prayer; and may the service of Your people Israel always be acceptable to You. May our eyes behold Your return to Zion in mercy."

"Blessed are You Lord, who restores His Divine Presence to Zion."

"We acknowledge that You are the Lord our God and God of our fathers forever. You are the strength of our life, the shield of our salvation in every generation. We will give thanks to You and recount Your praise, evening, morning and noon, for our lives which are committed into Your hand, for our souls which are entrusted

to You, for Your miracles which are with us daily, and for Your continual wonders and beneficences.”

“You are the Beneficent One, for Your mercies never cease; the Merciful One, for Your kindnesses never end; for we always place our hope in You. And for all these, may Your Name, our King, be continually blessed, exalted and extolled forever and all time.”

The congregation joined in the Psalm. “I will lift up mine eyes unto the mountains: from whence shall my help come? My help cometh from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; He that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, He that keepeth Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy keeper; the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall keep thee from all evil; He shall keep thy soul. The LORD shall guard thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth and for ever.”¹⁴ Then they followed with the Aleinu.

“It is incumbent upon us to give praise to the Lord of the Universe, to glorify Him who formed creation, for He hath not made us to be like the nations of the lands, nor hath He made us like the families of the earth; He hath not set our portion with theirs, nor our lot with their multitude; for they prostrate themselves before vanity and folly, and pray to a god who can not help. But we bend the knee and prostrate ourselves and bow down before the King of the Kings of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He! For it is He who stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, and the seat of His glory is in the heavens above, and His mighty dwelling-place is in the loftiest heights. ‘He is our God, and there is none other.’ In truth, He is our King, there is none besides Him, as it is written in His Torah: ‘And thou shalt know this day and lay it to thine heart that the Lord is God in heaven above and upon the earth beneath: and there is none other.’

“Therefore do we wait for Thee, O Lord our God, soon to behold Thy mighty glory, when Thou wilt remove the abominations from the earth, and idols shalt be exterminated; when the world shall be regenerated by the kingdom of the Almighty, and all the children of flesh invoke Thy name; when all the wicked of the earth shall be turned unto Thee. Then shall all the inhabitants of the world perceive and confess that unto Thee every knee must bend, and every tongue be sworn. Before Thee, O Lord our God, shall they kneel and fall down, and unto Thy glorious name give honor. So will they accept the yoke of Thy kingdom, and Thou shall be King over them speedily forever and aye. For Thine is the kingdom, and to all eternity Thou wilt reign in glory, as it is written in Thy Torah: ‘The Lord shall reign forever and aye.’ And it is also said: ‘And the Lord shall be King over all the earth; on that day the Lord shall be One and His name be One.’”¹⁵

Thaddeus continued with the counting of the Omer. “Lo, I am about to fulfill the affirmative precept of the counting of the Omer, as it is written in the Law And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the day of rest, from the day that ye brought the Omer of the wave-offering, seven complete weeks they shall be; until the morrow of the seventh week shall ye number fifty days. Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast sanctified us by thy commandments, and hast given us command concerning the counting of the Omer. This is the forty-ninth day, making seven weeks of the Omer.¹⁶ This was the last day. Tomorrow is the Festival.’ At this the whole assembly cheered with acclamations of hallelujah.

¹⁴ [Psalm 121](#)

¹⁵ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleinu>

¹⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counting_of_the_Omer <http://www.sacred-texts.com/jud/spb/spb40.htm>

He continued, "Tomorrow is forty nine days, making seven weeks from the resurrection of our Lord Yeshua Messiah!" At this the whole assembly cheered with even louder and longer acclamations of hallelujah.

Thaddeus invited all the disciples to join him for the great thanksgiving, the celebration of the holy meal. John had the honor of leading the closing worship.

"Peace be with you."

"Peace be with you." all responded.

"This morning the priests brought the Golden Table of the Bread of the Face from within the Holy Place onto the porch of the Temple. The Chief Priest lifted up the Bread of the Face for all to see and said, 'Behold God's love for you.'¹⁷" John picked up the loaf before him and said, "Behold this bread is the body of our Lord Messiah. Behold God's love for you.

"We thank You, our Father, for the life and knowledge He has made known unto us through Yeshua, His Son; to whom be glory for ever.¹⁸ Our Lord, Messiah, Yeshua has appeared among us, as we shared this bread of His body and drank this wine of His blood. The night He was betrayed He blessed and broke the bread and said it is His Body. We thank You, our Father, for the holy vine, David Your Son, which You have made known unto us through Yeshua Messiah, Your Son; to whom be glory for ever.¹⁹ He took the cup after supper, blessed it, gave it to us. His blood is the redemption for all people, the New Covenant, the forgiveness of all sin. Maranatha. Come. Eat. Drink. Receive Him, receive His life, into your own life, His body into your own body."

The people responded, "Maranatha,"²⁰ and prayed, "Our Father in heaven, holy be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done as in heaven so on earth. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debt, as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil: for Yours is the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. Have mercy on us."^{21 22} "Amen."

"Our Lord is here. Come and eat. Come and drink."²³

Mother Mary picked up her psaltery and began to play. There were others with instruments. As the worshippers came forward the rest of the congregation sang Psalms. It took a while to come down from the roofs and from the windows. When all had been served Peter with a loud voice reminded them all they would meet tomorrow morning for Shavuot in the far portico by the construction.

¹⁷ Brant Pitre, "Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist, Doubleday 2011 p 131 The word rendered "presence" is literally "face". Looking at it is seeing the face of God. Babylonian Talmud, Menachoth 29A page 110 <http://halakhah.com/pdf/kodoshim/Menachoth.pdf>

¹⁸ The Didache version about 150 AD. <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-hoole.html> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Didache> A copy is available in the supplements.

¹⁹ The Didache

²⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maranatha> - Our Lord has come.

²¹ The Didache

²² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord%27s_Prayer

²³ The following are excellent. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Eucharist , <http://theeucharist.wordpress.com/index/chapter-1/>

John continued. "May the great Name of God be exalted and sanctified, throughout the world, which He has created according to His will. His Kingship is established in your lifetime, in your days, in the lifetime of the entire household of Israel, and say, Amen."

"Amen. May His great name be blessed, forever and ever," the congregation responded.

"Blessed, praised, glorified, exalted, extolled, honored elevated and lauded be the Name of the Holy One, Blessed is He- above and beyond any blessings and hymns, Praises and consolations which are uttered in the world; and say Amen. May there be abundant peace from Heaven, and life, upon us and upon all Israel; and say, Amen." "Amen"

"He who makes peace in His high holy places, may He bring peace upon us, and upon all Israel; and say Amen."

"Amen."²⁴

"May He who causes His name to dwell in this House, cause to dwell among you love and brotherliness, peace and friendship."

The assembly relaxed. The service was over. There was so much to think about, so much to remember. Most were eagerly talking about all they had heard. There were a few who were quiet, wondering, so much, too much to take in. Even more to come. Seven weeks of seven days since the Lord appeared alive, more than alive.

Notes:

The followers of Jesus would have been celebrating the Holy Meal for seven weeks by this time. I expect they did so the next morning Pentecost - Shavuot before going to the Temple. That was the seventh week from the Resurrection. Seven weeks of seven days are a perfect holy number. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus should have had large houses in the city. James the Righteous may have been able to arrange for Essene guest houses to be available. There were five hundred guest houses plus the great houses of the princes and chief priests. There were many synagogues, some may have allowed Jesus' followers space to meet. There would have been a base of recognized religious leaders for the rapid growth of the early church. Bargil Pixner OSB suggests James the Righteous and the priests who joined in Acts 6:7 were Essene.²⁵

The Supplement folder in the King of Kings section of <http://thesignofconcord.com> has copies for individual download of the Shema, Aleinu, and Amidah. Jesus and his followers regularly said these prayers. It is good for followers of Jesus today to know how He and His followers worshipped.

²⁴ http://www.yahrzeit.org/kaddish_eng.html

²⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_Supper The traditional location is in an area that had a large Essene community. <http://www.centuryone.org/apostles.html> BARGIL PIXNER <http://www.centuryone.org/pixner-q-a.html>

The Eucharist liturgy in the early church is unknown. It was not what we have now. What is presented here has no claim for accuracy. Portions of the words used are from the Didache from about 150 AD. Most people today seem to think in the early church, the Last Supper celebrations were gathering of small groups. The Gospels reveal large numbers surrounding the few people mentioned. The smallest number is one hundred twenty at the Ascension. Tens of thousands who followed Jesus during His ministry were present for Shavuot. Five hundred saw Him after the resurrection at one time, perhaps on the mountain in Galilee. Three hundred or more participants for this service would be possible. It was not a small gathering. The worshippers had a lifetime of conducting and participating in synagog and Temple worship. This has the Sabbath evening service the people knew and adds a form of Eucharist.

The Gospels record the events of Jesus life. They do not include the background information everyone knew at the time they were written. This is one of a series of stories that includes that background faithful to what is known about the history and culture. I hope this provokes-in a good way-the reader to think deeply about the Scriptural account. Go to my web site for more. <http://thesignofconcord.com> . These are in the section titled "King of Kings". There is also a section titled "King of Kings Supplements" with additional information.

If you do not think this reflects the culture and historic situation, how would you tell the story?

Many thanks to my patient wife Lynne for repeatedly proofreading.

This is meant for non technical readers. The footnotes are links to the documentation.

Scriptures are from Jewish Publication Society of America 1917 Version. The New Testament quotes are ESV.

Questions:

How could have the information about Jesus birth been passed on and remembered?

How did Jesus brothers and sisters come to be followers?

How could it have come about that Mary became called "The Blessed Virgin"?

How could it have happened that Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus, became common phrases?

What happened to the gold, myrrh and frankincense?

How did the early followers worship?

Accuracy of the record, memories

We live in a culture where we do not do remember accurately. We record, document, what needs to be remembered. Since we do not, we think others did not, could not. The documented record of the Talmud, Mishnah and in many other places shows this was not so. People remembered with accuracy far beyond what we can imagine. It would have been possible for conversations to have been remembered accurately. We can believe or not believe, there is no way to “prove” they were.

About 1960 professor of mine met a Yemeni Jewish boy just after he emigrated to Israel. He could recite the entire Old Testament in Hebrew. It was not considered unusual. He had been from a small village. After a few years in Israel, he learned to read and began to forget what he had memorized.

If you read old books, there are many quotes from earlier works, council rulings, and the like. The authors did not go to their library, make note cards so they could use the quotes. They remembered what they read a long time before. Scholars today look for the places they misquote. Sometimes they did. It is amazing how often they are correct. The Talmud and Mishnah report hundreds of years later, many statements from earlier teachers that had been passed down orally, with accuracy. Homer, the early Greeks report diverse legends the same way.

In the centuries just before Jesus there was a great increase in popular piety among his people. It was the beginning of the synagog. It lifted up knowledge of the text in addition to rituals of sacrifice. The diaspora, the people spread across the known world: Gaul, central Asia , India, Ethiopia, Alexandria and Mesopotamia, kept their faith connection through the synagog and pilgrimage. Pilgrims were continually returning. Synagogs for prayer, study, worship did not require special buildings. They gathered in houses or even outside.

The vast majority of the people were peasant farmers and had a lot of free time in the off seasons. Talking about religion fills the time, no TV, radio, movies. Some might collect money to buy a scroll for the village. There was a great increase in publishing even though scrolls were very expensive. They could read and study it, trade it with other villages for different ones. After a while they could work their way through the whole Old Testament and other writings, Apocrypha and commentaries. Children have a lot of free time. Some would be interested in finding out what their parents are talking about. The local leader who teaches them is going to be given more money by the villagers. This is a self organizing religious practice, not worth recording. It is the same today in third world Islamic Maktab²⁶.

They learned the Hebrew scrolls by rote repetition and discussion. It was the basic way of learning until recently. Learn the Hebrew alphabet and it is easy to read what was already memorized. Reading was fairly common. We think reading and writing are two sides of a coin. They are not. Until recently writing was expensive, both what was written on and the ink. That is why there are few things written in archeology. The exception that proves the rule: there are hoards of cuneiform clay tablets, cheap and durable. Popular writing in the Roman world was on wax covered wood boards, smoothed and reused like a chalk board. Papyrus, leather, ink were very expensive and decay. The average person had little reason to write anything durable.

²⁶ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maktab>

Examples of how accurately words were passed on are the daily prayers Jesus knew and used. The Shema²⁷ still commonly said daily in Jewish homes is over 2000 years old. The Amidah²⁸, Synagog Prayer had a petition added after the destruction of the Temple 70 AD. The Aleinu²⁹ has a reference to prostration which stopped when the Temple was destroyed. These were not recorded for hundreds of years. The Dead Sea scrolls cross a gap of more than 1000 years to earlier documents with few minor changes. There is much there for scholars to study but the accuracy of the hand copying is amazing. Homer, Beowulf were transmitted for centuries orally. After thousands of years the Navaho remembered they came from a cold dark land. Their language is related to Alaskan tribes. The following quote is from authoritative scholarship.

“That these methods have been effective, is testified to by the preservation of the most ancient Indian religious text, the *Rgveda* (ca. 1500 BCE), as a single text, without any variant readings. Similar methods were used for memorizing mathematical texts, whose transmission remained exclusively oral until the end of the Vedic period (ca. 500 BCE).”³⁰

All of the above simply says it could have been possible for the conversations and messages reported in the Gospels to have been accurately stated. Therefore in my work I repeat them as recorded. All this, of course, proves nothing.

It is especially interesting that the Bible records variants of the most important words: the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, the words of Institution of the Last Supper. Luke records the conversion of Paul on the road to Damascus three times in Acts, twice quoting Paul as he tells the story. The three can not be reconciled. The variants are deliberate, or at least they tell us something very important about what “Historical accuracy” meant. Or perhaps the God of Scripture is telling us something. An almighty and all wise, omniscient, God could, if He wanted, had a single account recorded. It is the way we would do it, if we were god. Personally I consider it wiser to think God perfectly does whatever He wants. God wanted the story told the way it is written. The idea that God can’t, that God is unable to perfectly tell His own story, is hubris. Pride that challenges God.

See my web site for more. <http://thesignofconcord.com>
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²⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shema>

²⁸ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amidah>

²⁹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aleinu>

³⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oral_literature <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rigveda>