

The Forgotten Jesus Podcast
S6E3
Walking Daily With God - (Luke 4:16)

Description – Today we're talking about how the Synagogues came about in Israel at the time of Jesus and what it means to walk in obedience with God.

We're back in Luke 4 today.

Luke 4:16-17

¹⁶ He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up. As usual, he entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read. ¹⁷ The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him, and unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it was written:

Before we get deep into it, we have to stop and ask, what is a synagogue?

It's different from the temple in Jerusalem. They come on the scene first and foremost when the people are exiled into Assyria and particularly Babylon.

They were places of worship, of community, of learning and study. This is where they would gather for worship.

"Synagogue" in greek means - place of gathering / assembly

"Beit Knesset" in hebrew means - house of gathering

So the people go to Babylon and set up these Synagogues. They do this to have a place to gather together for the sabbath. To gather together to celebrate the feasts and religious days. To gather together to fast. And they gathered together to pray together. They believed that there was more power in prayer together than alone.

They also gathered to hear the word preached and proclaimed to them. They would open the scrolls to read and hear God's word read to them.

By the time the Temple falls in 70AD the Talmud says there are as few as 390 or as many as 480 synagogues in Israel.

Ezekiel 11:16

¹⁶“Therefore say, ‘This is what the Lord God says: Though I sent them far away among the nations and scattered them among the countries, yet for a little while I have been a sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone.’

The sages would say that this “little sanctuary” is one of the first references to a Synagogue.

To build a synagogue, you needed two things:

1. A group of 10 men who had “free” time.
 - a. These guys had extra time on their hands who could give their time to help with administrative duties, running the day to day things of the synagogue.
 - b. Why 10 men?
 - i. The reference is to the 10 men who were spies who went into the land and said they could not take the land. (Joshua and Caleb being the other 2 spies).
 - ii. 10 men swayed a nation, so it was thought that 10 men could be a congregation.

2. The Synagogue had to face a certain direction / position.
 - a. It had to face west (before the temple destruction)
 - b. Why West?
 - c. Ezekiel 8:16-17
 - d. ¹⁶So he brought me to the inner court of the LORD’s house, and there were about twenty-five men at the entrance of the LORD’s temple, between the portico and the altar, with their backs to the LORD’s temple and their faces turned to the east. They were bowing to the east in worship of the sun. ¹⁷And he said to me, “Do you see this, son of man? Is it not enough for the house of Judah to commit the detestable acts they are doing here, that they must also fill the land with violence and repeatedly anger me, even putting the branch to their nose?
 - e. To face east was equated with pagan worship. Worshipping false gods.

Direction in the bible is important.

Whenever you see someone going away from God, going to destruction or misery, they’re always going East.

The Bible equates going East with departing from God. But going West is equated with coming back to God.

Genesis 3:24

²⁴ He drove the man out and stationed the cherubim and the flaming, whirling sword east of the garden of Eden to guard the way to the tree of life.

God isn't just punishing them, he's also protecting them. Because of sin, they cannot be in the presence of God.

Genesis 4:16

¹⁶ Then Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

Genesis 13:11

¹¹ So Lot chose the entire plain of the Jordan for himself. Then Lot journeyed eastward, and they separated from each other.

When you surrender your life to God, you're moving East to West. You're moving from far from God to being close to God.

Psalms 103:12

¹² As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

To follow after God is a series of small steps of obedience. It's following after Him daily.