

“BEHOLDEST THOU . . . THE
PRIESTS AND THE LEVITES”
(JST, MATTHEW 7:4)

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Latter-day Saint scholars have long recognized many of the historical and doctrinal contributions made by *the Joseph Smith Translation* of the Bible (JST). Joseph Smith’s alterations and expansions of the biblical text help to clarify difficult passages and forge historical connections that may not be obvious in traditional readings of scripture. Such contributions have been noted in Joseph Smith’s reworking of the Sermon on the Mount. These include insights on the sermon’s audience and its relevance to the Jewish world at the time of Jesus.¹ One valuable contribution is a verse where the JST expands Jesus’ condemnation of hypocrisy to include practices of “the scribes, and the Pharisees, and the priests, and the Levites” (JST, Matthew 7:4).² Though this is a seemingly minor addition, it has significant implications for our understanding of the sermon’s audience, message, and relationship to various Jewish groups that were active in the first century.

Jesus’ relationship to Jewish scribes and Pharisees has been discussed at length by numerous scholars. However, the historical connection

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between the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount and the activities of Jewish priests and Levites has, to my knowledge, never been fully explored. This chapter considers the relationships between Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount and the Jewish priestly aristocracy of the first century as suggested by the JST and as illuminated by historical and archaeological sources. Ultimately I hope to demonstrate that the JST's inclusion of priests in the scope of the Sermon on the Mount is historically appropriate in light of what we know about first-century Jewish dynamics and provides valuable insights for our understanding of the sermon itself.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT AND THE PRIESTLY ARISTOCRACY

To understand the original significance and impact of the Sermon on the Mount, we must consider how Jesus' various teachings would have related to the different groups on the social landscape of first-century Judaism. Indeed, a wide variety of practices and attitudes existed among Jews in the late Second Temple Period (ca. 200 BC–AD 70), and the words and actions of Jesus often came in response to these dynamics. Understanding the issues that made these groups distinct from one another is therefore critical to fully appreciate the original context of Jesus' teachings. Numerous scholars have produced studies that document these issues and explain how different Jewish groups responded to them.³ For example, sects disagreed over the extent of written scripture, the authority of ancestral tradition, the performance of various religious practices, and the understanding of central doctrinal concepts.

New Testament scholars often note the relationship between these debates and Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount. The sermon seems to be structured into three sections commenting on the issues of Jesus' day. The first section deals with Jesus' teachings on Jewish law (see Matthew 5:17–48), the second with Jewish religious practices (see Matthew 6:1–18), and the third with first-century social issues (see Matthew 6:19–7:29).⁴ The teachings in these sections had different relevance to various Jewish groups. For example, Jesus' teachings on law and religious practices are directly related to Pharisaic teachings on matters such as divorce, oaths, fasting, and prayer. Indeed, the standard text of the sermon indicates that Jesus specifically denounced the activities of

"scribes and Pharisees" (Matthew 5:20), leading many scholars to focus on this relationship.⁵ In addition to Jesus' condemnation of Pharisaic practices, the JST adds material to the Sermon on the Mount that expands the scope of its social commentary to include the hypocritical activities of Jewish priests: "And Jesus said unto his disciples, beholdest thou the scribes, and the Pharisees, *and the priests, and the Levites?* They teach in their synagogues, but do not observe the law; nor the commandments, and *all* have gone out of the way, and are under sin. Go thou and say unto *them*, Why teach ye men the law and the commandments, when ye yourselves are the children of corruption? Say unto *them*, Ye hypocrites" (JST, Matthew 7:4–5; emphasis added).⁶

These additions suggest that Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount also related to the priesthood controversies at the heart of Jewish sectarianism in this period. Simply stated, the law of Moses provided for a hereditary priestly class to service the Jerusalem temple and function as the mediating entity between God and Israel;⁷ however, at various times in Israel's history, some of those priests were criticized for their failure to live up to God's expectations.⁸ Charges of priestly corruption and illegitimacy dramatically increased in the two centuries before the birth of Jesus. Many priests became immersed in extravagant Greek lifestyles, and the hereditary office of high priest became attained through bribes, usurpation, and political appointments by foreign rulers. Among these high priests were cruel and immoral tyrants who often flouted the law of Moses.⁹ By the time of Jesus' ministry, the "chief priests" of the Jerusalem temple comprised a wealthy and powerful aristocracy under Roman patronage, often associated with a sect known as the Sadducees, who functioned less as the mediators between God and Israel and more as the mediators between the people of Judea and Rome.¹⁰

These factors led many to question the ability of the Jerusalem priests to facilitate Israel's relationship with God. Different Jewish groups reacted in different ways. Among the priests themselves, some groups, such as the Oniads and Essenes, responded to Sadducean corruption by disassociating themselves from the Jerusalem aristocracy.¹¹ Other groups, including the Pharisees, remained fully integrated in Jewish society yet openly questioned the legitimacy, purity standards, morality, and opulence of the Jerusalem priesthood.¹² Despite the criticisms coming from

these various groups, the Jewish masses who did not belong to any sect still viewed the priesthood as a vital link in their relationship with God as shown by their continued temple worship and their regular payment of priestly tithes.¹³

The Gospels indicate that these dynamics were the backdrop for Jesus' ministry. Like other Jews, Jesus had strong feelings about the divine nature of the Jerusalem temple but decried the corrupt activities of its aristocratic administrators.¹⁴ Inevitably, the crowds with which Jesus interacted also had deep, if conflicted, feelings about the role and activities of Jerusalem's priests. The JST additions to the Sermon on the Mount suggest that concerns over priestly leadership influenced some of the teachings Jesus gave to his disciples on this occasion.¹⁵ Because these additions do not appear in ancient manuscripts, scholars have not considered the possible relationship between Jesus' teachings and priestly activities. However, historical and archaeological sources confirm that the sermon's social commentary describes the first-century Jewish priestly class particularly well.

It is difficult to determine precisely which teachings of the Sermon on the Mount the JST intended to apply to "priests and Levites." The JST maintains the sermon's reference to "scribes and Pharisees" in its section on Jewish law and mentions no specific group in its section on religious practices. Because the JST inserts "priests" into the part of the sermon that deals with social issues, I restrict my historical comparisons to that material. I recognize that other teachings may also apply to priests and that not every passage in this section necessarily had priests as the primary target.

The pursuit of wealth—serving God or mammon? The section of the Sermon on the Mount that deals with social issues begins with Jesus' teachings on wealth. He instructs his disciples, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, . . . for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matthew 6:19–21). This is followed by the bold statement, "No man can serve two masters. . . . Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). Rather than worrying about earning and storing money, the disciples should "seek . . . first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness," and God would provide all the necessities of life (Matthew 6:33).

These teachings on wealth would have had various applications to Jesus' original audience. When Jesus gave this sermon, Galilee was a region that reflected a great disparity between the rich and the poor, divided mostly along the lines of those in the cities and those in the countryside.¹⁶ Herod Antipas ruled the region on behalf of Rome and manifested an affinity for Roman culture in the two large cities he built as his administrative capitals, Sepphoris and Tiberias. The Jewish inhabitants of both cities maintained a wealthy standard of living and enjoyed several Roman-style luxuries.¹⁷ This stood in sharp contrast to the poor living standards of those in the towns and villages where Jesus ministered.¹⁸ The lavish lifestyles of the Herodian aristocracy resulted in additional burdens for the lower-class villagers. Increased agricultural consumption, building activities, and commercialization in the cities created an intense drain upon the villages, whose inhabitants were often forced to increase crop production to support growing urban populations and sell their lands to pay increasing taxes.¹⁹ Jesus' hearers would have been intimately familiar with this situation and the economic practices of those who fostered it. His teachings on wealth would have had broad application to the socioeconomic dynamics of first-century Galilee.²⁰

One specific group to which Jesus' criticisms of wealth could have also applied was the priestly aristocracy. Even though priests operated primarily in Judea, their economic and religious influence reached the villages of Galilee. Not only did some priestly aristocrats settle in Galilee,²¹ but the collection of tithes for the maintenance of the temple and support of the Jerusalem priesthood impacted every Jewish village.²² The economic pinch that this system caused the lower classes was not necessarily begrudged—indeed, the law of Moses stipulated such offerings²³—but would have made the opulence of priestly lifestyles in Jerusalem particularly disturbing.

Archaeological excavations in Jerusalem reveal the extent of opulence among the city's priestly aristocracy in the early to mid first century. Included among the excavated sites are a number of palatial mansions in Jerusalem's upper city that overlooked the temple and belonged to the "chief priests."²⁴ These mansions were expensive, multistoried structures with spacious rooms, reception halls, courtyards, elegant furniture (including carved stone tables), and basements with storage and

workshop facilities. The layout of these dwellings often paralleled the floor plans of Italian villas. The interior decoration confirms that the mansions' priestly inhabitants preferred the lifestyle of the Roman elite. Stucco work and frescoes decorated the walls in imitation of the villas at Pompeii, and well-executed floor mosaics attested to the wealth required to commission such artwork.²⁵

In addition to Roman-style floor plans and decoration, Jerusalem's mansions left other traces of the Roman luxuries enjoyed by the priestly aristocracy. Several of these dwellings contained complex bathing facilities with steam baths—a luxury known only to the elite of this period—and private cisterns for storing water.²⁶ Excavations also show that Jerusalem's priestly class dined in imitation of the Roman elite. The mansions' Hellenistic-style dining rooms allowed the priests to recline on couches while they ate Roman delicacies on expensive dishes, such as Roman and Nabatean fine ware.²⁷ Italian pans were discovered that attest to a wide variety of Roman culinary influences.²⁸ Large amphoras indicate that the priestly elite also enjoyed fine wines, fruits, cheeses, and even nonkosher fish sauce with their meals, all imported from across the Mediterranean at a high cost.²⁹

This stood in sharp contrast to the lifestyle of the masses in the villages of Judea and Galilee. Other archaeological excavations show that the dwellings of the average Jewish family were constructed of rough fieldstones sealed with mortar, thatched roofs of reeds and dried mud, and floors of beaten earth. These dwellings contained no interior decoration or luxury items, and those who lived in them often shared common courtyards and food preparation areas with other families.³⁰ The house layouts and pottery indicate that families ate while sitting on the earthen floor, often shared food out of the same dish, and could afford only low-quality local pottery. No imported cuisine was present, with standard meals consisting of bread, thin stews, and lentils.³¹ Some Jewish groups promoted this lower-class lifestyle as an ideological statement against the Hellenistic extravagance adopted by Jerusalem's priestly elite.³²

Another way in which the culture of Jerusalem's priestly aristocracy contrasted with the lower-class masses was in funerary customs. First-century Jerusalem was surrounded by monumental display tombs that attested to the wealth of the priestly families that owned them.³³ These

tombs were cut out of the limestone bedrock and included interior chambers, burial niches for newly interred bodies, and stone boxes (ossuaries) for storing bones after the flesh decayed. Such tombs often displayed ostentatious exterior monuments with Greek-style columns topped with pyramids.³⁴ These interior and exterior features were intentional imitations of Greco-Roman burial customs and were available only to the wealthiest families. The lower-class masses, in contrast, could not afford such elaborate rock-cut family tombs but were buried in simple graves dug into the ground and sealed with fieldstones.³⁵ All of this priestly opulence would have been visible to anyone visiting Jerusalem, including those from Galilee who were attending a pilgrimage festival at the temple.³⁶ Therefore, Jews throughout the region would have been aware of the standard of living enjoyed by the Jerusalem priesthood. As noted, several Jewish writings from this period harshly criticized the priestly aristocracy for such excesses.

The use of sacred revenues to support these lavish priestly lifestyles made the disparity between the upper-class priests and the lower-class masses even more disturbing. We know from scriptural and historical records that Jerusalem's priestly class and temple complex were in large part funded by the tithes and offerings of Jews from Judea, Galilee, and the Diaspora.³⁷ In the law of Moses, these tithes included a tenth of all increase from fields, produce, and animals, either in kind or in monetary value. The law also required a one-time payment of a half shekel for the support of the temple by every Israelite male over the age of twenty (see Exodus 30:11–16). By the time of Jesus, however, the Jerusalem priests had extended this requirement to include an annual temple tax levied on every Jewish male. The tax had to be paid in Tyrian silver coins, which were costly to obtain.³⁸ Although these priestly tithes and taxes were originally meant to provide a modest source of income for priests and to support the logistics of temple operations, by the late Second Temple Period the revenues were extensive. According to one first-century writer, this allowed "even the poorest of the priests . . . [to] appear to be very wealthy"³⁹ and provided "priests with the dignity and honor that belongs to kings."⁴⁰

Additional revenues for the priestly aristocracy came from the inner workings of the temple economy. Because some worshippers could not

bring a fit sacrifice with them to the temple, the temple administration licensed dealers who would sell the necessary sacrificial animals on site. Along with placing a surcharge on such purchased animals, temple officials required all sacred items to be bought with Tyrian shekels. This expensive currency was obtained from temple money changers at a high exchange rate. Needless to say, these expenses were a financial hardship for the lower-class.⁴¹ All of these burdens, some of which were required by the law of Moses and others being innovations of the priests to increase revenues, funded the lavish lifestyles of the priestly aristocracy at the expense of the masses.⁴²

Although Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount had universal application, his sayings on wealth had particular significance in light of this situation. Statements such as "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, . . . for where your treasure is, there will be your heart also" (Matthew 6:19–21) could have conjured images of the opulent lifestyles enjoyed by upper-class priests. Furthermore, Jesus created a dichotomy that would have been particularly relevant to those priests who were meant to be the mediators between God and Israel but who instead focused on obtaining wealth and political power: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). "Mammon" being an Aramaic term for "money,"⁴³ this statement may have been a criticism of the priestly leadership, who by implication were serving worldly interests rather than the things of God.

To illustrate this dichotomy, Jesus gave the example of those whose lifestyles focused on obtaining food, drink, and clothing (see Matthew 6:25–32). Without question these were basic necessities for all within Jesus' audience. However, his statement "For after all these things do the *Gentiles* seek" (Matthew 6:32; emphasis added) suggests that Jesus specifically criticized those who tried to emulate Roman lifestyles, such as existed among the Herodian administrators in Galilean cities and the priestly aristocracy in Jerusalem. The archaeological material discussed earlier demonstrates that by consuming imported Italian cuisine served on imitation Roman dishes, these elites attempted to emulate Roman culture particularly with regards to dining. JST Matthew 6:32 (which

expands Matthew 6:31–32) might also suggest that Jesus chastised his own disciples for envying those Gentile luxuries that they did not possess.⁴⁴

Jesus taught the disciples that rather than pursue these worldly things, they should "seek . . . first the kingdom of God and his righteousness," and all their daily needs would be met in a manner that surpasses the glorious raiment of Solomon (see Matthew 6:29–33). These remarks were possibly subtle jabs at Jerusalem's priestly aristocracy, whose biblical glory was symbolized by Solomon's temple and who, as Judaism's divinely appointed leadership, should have placed their primary focus on serving the Lord rather than seeking after wealth and power.⁴⁵

The relevance of this material to the priestly aristocracy is supported by parallels between it and Jesus' direct confrontations with the Jerusalem priests elsewhere in the Gospel of Matthew. For example, Jesus began his journey to Jerusalem by warning his disciples against wealth (see Matthew 19:16–30) and prophesying that the chief priests would deliver him to the Gentile Romans to be crucified (see Matthew 20:17–19). After his entry into Jerusalem, Jesus physically attacked the temple economy by overthrowing "the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves" (Matthew 21:12).⁴⁶ Jesus then gave a series of parables to the chief priests that compared them to a son who failed to serve in his father's vineyard (see Matthew 21:23, 28–31), to husbandmen who greedily seized their master's land (see Matthew 21:33–46), and to guests who refused an invitation to a marriage feast on account of their business interests (see Matthew 22:1–10). These passages accuse Jerusalem's priests of clinging to riches, collaborating with Gentiles, and focusing on their own interests rather than serving God. The parallels between this material and the teachings on wealth in the Sermon on the Mount suggest that priests may have been one of the groups Jesus was criticizing in the sermon, as implied in the JST.

Judgment, teaching, and hypocrisy. The next emphasis in the social exhortation of the Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' sayings on judgment, teaching, and hypocrisy. "Judge not that ye be not judged, for with that judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged" (Matthew 7:1–2). This powerful statement is followed by a rebuke of hypocrites who find motes, or splinters, in the eyes of others without noticing the beams, or logs, in their own

eyes (see Matthew 7:3–5). As with his sayings on wealth, Jesus' teachings on judgment and hypocrisy had broad application. For example, the Gospel of Matthew consistently rebukes Pharisees for enforcing their own traditions while ignoring the "weightier matters" of love, mercy, and forgiveness (see Matthew 23:1–33). As mentioned, the JST expands the Sermon on the Mount to indicate that the priests and the Levites were also hypocritical groups to which Jesus directed his rebuke.

The application of this principle to some first-century priests is fitting. One of the official responsibilities of priests under the law of Moses was to serve as judges of religious and civic matters. These responsibilities were carried out by priests throughout the Second Temple period and possibly for centuries afterward.⁴⁷ In the time of Jesus, official priestly judgment took various forms. The highest court of Jewish law, for example, was Jerusalem's Sanhedrin, which was presided over by the chief priests and convened adjacent to the temple complex.⁴⁸ The Sanhedrin used their authority to condemn Jesus (Matthew 26–27), allow Saul to persecute the Christians (see Acts 9:1–3), and execute early Church leaders.⁴⁹ Because of this, early Christian tradition remembered this judicial council as a persecutor of Jesus and his Church in its official capacity.

Lower-level priests also served as judges in the religious and civic affairs of their own villages. Unfortunately, we have little information about these local priestly courts, making it difficult to assess the fairness of the judgments they passed. The first-century Jewish historian Josephus hints that "bribery" and "perversion of justice" by priestly judges occasionally occurred at the local level, thus necessitating appeals to the high priestly court in Jerusalem.⁵⁰ Josephus also states that the priestly Sadducees were generally "very rigid in judging offenders, above all the rest of the Jews."⁵¹ If Jesus had priests and priestly courts in mind, as the JST suggests, he may have viewed their judgments against the religious activities of others to be hypocritical in light of their own pandering to Rome, their involvement in power politics, and their extravagant lifestyles. In this context, the JST's insertion of priests and Levites into Jesus' parable of the motes and beams makes its conclusion appropriate for known priestly activities: "Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye"

(Matthew 7:5). Jesus then commanded his disciples to level these charges against those priests who would resist their message (JST, Matt 7:4–5).

In association with judgment, the Sermon on the Mount adds synagogue teaching to the priests' hypocritical activities. "The priests and the Levites . . . teach in their synagogues but do not observe the law; nor the commandments" (JST, Matthew 7:4–5). Priestly instruction often occurred on the national level, including at public temple gatherings.⁵² Archaeological evidence indicates that priests also performed their teaching responsibilities in local synagogues. A Greek inscription found on a plaque that belonged to a first-century synagogue in Jerusalem reads, "Theodotos, the son of Vettenos, priest and archisynagogos, son of an archisynagogos, grandson of an archisynagogos, built the synagogue for reading the law and teaching the commandments."⁵³ This inscription describes a family of priests who built a synagogue in Jerusalem for "the reading of the law and teaching the commandments" and maintained the title of "archisynagogos" (synagogue leader) for at least three generations. This wording parallels the priestly synagogue activities mentioned by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Although limited evidence exists from first-century Galilee, it is likely that priests taught in synagogues throughout that region as well as in Judea.⁵⁴

It was in their role as synagogue teachers, however, that Jesus accused the priests of hypocrisy: "They teach in their synagogues but do not observe the law; nor the commandments, and have all gone out of the way, and are under sin. Go thou and say unto them, Why teach ye men the law and the commandments, when ye yourselves are the children of corruption? Say unto them, Ye hypocrites" (JST, Matthew 7:6–7). While we know very little about the specifics of priestly synagogue instruction in the first century, Josephus indicates that the aristocratic priestly Sadducees were known for emphasizing the written law of Moses,⁵⁵ while at the same time behaving in an arrogant and rude manner to those around them.⁵⁶ Jesus may have had these contradictions in mind when he condemned priestly hypocrisy.

Jesus' concerns regarding hypocrisy may have related also to the opulent priestly lifestyles discussed earlier. Along with imitating Roman architecture, interior decoration, and luxury items, Jerusalem's first-century mansions contained features that provided their priestly occupants

with the means for attaining ritual purity. “Ritual purity” was a Mosaic category specifically designed for priests who regularly came into contact with the divine realm (the temple). Generally speaking, the Mosaic purity system addressed human contact with those things deemed “impure,” such as various types of animals, bodily fluids, or corpses (see Leviticus 11–15). When priests came into contact with such impurities, thus rendering themselves impure, various washings were prescribed to return to a state of ritual purity. As a result, priests were expected to wash their hands, feet, or entire body prior to performing specific duties, such as officiating in the temple or eating meals that included sacrificial meat (see Leviticus 21–22).⁵⁷

Jerusalem’s priestly mansions contained several items meant to facilitate ritual purity. For example, private ritual baths (*miqva’ot*) were found in the basements of these mansions, allowing for full immersion before officiating in the temple or eating sacrificial meals.⁵⁸ Ritual foot washings for purification may also have occurred, as suggested by foot basins located next to the private *miqva’ot* within the priestly mansions.⁵⁹ In addition, expensive stone vessels such as cups, serving trays, and large water jars were present in great quantities.⁶⁰ Since stone was considered incapable of transmitting impurities,⁶¹ these stone vessels were used to store liquids in a state of purity and to wash hands and feet before eating sacrificial meat.⁶² These features make it clear that the members of Jerusalem’s priestly class took care to ensure their own high levels of ritual purity in their roles as mediators of the divine presence.

The fact that priests maintained ritual purity would not have been viewed as hypocritical in and of itself; indeed the law of Moses commanded priests to take these measures. Rather, Jesus’ charge of hypocrisy may have been due to the priests’ maintenance of outward ritual purity while ignoring inward ethical purity. It is important to note that in the law of Moses, the relationship between ritual purity and moral behavior is ambiguous. The Old Testament passages that deal with ritual purity simply describe a system that separates “clean” and “unclean” things and ensures that priests were washed clean when coming into contact with the divine. Ethics, morals, and modern notions of sin are not an obvious part of the description.⁶³ Based on this ambiguity, some of Jerusalem’s priestly class justified ethical corruption while maintaining ritual purity attained

through washings. The combination of priestly purity and excessive opulence may be symbolized in the Jerusalem mansions by the many stone vessels imitating Roman fine ware, including fancy serving trays, relish holders, and drinking goblets.⁶⁴

Several Jewish groups, such as the Essenes and the followers of John the Baptist, noted this disparity and insisted that inward ethical purity must accompany actions of outward ritual purity.⁶⁵ Jesus himself frequently proclaimed this message in various settings (see Mark 7:1–23). On at least one occasion, Jesus gave a fiery sermon that condemned the hypocrisy of those who focused on matters of ritual purity while ignoring the “weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith” (Matthew 23:23–26). Many of the examples he gave in this sermon were behaviors specific to Jerusalem’s priestly elite.⁶⁶ These include “devour[ing] widows’ houses” (Matthew 23:14), demanding precise tithing on the most minute items (see Matthew 23:23), and building monumental tombs for themselves (see Matthew 23:27–29).⁶⁷ This sermon closely parallels the criticisms of priests in the JST additions to the Sermon on the Mount. In both instances, Jesus accused the priests of making themselves “appear unto men that [they] would not commit the least sin, and yet [they themselves] transgress the whole law” (JST, Matthew 23:24).⁶⁸

In the JST expansion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus’ disciples are concerned that the priests will respond to these accusations by saying, “We ourselves are *righteous* and need not that any man should teach us. . . . We have *the law* for our salvation, and that *is sufficient* for us” (JST, Matthew 7:9; emphasis added).⁶⁹ If this addition indeed reflects a historical saying of Jesus’ disciples, it may have been a play on the name and theological position of the priestly Sadducees. “Sadducee” was likely a term meant to recall the Hebrew word for “righteous” (*tzaddiq*) and/or the title “Zadok,” the traditional name of the high priestly line.⁷⁰ As noted earlier, this group was known for its exclusive adherence to the written law of Moses. However, if for Jesus the whole law consisted of love and mercy (see Matthew 22:36–40; Mark 12:28–34), the law was not being kept by the priestly elite, despite their roles as leaders, judges, and synagogue teachers.⁷¹

Giving holy things to the dogs. Immediately following his teachings on wealth, judgment, and hypocrisy, Jesus states, “Give not that which is holy

unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you” (Matthew 7:6). For many readers of the Sermon on the Mount, this statement’s content and placement are difficult to understand.⁷² In Jewish literature, dogs and swine are well-known images associated with Gentiles;⁷³ swine were the paradigmatic symbol for “unclean” things in ancient Judaism (Leviticus 11:7; Deuteronomy 14:8; Matthew 8:28–34), and dogs were scavengers often singled out for exclusion from Israel’s sacred precincts (Deuteronomy 23:18; Matthew 15:21–27). However, what exactly is “that which is holy,” why would Gentiles rend those who share it, and how does this relate to the preceding statements on hypocrisy?

A general application of this saying may be to not share sacred teachings or practices with unprepared, uninitiated, or unworthy outsiders. Jesus conveys this notion to his disciples in the JST’s expansion of the passage (JST, Matthew 7:7).⁷⁴ Maintaining a priestly context of this saying, however, might help us to make more precise sense of its original significance. The law of Moses uses the term “holy” (*qodesh*, “set apart”) to describe items, spaces, times, and people associated with the temple and priesthood. In particular, “the holy things” (Hebrew *qodashim*; Greek *to hagion*) refer to animals sacrificed in the temple and consumed by the priests (Exodus 29:33; Leviticus 2:3; 22:6–7, 14–16; Numbers 18:8–19; Ezra 2:63; Nehemiah 7:65). Archaeological excavations at Masada show that in the first century, Jews also set apart other foodstuffs as priestly tithing and marked the storage jars as “qualified for the purity of the holy things.” Associated inscriptions suggest that priests declared the contents to be holy food.⁷⁵ As mentioned earlier, priestly families were to eat “the holy things” in a state of ritual purity.

It is probable that Jesus’ reference to “that which is holy [*to hagion*]” originally pointed to such sacrificial priestly food.⁷⁶ Support for this idea is found in the *Didache*, a late-first-century Christian handbook on Church practices. This text identifies Jesus’ commandment to “not give the holy thing to the dogs” as prohibiting those who are not baptized from partaking of the Eucharist.⁷⁷ In this case, the Eucharist was the sacrificial food that must be eaten in a state of purity attained through baptism. The *Didache* thus transferred Jewish priestly actions and terminology to a Christian setting. Although Christian baptism and Eucharist were not

yet in place when Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount, it is important to note that its earliest Christian commentary understood this saying in the context of priestly sacrificial meals.

Even more compelling evidence for this context is found in biblical and Second Temple Period discussions on the qualification of sacrificial meat. To put it simply, dogs were not allowed near the temple precincts for the fear that they might devour the flesh of a sacrificial animal that had been set apart for the consumption of the priests.⁷⁸ In addition, if an animal was already consecrated but was "rent" by a wild animal before it could be eaten by the priests, the person who made the offering was not allowed to buy it back from the temple, lest the torn sacrificial meat subsequently be given to the dogs.⁷⁹ Because torn meat was considered unfit for a holy meal, it was buried to keep it from scavenging dogs.⁸⁰ These ideas of holy food, torn flesh, and being thrown to the dogs bear a striking resemblance to Matthew 7:6—"give not that which is holy unto the dogs . . . lest they turn again and rend you."⁸¹ If read in the priestly context established by the JST, this statement seems to be Jesus' way of turning a legal discussion of priestly purity into a condemnation of the priests' immorality.

Recalling the priestly lifestyles discussed earlier, Jesus may have been criticizing the priests for consuming sacred meals while living Roman lifestyles and playing Roman power politics, when ultimately this very alliance would result in the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. In other words, by compromising their "holy things" with the Roman world (the "dogs" and "swine"), the priests themselves would soon be devastated ("rent" or "torn") by the loss of Judaism's sacred centerpiece at the hands of those Gentiles. While this is not the only interpretation of the passage, it fits well with Jesus' statements to the chief priests that because of their self-interest and worldly concerns they would be killed, their city burned, and their kingdom given to those of another nation (see Matthew 21:33–22:7). These passages refer to the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and the subsequent loss of the institutional priestly leadership. Reading Matthew 7:6 as Jesus' criticism of and predictions for Jerusalem's hypocritical priests is a compelling way to make sense of an otherwise enigmatic saying.

Prophecy and the divine name. The section of the Sermon on the Mount that deals with social issues concludes with Jesus' warning against false prophets. Such individuals profess the Lord's name but are actually ravening wolves in sheep's clothing who do not carry out the Lord's will (see Matthew 7:15–23). As with Jesus' teachings on wealth, judgment, and hypocrisy, these warnings could easily have had various applications, both within and outside the early Church. Historical sources indicate that various types of prophetic figures are known to have lived in the mid to late first century. Josephus tells of failed prophetic movements that were active during the Jewish revolt against Rome.⁸² False prophets also arose in the Christian Church almost immediately after the death of Jesus and flourished into the early second century.⁸³ All of these figures may have fallen within the scope of Jesus' warning.⁸⁴

It is unclear whether the JST's addition of priests and Levites was meant to apply to these concluding passages. If so, there are a number of possibilities as to this material's relevance for first-century priests. From an early period, the gift of prophecy was seen as the prerogative of the temple priesthood.⁸⁵ In the Old Testament, some of Israel's most famous prophets were priests who were connected with the Jerusalem temple.⁸⁶ The association of prophecy with priesthood in ancient Israel may have originated with Moses giving the Urim and Thummim—illuminating stones used to discern God's will—to the Aaronic high priest (see Exodus 28:30; Numbers 27:21; Deuteronomy 33:1). From Aaron onward, this means of divine communication accompanied the high priestly office and was in use into the Second Temple Period.⁸⁷ Although the ultimate fate of the Urim and Thummim is unknown, several texts from the time of Jesus associate the priests' abilities to judge and lead the nation with their unique prophetic gifts.⁸⁸ Josephus, a Jerusalem priest, viewed himself as an heir to Israel's prophetic tradition,⁸⁹ and the Gospel of John even attributes the gift of prophecy to an otherwise corrupt high priest (see John 11:47–53).

The false prophets referred to in the Sermon on the Mount perform healings and exorcisms, activities often associated with priests in ancient Judaism.⁹⁰ Another characteristic is their profession of the name of the Lord: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in

heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? . . . And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:21–23). While this generally seems to refer to those who claim the Lord's name without keeping his commandments, it could also refer to those priests responsible "to bless in the name of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 21:5) and "put [the Lord's] name upon the children of Israel" (Numbers 6:27).

In ancient Judaism, the divine name of God (*YHWH*) was considered so sacred that biblical texts often used the generic term "Lord" (Hebrew *adonai*; Greek *kurios*) in its place. Its full utterance was restricted to priests serving in the temple on special occasions.⁹¹ Rabbinic literature after AD 70 claims that the name of the Lord was pronounced only once a year by the high priest on the Day of Atonement.⁹² However, sources from the Second Temple Period indicate that priests uttered the divine name twice a day as they blessed congregations assembled in the temple for the daily sacrifice.⁹³ In this daily pronouncement, the priests fulfilled their obligation to place the name of the Lord upon Israel.

It is possible that Jesus' reference to those who cry "Lord, Lord" (Greek *kurie, kurie*) had relevance for priests, who were among the few who pronounced the divine name in the temple. Such a connection is strengthened by the name being doubled by those being condemned. "Lord, Lord" is a rare phrase in Jewish literature and is likely a reference to Psalm 141:8 (LXX Ps 140:8), in which "Lord, Lord" (Hebrew *YHWH adonai*; Greek *kurie, kurie*) was sung in a hymn that recalled or accompanied the incense offering by temple priests during the evening sacrifice.⁹⁴ If these connections were intended, Jesus' statement may have been another way of indicting the priestly class. In essence, those priests who were divinely appointed to act in God's name are the very individuals he will not recognize at the Final Judgment because of their neglect of God's will and their iniquitous works.

It is important that we not stretch these last connections beyond what the evidence supports. Indeed, the primary intention of these sayings likely had a more universal application. However, since the notions of priesthood, prophecy, and speaking the name of the Lord were all intimately bound together in Second Temple Judaism, this cluster of themes in the Sermon on the Mount may have had particular significance for

Jerusalem's priestly class. In that case, Jesus' characterization of false prophets who spoke the name of the Lord could easily have described those priests supposed to be the divinely appointed leaders of Israel whose "evil fruit" would ultimately cause them to "be hewn down and cast into the fire" (Matthew 7:18–19), as seen in the events of AD 70.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In this paper I have dealt with some of the controversies surrounding Jerusalem's priesthood during the late Second Temple Period. Despite, or perhaps because of, their divinely appointed role as mediators between God and Israel, Jerusalem's priestly elites were criticized by several Jewish groups for their extravagance, ethical corruption, and political collaboration with Rome. These charges were very serious and no doubt reflected the activities of numerous priests in this period. However, we must acknowledge that the picture of priests painted by their critics was made with a fairly broad brush. As the work of E. P. Sanders and Jonathan Klawans demonstrates, not all priests were inherently corrupt, and most Jews, including Jesus and his followers, supported the temple and priesthood as divine institutions.⁹⁵ This made the corruptions that did exist in the system, particularly among those in its upper echelons, all the more troubling for the pious. Those members of the priestly aristocracy who abused their divine status and position loomed large enough on the social landscape of first-century Judaism that Jesus' proclamations of the coming kingdom of God inevitably came into sharp conflict with them.

One of the great contributions of *the Joseph Smith Translation* is the insight that some of Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount were directed against the priestly elite. These additions have several implications for our understanding of the nature of the JST and the context of the sermon itself. A number of LDS scholars, including Robert J. Matthews, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert L. Millet, have carefully studied the JST's alterations of the biblical text and have noted various categories into which the changes may fit.⁹⁶ Possible categories include: (1) the restoration of original biblical material, (2) the insertions of actual historical events that were not originally part of the biblical text, and (3) Joseph Smith's application of the biblical text for latter-day use. The historical connections discussed in this paper suggest that the JST's insertion of

priests into the Sermon on the Mount may relate to more than one of these categories.

Because ancient manuscripts of the New Testament do not contain material similar to the JST additions, it is difficult (though not impossible) to claim that these particular additions are a restoration of the original biblical text. However, the JST's insertion of priests into the sermon is historically appropriate for what we know about first-century Jewish dynamics. Criticisms of priestly wealth, hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and corruption are all found in historical sources from this period, many of which closely parallel the material added by the JST. These themes are also consistent with Jesus' criticisms of the priestly establishment elsewhere in the Gospels. Some linguistic hints, such as the possible play on the Hebrew words for "righteous" and "Sadducee," also suggest that the JST may have restored an actual historical dialogue between Jesus and his disciples. It is therefore reasonable to claim that Jesus' condemnation of priests in the JST reflects his historical views on these issues, even if they may not have been originally recorded in the Gospel of Matthew as part of the Sermon on the Mount.⁹⁷ In this instance, the JST's additions help us to appreciate aspects of the sermon's original impact and significance in a way that might not have been obvious otherwise.

Finally, the JST's addition of "priests" into the Sermon on the Mount may also have articulated Joseph Smith's applications of the sermon to modern Latter-day Saints. Warnings about wealth, judgment, and hypocrisy were all messages that Joseph Smith tried to convey to the modern Church. By expanding the Sermon on the Mount, Joseph may have been using Jesus' famous teachings on these issues to impart similar warnings for modern readers. In light of historical and archaeological research conducted in the last hundred years, the JST's emphasis on first-century priests now provides us with a tangible example of how Jesus' teachings can relate to a real-life setting. Such concrete examples of pursuing wealth, judging others, and ritual hypocrisy can help us all to move beyond abstract notions and better understand how to seek first the kingdom of God, judge not others, and bring forth good fruit in our own discipleship.

NOTES

1. Robert A. Cloward, "The Sermon on the Mount in the JST and the Book of Mormon," in *The Joseph Smith Translation: The Restoration of Plain and Precious Things*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Robert L. Millet (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1985), 163–200; Robert L. Millet, "Looking Beyond the Mark: Insights from the JST into First-Century Judaism," in *Joseph Smith Translation*, 201–14; Millet, "Joseph Smith and the Gospel of Matthew," in *BYU Studies* 25, no. 3 (Summer 1985); Andrew C. Skinner, "Doctrinal Contributions of the Joseph Smith Translation of the New Testament," in *Plain and Precious Truths Restored: The Doctrinal and Historical Significance of the Joseph Smith Translation*, ed. Robert L. Millet and Robert J. Matthews (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995), 72–103.

2. Thomas A. Wayment, ed., *The Complete Joseph Smith Translation of the New Testament: A Side-by-Side Comparison with the King James Version* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2005), 20.

3. Anthony J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes, and Sadducees in Palestinian Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988); Albert I. Baumgarten, *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1997).

4. W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 1: *Introduction and Commentary on Matthew I–VII* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 410–730; Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 166–556.

5. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 481–619; Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 124–64; John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, vol. 4: *Law and Love* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 74–234.

6. Wayment, *The Complete Joseph Smith Translation*, 20.

7. For detailed overviews of the role and division of the priesthood in the biblical and postbiblical periods, see Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 147–221; Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)*, vol. 2, rev. and ed. Geza Vermes, Fergus Millar, and Matthew Black (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 227–42; and E. P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief, 63 BCE–66 CE* (London: SCM Press, 1992), 77–83.

8. The prophets of the Old Testament period often leveled charges of corruption against Jerusalem's temple priesthood (see Malachi 1–2). For discussions on the prophetic critique of the priests and the temple cult, see John Barton, "The Prophets and the Cult," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel*, ed. John Day (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 111–22, and Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 75–100.

9. The entanglement of the high priesthood with Greek culture and power politics in the second century BC is vividly portrayed in 2 Maccabees 2:19–7:42, which describes how priests favored Hellenistic institutions over their temple responsibilities and how the high priesthood became a position of political appointment obtained through bribery, murder, and intrigue. One example of priestly

corruption was the Hasmonean king and high priest Alexander Jannaeus (103–76 BC). Josephus records how this high priest once crucified eight hundred Jews for rebelling against him, ordering their families to be executed before the victims as they hung on the cross, while he himself enjoyed a lavish feast with his concubines. In addition, Alexander Jannaeus violated Mosaic legislation governing the office of high priest by leading armies in battle and marrying a widow (see Leviticus 21:13–15; Josephus, *Ant.*, 13.320–407).

10. Josephus, *Ant.* 20.251 reports that the high priestly families became the ruling aristocracy of Judea after the deaths of Herod the Great and his son Archelaus. For discussions on the history of high priestly politics, see Deborah W. Rooke, *Zadok's Heirs: The Role and Development of the High Priesthood in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); James C. Vanderkam, *From Joshua to Caiaphas: High Priests after the Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004); Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 2:227–36.

11. One line of Zadokite priests (the Oniads) went to Egypt to build their own temple (Josephus, *War of the Jews* 1.31–33; 7.423–36; *Ant.* 12.387–88; 13.62–73). Another line (the Essenes) withdrew into the Judean desert to await the day when God would purify the temple. Several passages in the Dead Sea Scrolls (the Essene sectarian library) decry the wealthy lifestyle, politics, and ritual practices of the Jerusalem priesthood (e.g., CD 5.6–7; 1QpHab 12.8). For an accessible treatment of the literary and archaeological evidence for this group's relationship to the Jerusalem priesthood, see Jodi Magness, *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002).

12. For example, 1 *Enoch* 1–16; *Psalms of Solomon* 8; *Testament of Levi* 14; *Testament of Moses* 6–7. For a fuller treatment of some of these charges, see Martha Himmelfarb, *A Kingdom of Priests: Ancestry and Merit in Ancient Judaism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006). Rabbinic literature from the second through sixth centuries AD reflects the Pharisaic contempt for the opulence and immorality of Jerusalem's priests (Chaim Licht, *Ten Legends of the Sages: The Image of the Sage in Rabbinic Literature* [Hoboken: Ktav, 1991], 87–119; Peter Schäfer, "Rabbis and Priests, or: How to Do Away with the Glorious Past of the Sons of Aaron," in *Antiquity in Antiquity: Jewish and Christian Pasts in the Greco-Roman World*, ed. Gregg Gardner and Kevin L. Osterloh [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008], 155–72; Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 175–211). While all of these ancient sources offer sweeping criticisms of the morality of the priesthood in the late Second Temple Period, a more tempered modern assessment is given by Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 182–89.

13. Sanders, *Judaism*, 52–54.

14. Jesus' attitude towards the priestly aristocracy was demonstrated by his bold denunciation of their leadership and his "cleansing of the temple." All four Gospels depict Jesus' conflict with Jerusalem's chief priests as directly leading to his Crucifixion (see Mark 11–12, 14; Luke 19–23; John 2, 11, 18–19). For a general discussion on the involvement of the chief priests in the trial and execution of Jesus, see Geza Vermes, *The Passion: The True Story of an Event that Changed Human History* (London: Penguin Books, 2006). In addition, various perspectives on Jesus' relationship to the Jerusalem temple and priesthood can be found in Craig A. Evans,

“Opposition to the Temple: Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 235–53, and Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 213–45.

15. Along with relevance to Jesus’ ministry, the Jewish priestly class may also have been a part of the larger context behind the Gospel of *Matthew*. *Matthew* seems to have been written within a decade or two after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70 when Jews were struggling to make sense of Judaism without a temple. As such, the Gospel of *Matthew* may have been an attempt to persuade other Jews that God’s plan for Israel in the post-temple era was the law as taught by Jesus the Messiah (see Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*). It is generally assumed that priests lost their influence within Jewish society immediately after the temple’s destruction and were replaced by Pharisaic rabbis as the leading voice in post-70 Judaism, making Pharisees the main competition among the masses for *Matthew’s* message. Certainly *Matthew* perceived Pharisaism as an influence that needed to be countered by the teachings of Jesus. However, recent research shows that priests did not fully disappear after the destruction of the temple but rather remained an active and competitive voice vying for leadership in post-70 Jewish society (Seth Schwartz, *Josephus and Judean Politics* [Leiden: Brill, 1990], 58–109 and Martin Goodman, “Religious Variety and the Temple in the Late Second Temple Period and its Aftermath” in *Journal of Jewish Studies* 60, no. 2 [Autumn 2009]: 202–13). This made *Matthew’s* inclusion of Jesus’ harsh condemnations of priestly leadership just as relevant in its day as it was in the original preaching of Jesus.

16. Sean Freyne, “Urban-Rural Relations in First-Century Galilee: Some Suggestions from the Literary Sources,” in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. Lee I. Levine (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1992), 76–90.

17. Sepphoris, for example, was built according to a Greco-Roman city layout with colonnaded marketplace with limestone pavement and walkways covered with red roof tiles, public buildings built with dressed ashlars and decorated with mosaics, frescos, and imported marble sheeting. It had elaborate private dwellings and running sewage channeled underground (Jonathan L. Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus* [Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000], 79–82, 90–93, 118–22, 125–28). With this growing urbanization and increasing interest in Roman culture, however, Mark Chancey, *Greco-Roman Culture and the Galilee of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005) offers an important reminder that Galilean cities in the time of Jesus were not yet thoroughly hellenized, as demonstrated by their lack of Roman temples and figurative artwork, as well as the continued presence of distinctly Jewish features such as stone vessels and *miqva’ot*.

18. Villages such as Nazareth and Capernaum had no public structures, no paved streets, no running sewage (waste being thrown into the alleys), no luxury items, and contained poorly constructed dwellings (Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus*, 131–32, 149–56).

19. Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus*, 66–68, 84–89, 96–98. One particular point of tension was the collection and storage of grain by the urban elite, who gathered the resources from the villages but hoarded it for resale in times of famine (see Josephus, *Life* 71, 118). It should be noted, however, that urban and

rural relationships in first-century Galilee were not entirely negative. In some instances, a symbiotic relationship existed where the cities provided services, employment opportunities, and trading networks for the lower-class villagers (Douglas Edwards, "The Socio-Economic and Cultural Ethos of the Lower Galilee in the First Century: Implications for the Nascent Jesus Movement," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, 53–73).

20. One example of how Jesus' statements about wealth in *the Sermon on the Mount* could have applied to these urban-rural tension is the futility of hoarding money due to "thieves [who] break through and steal" (*Matthew* 6:19). Josephus describes several instances in Galilee where bandits driven by poverty robbed from wealthy inhabitants of the cities (*Life* 122–30), as well as the plundering of state treasuries by poor rebels in the years leading up to the Jewish revolt against Rome in AD 66–70 (*Life* 66–68).

21. Rabbinic literature records that the high priestly family of Joseph b. Elam lived in Sepphoris (*T Yoma* 1.4; *Y Yoma* 1.1, 38d; see Eric M. Meyers, "Roman Sepphoris in Light of New Archaeological Evidence and Recent Research," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, 322–26).

22. For example, Josephus, *Life* 63, 77, 81, records instances where Josephus and other priests came to the villages of Galilee in order to collect their priestly tithes and offerings.

23. Sanders, *Judaism*, 52–54, 146–68.

24. Three structures in particular were excavated by Nahman Avigad from 1969 to 1978. These include the "Herodian Residence," the "Palatial Mansion," and the "Burnt House" (Nahman Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem* [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983], 83–165). Although very few inscriptions were found to conclusively identify their inhabitants, one inscription identified the "Burnt House" as belonging to the High Priestly family of Bar Kathros (*T Minhoh* 13.21; *B Pesah* 51a; see Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem*, 129–130). In addition, fragments of plaster were found within the context of the Herodian mansions that were decorated with images of the menorah and table of showbread from the temple, attesting to the priestly activities of their inhabitants (Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem*, 147–50). Much of the description of priestly mansions that follows will be elaborated upon in Jodi Magness, *Aspects of Jewish Daily Life in Late Second Temple Period Palestine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010; at press).

25. Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem*, 83–165; see also Lee I. Levine, *Jerusalem: Portrait of the City in the Second Temple Period (538 BCE–70 CE)* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2002), 255–81, 313–73.

26. Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem*, 139–42.

27. One style of dining and serving dishes prevalent in the priestly mansions is known as Eastern Terra Sigillata A. This was a glossy red-slipped fine ware used by Romans and imitated by Jerusalem's upper class. Bowls with thin walls and painted with floral designs in imitation of fine Nabatean ware were also found in the mansions. (Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem*, 88, 117, 183–86).

28. Renate Rosenthal-Heginbottom, "Hellenistic and Early Roman Fine Ware and Lamps from Area A," in *Jewish Quarter Excavations in the Old City of Jerusalem*

conducted by Nahman Avigad, 1969–1982, vol. 2: *The Finds from Areas A, W and X-2, Final Report*, ed. H. Geva (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2003), 217.

29. Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem*, 88; Rachel Bar-Nathan, *Hasmonean and Herodian Palaces at Jericho: Final Reports of the 1973–1987 Excavations*, vol. 3: *The Pottery* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2002), 129–33.

30. Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus*, 92, 131–32, 146, 157–60.

31. See Andrea Berlin, *Gamla I: The Pottery of the Second Temple Period* (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2006), 140–51; “Jewish Life before the Revolt: The Archaeological Evidence,” in *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 36, no. 4 (2005): 437–45.

32. Josephus says that the Pharisees intentionally “simplify their standard of living, making no concession to luxury” (*Antiquities* 18.12). Similar Pharisaic austerity was noted in later rabbinic writings as being explicitly in contrast to the wealthy Sadducees (e.g., Abot d’Rabbi Nathan 5). The Essenes were another group that intentionally adopted a lifestyle of frugality. Josephus, *War* 2.130–32, indicates that when they ate they sat on the floor rather than reclining on couches, they had only one type of food per meal (rather than the varied cuisine of the aristocracy), and each member was given an equal and modest portion. For a discussion on the frugality of the sect as manifested in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the excavations at Qumran, see Magness, *Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 73–104, 113–26.

33. Indications of the priestly ownership of Jerusalem’s monumental tombs come from inscriptions associated with the tombs themselves, as well as on the ossuaries found within them. For example, inscriptions within the most noticeable tombs in the Kidron Valley mention the ownership of the high priestly family of Bene Hezir (P. Jean-Baptiste Frey, *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum* [Rome: Pontificio Istituto Di Archeologia Cristiana, 1952] [CIJ], 2:324–325, nos. 1394–95). Inscriptions on ossuaries from tombs surrounding Jerusalem also include names of priests and their families; e.g., L. Y Rahmani, *A Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries in the Collection of the State of Israel* (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 1994), nos. 41, 151, 871; CIJ 2.250, 304–6, nos. 1221, 1350–54. Some ossuaries also contain depictions of cultic vessels associated with the temple and priesthood, including the altar and menorah (Rahmani, *Jewish Ossuaries*, nos. 41 and 815).

34. For detailed overviews of these burial customs, see Byron R. McCane, *Rolling Back the Stone: Death and Burial in the World of Jesus* (London: Trinity Press International, 2003), 28–56; Jodi Magness, “Ossuaries and the Burials of Jesus and James,” in *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 124–40; Geoffrey B. Waywell and Andrea Berlin, “Monumental Tombs: From Maussollos to the Maccabees,” in *Biblical Archaeology Review* 33, no. 3 (May/June 2007): 54–65.

35. Cemeteries of this type have been found at Qumran, Jerusalem, and Khirbet Qazone (Joan E. Taylor, “The Cemeteries of Khirbet Qumran and Women’s Presence at the Site,” in *Dead Sea Discoveries* 6 [1999]: 285–323; Boaz Zissu, “‘Qumran Type’ Graves Found in Jerusalem: Archaeological Evidence of an Essene Community?” in *Dead Sea Discoveries* 5 [1998]: 158–71; Konstantine D. Politis, “The Nabatean Cemetery at Khirbet Qazone,” in *Near Eastern Archaeology* 62 [1999]: 128).

36. Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus*, 57–58.

37. For a detailed overview of the scriptural and historical development of the tithing system, see Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 2:257–74.

38. The earliest evidence for an annual temple tax was in the days of Nehemiah upon return from Babylonian exile (see Nehemiah 10:32–39). Josephus, *Ant.* 18.312–13 confirms that the tax continued into the first century, which may be the “tribute” under discussion in *Matthew* 17:23–27. After the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in AD 70, this Jewish temple tax was forcibly paid to the temple of Capitoline Jupiter in the Roman forum (Josephus, *War* 7.218). Some Jewish groups decried the innovation of an annual tax, insisting instead that only the one-time payment mentioned in the law of Moses should be required. This view is found in the Dead Sea Scrolls (see 4Q159 frg. 1; 11QTemp 39.8–9). For the relationship between the Essenes and the temple tax, see Magness, *Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 188–93.

39. Philo, *Special Laws* I.133. As E. P. Sanders has noted, although these statements may have generally been an accurate description of the situation, Philo’s statement here was a slight exaggeration. Indeed, elsewhere Philo indicates that neglect of the priestly tithes led some priests into poverty (*Special Laws*, I.54; see Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 53). The difference between the two statements may have been in their respective descriptions of Jerusalem’s priestly aristocracy (which served as the hub for all tithes and offerings) and priests from the villages who suffered at the local level.

40. Philo, *Special Laws*, I.141–145. *Special Laws* I.76–77 and *Aristeas* 40 are two other references to the massive revenues brought into Jerusalem by the tithes and offerings of the late Second Temple period.

41. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 85–92, 146–68, also gives a detailed overview of the tithing system and temple economy but provides a more optimistic appraisal of its affects on the poor.

42. Shmuel Safrai, “The Temple and the Divine Service,” in *The World History of the Jewish People*, volume 7: *The Herodian Period*, ed. Michael Avi-Yonah (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1975), 286.

43. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 643; Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 458.

44. Wayment, *Complete Joseph Smith Translation*, 19.

45. Although Solomon’s temple is a possible allusion if viewing Jesus’ saying in the context of priests, the primary reference to Solomon’s garments appears to be to his royal regalia (Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 477–78).

46. It is likely that Jesus’ “cleansing of the temple” was, at least in part, a condemnation of the exploitation of the masses by those who were supposed to be Judaism’s divinely appointed leadership. Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 222–41, offers a cautious discussion of Jesus’ relationship to the Jerusalem’s priests and temple economy, including the annual tax, surcharges on sacrifices, and the use of Tyrian currency. Jesus did not condemn the temple and priesthood as divinely appointed institutions but rather the abuses of the system.

47. For a detailed discussion of priests’ judicial responsibilities and activities in both the Old Testament and the Second Temple period, see Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 170–82. For the likelihood that priests continued to serve as judges in

internal Jewish matters for centuries following the destruction of the temple, see Beverly P. Mortenson, *The Priesthood in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Renewing the Profession* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 1:261–327.

48. See Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, 2:199–226, for a detailed overview of the history, priestly composition, and competency of the Sanhedrin.

49. For the execution of Stephen, see Acts 6:11–7:1, 7:57–60. For the execution of James the brother of Jesus, see Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.197–203.

50. Josephus, *Antiquities* 4.214–18.

51. Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.199.

52. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 170–82, discusses the role of priests as scribes and teachers of law. Contrary to common assumptions that Pharisees were the primary scribes and teachers, Sanders makes a compelling argument that it was, in fact, the priests who had the leisure, educational training, and divine mandate to fill these roles, and did so throughout the Second Temple period. For priests as scribes, see also Himmelfarb, *Kingdom of Priests*, 11–52.

53. *CIJ* 2:332–35, no. 1404; see also Lee I. Levine, *The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 57–59; Anders Runesson, Donald D. Binder, and Birger Olsson, eds., *The Ancient Synagogue from its Origins to 200 C.E.* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 52–54.

54. Philo, *Hypothetica* 7.12–13, states that priests generally led the reading and interpretation of the Law in synagogue worship. Among the Essenes, any group of ten or more members who were gathered to study the Torah was required to have a priest among them to ensure correct reading and interpretation of the Law (IQS 6.1–10). The tradition of priests teaching law in synagogues appears to have continued for centuries after the destruction of the temple. Inscriptions associating priests with synagogues have been found from the third through sixth centuries, including at sites in Galilee (Sepphoris), southern Judea (Na'aran, Eshtemoa, and Susiya) and the Diaspora (Dura Europos and Sardis) (Levine, *Ancient Synagogue*, 519–29).

55. Josephus, *Antiquities* 13.297–98; 18.16–17.

56. Josephus, *War* 2.164–66.

57. For further discussion on the ritual purity system, see Sanders, *Judaism: Belief and Practice*, 71–72; Hannah Harrington, *The Purity Texts* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 7–44.

58. Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem*, 139–42. For a fuller discussion of these ritual baths, in Jerusalem and elsewhere, see Jonathan D. Lawrence, *Washing in Water: Trajectories of Ritual Bathing in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Literature* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 155–83; Magness, *Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 134–62.

59. Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem*, 84, 86.

60. Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem*, 174–83.

61. Stone is lacking in list of materials susceptible to impurities in Leviticus 11. This likely led to the specific use of stone vessels out of purity concerns mentioned in later rabbinic literature (see *M Kelim* 10.1).

62. The same archaeological profile of opulence and purity features were found in the dwellings at Sepphoris in the Galilee region (possibly where the city's priestly

residents lived). It should be noted, however, that stone vessels (although of a much lesser quality) were also found in villages throughout the region, apparently being used by non-priests as well (Reed, *Archaeology and the Galilean Jesus*, 49–50, 56–57, 125–28); compare John 2:6. The use of stone vessels by non-priests apparently reflects the desire to extend priestly purity into the daily lives of all Jews, as promoted by the Pharisees. The Sadducees seemed to restrict the need for ritual purity to their temple related activities. (see Jacob Neusner, *From Politics to Piety: The Emergence of Pharisaic Judaism* [Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1973], 67, 81–96; see also Magness, *Aspects of Jewish Daily Life*). For the extent and logistics of stone vessel production in the time of Jesus, see Yitzhak Magen, *The Stone Vessel Industry in the Second Temple Period: Excavations at Hizma and the Jerusalem Temple Mount* (Jerusalem: Israel Antiquities Authority, 2002).

63. Himmelfarb, *Kingdom of Priests*, 61–63, 87–92, 109, 132. For a fuller discussion of the relationship between sin and ritual purity, see Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

64. Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem*, 174–83.

65. For the Essenes, see IQS 3.5–10; 4.20–25; 5.10–20; 8.15–20. For John the Baptist, see *Matthew* 3:1–12 (which specifically addresses these concerns to the Sadducees); Mark 1.1–5; Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.116–118.

66. *Matthew* 23 presents a sermon in which Jesus condemns the “scribes and Pharisees” for various hypocritical activities. Although it is tempting for modern readers to see all of these activities as a blanket condemnation of Judaism, each activity actually related to different groups in different ways. For example, many of the activities listed actually applied to priests (apparently under the umbrella of “scribes”), while others represent known Pharisaic practices. Mark 12 seems to better preserve the original context of this sermon as being given in the temple to the Sadducees and priestly scribes. For priests as “scribes,” see Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 170–82 and Himmelfarb, *Kingdom of Priests*, 11–52.

67. A specific example of this form of hypocrisy is found in Jesus’ statement, “Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel” (*Matthew* 23:24). The practice of keeping gnats (declared “unclean” by the law of Moses; Leviticus 11:23–24) out of liquid storage and drinking vessels through the use of a cloth was unique to the Sadducees in their pursuit of priestly purity (*T Terumot* 7.11). That the priests went to such lengths to maintain ritual purity while consuming Roman cuisine and enjoying opulent Roman lifestyles was compared by Jesus to “straining out gnats while swallowing a camel” (a much larger “unclean” animal; Leviticus 11:4), thus rendering them “blind guides.” For the larger context of *T Terumot* 7.11, see David Instone-Brewer, *Traditions of the Rabbis from the Era of the New Testament*, vol. 1: *Prayer and Agriculture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 290–93.

68. Wayment, *Complete Joseph Smith Translation*, 65.

69. Wayment, *Complete Joseph Smith Translation*, 21–22.

70. In this case, the Sadducees may have had their origin in those Zadokites who compromised their position through accommodation with foreign rulers as a way of maintaining their standing in the aristocracy (Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 25).

71. One pseudepigraphic text from this period, the *Testament of Moses*, closely parallels the JST Sermon on the Mount in its criticisms of priestly hypocrisy in their maintaining ritual purity while living lives of opulence, arrogance, and self-righteousness: “[Jerusalem’s priests] represent themselves as being righteous, but (in fact) . . . [are] deceitful men, pleasing only themselves, false in every way imaginable, (such as) loving feasts at any hour of the day—devouring, gluttonous. . . . They consume the goods of the (poor), saying their acts are according to justice. . . . [Instead they] deceitfully seek to conceal themselves, . . . saying, ‘We shall have feasts, even luxurious winings and dinings. Indeed, we will behave ourselves as princes.’ They, with hand and mind, will touch impure things, yet their mouths will speak enormous things, and they will even say, ‘Do not touch me, lest you pollute me in the position I occupy’” (*Testament of Moses* 7.1–10).

72. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 674–77; Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 493–500.

73. 1 Enoch 89.42–49; 2 Peter 2:22; M *Baba Qamma* 7.7.

74. Wayment, *Complete Joseph Smith Translation*, 21.

75. Yigael Yadin and Joseph Naveh. *Masada I: The Yigael Yadin Excavations 1963–1965 Final Reports. The Aramaic and Hebrew Ostraca and Jar Inscriptions* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1989), 32–39.

76. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 675.

77. Didache 9–10, 14; Huub van de Sandt. “Do Not Give What Is Holy to the Dogs (Did 9:5d and Matt 7:6a): The Eucharistic Food of the Didache in its Jewish Purity Setting,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 56, no. 3 (August 2002): 223–46.

78. For example, 4QMMT (4Q397) frgs. 6–13 considers Jerusalem to possess the same sanctity as the “desert camp” of the Exodus and thus prohibited dogs from entering lest they eat the sacred meat in the temple. The image of dogs being excluded from the temple camp is also found in Revelation 22:15. For a fuller discussion of this law in light of animal bone deposits at Qumran see Magness, *Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 113–26.

79. M *Terumah* 6.5; B *Terumah* 17a both discuss the prohibition against redeeming torn sacrificial meat lest it ultimately go to the dogs.

80. Exodus 22:31 states that meat torn by wild animals is fit only for dogs. As such, Leviticus 7:24 deems torn meat as not fit for sacrificial food (compare Ezekiel 44:31). B *Bekhorot* 15a is a post-70 rabbinic text that discusses the fate of sacrificial meat once it had become torn.

81. van de Sandt, “Eucharistic Food,” 230–36.

82. Josephus, *Antiquities* 20.97–99; 20.167–72; *War* 6.249–315; Acts 5:36. For a fuller discussion of these self-proclaimed prophets, see Richard A. Horsely and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1999), 135–89.

83. See Matthew 24:11; Acts 20:28–30; 2 Thessalonians 2:1–12; 1 Timothy 4:1–3; 2 Timothy 4:3–4; 1 John 2:18–19; Jude 4; Revelation 2:20; *Didache* 11; *Shepherd of Hermas*, Mandate 11.

84. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 701–19; Betz, *Sermon on the Mount*, 527–56.

85. Anthony J. Tomasino, *Judasm Before Jesus: The Events and Ideas That Shaped the New Testament World* (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 197.

86. For example, Isaiah (see Isaiah 6), Jeremiah (see Jeremiah 1:1), and Ezekiel (see Ezekiel 1:3).

87. Ezra 2:63; Nehemiah 7:65; *Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sira* 45:10; Josephus, *Antiquities* 3.218.

88. Philo, *Special Laws* 4.190–92, states that the gift of prophecy is what allows priests to serve as judges. Josephus, *War* 1.68–69 and *Antiquities* 4.214–18, attributes various aspects of the high priest's leadership to his gift of prophecy. For more on the connection between priests and prophecy, see Vermes, *The Passion*, 19–20; Oliver Gussman, *Das Priesterverständnis des Flavius Josephus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 288–305.

89. Josephus, *War* 3.350–54.

90. Acts 19:13–14 describes the priestly sons of Sceva as performing these types of exorcisms in Asia Minor. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, an Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Old Testament that dates to the fourth century AD, includes protection from demons as part of the blessing given by priests to synagogue congregations. Although we can not be certain if this precise form of priestly exorcism existed in the first century, the passage does indicate that there was a larger tradition of priests having power over evil spirits within ancient Judaism. See Martin McNamara and Ernest G. Clarke, *Targums Neofiti 1 and Pseudo-Jonathan: Numbers* (The Aramaic Bible 4; Collegetown, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1995), 205.

91. Philo, *Life of Moses* 2.114. Even a priestly sect like the Essenes sought to limit its use among their members (see IQS 7.1–5).

92. For example, *B Kiddushin* 71a.

93. *Wisdom of Jesus Ben Sira* 45.15; 50:20; IQS(b) 1–5; *M Tamid* 7.1–2 all connect the pronouncement of the divine name (contained within the priestly blessing in Num 6:22–27) with the daily temple service.

94. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 712.

95. See, generally, Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief* and Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*.

96. Robert J. Matthews, "A Plainer Translation": *Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible, A History and Commentary* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 233–53; Millet, "Joseph Smith and the Gospel of Matthew," 68; Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith's New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2004), 8–11.

97. Individual sayings of the Sermon on the Mount are cited in the other Gospels, particularly Luke, as being given by Jesus in a variety of settings to a variety of audiences (Kurt Aland, ed., *Synopsis of the Four Gospels*, English ed. [New York: American Bible Society, 1982], 49–71). Because these sayings clearly formed some of Jesus' core teachings, he likely applied them to priests on more than one occasion.