

# FREE-MAN'S PERSPECTIVE

How Life, Liberty & Sanity Can Win

ISSUE #44

FEBRUARY 2014

## IN THIS ISSUE:

Jesus Was Not  
Religious .....2

His Students Did Not  
Understand.....2

The Old Way, The New  
Way .....4

The Troubling  
Implications.....8

What Comes From  
This? .....9

Final Thoughts .....11

## THE LOST PHILOSOPHY OF JESUS OF NAZARETH



Very few people think of Jesus of Nazareth as a philosopher. They think of him as a mystical figure or as a purveyor of superstitions, but not as a philosopher. Nonetheless, he created a philosophy that stands ready to revolutionize human life... if people ever take it seriously.

Please understand that nothing in this issue requires you to believe in Jesus as anything more than a man with an idea. At its root, this is a secular philosophy, requiring no religion at all.

Few of us have ever considered Jesus separate from religion, but as I think you will see, we really should.

It is significant that religious people have never grasped the things we'll cover today. And that's the astounding thing about Jesus's lost philosophy: It sits openly among the pages of the gospels, having been read for centuries. Yet, if anyone has ever taught on this subject in the past, I find no record of it.

I am quite sure that people have stumbled across some of the ideas I will cover below – they sit in plain view, after all – but they didn't stay with them, and for good reason: This philosophy, if taken seriously, prescribes an utterly new and unfamiliar way of experiencing our lives, and that is something that scares people away.

I believe this philosophy could change the world for the better, and quite possibly permanently. But this is a deeply radical and troubling philosophy. And if there were to be a new Jesus movement generating martyrs, it's a good bet that this philosophy would lie at its root.

So, buckle your helmets; this is going to be an interesting ride.

## **JESUS WAS NOT RELIGIOUS**

There were large numbers of religious people in Jesus's place and time: priests, Pharisees, scribes, members of the Sanhedrin, experts on the law, people who traced their lineage as Levites, and so on. Jesus aligned with none of them. Ernest Renan, a writer who devoted much of his life to studying Jesus the person, described him this way:

*Never has anyone been less a priest than Jesus, never a greater enemy of forms.*

Jesus was an outsider, rejected by nearly all the religious people of his time. Neither did he pick religious people as friends. None of the "apostles" had any religious background that we can point to:

- Peter, Andrew, James, and John were fisherman.
- Matthew was a tax collector, among the most despised people of that place and time.
- Simon was a Zealot, a dangerous man.

Jesus himself was a construction worker (that's probably a better translation than carpenter) and was followed mostly by less-than-respectable types. There was nothing particularly religious about them. The thousands who showed up to see him came for miracles and even for food, but not for religion – they had simpler and more respectable ways to get that.

When referring to a higher being, Jesus prefers to say "the father," or "my father," or even "your father." He seems to use "God" mostly as a concession to his listeners, so they could grasp his teachings. He doesn't quote scriptures very often either, even though he was teaching within a culture dedicated to them.

Religion has been a disaster for Jesus's ideas. Rather obviously, religions that claimed Jesus's name have used it to justify atrocities and abuses. But even more importantly, Jesus's ideas have never been taken seriously outside of religion... they were *contained*... restricted only to religion.

But here, we will take Jesus's ideas seriously... as a philosophy, not as a religion.

## **HIS STUDENTS DID NOT UNDERSTAND**

Most Westerners have absorbed a general idea that Jesus's closest students, "the Apostles," were, or at least were supposed to have been, men who had been very close to Jesus, and that his magic rubbed off on them.

The actual evidence, however, says that these men missed a lot of what Jesus taught. Consider the things Jesus said to them:

*Do ye not yet understand, neither remember? ... How is it that you do not understand...?*  
Matt. 16:9, 11

*Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?*  
Mark 4:13

*Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?*  
Mark 4:40

*Then are you also without understanding?*  
Mark 7:18

*Do you not yet perceive or understand? Is your heart still hardened? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember? How is it that you do not understand?*  
Mark 8:17-18, 21

*Does this offend you?*  
John 6:61

*His disciples said... by this we believe that you came from God. Jesus answered them, Do you now believe?*  
John 16:29-31

*I have many things to say to you, but you are not able to bear them now.*  
John 16:12

Given all of this, I think it's quite reasonable that we should understand things that Jesus's students missed. We have the benefit of two thousand years of development, after all.

Furthermore, it is important to understand that Christianity changed in the century following Jesus. In the beginning, Jesus tried to get people to take his teachings seriously:

*Whoever hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon a rock.*  
Matt. 7:24

Soon enough, however, Christianity lost its focus on what Jesus said, and re-focused on who he was. That was a fundamental shift.

The promoters of the Jesus movement also changed. At first, they were fishermen and construction workers – people who had not previously been involved with religion. By the middle of the second century, however, the biggest promoters became people who had been religiously or philosophically minded before they encountered the teachings of Jesus.

So, the Jesus movement changed significantly over its first century or so. Had it not been that his friends documented some of it, its beginnings might be lost to us.

## THE OLD WAY

The great example of the old way of judging right and wrong – and the way that Jesus faced directly – was the Law of Moses. That law was said to have been given by God himself and provided a list of things that humans should and should not do.

This is, of course, the same model that rules over the Earth at present. Specifically, it works like this:

- A set of rules are defined and ascribed to some higher power: A god, a king, wise men, the will of the people, etc.
- People are punished if they do not obey the rules.
- To show themselves as “good,” people explain that they haven’t broken any of the rules.

Under this model, we are taught to measure ourselves against an external standard. This seems very normal to those of us who’ve been raised under this model, but there are real problems with remotely-produced rules.

Rules operate on a different model than the human mind. The two are different types of systems and they do not harmonize; in fact, they conflict.

The rule model requires us to memorize data that we didn’t produce and may not understand. And we’re not good at that.

Humans are wonderful at recognizing patterns but bad at memorizing data. For us to remember things, we have to consider them meaningful in some way. That’s why schooling can be so difficult and unnatural to us – it majors on memorization.

Computers operate naturally under the rules model, but human minds do not. We require patterns and meaning.

## THE NEW WAY

To put it briefly, the old model demotes our minds. It places our consciousness beneath the rule and subservient to it.

The fascinating thing about the Jesus model (to which we’ll come momentarily) is that it makes the opposite structural assumption – placing the human consciousness in the top position, not the subservient position.

However he came to this philosophy, Jesus did a fundamentally radical thing, something that the world has not remotely caught up with even today: He defined an entirely new way of judging right and wrong. He did this by placing human consciousness and its natural operations as the essential component, and demoting rules.

The new model that Jesus taught works like this:

1. A person knows what they like and don’t like.

2. By doing things to others that they would not like themselves, they condemn their own actions.
3. By doing things to others what they would like themselves, they justify their own actions.

This is a simple model, and we do see it in the world but mostly in private or at the fringes. Jesus, however, sets it as the only and ultimate model and tosses the old model away.

Jesus was very clear on the point that he was instituting something new and different. In the 9th chapter of Matthew, teachers of the law complain to him that his students weren't behaving in the approved ways. He responded by saying this:

*No man sews a piece of new (unshrunk) cloth into an old garment, because that new cloth will pull away from the garment, and the tear will be made worse. Neither do men put new wine into old wine-skins, or else the skins will burst, the wine will be spilled, and the skins will be ruined. Men put new wine into new wine-skins, and both are preserved.*

He may as well have said, "We're not like you, and we never will be."

So, before we examine Jesus's specific teachings on this point, let's recap:

- Under the old model, we are judged by rules. This is not natural to us and therefore tends to degrade our mental functioning.
- Under the new model, we judge ourselves, which is natural to us and tends to support our mental functions.

## THE TEACHINGS

Here are Jesus's specific teachings on this new way of judging:

- *Whatever you would have men do unto you, do so to them.*  
Matt. 7:12
- *With whatever judgment you judge, you shall be judged.*  
Matt. 7:2
- *By your words you will be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned.*  
Matt. 12:37
- *Forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors.*  
Matt. 6:12
- *If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*  
Matt 6:14-15
- In the 18th chapter of Matthew, Jesus tells the story of a king who audited his servants. One was found to owe him a great deal of money. When he could not pay, the man was ordered to be sold, and his family with him. The servant then begged for mercy, saying "Have patience



with me, and I will pay you everything.”The king, moved with compassion, forgave him the debt. But that same servant went and found someone who owed him money, and rather than forgiving the man, had him thrown into prison. Eventually the king learned of this and had this servant punished, because he was forgiven but refused to forgive others.

This passage is a lengthy illustration of one of Jesus’s primary principles: *With the judgment you judge, you shall be judged.*

- In the 8th chapter of John we find the famous story of a woman caught in adultery. As the religious people quoted a law, requiring this woman to be stoned to death, Jesus stands and says this, once again placing self-reference above the law:

*He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone.*

- Here Jesus (quoting Isaiah) casts down words and the commandments of men. Instead, he promotes the “heart,” which is where self-reference takes place:

*This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. They worship in vain, teaching the commandments of men.*

Mark 7:6-7

- In this passage, Jesus tells his students that if they want to enter into life, they’ll need a different and better type of righteousness than that of the law-keepers:

*Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom.*

Matt. 5:20

- He makes the same point in Luke 11:52, in a passage that begins with Jesus saying that these people were focused on external things and ignored the internal things. He goes on to say that the law – the old model – is emphatically NOT the key to knowledge, and is, in fact, its enemy:

*Woe unto you, teachers of the law, because you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering, you hindered.*

- Law requires memorization and a permanent fear of punishment. Jesus particularly complained about teachers of the law (see Luke 11) laying heavy and grievous burdens upon men. And he clearly saw his new way as a refuge:

*Come to me, all of you that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

Matt. 11:28-29

The two passages shown immediately above do not follow each other in the text, but it still seems that Jesus considered the memorize-and-obey model to be unnatural and difficult.

- In Mark chapter 3 we see Jesus, who was known for healing people, encountering a man with a withered hand. Since this happened on a Sabbath, when the law forbade all work, the law minded people watched to see whether Jesus would heal him. Here’s what happened:

*And he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Come here." And he said to them, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do harm, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. And he looked around at them with anger, grieved at their hardness of heart, and said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out, and his hand was restored.*

This "hardness of heart" is precisely a lack of empathy (self-reference), which these people had sacrificed to the law. And you can see the kind of damage done by this enthroneing of rules and demotion of consciousness in the very next verse:

*The Pharisees went out, and immediately held counsel with the Herodians (the rulers) against him, how to destroy him.*

- In Matt 25:14-29: Jesus tells the story of a man who had three servants. He gave one of them five talents (a talent was a certain amount of money), to another two, and to another one talent, each "according to his ability." Then he went away. He later returned and asked them to account for what they had been given. The first two had improved upon what they were given, and were rewarded for it. The last one did nothing with his talent. He was then thrown out, because he failed to use his abilities at all.

In this case again, Jesus uses the "you will be judged as you judge" model, saying that if men don't value their life enough to use it in the world, no one else should value it either.

He makes a similar point in Luke 12:57, where he says:

*Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right?*

What we see here are demands for self-reference and self-value, and no reliance upon the law model at all.

- Even when describing a final judgment (Matt. 25:34-45), Jesus relies on his new formulation. He tells a story featuring this line as the reason certain people will be rewarded:

*For I was hungry, and you gave me food: I was thirsty, and you gave me drink: I was a stranger, and you took me in.*

Very obviously, a hungry person wants to be fed; a thirsty person wants something to drink. So, this judgment matches what he taught earlier: *Whatever you would have men do unto you, do so to them.*

- In Matthew 12, Jesus goes so far as to place self-reference and compassion above one of the Ten Commandments. He says:

*What man of you, if he has one sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out?... Therefore it is not wrong to do good on the Sabbath.*

Here's what Jesus is, in effect, saying:

*"All of you will pull your sheep out of a pit on the Sabbath, out of self-interest and compassion for the animal. And you are not wrong to do so."*

By saying this, Jesus is demoting the fourth commandment, which says, "On the Sabbath you shall do no work."

## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THESE PASSAGES

I have listed 15 passages that demonstrate Jesus's teaching on this subject. The fact that I could assemble that many is highly significant.

When people think of the Bible, they generally think of a large book. Jesus's teaching, however, comprises only a small part of it. Of the Bible's sixty-six individual books, we have only four fairly small ones that contain Jesus's teachings, and three of those four are near-duplicates. Set in a modern book format, the four gospels contain less than 40 pages of unique material, and most of that is narration.

So, to have this much content devoted to a single philosophical idea is really quite extraordinary. (And I avoided duplicate passages.)

This subject accounts for a very large percentage of what Jesus taught. This is (arguably, I suppose) the principle that he turned to more often than any other.

These teachings describe an entirely new moral system, one based on a completely different mechanism than that of the Law of Moses, the laws of the empires, and the laws of today.

## THE TROUBLING IMPLICATIONS

So, what does the world look like if we apply the Jesus model of judging to it?

You're about to see why people turn away from this possibility; the implications of it are profoundly and immediately frightening. Consider:

If the proper mode of human judgment is self-judgment, then the legitimacy of law vanishes. The immediate fear is this:

*If everyone is free to do what they want, they'll cheat, steal, and destroy!*

*Without law, we can't stop criminals... They'll be free to rape and murder and steal... and they will!*

If we apply Jesus's teachings to the world at large, no law or set of laws is legitimate any longer. No ruler will have any legitimacy. Each person stands utterly alone. Order itself seems to have no root.

Imagining this, we feel deeply endangered, lost, and abandoned, as if we were without any moorings.

In other words, we feel like this:





But these feelings, as bad as they may be, are based entirely upon old conditioning and habits. If we can get past them and actually **think** about this new situation (rather than panicking at the prospect), it may also be that a new world of opportunity will begin to unfold.

So, let's examine what this would mean to us, rather than freaking out.

Is it true that we'd all die horrible deaths? That rapists and torturers would roam the Earth like bands of energetic zombies?

Or, might other things happen?

## WHAT COMES FROM THIS?

Because this idea can be so troubling, let me set your mind at ease right away. We will end up concluding two things about living under this new arrangement:

1. We will become better, happier, and more confident people.
2. Crime will drop.

Now, let's look at the reasoning behind those two conclusions:

We might imagine Jesus in a modern situation explaining his philosophy this way:

*Being by nature self-referential, you judge yourself every time you act. Treating others as you wish to be treated, you define yourself as a benefit to the world. Treating others in ways you wouldn't like, you define yourself as a hazard. There is no escape from this arrangement, though men attempt it by ceding their will to others, as when following rules.*

*Obedience to a rule, however, opposes the self-reference that produces all the joy, goodness, and creativity in the world. However much you lay your will at the feet of a rule, you rob yourself and others of that much happiness. Obeying the rule, you place your will in the service of an inferior morality and contribute to the darkening of mankind.*

Here are reasons to think that Jesus's mode of judging would make us happier and better:

- Judging by rules deprives us of conscious righteousness – of self-status – of knowing that we are good. Those are massively healthy self-estimates, and obeying rules deprives us of them.
- Law has taught us that we are always on the verge of doing bad things. And this is a lesson that has been repeated to us thousands of times. That's a lot of training to mistrust ourselves and to judge ourselves as of questionable worth.
- The personality that judges the new way enjoys life and experiences himself with pleasure. He sees his abilities, rather than his deficits. He likes what he or she is.
- The Jesus way of judging creates richer, fuller, and closer personal relationships. The reason is again structural: Under the rules model, all relationships involve third parties: the rule makers and enforcers. Those entities intrude upon all our relationships. The way of self-reference, on the other hand, gives us unmediated relationships, relationships that are closer and more honest than those we have known.

- The Jesus way of judging is easier. It requires less energy and does not engender fear. The way of self-reference is easier on us than the way of memorization and punishment.

Our experience of ourselves changes under the Jesus model. We move from external justice to internal justice, and we assume ourselves to be generators of good. We become honest and authentic, which affects the whole panorama of life.

Now, let's see why we become more safe, rather than less safe, under the new model. And, again, the issue is structural:

- Which would be more effective at deterring crime, fifty enforcers of justice in a town, or ten thousand? Presuming that these were honest enforcers, the obvious conclusion is that more are better. Under the law model, however, the ten thousand are forbidden to pursue justice. In fact, they will be punished if they try.
- Under the Jesus model, every man is an enforcer of justice, if and as he or she deems fit. Modern people are trained to think such a system could never work, but it has worked through the vast majority of human history. As mentioned in FMP #42, police departments never existed before 1800 AD. The Romans didn't have them, nor did the Greeks, the Egyptians, or any of the others. In actual fact, crime is more common under the reign of police than it was prior. And for the same reason: Everyone could enforce justice.
- "Enforcing justice" does not mean that everyone is required to run into every crime in progress. Each person makes their own choices. For some, it might be to raise an alarm, for others, to throw rocks at the offender, and for some, to arm themselves and engage. There is no requirement, only the question, "If I were in that situation, what would I want someone to do for me?"
- Under the law model, the natural human instincts to defend and to execute judgment have been punished and suppressed. Under the new model, they would come back.
- Excesses under this system would be kept under control by a natural mechanism: Someone who enforced justice would be answerable to everyone living in the area and to everyone he or she knew, as to how they handled the situation.
- That arrangement nearly assures that every crime is addressed at the earliest possible moment and that the criminals are accurately and immediately identified.

The new way actually provides a dense web of safety, and by almost any analysis, it would be more effective at reducing crime.

As for political organization, that would almost certainly become a thing of the past. Not because it would be forbidden, of course, but because so few people would ever choose it. Still, if you wanted to setup some political structure, you'd be free to do so; you just couldn't force anyone to take part in it.

Nor would the usual fear of foreign invasion be a real problem, but that's a lengthy subject and I'll save it for some other time.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

The conclusion of the life-based philosophy we covered last month was this:

*Man gives his life its proper direction and meaning by choosing to create what he understands to be beneficial.*

Jesus's new model fuels the ability of men and women to do precisely that.

I'll close with a few words from Thomas Jefferson. This is the closest statement I've ever seen to the material we covered today. This passage is from a letter he wrote to Benjamin Rush in April of 1803:

*The precepts of philosophy, and of the Hebrew code, laid hold of actions only. Jesus pushed his [examinations] into the heart of man; erected his tribunal in the region of his thoughts, and purified the waters at the fountain head.*

◇◇◇◇◇◇◇◇

See you next month.

PR