

Lent Lectures 2017

References to read alongside Lecture One

1) Early Church Writings

- a. The Didache, Epistle of Barnabas, 1st Letter of Clement of Rome, The Shepherd of Hermes, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp all offer valuable insights. They can be viewed here: <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/churchfathers.html>

2) Jewish and Roman Testimony

- a. Reporting on Emperor Nero's decision to blame the Christians for the fire that had destroyed Rome in A.D. 64, the Roman historian Tacitus wrote:

Nero fastened the guilt ... on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of ... Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome...

- b. Pliny says that he needed to consult the emperor about this issue because a great multitude of every age, class, and sex stood accused of Christianity. At one point in his letter, Pliny relates some of the information he has learned about these Christians:

They were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god, and bound themselves by a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food – but food of an ordinary and innocent kind.

- c. Perhaps the most remarkable reference to Jesus outside the Bible can be found in the writings of Josephus, a first century Jewish historian. On two occasions, in his *Jewish Antiquities*, he mentions Jesus. The second, less revealing, reference describes the condemnation of one "James" by the Jewish Sanhedrin. This James, says Josephus, was "the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ." F.F. Bruce points out how this agrees with Paul's description of James in Galatians 1:19 as "the Lord's brother." And Edwin Yamauchi informs us that "few scholars have questioned" that Josephus actually penned this passage.

As interesting as this brief reference is, there is an earlier one, which is truly astonishing. Called the "Testimonium Flavianum," the relevant portion declares:

About this time there lived Jesus, a wise man, if indeed one ought to call him a man. For he ... wrought surprising feats.... He was the Christ. When Pilate ...condemned him to be crucified, those who had . . . come to love him did not give up their affection for him. On the third day he appeared ... restored to life.... And the tribe of Christians ... has ... not disappeared.

Material compiled from www.betinking.org

3) Love Poverty and Simple Living

- a. 'If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money^c to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.'
Matthew 19:21
- b. 'Truly I tell you, it will be hard for a rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven'.
Matthew 19:23
- c. 'But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind.'
Luke 14:13
- d. 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,'
Luke 4:18
- e. And he answered them, "Whoever has two tunics is to share with him who has none, and whoever has food is to do likewise."
Luke 3:11
- f. 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'
Matthew 25:40
- g. And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh".
Matthew 6:20-21
- h. And he said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."
Luke 12:15

4) **Forgive sinners**

- a. For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.
Matthew 6:13-14
- b. 'Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.'
Mark 11:25
- c. Be on your guard! If another disciple sins, you must rebuke the offender, and if there is repentance, you must forgive. ⁴ And if the same person sins against you seven times a day, and turns back to you seven times and says, "I repent", you must forgive.'
Luke 17:3-4
- d. for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Matthew 26:28

5) **Love and forgive our enemies and those who hurt us**

- a. But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,
Matthew 5:44
- b. "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,
Luke 6:27
- c. You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

Matthew 5:43-48

- d. Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.' And they cast lots to divide his clothing.

Luke 23:34

6) **Seek stillness and silence with the Father**

- a. "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed."

Mark 1:35

- b. "Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed."

Luke 5:16

- c. "Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them."

Luke 6:12-13

- d. "One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.' He said to them, 'When you pray, say: "Father, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come..."

Luke 11:1-2

- e. "When Jesus heard what had happened [that John the Baptist was beheaded], he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing of this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns."

Matthew 14:13

- f. "Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself."

John 6:15

- g. [Jesus] said to [his disciples], 'Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.' So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place."

Mark 6:31-32

- h. Jesus said to his disciples and a crowd of people: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Matthew 11:28-30

7) **Turning over the tables in the Temple**

- a. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. ¹⁵ Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!'

John 2:14-16

Then Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who were selling and buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold doves.

Matthew 21:12

8) **Disciples must conform**

- a. Then the Pharisees went and plotted to entrap him in what he said. So they sent their disciples to him, along with the Herodians, saying, 'Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality. Tell us, then, what you think. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not?' But Jesus, aware of their malice, said, 'Why are you putting me to the test, you hypocrites? Show me the coin used for the tax.' And they brought him a denarius. Then he said to them, 'Whose head is this, and whose title?' They answered, 'The emperor's.' Then he said to them, 'Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the

emperor's, and to God the things that are God's.' When they heard this, they were amazed; and they left him and went away.

Matthew 22:15-22

- b. 'So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets'.

Matthew 7:12

- c. 'Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

Matthew 5:17-18

9) **Expect opposition, even from your own family**

- a. 'Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.' 'Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

For I have come to set a man against his father,
and a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;
and one's foes will be members of one's own household.

Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.'

Matthew 10:32-39

10) **Do not retaliate with anger and violence, even when threatened with death**

- a. Suddenly, one of those with Jesus put his hand on his sword, drew it, and struck the slave of the high priest, cutting off his ear. Then Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword back into its place; for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then would the scriptures be fulfilled, which say it must happen in this way?'

Matthew 25:51-24

- b. Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?'

John 18:11

11) **The women caught in adultery**

- a. While Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. Early in the morning he came again to the temple. All the people came to him and he sat down and began to teach them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery; and making her stand before all of them, they said to him, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?' They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.' And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. Jesus straightened up and said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' She said, 'No one, sir.' And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.'

John 8:1-11