

Jesus and Hierarchy

Introduction

In the fourth century, Christianity became the official state religion of the Roman empire. Throughout the middle ages, the Roman Catholic Church was the epitome of worldly power. Even today, the Catholic and Orthodox churches are structured in rigid hierarchy. Hierarchy and worldly power are historically intertwined with Christianity. However, is this consistent with the teachings of Jesus Himself? This paper examines Jesus' criticisms of hierarchy and mundane authority. This paper also explores how the words of Jesus can be considered a criticism of the Roman empire, since Rome, at the time of Jesus, embodied worldly power.

This paper begins by examining Jesus' view of wealth, exploring how Jesus exalts poverty when most people think poverty to be a terrible curse. Next, I look at how Jesus perceives reputation and shame, something very important to His contemporaries. Then, Jesus' views on gender and race are examined. I explore what Jesus says about the family, and about children in particular. Finally, I examine what is directly said in the Gospels about the Roman empire.

This paper uses only that evidence about Jesus which is contained in the four canonical Gospels. Further, this paper makes no attempt to determine the accuracy of those accounts, and does not attempt to see conflict between them. Rather, those four accounts are treated as one, and evidence from all four books is used to advance the arguments of this paper. All biblical quotes are taken from <http://www.tims.net/bible/nkjv/books.htm>. The translation used is the New King James Version.

Jesus and Poverty

In modern times, wealth gives rise to hierarchy. In general, the wealthy have better access to education, health care, and respect. When was the last time that a poor person became president of the United States? Even so, modern American notions of wealth and poverty do not adequately describe the condition of economic distribution present in the Roman world of which Jesus was a part. In that world, there was a tremendous chasm separating the rich and the poor. In many countries today, social mobility is a possibility; although there were exceptions, most people born into poverty in the time of Jesus would die in poverty as well. Moreover, financial well-being was tightly tied to political power; to be a wealthy Roman was to be a politically potent Roman. The poor of the time of Jesus did not live in a democracy in which they, despite their poverty, had at least a vote; rather, they are both poor and – for the most part – powerless.

Jesus, in the Gospels, admonishes against material wealth. In some passages, wealth appears as an impediment to a relationship with God because people may devote their efforts to furthering their finances rather than focusing on God. In other passages, however, wealth appears to be depicted as an evil in itself. The Gospels contain both warnings against becoming consumed with the pursuit of wealth, and warnings against the possession of that wealth.

These passages emphasize the transience and unimportance of worldly goods:

Matthew 6

19. "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;
20. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.
21. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Luke 12

15. And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."
16. Then He spoke a parable to them, saying: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully.
17. And he thought within himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?'
18. So he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods.
19. And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry." '
20. But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?'
21. So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

22. Then He said to His disciples, "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on.

23. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing.

24. Consider the ravens, for they neither sow nor reap, which have neither storehouse nor barn; and God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds?

Although these two passages differ in that one is a parable and one is a simple admonition, they both convey the message that material wealth is fleeting and, therefore, not something in which one should put one's faith. The passage from Matthew emphasizes the vulnerable nature of worldly goods, comparing it unfavorably to "treasures in heaven." In the passage from Luke, Jesus stresses the unimportance of worldly goods because those goods cannot secure happiness once one is dead. The character in the parable has dedicated his efforts to accumulating mundane riches, but those are shown to be worthless upon his demise, which may come at any time.

In the following passage, Jesus states that a concern for wealth can interfere with a concern for God.

Luke 16

13. No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

14. Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him.

15. And He said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

This passage indicates that one cannot dedicate oneself both to pecuniary gain and to spiritual gain. This passage does not condemn material wealth, but rather condemns making that material wealth the focal point of one's life. By establishing God and mammon as two separate entities, Jesus is stating that pursuing riches is inconsistent with pursuing God. What Jesus says to the Pharisees shows that what God values and what the humans of His time value are not necessarily the same things.

The following parable shows how wealth and other mundane concerns can interfere with doing God's will.

Luke 14

16. Then He said to him, "A certain man gave a great supper and invited many,

17. And sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, 'Come, for all things are now ready.'

18. But they all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused.'

19. And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused.'

20. Still another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.'

21. So that servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house, being angry, said to his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in here the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind.'

22. And the servant said, 'Master, it is done as you commanded, and still there is room.'

23. Then the master said to the servant, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.'

24. For I say to you that none of those men who were invited shall taste my supper.' "

The person giving the feast is God, and He is calling people to Himself. Mundane concerns – real estate, possessions, a wife – prevent those whom he invites from attending His feast. Therefore, the servant instead summons “the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind” and those living along the “highways and hedges.” The destitute, therefore, attend God’s feast because they do not have those worldly concerns to distract them and occupy their time. Thus, worldly concerns can distract one from God.

This next passage furthers the idea that material wealth can prevent one from doing God’s will.

Matthew 19

16. Now behold, one came and said to Him, "Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?"

17. So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments."

18. He said to Him, "Which ones?" Jesus said, "'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,'

19. 'Honor your father and your mother,' and, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' "

20. The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept from my youth. What do I still lack?"

21. Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

22. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

23. Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.

24. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

25. When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?"

26. But Jesus looked at them and said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Luke 18

18. Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

19. So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.

20. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother.' "

21. And he said, "All these things I have kept from my youth."

22. So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."

23. But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.

24. And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!

25. For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

26. And those who heard it said, "Who then can be saved?"

27. But He said, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God."

The man who speaks to Jesus in this parable appears to be pious since he follows the commandments. However, Jesus asks him to sell all that he has and to follow Him. Upon hearing this request, the man is saddened and leaves. If the man were poor and had few or no possessions, it would not be a great burden for him to relinquish his few possessions and to follow Jesus. However, on account of the abundance of his possessions, he is unwilling to part with those possessions. This parable, then, illustrates a person not following Jesus because he is tethered to his riches.

The above parable is also interesting because of the question which is asked of Jesus in Luke 18:26 and in Matthew 19:25. Jesus states that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." He is then asked, "Who then can be saved?". Jesus does not directly answer this question; however, the question offers an obvious answer to itself. If it is difficult for the wealthy to be saved, then the poor can be saved.

This passage shows that the devotion of the poor is valued by God.

Mark 12

41. Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much.

42. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans.

43. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury;

44. For they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood."

Luke 21

1. And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury,
2. And He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites.
3. So He said, "Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all;
4. For all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had."

In this passage, the donation of the poor widow is made to appear more significant than the donations of the rich. This is, indeed, consistent with Jesus' exalting the poor.

However, this passage goes beyond that. In the ancient world, large sums of money were spent to influence divine behavior. Grand statues, for instance, are erected in order to win the favor of pagan gods. The implication of this transaction-based relationship with the gods is that the wealthy were better able to win the favor of the gods, since they were better able to afford the offerings which pleased the gods. Jesus, however, appears more concerned with the devotion shown by the widow through her gift than with the actual gift itself. Jesus is thus elevating devotion, which is available to everyone, over lavish offerings, which are available only to the wealthy. By upholding the small gift of the poor widow, Jesus is declaring that the wealthy are not better able to please God than the poor.

The above passages warn that the accumulation and possession of wealth can interfere with one's relationship with God. In those passages, wealth is not depicted as inherently evil, but is shown to be capable of having undesirable effects on the wealthy. However, in the beatitudes found in Luke, Jesus explicitly exalts the poor while condemning the wealthy.

Luke 6

20. Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: "Blessed are you poor, For yours is the kingdom of God.

...

24. But woe to you who are rich, For you have received your consolation.

It is one thing to caution that wealth can lead to evil, and another to declare wealth itself to be evil. That, however, is what the beatitudes found in Luke appear to be doing.

This parable illuminates the above passage from the beatitudes.

Luke 16

19. "There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day.

20. But there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate,

21. Desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table. Moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.

22. So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.

23. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

24. Then he cried and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.'

25. But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.

26. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us.'

27. Then he said, 'I beg you therefore, father, that you would send him to my father's house,

28. For I have five brothers, that he may testify to them, lest they also come to this place of torment.'

29. Abraham said to him, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.'

30. And he said, 'No, father Abraham; but if one goes to them from the dead, they will repent.'

31. But he said to him, 'If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead.' "

This parable manifests the difficulty for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. The rich man is cast into “torments in Hades” because of his wealth, while Lazarus, the poor man, is “carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom.” This parable displays a sort of justice in death, indicated by the line “in your lifetime you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted and you are tormented.” Lazarus finds comfort on account of his poverty and the rich man finds torment on account of his wealth.

On wealth, as on several other issues, Jesus offers a set of values which are different than those commonly held in His society. In the ancient world, those with wealth were those with power; further, since they could afford lavish offerings to the gods, the wealthy were often thought to be better able to win the favor of the divine. In the eyes of the world in which Jesus lived, those with wealth were usually considered to be above those who were destitute. Jesus, however, depicts wealth as something which can distract one from God. This is an example of Jesus opposing hierarchy, for wealth is one of those factors which is used to separate people and to place some people above others.

Jesus and Reputation

Reputation – how one appears in the eyes of others – is a hierarchical distinction which divides people and puts some people above others. The influential have authority.

Moreover, the notion of reputation present in the time of Jesus is not the same as the modern conception of reputation. The significance of Jesus' rejecting the importance of reputation cannot be understood within the context of modern America. In the shame-focused society of the Roman world, a tremendous degree of importance was placed on how one looked in others' eyes.

The emphasis placed on shame in the time of Jesus is shown by Jesus' attacks on shame. If having a low regard in the eyes of others were not viewed as terrible in His time, Jesus would not bother to say – as He does in Luke 6:22 – “Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake.” The fact that Jesus, in the passages cited bellow, warns against a concern for shame indicates that many people in the time of Jesus were indeed concerned with shame.

Jesus admonishes His followers to be unconcerned with their reputations and their standings in social hierarchies. Indeed, He is concerned that His followers be just, but is not concerned that His followers should have reputations for justice. The beatitudes deal, alongside other concerns, with reputation.

Matthew 5

5. Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.

...

10. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

11. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

12. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Luke 6

22. Blessed are you when men hate you, And when they exclude you, And revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake.

23. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets.

...

26. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, For so did their fathers to the false prophets.

In the shame-based society of the Roman empire, being exposed to the sort of persecution which Jesus mentions above would be terrible. Those who were exposed to that sort of persecution were likely to have low regard in the eyes of society, and this was an awful fate in the Roman world. However, Jesus exalts those who are persecuted, telling His followers to exult in their shameful reputations. Jesus is at once predicting the ill treatment which His followers will eventually encounter, and telling them to rejoice in it. He emphasizes the insignificance of common opinion by recalling that the prophets also had poor reputations in their time.

In the following passage, Jesus tells His followers not to use their piety as a chance to gain a good reputation.

Matthew 6

1. "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven.
2. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.
3. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,
4. That your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.
5. "And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.
6. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.
7. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.
8. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him.
14. "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.
15. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.
16. "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.
17. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face,

18. So that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

In the above passage, Jesus is instructing His followers to perform acts of piety in such a way that no one else can see them. Jesus goes beyond simply warning against ostentatious displays of piety: He explicitly says that his followers will be rewarded for their piety only if their deeds are not seen by anyone else. Thus, He is forbidding His followers to seek reputations as pious people. Fulfilling one's religious obligations in secret is very different than how pagans conducted themselves. Pagans held sacrifices in which the entire community could bear witness to their piety. Pagans erected statues and temples for all to see. By telling His followers to work in secret, Jesus is making a good reputation appear undesirable.

This passage deals with hierarchy among the disciples themselves:

Matthew 20

25. But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them.

26. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant.

27. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—

28. Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Mark 10

42. But Jesus called them to Himself and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them.

43. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant.

44. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all.

45. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Luke 22

24. Now there was also a dispute among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest.

25. And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.'

26. But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.

27. For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves.

28. But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials.

29. And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me,

30. That you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

In this passage, Jesus discusses how authority ought to exist among His followers. Jesus says that he who wishes to be greatest should be as a servant. In the Roman conception of power and hierarchy, he who has authority is served by those over whom he has authority. The desires of him who has authority become the concern of all. However, Jesus is here setting forth a different notion of how those with authority should conduct themselves and use that authority. Instead of using authority to accomplish one's own objectives, Jesus is instructing His followers to use their authority to accomplish those objectives most consistent with the well-being of those over whom they exercise authority. Jesus is reversing the traditional Roman conception of how power is to be used,

and transforming authority into something far less desirable than it once was. Jesus Himself uses His authority in this manner. Rather than using His authority and power to make life easy and enjoyable for Himself, He uses His potency to benefit those around Him; His authority casts Him in the role of the servant.

Jesus sees one with authority as one with a responsibility to secure the well-being of those over whom authority is held. Therefore, in Luke 22:30, Jesus is not promising His disciples a life of power and luxury when He states, "I bestow upon you a kingdom." Rather, Jesus is telling His followers that they will have a responsibility to follow in His footsteps and to spread His message, thereby being servants to the populace, just as He Himself is.

This passage may depict Jesus rebuking Peter for being concerned with shame.

Matthew 16

21. From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.

22. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!"

23. But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

24. Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

25. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

26. For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

27. For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

Mark 8

29. He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered and said to Him, "You are the Christ."

30. Then He strictly warned them that they should tell no one about Him.

31. And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

32. He spoke this word openly. And Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him.

33. But when He had turned around and looked at His disciples, He rebuked Peter, saying, "Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

34. When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.

In this passage, Jesus tells Peter that He will suffer and be killed at the hands of “the elders and chief priests and scribes” – reputable members of society – and will then rise from the dead. Peter rebukes Jesus for saying this, appearing not to believe that this will happen. Jesus, in response, very harshly scolds Peter, going so far as to call him Satan. There are two ways to interpret this passage. The simple explanation is that Jesus perceives that Peter does not see the necessity of His being killed.

However, the strong language with which Jesus rebukes Peter – “Get behind Me, Satan!” – suggests another possible interpretation of this passage. When Peter is amazed by what

Jesus says, and contradicts Him, Peter is showing a concern for shame. Being caused to suffer and then being executed by some of the most distinguished members of the community would be a very shameful experience to most people of Jesus' time, and the significance of shame in the ancient world has been discussed above. Jesus responds to Peter so harshly because He hopes to dissuade Peter from being concerned with shame. This is supported when Jesus says in Matthew 16:23 and Mark 8:33, "you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men." Thus, Jesus is rebuking Peter for being concerned with shame, which is a thing of men and not of God.

Jesus shows disdain for concern for reputation. He advises His followers against being mindful of reputation and shame, and exalts those who suffer from a poor reputation for His sake. This sentiment is consistent with Jesus' opposition to hierarchy, since reputation, and the authority derived from that reputation, places some people above others. Moreover, by degrading reputation, Jesus is challenging the common values of His day, just as He does when speaking against wealth.

Jesus and Gender

Gender, like wealth and reputation, is a factor that in Jesus' time divided people from each other and established a hierarchy among them. In Roman custom, women were excluded from the official political workings of the state, unable to hold office and unable to vote. Through much of Rome's history, women were unable to have independence

since they had to be at all times under the protection – and under the authority – of a male. In Jewish society as well, the roles of women were clearly established. Jesus, however, appears to treat women differently than most of His society did.

The following passage indicates that Jesus has female followers who travel with Him on His journeys.

Luke 8

1. Now it came to pass, afterward, that He went through every city and village, preaching and bringing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with Him,
2. And certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities-- Mary called Magdalene, out of whom had come seven demons,
3. And Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who provided for Him from their substance.

Further evidence of Jesus having female followers is that women appear at His tomb after His crucifixion. This occurs in all four Gospel accounts.

Matthew 28

1. Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.

Mark 16

1. Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him.
2. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen.

Luke 24

1. Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared.

2. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb.

John 20

1. Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

Therefore, Jesus has women who are His followers, in addition to the twelve disciples who have received so much attention.

The question then becomes, is it significant that Jesus has women among His followers, or is that consistent with the customs of His day? The following passage from John, in which the disciples find Jesus speaking to a Samaritan woman, reveals that it is inconsistent with contemporary customs for Jesus to include women among His students.

John 4

27. And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?"

Thus, the disciples of Jesus appear surprised that He should even be talking with a woman in this instance. It is significant, then, that He includes women among His followers.

In addition to Jesus having female followers, there are two passages found in Luke in which Jesus gives insight into His views on gender. The following passage occurs when Jesus is the guest of a woman named Martha.

Luke 10

38. Now it happened as they went that He entered a certain village; and a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house.

39. And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word.

40. But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said, "Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me."

41. And Jesus answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things.

42. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."

In this passage, Martha is performing the traditional female duty of serving. On the other hand, her sister, Mary, is neglecting those duties in order to hear the teachings of Jesus. Martha complains to Jesus and asks Him to tell Mary to resume her chores; however, Jesus defends Mary's listening to Him, and says that Mary has "chosen that good part."

The significance of this passage is twofold. By upholding Mary's decision to hear Him, Jesus is clearly indicating that both men and women are welcome to be His followers. Moreover, Jesus is indicating that hearing His teachings is more significant than following the duties which Mary is given by society because she is a woman. It was shown above that wealth and reputation can occupy one's mind and that obsession with them can cause one to give insufficient attention to God. Similarly, in this case, being preoccupied with the role given to her gender by society causes Martha not to be properly attentive to the teachings of Jesus.

This passage may depict Jesus delivering a deep social criticism:

Luke 11

27. And it happened, as He spoke these things, that a certain woman from the crowd raised her voice and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts which nursed You!"

28. But He said, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!"

This passage has two possible interpretations. The obvious interpretation of this passage is that Jesus is emphasizing the importance of following Him, and perhaps even diminishing the relative importance of His own mother.

There is, however, another interpretation of this passage. In the time of Jesus, women in Roman society were honored and valued not for their own merit as humans or for their own accomplishments, but rather for the male children which they produced. The woman speaking in this passage intends to praise Mary through her children, a practice consistent with contemporary beliefs. Jesus rebukes the woman not for praising His mother, but rather for praising His mother for the wrong reason. The phrase "blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" indeed applies to Mary, since she is willing to bear God's child. Jesus is instructing the woman not to praise Mary for her offspring, but instead to praise Mary for her own piety and obedience to God. Jesus is challenging the way in which women are perceived, and arguing that they are to be valued as individuals, and not merely for their children.

Jesus and Ethnicity

This paper so far has discussed wealth, reputation, and gender. The emphasis which the Romans placed on reputation is much greater than the emphasis placed on reputation in modern America, and women in modern America have much more freedom than Roman women. However, even today in America, racial issues are still making headlines. Ethnicity and nationality are – like wealth, reputation, and gender – factors which separate people from one another and can lead to hierarchy. Events within the last century depict what evils can occur when one race is segregated from another, and when one ethnicity considers itself to be better than another.

Jesus Himself is a Jew, and His role – that of Messiah – is outlined by the prophecies of Judaism. According to John 1:45, "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." After His passing, there arose a dispute among His followers: is the message of Jesus for Jews only, or is it open to people of all races? From the accounts of Him given in the Gospels, it appears that His message is for all people.

The introduction of the book of John depicts Jesus as having come for all of humanity, not just for Jews.

John 1

11. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.
12. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.

John 3

16. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

The above passages from John indicate that Jesus may be received by all people regardless of race. In John 1:12, the phrase “as many as” has no qualifiers. In John 3:16, use of the term “whoever” indicates that all people may “have everlasting life.”

The following passage from Luke appears to depict Jesus declaring the kingdom of God to be for people of all nations.

Luke 13

20. And again He said, "To what shall I liken the kingdom of God?

21. It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."

...

29. They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God.

Luke 13:29 seems to show Jesus foreseeing people from all parts of the earth entering the kingdom of God. Just before this, included above, Jesus likens the kingdom of God to leaven in meal. Leaven used in baking does not stay in one part of the meal; rather, it permeates the entire dough. When the dough is baked, it is not the case that one part of the dough rises, elevated above the others; rather, the entire dough rises in unison. If the kingdom of God is the leaven and the world itself is the meal, then the message of Jesus is to be distributed throughout the world, not secluded in one small part.

The story of Jesus and the Samaritan women is noted above for its gender significance. Here, the racial significance of that episode is highlighted.

John 4

4. But He needed to go through Samaria.

5. So He came to a city of Samaria which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

6. Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

7. A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink."

8. For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

9. Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

10. Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

Jesus, a Jew, speaks to the Samaritan woman, despite the fact that "Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." Thus, by speaking to her, Jesus is crossing ethnic barriers. Moreover, Jesus does more than just speak with her; he tells her that she is able to receive "living water." By saying that a Samaritan – a gentile – is able to receive "living water," Jesus is indicating that His message is not to be limited to a Jewish audience.

The following two passages from Luke depict a Samaritan doing the right thing when Jews fail to do so.

Luke 10

30. Then Jesus answered and said: "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31. Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32. Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side.

33. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion.

34. So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35. On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you.'

Luke 17

12. Then as He entered a certain village, there met Him ten men who were lepers, who stood afar off.

13. And they lifted up their voices and said, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

14. So when He saw them, He said to them, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And so it was that as they went, they were cleansed.

15. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice glorified God,

16. And fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.

17. So Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?"

18. Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?"

19. And He said to him, "Arise, go your way. Your faith has made you well."

In the parable of the good Samaritan, the priest and the Levite are Jews of high standing who both refuse to stop to tend to the wounded man. The Samaritan, however, does care for the wounded man. First, this passage shows those with worldly authority – the priest

and the Levite – acting without mercy. Second, this depicts the Samaritan acting properly while the two Jews in the story act improperly. The second passage continues this theme. The Samaritan alone among the ten lepers whom Jesus heals returns to thank Him. This passage shows the Samaritan acting properly – “were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?”.

The above two passages appear to be praising Samaritans above Jews. However, it would be incorrect to conclude that Jesus is maligning Jews. Jesus Himself is a Jew, and His being a Messiah is a role in the Jewish tradition. Samaritans, as indicated above – John 4:9 and Luke 17:18 – were viewed with a degree of contempt and seen as outsiders. Jesus has no particular affection for Samaritans; rather, Jesus is using Samaritans to represent someone foreign. He is showing that righteousness is not limited to a particular nationality.

It would be incomplete and perhaps unfair if this paper did not attempt to explain the following passage before concluding this section.

Mark 7

25. For a woman whose young daughter had an unclean spirit heard about Him, and she came and fell at His feet.

26. The woman was a Greek, a Syro-Phoenician by birth, and she kept asking Him to cast the demon out of her daughter.

27. But Jesus said to her, "Let the children be filled first, for it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs."

28. And she answered and said to Him, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs."

29. Then He said to her, "For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter."

30. And when she had come to her house, she found the demon gone out, and her daughter lying on the bed.

This paper has been arguing that Jesus brings His message not only to Jews but also to gentiles. Does this passage contradict that sentiment? One may interpret this passage as Jesus saying that His task is only to deal with Jews. He is reluctant to heal the Greek woman's daughter, and he calls her and her people "little dogs." Moreover, since this passage occurs in Mark, and the passages used above to illustrate Jesus breaking racial barriers are taken from Luke and John, one can argue that Mark in fact sees Jesus as only concerned with Jews.

However, there is another possible interpretation of the above passage which is consistent with the idea that the message of Jesus is intended for people of all races. This interpretation requires considering this passage from John.

John 6

3. And Jesus went up on the mountain, and there He sat with His disciples.

4. Now the Passover, a feast of the Jews, was near.

5. Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?"

6. But this He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do.

In this passage, Jesus is testing Philip. Perhaps, then, Jesus is testing the Greek woman in the above passage. Although He does call her and her people "little dogs," He does in fact do what she requests. Moreover, she is the only character in the Gospels who successfully contradicts Jesus. Countless Pharisees attempt unsuccessfully to entangle Jesus in His

words. This woman, however, succeeds. Perhaps she is just an excellent debater; it is more likely, however, that Jesus says what He says expecting her to gainsay Him. Therefore, Jesus is not rejecting the Greek woman on account of her race, but is instead testing her faith.

The introduction of the Gospel of John indicates that Jesus intends his message to be heard by all people, as does Jesus' speech in Luke 13. Although Jews and Samaritans do not tend to interact, Jesus teaches a Samaritan woman and heals a Samaritan leper. In His stories which exalt Samaritans, Jesus is stating that righteousness is not limited to a single group. Thus, Jesus is attacking ethnicity as another element which separates and segregates humans.

Jesus and Family

The modern age is far less hierarchical than the age in which Jesus lived. Some of the radical notions of Jesus – that women are to be valued as individuals and that righteousness is not limited to a particular race – would be consistent with standard modern values in the United States. However, even today, the family is still a hierarchical institution. This section examines Jesus' views on family.

The modern family, like the institutions which Jesus denounces above, is a hierarchical structure which places some people over others – specifically, parents over their children,

one generation over another. Further, the family includes some people and excludes others – someone is either a part of one’s family or is not.

The Roman conception of a family and the modern conception of a family are somewhat different. In both ancient and modern families, parents have authority over their children. In Rome, one’s family was a source of reputation and social standing. The son of a senator would likely be a senator himself, and the son of a slave would likely be a slave. Power and authority were passed along familial lines just as property was. The caste system meant that hierarchy existed not only within a family as is the case today, but also between families, with one family above another family. Thus, although hierarchy exists in modern families between parents and children, hierarchy was even more pronounced in ancient families in which social status was inherited.

Jesus discusses marriage here:

Luke 20

27. Then some of the Sadducees, who deny that there is a resurrection, came to Him and asked Him,

28. Saying: "Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife, and he dies without children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother.

29. Now there were seven brothers. And the first took a wife, and died without children.

30. And the second took her as wife, and he died childless.

31. Then the third took her, and in like manner the seven also; and they left no children, and died.

32. Last of all the woman died also.

33. Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife does she become? For all seven had her as wife."

34. And Jesus answered and said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage.

35. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage;

36. Nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

37. But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'

38. For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him."

In this passage, the Sadducees attempt to argue against the possibility of resurrection by pointing out that several men may, at different points, be married to the same woman.

The Sadducees point out the difficulty which this poses to the notion of resurrection: in the resurrection, who would be married to the woman? Jesus responds that there is no marriage at all in the resurrection.

Marriage is often thought to be the focal point of a family; it is the bond which brings about children. However, Jesus is diminishing the significance of marriage by saying that marriage is something only of this world, and not eternal. Marriage is for "the sons of this age," but those who are resurrected and made "equal to the angels and are sons of God" do not marry after their transformation. Thus, Jesus is attacking the foundation of the family by attacking the significance of marriage.

Previous sections of this paper describe how Jesus expresses concern that worldly goods and wealth may occupy one's mind and distract one from a proper relationship with God. The following passages shows that familial concerns may distract one from properly following Jesus.

Matthew 8

21. Then another of His disciples said to Him, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."
22. But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead."

Matthew 10

37. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

Luke 9

59. Then He said to another, "Follow Me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father."
60. Jesus said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and preach the kingdom of God."
61. And another also said, "Lord, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house."
62. But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

In Matthew 8:21-22 and Luke 9:59-62, Jesus rebukes someone for using the burial of his father as a reason not to follow Him. Filial piety and the proper treatment of the dead are strong concerns in the ancient world; filial piety even has its own commandment. By placing Himself above the need to bury one's own father, Jesus is emphasizing how important following Him is. In Matthew 10:37, Jesus directly places concern for Himself over concern for one's family. In the above passages, Jesus is showing that family can distract one from Him.

In this passage, Jesus proclaims how He will divide families against themselves.

Luke 12

51. Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division.

52. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three.

53. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

Jesus declares that He will divide the family, the elder against the younger. This may be a prediction about what effects the introduction of Christianity will have on the Roman world. Further, Jesus is predicting the breakdown of the hierarchical relationship between generations.

This passage shows Jesus calling into question the very meaning of family.

Matthew 12

46. While He was still talking to the multitudes, behold, His mother and brothers stood outside, seeking to speak with Him.

47. Then one said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are standing outside, seeking to speak with You."

48. But He answered and said to the one who told Him, "Who is My mother and who are My brothers?"

49. And He stretched out His hand toward His disciples and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers!

50. For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother."

Mark 3

31. Then His brothers and His mother came, and standing outside they sent to Him, calling Him.

32. And a multitude was sitting around Him; and they said to Him, "Look, Your mother and Your brothers are outside seeking You."

33. But He answered them, saying, "Who is My mother, or My brothers?"

34. And He looked around in a circle at those who sat about Him, and said, "Here are My mother and My brothers!

35. For whoever does the will of God is My brother and My sister and mother."

When Jesus is told that His family wishes to see Him, His response is to question the very meaning of family. By continuing to teach instead of tending to the needs of His mother and brothers, Jesus is here – as elsewhere – showing that His mission is more important than filial piety.

Moreover, Jesus defines His family to be “whoever does the will of God.” A family, under its usual definition, is closed; it excludes some and includes other. However, the family of which Jesus speaks is open to all people. Anyone who wishes can become a part of this family, regardless of race or income; the only condition is that one act in a certain way. Jesus is transforming a family from a closed, exclusive group of people into a group of which anyone can be a part.

This passage depicts Jesus using harsh words against the family.

Luke 14

25. Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them,

26. "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.

27. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple

I find it difficult to adhere to a literal interpretation of this passage. For one thing, if parents actually came to hate their children, those children would probably perish; thus, a literal interpretation of this passage would be inconsistent with the high regard for children which Jesus shows, as discussed below. Moreover, Jesus proclaims the importance of honoring one's parents in the Gospel of Luke, in which the above passage also occurs.

Luke 8

18. Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

19. So Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God.

20. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother.' "

Therefore, a literal interpretation of this passage would be inconsistent with other teachings of Jesus. What, then, does Jesus mean when He attacks the family, both here and in other the other passages mentioned above?

It is shown above that Matthew 12:46-50 and Mark 3:31-35 depict Jesus not attempting to destroy the family but rather to expand the family. A family, in the traditional sense, is a closed group which divides the world into two groups, those who are a part of the family and those who are not. People are often willing to go out of their way in order to help and comfort members of their family in any way possible, while being indifferent to the needs and concerns of those outside of their family. Rather than seeking to dismantle

the care that family members feel for one another, Jesus may be attempting to expand that care so that people feel as concerned for the welfare of those to whom they are not related as they do for the welfare of their family. Jesus is not insisting that a son treat his father badly; rather, He is insisting that a son treat anyone as well as he would treat his father. Jesus is not attacking the family because members of a family care for each other; rather, he is attacking the family because members of a family care more for each other than for others.

Jesus and Children

In two different passages, both of which occur in three of the four Gospels, Jesus holds forth children as examples of how His followers ought to behave. Jesus' exalting children is consistent with His statements against hierarchy which are outlined throughout this paper. Children are models for how His followers ought to behave because children hold power and authority over no one.

This is the first passage in which Jesus exalts children.

Matthew 18

1. At that time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"
2. Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them,
3. And said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

4. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Mark 9

35. And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all."

36. Then He took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them,

37. "Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent Me."

Luke 9

44. "Let these words sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men."

45. But they did not understand this saying, and it was hidden from them so that they did not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this saying.

46. Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest.

47. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him,

48. And said to them, "Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great."

This is the second passage in which Jesus exalts children.

Matthew 19

13. Then little children were brought to Him that He might put His hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them.

14. But Jesus said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Mark 10

13. Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them; but the disciples rebuked those who brought them.

14. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.

15. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."

16. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them.

Luke 18

15. Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them; but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them.

16. But Jesus called them to Him and said, "Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God.

17. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it."

The first passage above suggests an association between children and hierarchy. In Matthew, His disciples ask Jesus who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven; Mark deals with "anyone [who] desires to be first"; in Luke, the disciples are concerned with "which of them would be greatest." In each of these scenarios, the focus is on hierarchy and who is to have authority. In each case, Jesus compares being great to a child. The second passage also depicts Jesus extolling the virtues of a child, saying that theirs is the kingdom of God.

The first passage demonstrates a connection between children and hierarchy; from there, it becomes easy to understand why Jesus praises children and uses them as examples for His followers. Children have no authority. In the modern age, for instance, children

cannot vote, and they are under the command of their parents and their teachers. In the passage above, the followers of Jesus are concerned with hierarchy and who will have power. By praising children, who have no power, Jesus is telling His followers not to be mindful of hierarchy. Here again, as elsewhere, Jesus is attacking hierarchy.

Jesus Against Rome

In the place and time of Jesus' life, one cannot think of power and hierarchy without thinking of the Roman empire. Externally, Rome had authority over many nations in the world. This grand imperial power has subjugated Jesus' people and many other nations throughout that part of the world. The Roman military remained nearly invincible.

Internally, Rome was the epitome of hierarchy. At the head of the empire was a powerful emperor whose will was law. Hierarchy was found throughout the Roman empire: senators were above equestrians, patrons were above clients, and free were above slaves.

The above sections of this paper show Jesus to be critiquing His society. Moreover, His message can be viewed as an attack against Roman values, along with other gentile and Jewish values. By diminishing the importance of wealth, reputation, and worldly authority, Jesus is indicating that those things on which the might of the Roman empire stood are worthless. A diminishing of the importance of those things is a diminishing of the importance of Rome. Jesus upholds the importance of women, who were excluded from direct participation in Roman politics, and who were given little independence in

that society. Jesus discusses the insignificance of nationality, although Romans tended to view Roman citizens as being above those who were not Roman citizens. Jesus further attacks the integrity of the family, although the *familia* was a potent source of both identity and power for many Romans. Jesus exalts children; in the Roman world, infants were of so little account that it was not uncommon that unwanted newborns be exposed to perish in the wilderness.

There are parts of the Gospels, however, which do not merely criticize the values of the Roman empire; rather, they attack the empire itself. This scene, in which Satan is tempting Jesus in the wilderness, does not mention Rome directly. However, it appears to be referring to a connection between Satan and Rome.

Matthew 4

8. Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

9. And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down and worship me."

10. Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.' "

11. Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and ministered to Him.

Luke 4

5. Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.

6. And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish.

7. Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours."

8. And Jesus answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.' "

It is implied in the passage from Matthew and directly stated in the passage from Luke that Satan has authority over "all the kingdoms of the world" and that he gives authority over those kingdoms to whomever he wishes. At the time in which these events occur, Rome actually had authority over the kingdoms of the world. Therefore, there are two ways to interpret this passage. First, the Roman empire may be Satan himself, since Satan says that he has authority over the kingdoms of the world. Second, the Roman empire may be acting according to Satan's will. Satan claims, "this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish." It is clear that Rome possessed that worldly power of which Satan speaks. In either scenario, Rome is depicted as a diabolic agent.

This passage also slights Rome in another way. Jesus appears uninterested in the worldly power which Satan offers Him. Worldly power was the basis on which the Roman empire was built, and its accumulation and retention were often the purpose of Rome's actions. By rejecting the value of worldly power, Jesus is rejecting the foundation of Rome.

Many Jews in the time of Jesus expected that the messiah would drive the Romans out of Jewish land. Jesus never does this; He does not launch any sort of physical rebellion. However, in this passage, He symbolically assaults Rome.

Mark 5

1. Then they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes.

2. And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit,
3. Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains,
4. Because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him.
5. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones.
6. When he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and worshiped Him.
7. And he cried out with a loud voice and said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God that You do not torment me."
8. For He said to him, "Come out of the man, unclean spirit!"
9. Then He asked him, "What is your name?" And he answered, saying, "My name is Legion; for we are many."
10. Also he begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country.
11. Now a large herd of swine was feeding there near the mountains.
12. So all the demons begged Him, saying, "Send us to the swine, that we may enter them."
13. And at once Jesus gave them permission. Then the unclean spirits went out and entered the swine (there were about two thousand); and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and drowned in the sea.

Luke 8

27. And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs.
28. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!"

29. For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness.

30. Jesus asked him, saying, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," because many demons had entered him.

31. And they begged Him that He would not command them to go out into the abyss.

32. Now a herd of many swine was feeding there on the mountain. So they begged Him that He would permit them to enter them. And He permitted them.

33. Then the demons went out of the man and entered the swine, and the herd ran violently down the steep place into the lake and drowned.

A legion, *legio*, is a unit of Roman soldiers. Thus the connection between Rome and the demonic, which is mentioned in the previous passage, is reinforced here. The demon's begging for mercy – "I beg You, do not torment me" – shows Jesus' power over Rome. By attacking this demon, Jesus is symbolically attacking the Romans.

Although the above passages make the Roman empire look bad, it is the ultimate execution and resurrection of Jesus which truly makes the Roman empire appear to be terrible. Jesus is crucified. Although the Romans are not alone in clamoring for the death of Jesus, crucifixion was a distinctly Roman means of execution. Pilate, a Roman authority, unjustly kills Jesus. This indeed makes Rome look horrible. Jesus, through His resurrection, overcomes not only death, but also the power of the Roman empire. Death is the worst thing Rome can inflict on Jesus. By overcoming that death, Jesus is showing that He is above Roman authority. Thus, Jesus attacks both Roman values and Rome itself.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Jesus strongly attacks the hierarchy and worldly authority which were so highly valued in His time. Jesus attacks wealth; wealth is depicted as something which can distract one from proper respect for God, and wealth is also depicted as something which is inherently bad. At a time when honor and shame were integral aspects of life, Jesus exalts those who are not highly regarded and predicts that His followers will suffer humiliation for their beliefs. Jesus shows that both men and women are invited to follow Him, and He has female followers. At a time when ethnicity and nationality carved up the world, Jesus shows that His message is intended for people of all nationalities. Jesus attacks the family as a center of worldly power and social status, and He uses children as examples of greatness. He even makes the Roman empire appear evil and impotent. Jesus is offering a severe criticism of contemporary values.