

Twisted Scriptures

Peter's Two Fathers: Jonah and John

TWISTED SCRIPTURES – MT. 16:17 / JN. 1:42, 21:15-17

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The teaching is being given these days – as support of the notion that in order to reach spiritual maturity we must first submit ourselves to a “spiritual father” – that Jesus refers once to Simon Peter’s physical father as Jonah (Mt. 16:17) but on two other occasions refers to his spiritual father as John. (Jn. 1:42, 21:15-17) The proof that Jesus, in referring to Simon as the son of Jonah is referring to his physical father is seen in the “context” of Jesus having refused to give the Pharisees and Sadducees who were testing Him any sign but the sign of Jonah. (Mt. 16:4)

If we turn to the Greek we find that “Bar-Jonah” is the transliteration of “Bariona” – “iona” being the part we translate “Jonah.” This is identical to the name of the Old Testament prophet Jonah – “Iona.” And we find that the writer John, who very well might even have been named after Simon Peter’s father, uses “Ioannou” which simply means “of John.” This usage is seen in the instance where Jesus first meets Simon and names him “Cephas (which is translated Peter).” (Jn. 1:42) and where Jesus, in drawing out Simon Peter’s own recognition of the flaws and limits in his love for Jesus, commands Simon Peter to feed and tend His sheep. (Jn. 21:15-17) There are so many translations, transliterations and linguistic adaptations of names throughout the New Testament and there is so little to go on here that one wonders why the “spiritual fathering” teachings – if they really were indeed truth and light from God – would turn to such an obscure passage as this to support the teachings!

Yet it is true context here that points us in the right direction. “Matthew is the gospel written by a Jew to Jews about a Jew. In his *Ecclesiastical History* (A.D. 323) Eusebius quoted a statement by Papias (c. A.D. 140) that Matthew wrote *logia* (“sayings”) in Aramaic. No Aramaic gospel of Matthew has been found, and it is evident that Matthew is not a Greek translation of an Aramaic original. Some believe that Matthew wrote an abbreviated version of Jesus’ sayings in Aramaic before writing his gospel in Greek for a larger circle of readers.” (Open Bible Study Aids – Matthew) The real context of Matthew is that he is a Jew writing to Jews quoting a Jew who spoke like a Jew. “Bar Jonah” is simply the Jewish way of referring to someone as the son of someone else.

John’s gospel, on the other hand, could have been written as much as 30 or even 40 years after Matthew’s gospel. Matthew’s gospel was written between A.D. 58 to 68 – John’s anywhere from A.D. 60 to 90, but certainly much after Matthew’s. Matthew’s gospel was written in predominately Jewish Palestine or perhaps Syrian Antioch, an equally predominately Jewish settlement – John, according to all widely accepted tradition, wrote his gospel in Ephesus, an important trade center of about 300,000 *Greek* speaking people was also connected to many major points in Asia Minor and around the Mediterranean world. Ephesus had a large amphitheater, a number of gymnasiums, public baths and numerous impressive public buildings, including the temple of Artemis (or Diana, her Roman name) which was considered one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The Isle of Patmos, where John was imprisoned, lies directly off the coast of Ephesus. John’s gospel, which differs greatly from the synoptic gospels

in style, content and theme, has as its purpose “to set forth Christ in His deity in order to spark believing faith in his readers.” (OBSA – John, City of Ephesus) Matthew’s readers were primarily Jews – John’s were primarily Greeks.

This difference is evident even in Jn. 1:42 where John specifically uses “Cephas” (Aramaic) which is translated into Greek as “Petros” (Peter, a stone). He also took care one sentence earlier to be sure His Greek readers understood that the Hebrew/Aramaic “Messhiac” (English messiah) and the Greek “Christos” (Christ, Anointed One) were equivalent terms. (Jn. 1:41) This familiarizing his Greek readers with Hebrew words is seen also when John translates Rabbi as Teacher. (Jn. 1:38) It is much more likely that John considered “Barjona” as simply a non-essential Aramaic term for sparking believing faith in his Greek readers than that he was embedding some hidden teaching regarding “spiritual fathering” to be discovered and decoded two millennia later by a few “specially,” spiritually “enlightened” teachers.

This simple difference of context is more than enough to explain the different expressions used in these two gospels. We need not imagine some hidden “deeper spiritual” meaning – there is none. There is only poor scholarship. Or, since the propagators of this nonsense seem to insist they’ve received “special revelation,” we can only conclude that demonic deception is clearly indicated. Such poor excuses for “deeper, meatier” teachings can only find a welcome spot in the hearts of immature believers whose own personal desires to be loved, respected and/or accepted by men is greater than their love for God.

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