



THE LIFE AND TIMES

of

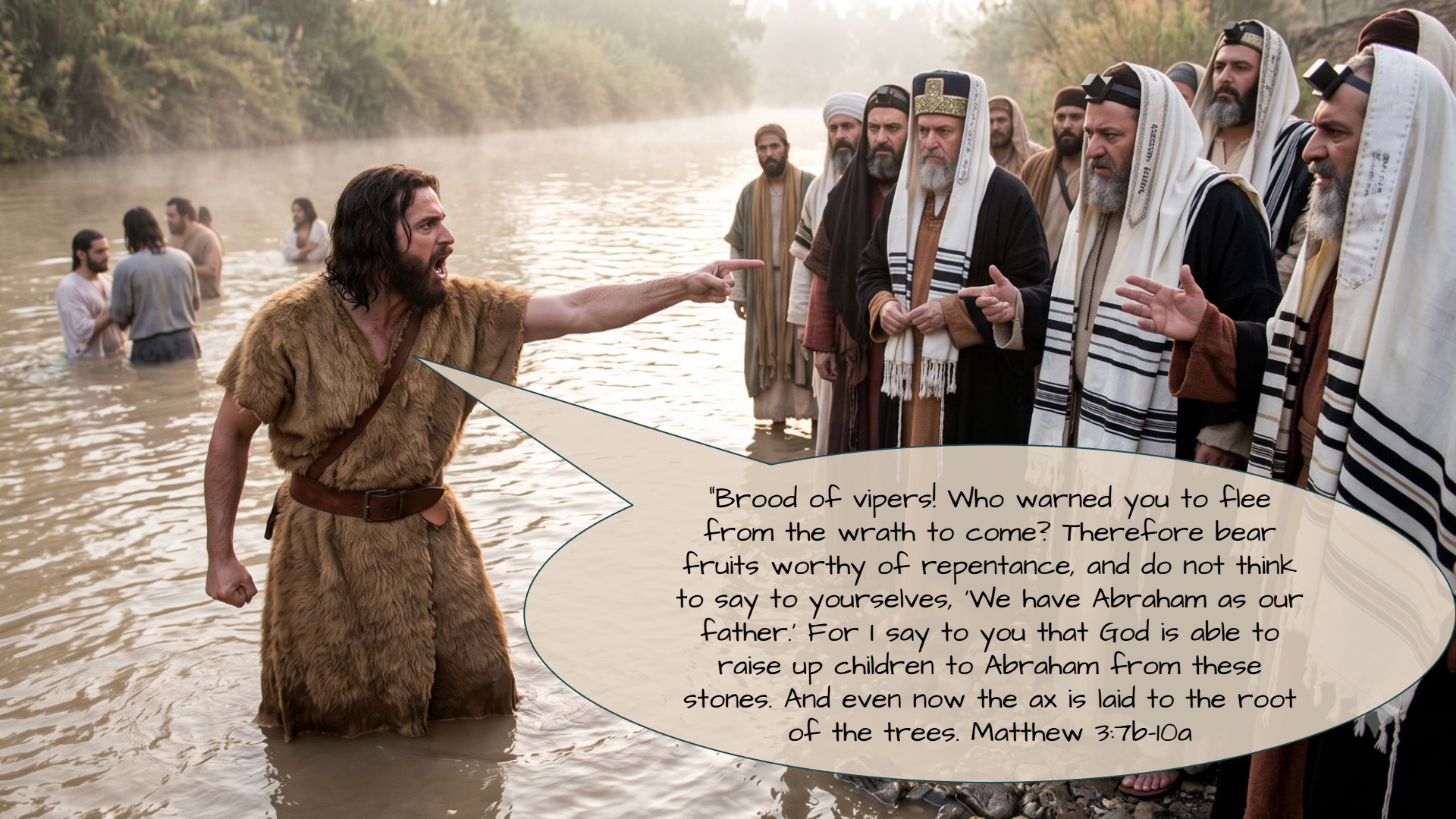
JESUS OF NAZARETH

Arc of Conflict

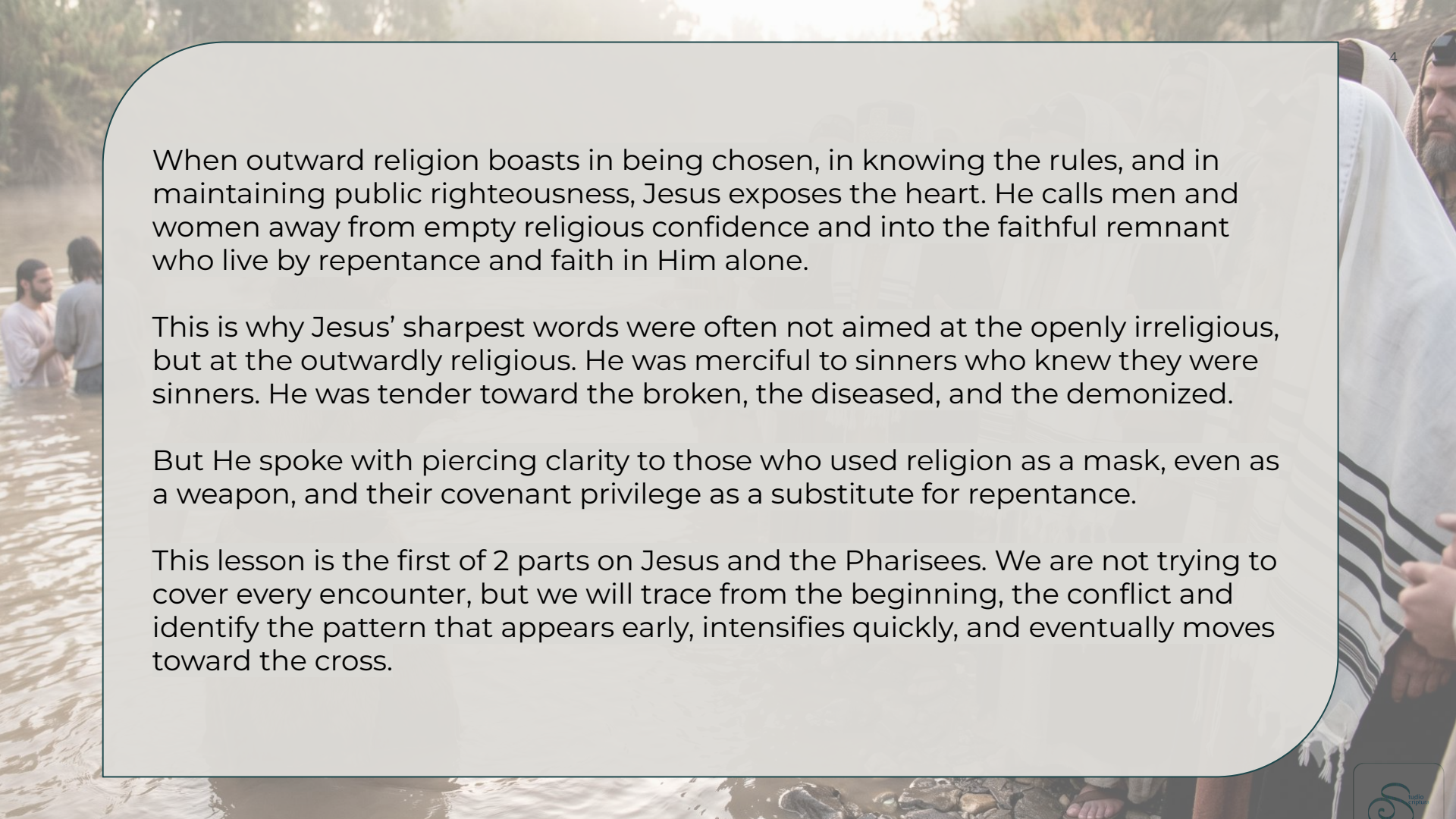
Brood of Vipers

Religious Pride
&
Covenantal Presumption

Part 1



"Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Matthew 3:7b-10a



When outward religion boasts in being chosen, in knowing the rules, and in maintaining public righteousness, Jesus exposes the heart. He calls men and women away from empty religious confidence and into the faithful remnant who live by repentance and faith in Him alone.

This is why Jesus' sharpest words were often not aimed at the openly irreligious, but at the outwardly religious. He was merciful to sinners who knew they were sinners. He was tender toward the broken, the diseased, and the demonized.

But He spoke with piercing clarity to those who used religion as a mask, even as a weapon, and their covenant privilege as a substitute for repentance.

This lesson is the first of 2 parts on Jesus and the Pharisees. We are not trying to cover every encounter, but we will trace from the beginning, the conflict and identify the pattern that appears early, intensifies quickly, and eventually moves toward the cross.

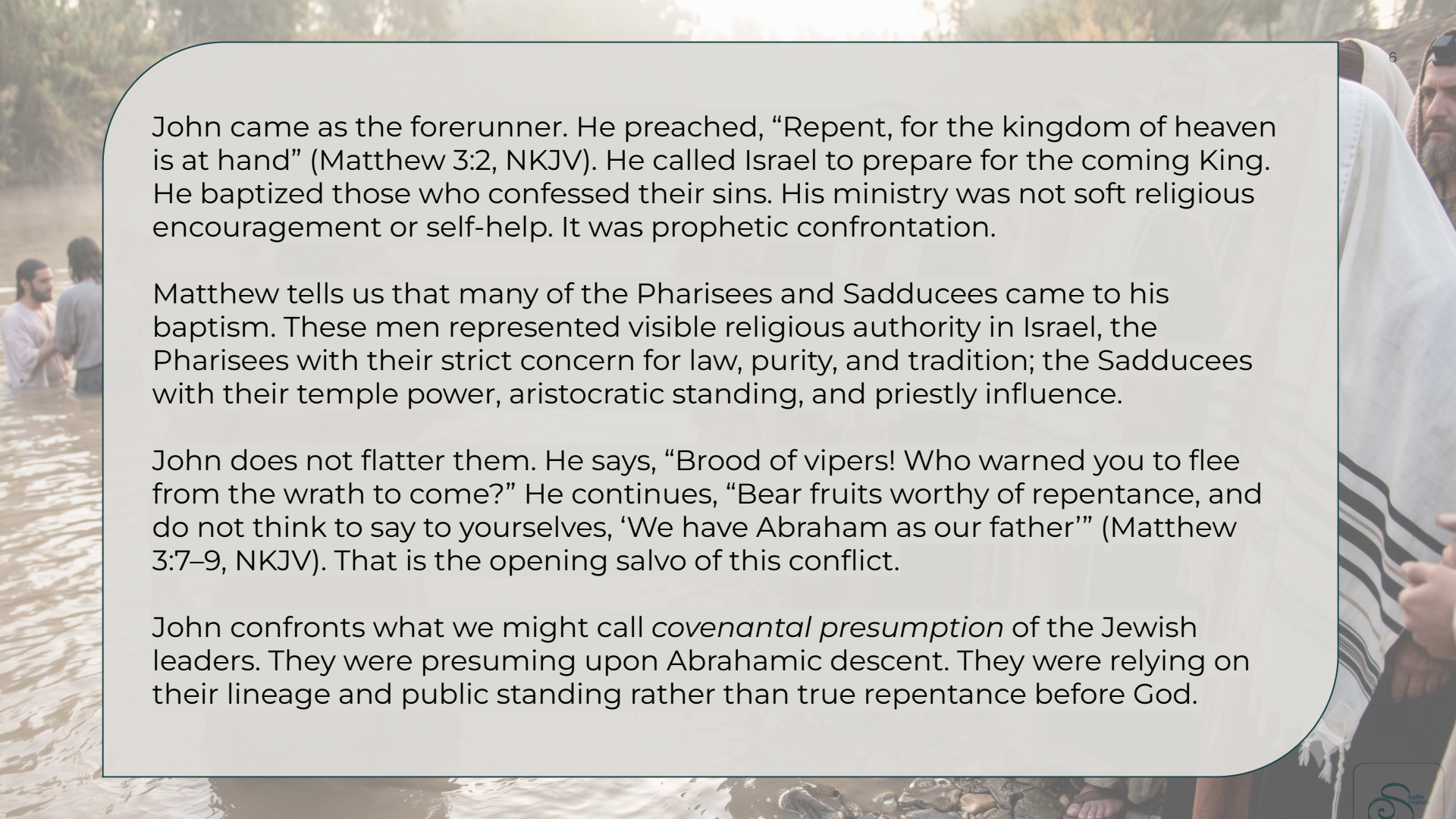
We acknowledge at the start: Jesus was Jewish. The apostles were Jewish. The earliest believers were Jewish. The Scriptures of the Church are rooted in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms. The issue is not Jewishness itself. The issue is covenantal presumption and religious leadership that resists the Messiah when He threatens its power.

And that warning does not stop with first-century Pharisees. The same danger has appeared whenever religious institutions, traditions, or influential voices are more concerned to protect their position and power than submit to the authority of Jesus.

The Pharisee is not merely a figure from ancient Judaism. The Pharisee is also a mirror held up to every age, every denomination, and every human heart.

And this conflict did not begin in the grainfields of Galilee. It was already visible at the Jordan River when John the Baptist began preaching repentance.





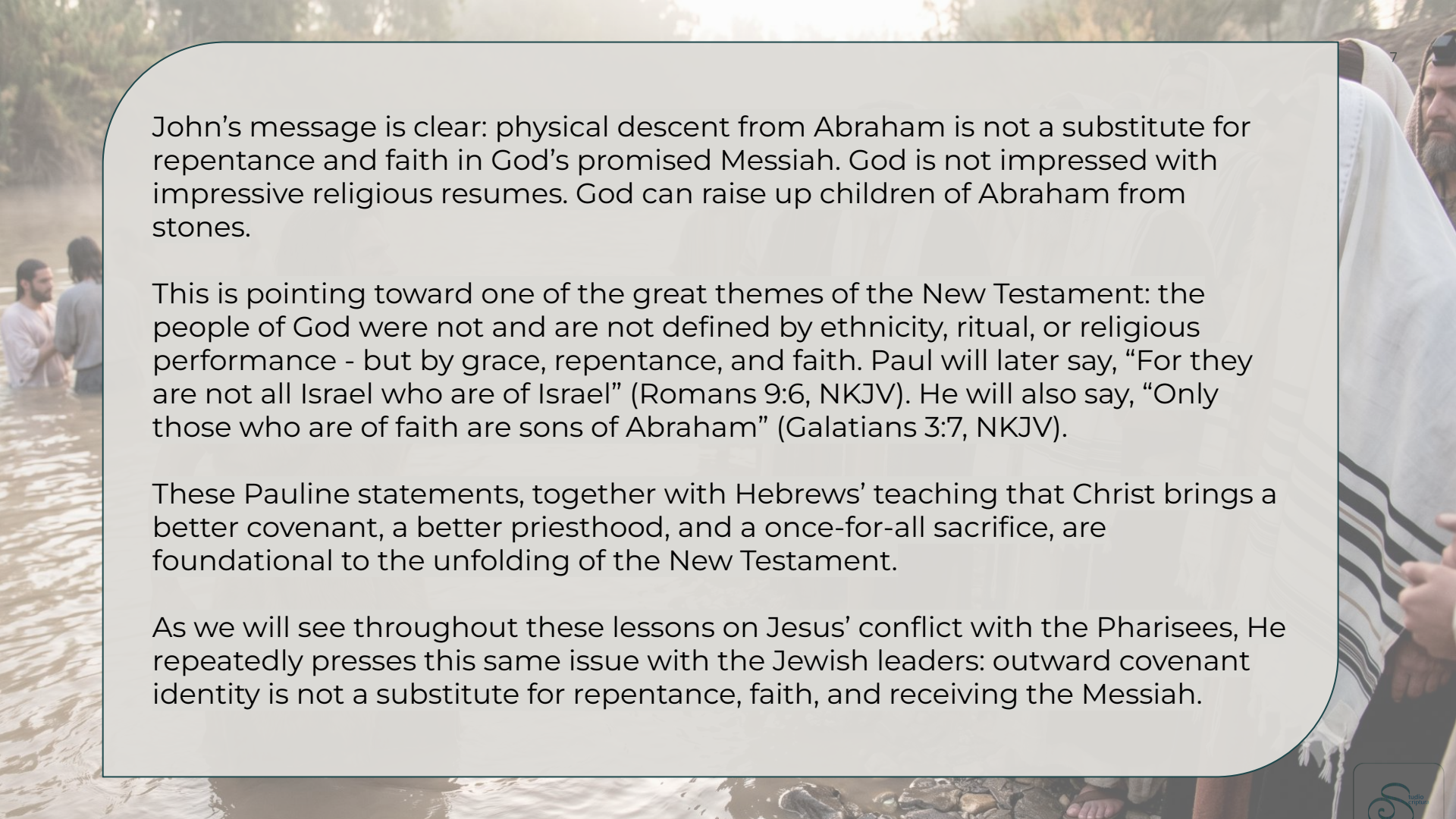
John came as the forerunner. He preached, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2, NKJV). He called Israel to prepare for the coming King. He baptized those who confessed their sins. His ministry was not soft religious encouragement or self-help. It was prophetic confrontation.

Matthew tells us that many of the Pharisees and Sadducees came to his baptism. These men represented visible religious authority in Israel, the Pharisees with their strict concern for law, purity, and tradition; the Sadducees with their temple power, aristocratic standing, and priestly influence.

John does not flatter them. He says, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?” He continues, “Bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father’” (Matthew 3:7–9, NKJV). That is the opening salvo of this conflict.

John confronts what we might call *covenantal presumption* of the Jewish leaders. They were presuming upon Abrahamic descent. They were relying on their lineage and public standing rather than true repentance before God.



A background image showing a group of people, some in white robes, standing in a river. The scene is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the text overlay.

John's message is clear: physical descent from Abraham is not a substitute for repentance and faith in God's promised Messiah. God is not impressed with impressive religious resumes. God can raise up children of Abraham from stones.

This is pointing toward one of the great themes of the New Testament: the people of God were not and are not defined by ethnicity, ritual, or religious performance - but by grace, repentance, and faith. Paul will later say, "For they are not all Israel who are of Israel" (Romans 9:6, NKJV). He will also say, "Only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham" (Galatians 3:7, NKJV).

These Pauline statements, together with Hebrews' teaching that Christ brings a better covenant, a better priesthood, and a once-for-all sacrifice, are foundational to the unfolding of the New Testament.

As we will see throughout these lessons on Jesus' conflict with the Pharisees, He repeatedly presses this same issue with the Jewish leaders: outward covenant identity is not a substitute for repentance, faith, and receiving the Messiah.



John the Baptist is not rejecting the Old Testament; he is enforcing it. The prophets had always called Israel to repentance, covenant faithfulness, justice, mercy, and humble dependence upon God. John stands in that prophetic line.

Later, after His resurrection, Jesus would say that “all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me” (Luke 24:44, NKJV). John is not setting aside the Old Testament; he is preparing Israel for its fulfillment in Christ.

So before Jesus begins His full public ministry, the religious establishment is already interested and is already being warned. The axe is laid to the root of the trees - God’s long patience is ending and judgment is ready. With the Messiah’s arrival, a decisive reckoning begins: produce the fruit of genuine repentance, or be cut down.

God is not abandoning His covenant promises, but He is judging an unfruitful religious order that relies on privilege without repentance. Religious privilege without repentance will not stand before a holy God. The coming Messiah will not merely challenge the existing religious order; He will expose its spiritual bankruptcy.



This background with John the Baptist helps us understand Jesus' ministry and conflicts.

When Jesus begins to teach, heal, forgive sinners, and speak with divine authority, the conflict has already started.

It is not that a few legal experts disliked His Sabbath views.

The deeper issue is that Jesus threatens the entire system of their lineage, presumed privilege, public righteousness, and community capital on which many of the leaders had built their identity.

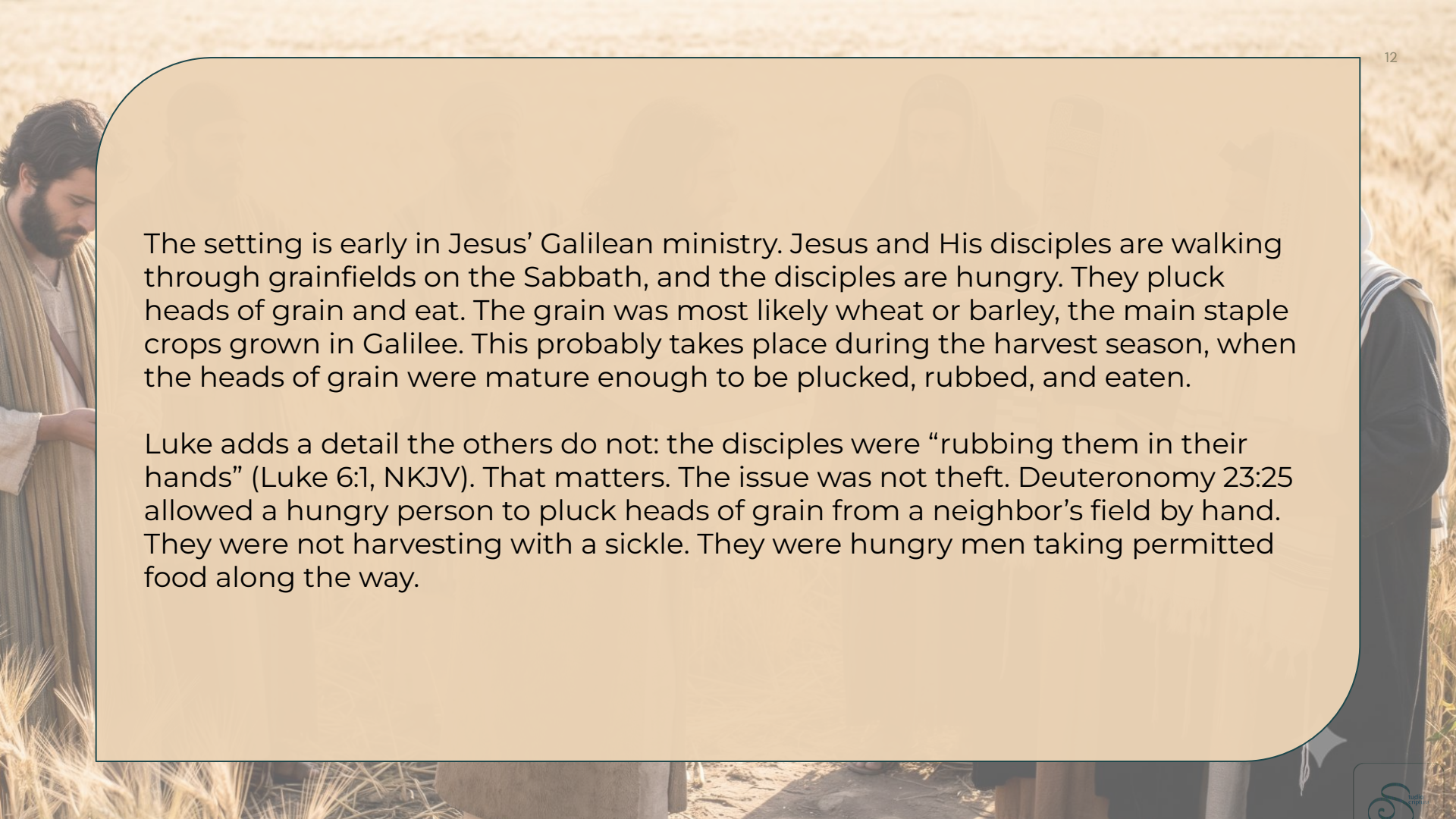




Sabbath Showdown: The Grainfields

Matthew 12:1–8; Mark 2:23–28; Luke 6:1–5





The setting is early in Jesus' Galilean ministry. Jesus and His disciples are walking through grainfields on the Sabbath, and the disciples are hungry. They pluck heads of grain and eat. The grain was most likely wheat or barley, the main staple crops grown in Galilee. This probably takes place during the harvest season, when the heads of grain were mature enough to be plucked, rubbed, and eaten.

Luke adds a detail the others do not: the disciples were “rubbing them in their hands” (Luke 6:1, NKJV). That matters. The issue was not theft. Deuteronomy 23:25 allowed a hungry person to pluck heads of grain from a neighbor's field by hand. They were not harvesting with a sickle. They were hungry men taking permitted food along the way.

The accusation was Sabbath violation.

By rubbing the heads of grain in their hands, they were separating the edible grain from the husk. Later rabbinic sources preserve and codify categories of Sabbath work such as reaping, winnowing, and preparing food. We need to be a bit careful here - The Mishnah and Talmud were codified after the time of Jesus, so we should not speak as if the later rabbinic system existed in full and final written form during His ministry. But these later sources do help us understand the kinds of Sabbath reasoning and rule categories that were developing in Jewish thinking at the time of Jesus.

So Luke's detail helps explain the charge. The Pharisees are not saying, "Your disciples are thieves." They are saying, "Your disciples are doing work on the Sabbath."

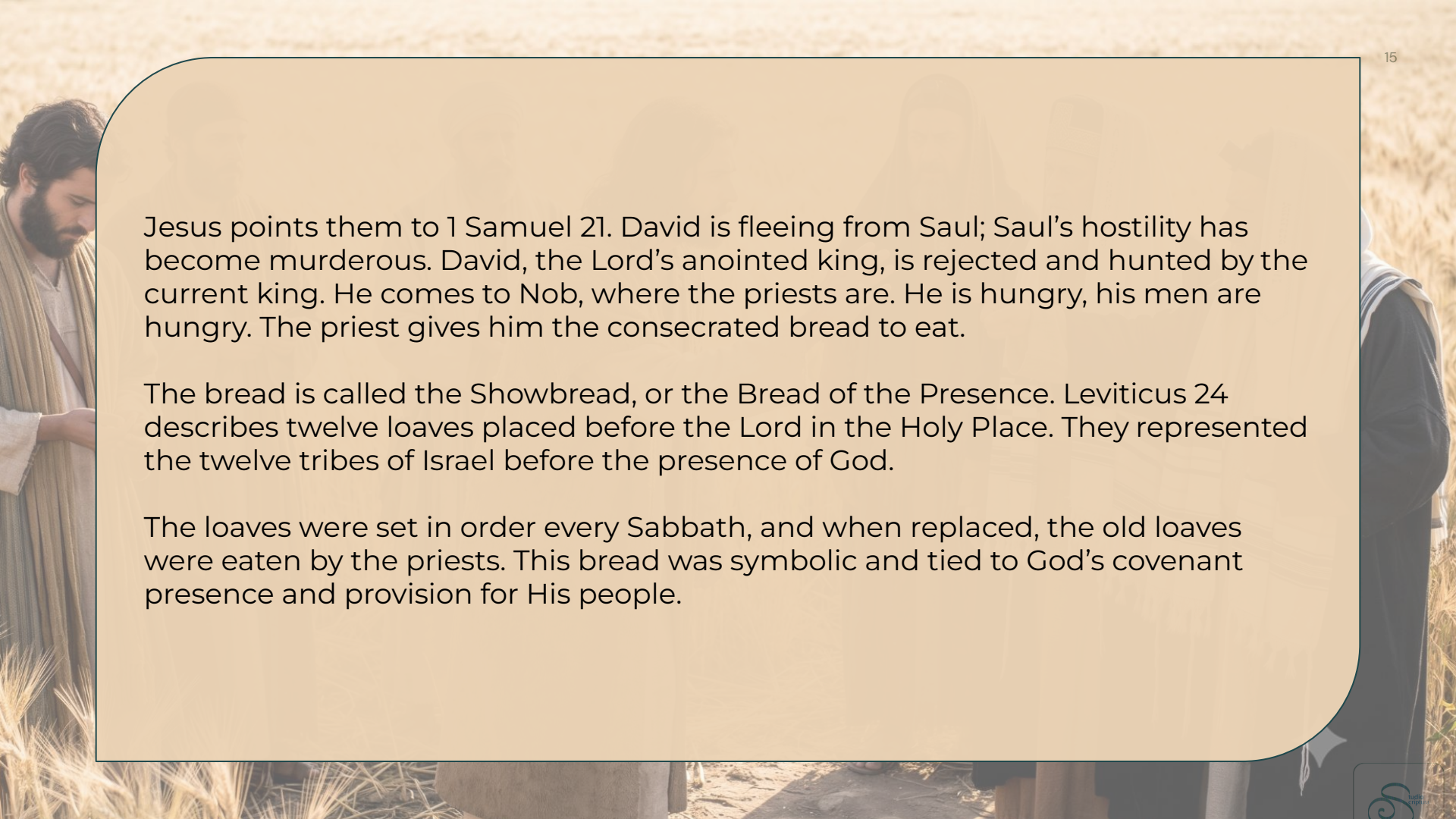
This is where the conflict becomes very important. These are not merely minor in-house debates over religious case law. This is a collision over authority. Who has the final right to define the meaning and proper application of the Law? The Pharisees, the visible religious experts? Or Jesus?

The Pharisees say, “Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” (Mark 2:24, NKJV).

Jesus answers, “Have you never read?” (Mark 2:25, NKJV). That question is devastating, and in fact it still is today. The Pharisees not only knew but had studied the text. They built a whole public identity around their mastery of the text. But Jesus says, in effect, “You have read the words, but you have missed the meaning. You have developed the rules for yourselves and others, but missed the heart of God. You claim to defend Scripture, but Scripture rightly understood stands against you.”

That must remain one of the major lessons of this series: Jesus always draws us back to Scripture. Not to sentiment. Not to religious tradition. Not to institutional authority. Not to what has always been done.

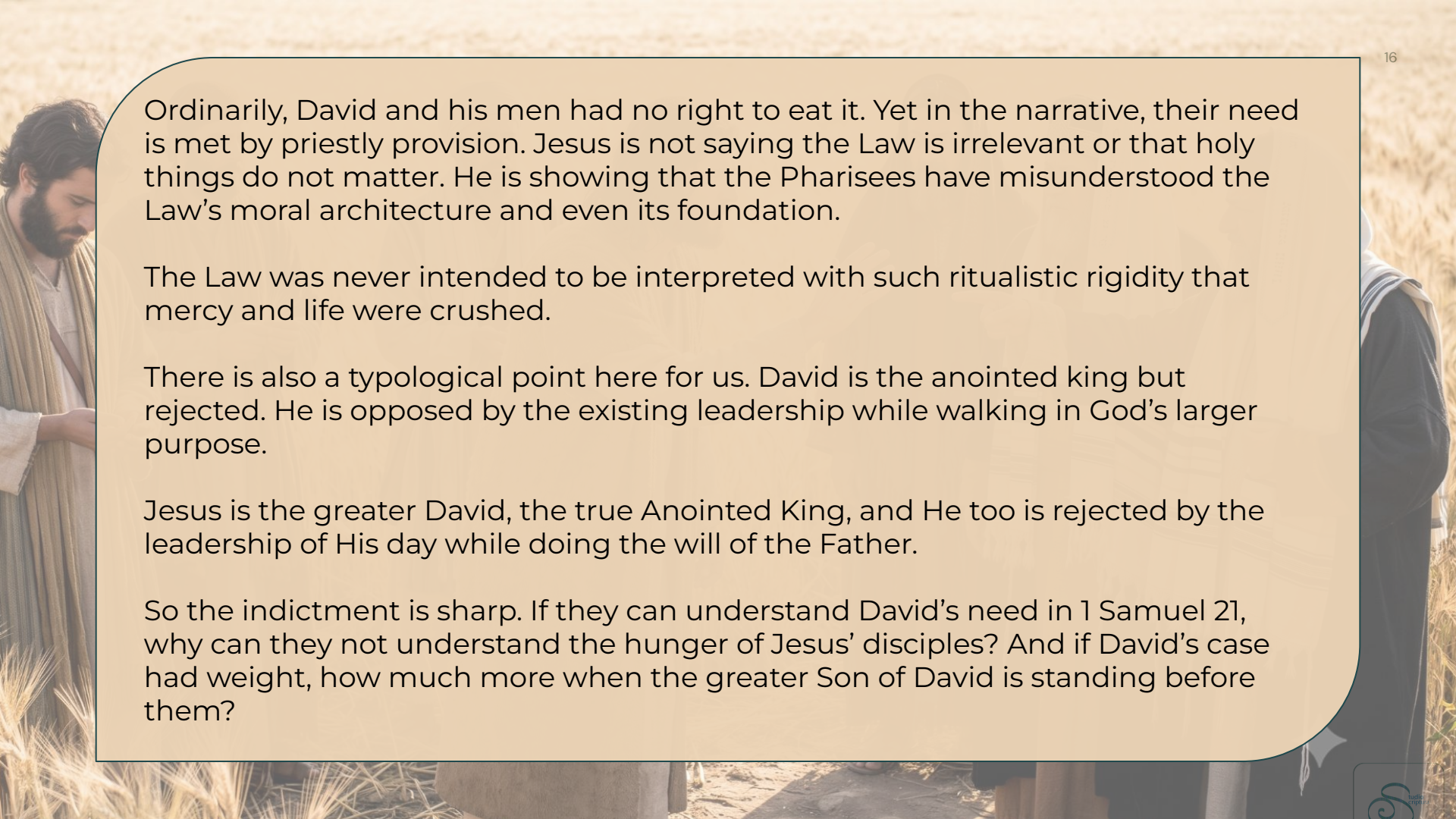
But back to the Word of God, rightly understood.



Jesus points them to 1 Samuel 21. David is fleeing from Saul; Saul's hostility has become murderous. David, the Lord's anointed king, is rejected and hunted by the current king. He comes to Nob, where the priests are. He is hungry, his men are hungry. The priest gives him the consecrated bread to eat.

The bread is called the Showbread, or the Bread of the Presence. Leviticus 24 describes twelve loaves placed before the Lord in the Holy Place. They represented the twelve tribes of Israel before the presence of God.

The loaves were set in order every Sabbath, and when replaced, the old loaves were eaten by the priests. This bread was symbolic and tied to God's covenant presence and provision for His people.



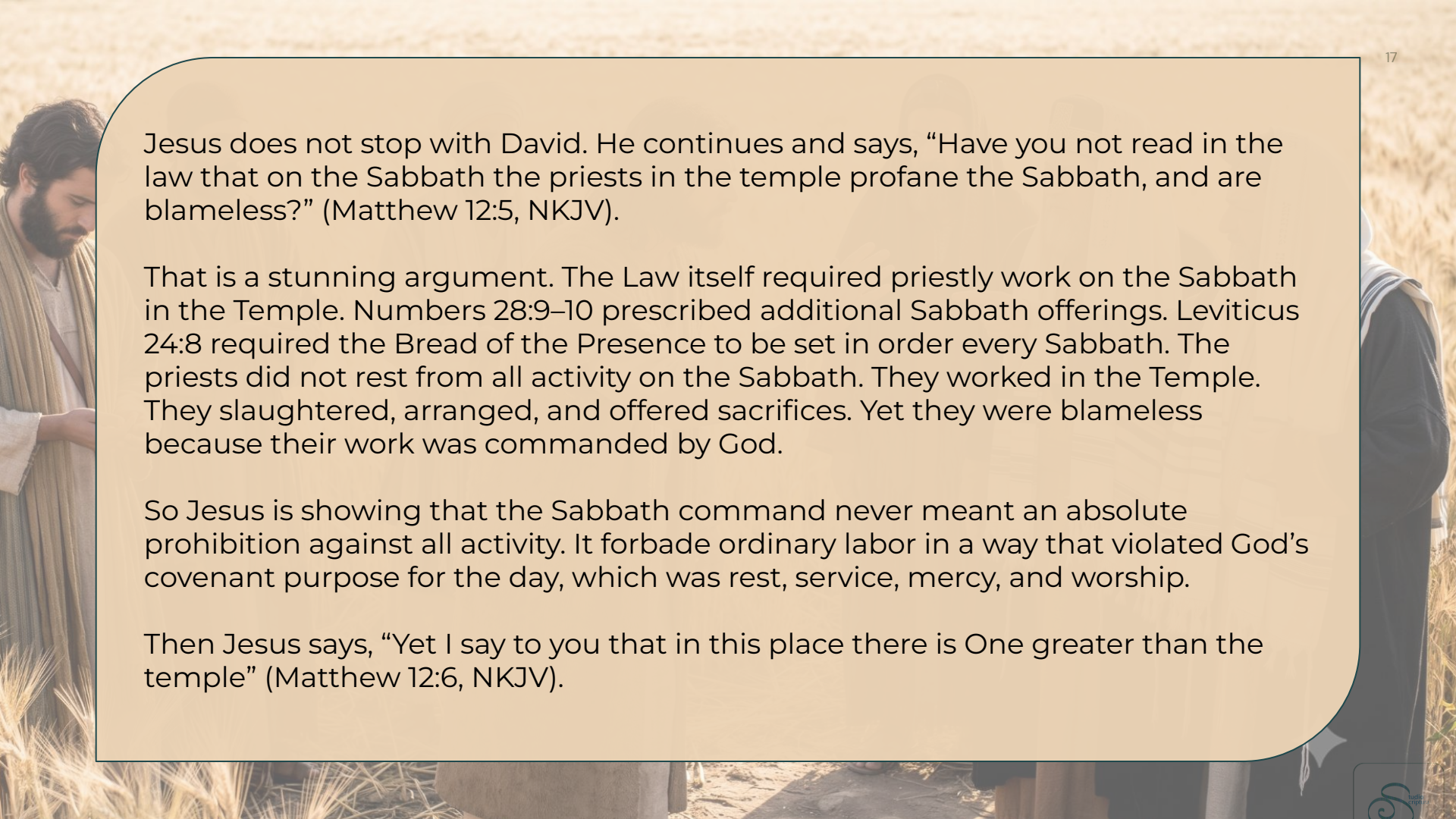
Ordinarily, David and his men had no right to eat it. Yet in the narrative, their need is met by priestly provision. Jesus is not saying the Law is irrelevant or that holy things do not matter. He is showing that the Pharisees have misunderstood the Law's moral architecture and even its foundation.

The Law was never intended to be interpreted with such ritualistic rigidity that mercy and life were crushed.

There is also a typological point here for us. David is the anointed king but rejected. He is opposed by the existing leadership while walking in God's larger purpose.

Jesus is the greater David, the true Anointed King, and He too is rejected by the leadership of His day while doing the will of the Father.

So the indictment is sharp. If they can understand David's need in 1 Samuel 21, why can they not understand the hunger of Jesus' disciples? And if David's case had weight, how much more when the greater Son of David is standing before them?

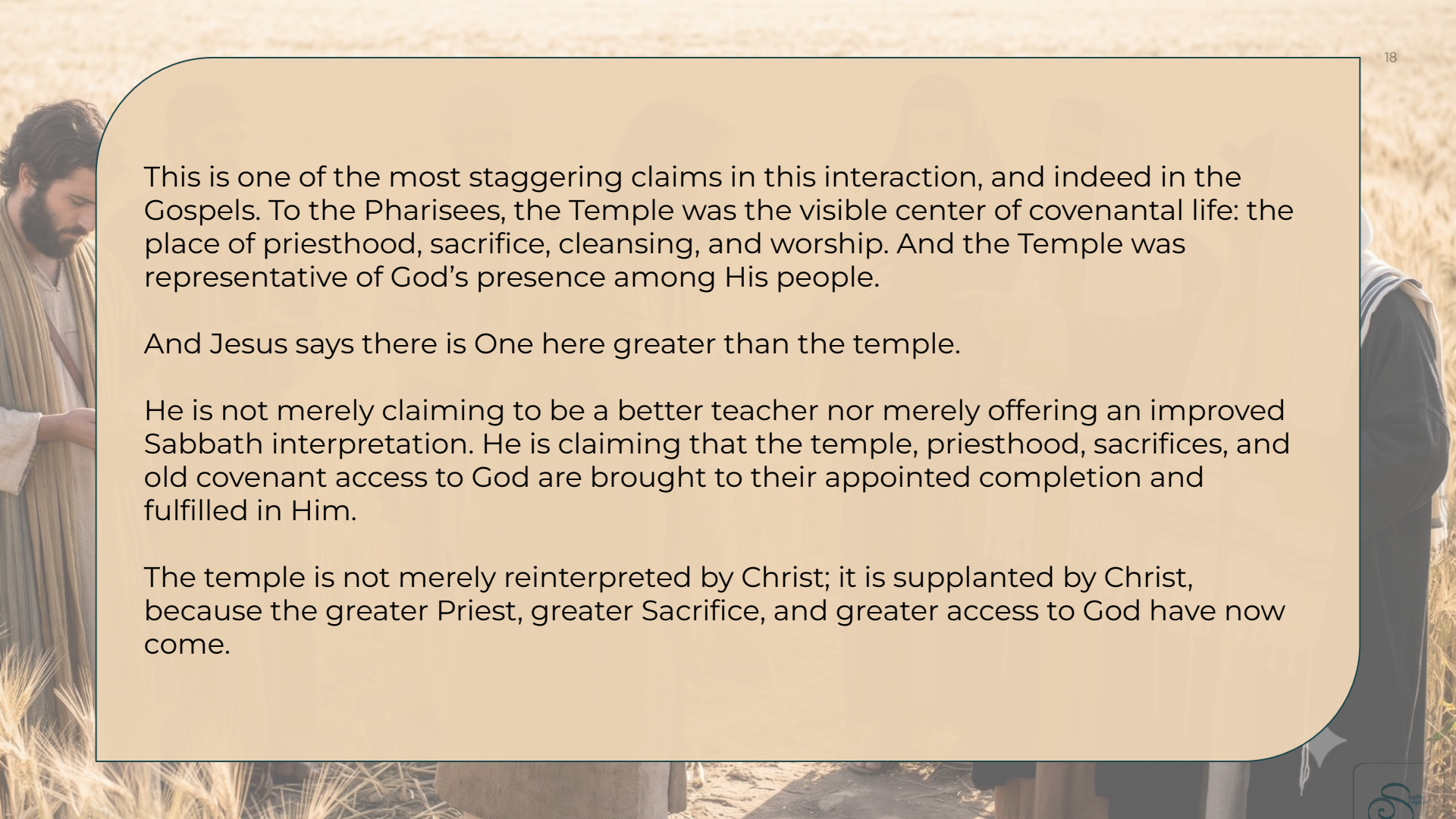


Jesus does not stop with David. He continues and says, “Have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?” (Matthew 12:5, NKJV).

That is a stunning argument. The Law itself required priestly work on the Sabbath in the Temple. Numbers 28:9–10 prescribed additional Sabbath offerings. Leviticus 24:8 required the Bread of the Presence to be set in order every Sabbath. The priests did not rest from all activity on the Sabbath. They worked in the Temple. They slaughtered, arranged, and offered sacrifices. Yet they were blameless because their work was commanded by God.

So Jesus is showing that the Sabbath command never meant an absolute prohibition against all activity. It forbade ordinary labor in a way that violated God’s covenant purpose for the day, which was rest, service, mercy, and worship.

Then Jesus says, “Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple” (Matthew 12:6, NKJV).



This is one of the most staggering claims in this interaction, and indeed in the Gospels. To the Pharisees, the Temple was the visible center of covenantal life: the place of priesthood, sacrifice, cleansing, and worship. And the Temple was representative of God's presence among His people.

And Jesus says there is One here greater than the temple.

He is not merely claiming to be a better teacher nor merely offering an improved Sabbath interpretation. He is claiming that the temple, priesthood, sacrifices, and old covenant access to God are brought to their appointed completion and fulfilled in Him.

The temple is not merely reinterpreted by Christ; it is supplanted by Christ, because the greater Priest, greater Sacrifice, and greater access to God have now come.

As what we have already studied, John 1:14 also helps us: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14, NKJV).

The word “dwelt” carries the meaning of tabernacling. The eternal Word took on flesh and tabernacled among us. In the Old Testament, the tabernacle and temple were the appointed meeting places between God and His people. In Christ, God Himself has come to fellowship with His people.

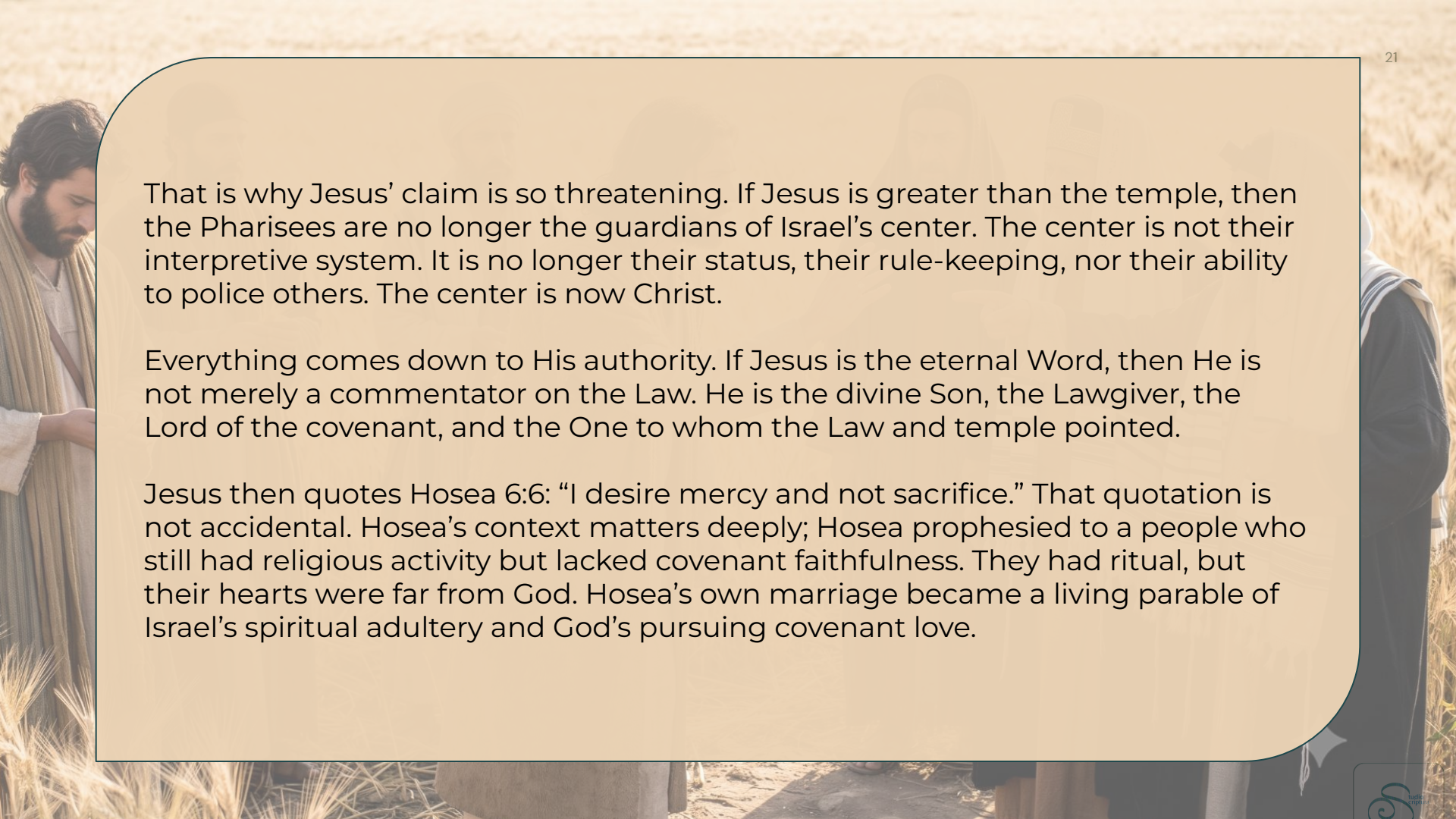
Because of Jesus: We do not return to temple sacrifices because His true sacrifice has been offered.

We do not need a Levitical priesthood to mediate access because Christ is our great High Priest.

The Book of Hebrews makes this unmistakable. Christ is the Mediator of “a better covenant, which was established on better promises” (Hebrews 8:6, NKJV). The old covenant is described as becoming “obsolete” and “ready to vanish away” (Hebrews 8:13, NKJV).

Why? Because Christ has now done what the temple sacrifices could only point toward. He offered Himself “once for all” (Hebrews 7:27, NKJV). He entered the Most Holy Place “once for all” by His own blood, “having obtained eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:12, NKJV). And by “one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14, NKJV).

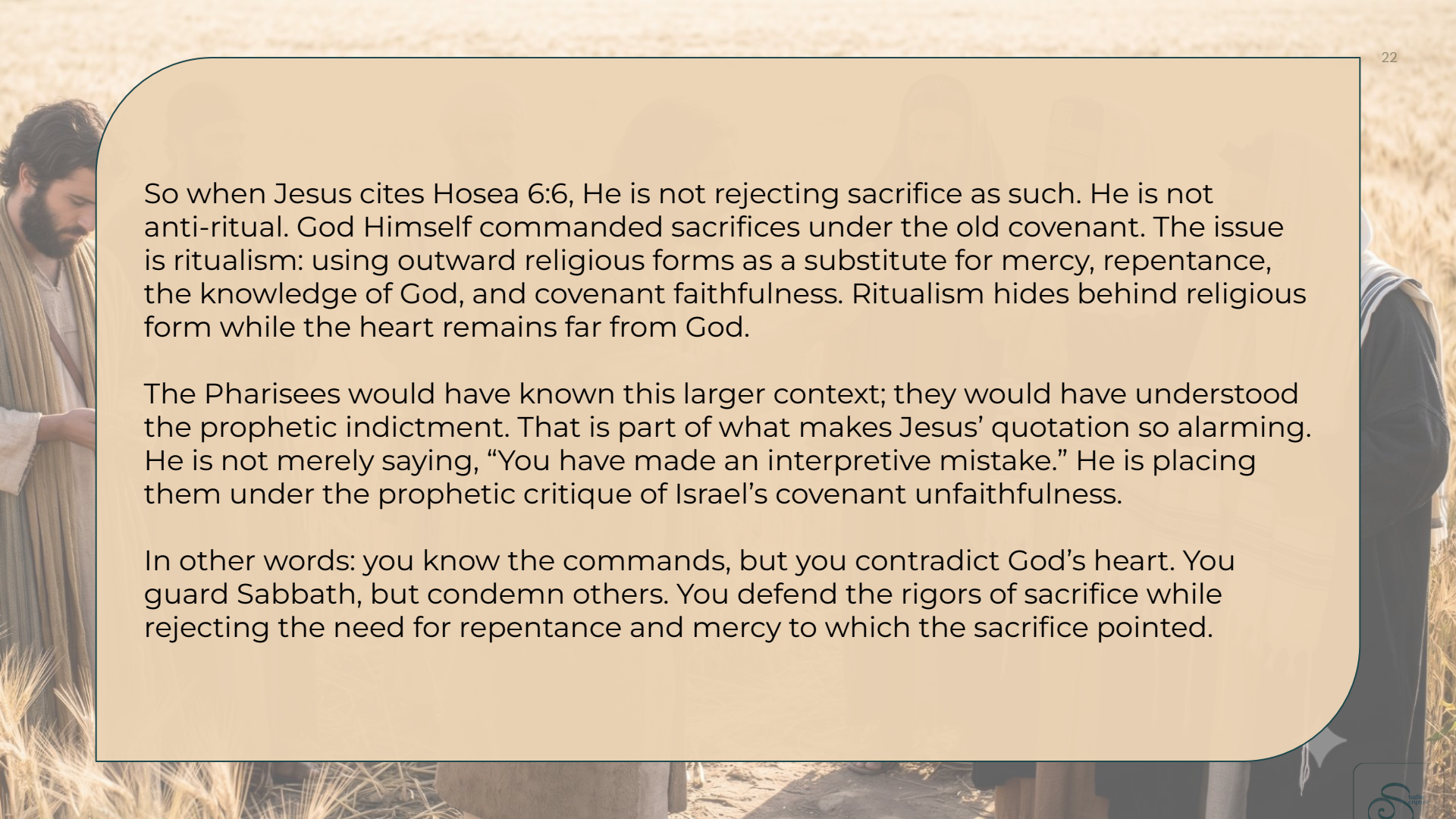
Christ does not merely stand beside the temple as a parallel religious symbol. He surpasses it. The signs, types, and shadows give way to the reality. The old covenant temple system is supplanted by Christ Himself as the true meeting place between God and man.



That is why Jesus' claim is so threatening. If Jesus is greater than the temple, then the Pharisees are no longer the guardians of Israel's center. The center is not their interpretive system. It is no longer their status, their rule-keeping, nor their ability to police others. The center is now Christ.

Everything comes down to His authority. If Jesus is the eternal Word, then He is not merely a commentator on the Law. He is the divine Son, the Lawgiver, the Lord of the covenant, and the One to whom the Law and temple pointed.

Jesus then quotes Hosea 6:6: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." That quotation is not accidental. Hosea's context matters deeply; Hosea prophesied to a people who still had religious activity but lacked covenant faithfulness. They had ritual, but their hearts were far from God. Hosea's own marriage became a living parable of Israel's spiritual adultery and God's pursuing covenant love.



So when Jesus cites Hosea 6:6, He is not rejecting sacrifice as such. He is not anti-ritual. God Himself commanded sacrifices under the old covenant. The issue is ritualism: using outward religious forms as a substitute for mercy, repentance, the knowledge of God, and covenant faithfulness. Ritualism hides behind religious form while the heart remains far from God.

The Pharisees would have known this larger context; they would have understood the prophetic indictment. That is part of what makes Jesus' quotation so alarming. He is not merely saying, "You have made an interpretive mistake." He is placing them under the prophetic critique of Israel's covenant unfaithfulness.

In other words: you know the commands, but you contradict God's heart. You guard Sabbath, but condemn others. You defend the rigors of sacrifice while rejecting the need for repentance and mercy to which the sacrifice pointed.

This remains a word for us today. Whenever we use tradition, denominational loyalty, liturgy, or biblical knowledge to avoid humility, repentance, faith, and love, we are reenacting the same spiritual corruption Jesus exposed.

Jesus concludes, “For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath” (Matthew 12:8, NKJV). Mark adds, “The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27, NKJV). The Sabbath was given by God for rest, worship, and human flourishing under His lordship. It was not given as a tool for religious supervisors to weaponize against those outside the club. But Jesus does not stop with this humanitarian principle. He moves to a Christological conclusion: *the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath*. Matthew 12:8

The Sabbath goes back to creation. It is embedded in the Ten Commandments. For Jesus to claim lordship over the Sabbath is to claim divine authority. He is not merely saying, “I understand the Sabbath better than you.” He is saying, “The Sabbath belongs to Me and its purpose is governed by Me.”

If Jesus is right (and He is) then their entire religious system is called into question. Their public personas, moral scorekeeping, and their ability to condemn others are exposed as religious performance. This is why the conflict escalates.





Sabbath Showdown: Man With a Withered Hand

Mark 2:23–28; Matt. 12:1–8; Luke 6:1–5

The second Sabbath clash comes very quickly. Mark places it immediately after the grainfields controversy. Matthew moves directly from the grainfields into the synagogue. Luke says it happened on another Sabbath. The text does not give us an exact number of days, but the narrative movement indicates that within a short span of Sabbaths, the conflict arises again and moves from accusation to conspiracy.

The location is not named. Mark says Jesus entered “the synagogue again” (Mark 3:1, NKJV). Given the Galilean setting, Capernaum is possible, but the text does not specify. So we should not be more certain than Scripture is.

What we do know is that there was a man there with a withered hand. Luke tells us it was his right hand. The Gospel term suggests something shriveled or atrophied. We cannot diagnose the man from the text, but possible medical causes might include nerve injury, stroke-related weakness, or congenital deformity. It probably involved visible weakness, abnormal posture, and social embarrassment.

But the theological point is more important than the medical speculation. In that culture, visible disability could carry stigma; people could wrongly associate physical affliction with shame, hidden sin, even divine judgment. This man may have hidden his hand under his garment for years, so we can only imagine the vulnerability and embarrassment of being called into the center of the synagogue with his weakness exposed before everyone.

Luke says they watched Him to see whether He would heal on the Sabbath, “that they might find an accusation against Him” (Luke 6:7, NKJV).

Notice how a suffering man is present, and they see him as bait. They are not moved by compassion; they are not wondering whether the kingdom of God is breaking in. They are waiting to use a man’s affliction as evidence against Jesus.

That is what religious hardness can do. It can sit in a place of worship, look at human suffering, and think about accusation.



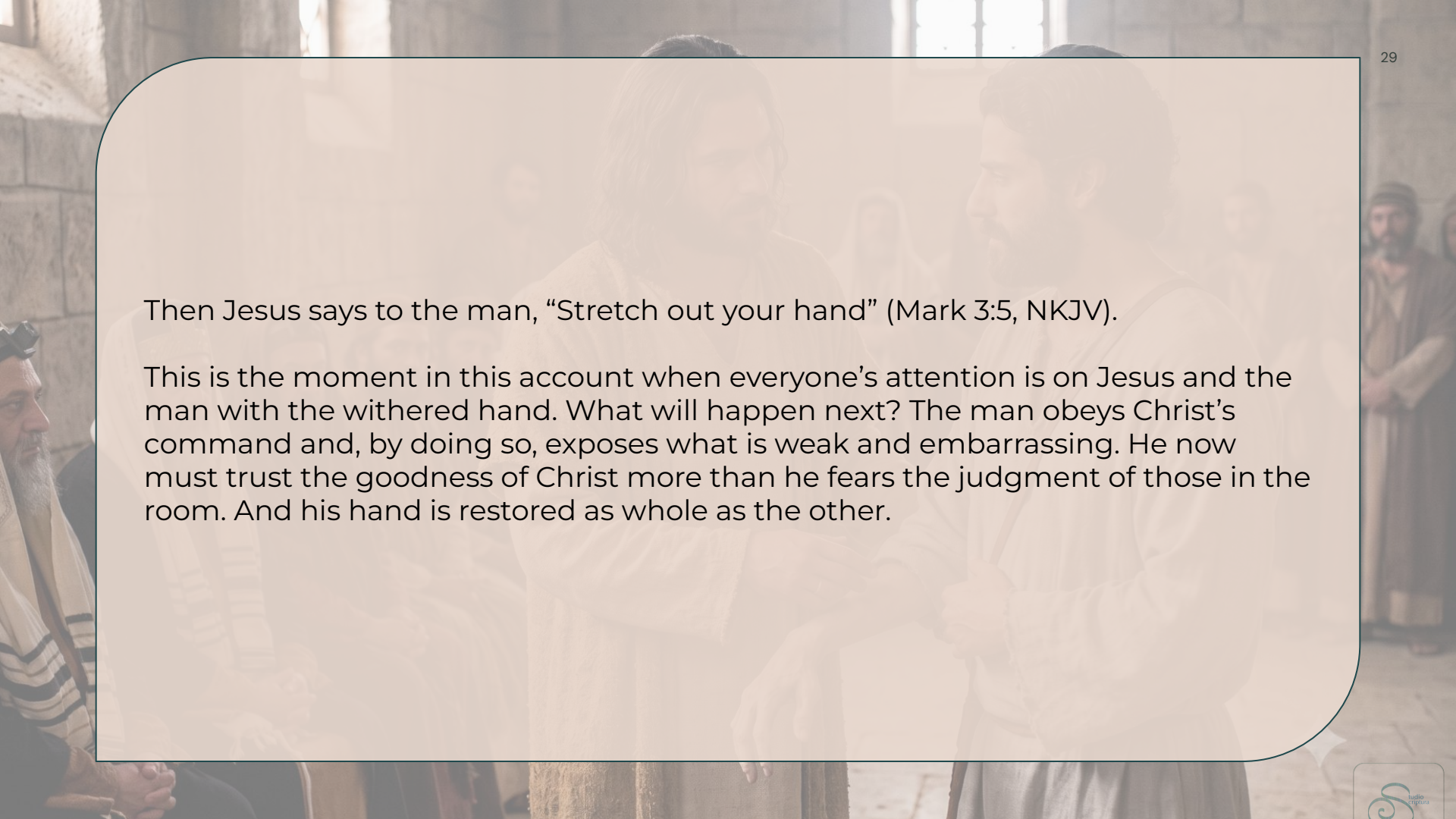
A withered hand was not immediately life-threatening, so they thought they had Jesus cornered. If He heals, they accuse Him of Sabbath violation. If He refuses to heal, He appears to withhold mercy and contradict the character of His own ministry.

But Jesus turns their trap to His and the man's advantage. He calls the man forward. He asks, "Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?" (Mark 3:4, NKJV).

That question exposes everything. The Pharisees had framed the issue as permitted work versus forbidden work. Jesus frames it as mercy versus hardness.

Their silence is their indictment. Jesus exposes their hypocrisy. Their Sabbath strictness is selective. It bends for their own interests but becomes rigid against mercy. They can rescue a sheep but condemn the healing of a man.





Then Jesus says to the man, “Stretch out your hand” (Mark 3:5, NKJV).

This is the moment in this account when everyone’s attention is on Jesus and the man with the withered hand. What will happen next? The man obeys Christ’s command and, by doing so, exposes what is weak and embarrassing. He now must trust the goodness of Christ more than he fears the judgment of those in the room. And his hand is restored as whole as the other.

The man's condition is not presented as punishment for hidden sin, and we should not turn his disability into merely an allegory. Yet his willingness to obey Christ publicly does illustrate a broader truth: faith trusts Christ enough to bring weakness, shame, and need into His presence rather than hiding from Him.

We are not required to broadcast every sin, weakness, or shameful part of life in public. Scripture gives us categories for confession to God, confession to those we have sinned against, and wise accountability within the body of Christ. Not everything belongs in front of everyone. But we learn we must be honest before God and stretch out those hidden sins that are withering away our life before the Lord.

That hidden pride. The secret resentment. That selective mercy. Addiction to approval. Envy and covetousness. That old bitterness you still seem to cherish. Those hidden lustful daydreams. The addiction we continue to justify. Quiet paranoia resulting in hatred.

Christ does not restore what we insist on hiding from Him. He calls us to bring our hidden sins, such as those just listed, that have withered our life. He calls us to repent before Him for mercy and healing.

Jesus looked around at them “with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts” (Mark 3:5, NKJV). This is holy anger; it is not irritation nor loss of control. It is the anger of the Son of Man when religion becomes merciless and hard-hearted. And it is anger laden with sorrow. Mark joins anger and grief - anger and grief over men who would rather preserve their position and control than rejoice in restoration.



Luke adds they were filled with rage. The Greek word can convey senseless or irrational fury, a rage no longer governed by truth. Mark says the Pharisees went out and immediately plotted with the Herodians against Him, how they might destroy Him. That is a clear escalation.

In a very short span, the posture has moved from watching, to accusing, to plotting destruction. This is one of the central warnings of the lesson: unrepentant religious pride does not remain static. When threatened, it becomes vicious in intent, and eventually in action.

The Herodians were savvy political operators aligned with the Herodian dynasty and their Roman-backed political order. Herod Antipas was the tetrarch of Galilee and Perea during Jesus' ministry. He was a son of Herod the Great, the ruler associated with Jesus' birth. Antipas is the Herod involved in the execution of John the Baptist. By contrast, the Pharisees were religious conservatives concerned with law, purity, and Jewish covenant identity. They were not natural allies but had a shared opposition to the true King, which was enough to make them allies.



To the Pharisees, Jesus threatened their theological authority, public righteousness, Sabbath control, and the moral capital of outward rule-keeping.

To the Herodians, Jesus threatened political stability, popular influence, and the settled arrangement of power.

Religious control and political control discover a common enemy in Jesus. Together they likely saw in Jesus the risk that Roman power might reassert itself and brutally extinguish the limited autonomy they retained under Herodian rule. Concerns about Roman intervention would eventually be expressed openly by the Jerusalem leadership, although Mark does not tell us precisely what was discussed at this early meeting.

The conflict first begins with scrutiny, but not the honest scrutiny of someone seeking truth. It is the scrutiny of accusation. The leaders watch Jesus and His disciples closely, not in order to learn, but in order to find fault. We still meet this spirit today.

Some watch Christians, churches, pastors, and ministries not to understand, but to accuse quickly. Sometimes the criticism is deserved and must be heard. But there is also a watching that is not humble discernment; it is accusation looking for ammunition.

Second, Jesus publicly exposes the heart and their faulty hermeneutic. Jesus exposes not only their behavior but their incorrect way of reading Scripture. They know the texts but miss the goal, the purpose, the fulfillment of the Law in the Messiah. They can cite Scripture yet contradict Scripture when they do so. They can defend Sabbath while resisting the Lord of the Sabbath.

Third, there is resolve to destroy or neutralize the threat. Once pride remains unrepentant, it does not simply disagree. It turns dark, seeks to silence, and ultimately destroy. That is the arc of conflict.

God justifies the ungodly by faith apart from works. God receives repentant sinners freely through Christ. God gathers tax collectors, prostitutes, gentiles, lepers, demoniacs, Roman centurions, broken women, prodigal sons, and humbled Pharisees into one people by grace.



We must not keep this lesson at a distance from us and maintain it at a safe distance from us in the first century.

The Holy Spirit does not allow Christians to read these passages with superiority. Paul explicitly warns Gentile believers in Romans 11 not to boast. The issue is proud religion through the ages. And sadly, proud religion has appeared throughout Christendom. Whenever religious authorities are threatened by the clear teachings of Jesus, they move quickly to protect their positions of control, from control to accusation, and from accusation to punishment.

In the medieval and pre-Reformation church, calls to return to Scripture's authority and justification by faith alone were often met with accusations, suppression, and sometimes death. In Protestant, evangelical, and even Reformed contexts, the same spiritual corruption can appear in different clothing. A church may defend its tradition more fiercely than Scripture. A denomination may protect its brand more than truth. A pastor may protect his platform more than the sheep.



And this danger is not confined to Rome, Geneva, Canterbury, Nashville, Dallas, or any other center of visible Christianity. It can appear in Reformed circles. It can appear in Baptist circles. It can appear in Bible churches. It can appear in independent churches. It can appear in Studio Scriptura. It can appear in me. And it can appear in you.

We should be very careful about reading the Pharisee only as “those false religious guys back then.” The Pharisee can live in the heart today when it says: I know more Scripture than they do. I am more faithful than they are. I would never fall into sin like that. My tradition is safe from correction. My public reputation must be protected. Mercy toward that person is compromise. If God receives them freely, my obedience has been cheapened.

That is the Pharisee type thinking. Jesus hates it and confronts it head on.

John the Baptist had already warned them: do not presume upon Abrahamic descent: *God is able to raise up children for Abraham from stones*. That warning unfolds through the New Testament. Many visible leaders in Israel rejected the Messiah, yet many Jews believed: the apostles, the earliest church in Jerusalem, thousands at Pentecost, and Paul himself, a Hebrew of Hebrews and apostle to the Gentiles.

So the Gospel moving to the nations is not God abandoning His promises. It is God fulfilling them. The blessing promised to Abraham in genesis 12 was always intended to reach *all the families of the earth*.

The Gospel expands beyond Judaism, as always intended, and moves beyond a covenantal system centered on temple, priesthood, sacrifice, circumcision, and ethnic boundary markers, because Christ Himself is now the center. He is the greater Temple, the final Sacrifice, the great High Priest, and the Lord of all.



That is why this conflict was so intense from the beginning.

Jesus welcomed sinners without requiring them to climb the ladder of Pharisaic approval. He forgave sins directly. He healed on the Sabbath. He exposed public righteousness as insufficient. He claimed authority over the Sabbath. He claimed to be greater than the temple. He gathered a people around Himself by grace.

If Jesus is right (and He is), their whole *righteousness project* collapses.

And this is only the beginning.

These Sabbath confrontations are the first major wave in a series of conflicts that will continue to intensify. There is more to come in Part 2: the traditions of the elders, ceremonial hand-washing, table fellowship with sinners, demands for signs, the sign of Jonah, the woes against the Pharisees, and the final confrontations of Passion Week.

The pattern we have seen will keep appearing in Part 2 of this study: accusation and the growing resolve to kill Him.



If You Missed a
Week

Where We've Been



Legion, the Swine, and a Cliff

Demons Flee, Pigs Plunge, Power Proclaimed

Matthew 8:28–34; Mark 5:1–20; Luke 8:26–39

1. Jesus deliberately crossed into the pagan Decapolis, demonstrating His global authority by entering territory others would have avoided.
2. There He met a possessed, violent, isolated man living naked among the tombs. A vivid picture of how the enemy degrades and destroys.
3. The demons, calling themselves Legion, instantly recognized Jesus as the *Son of the Most High God* and begged Him not to torment them.
4. But Christ is never outnumbered or overpowered. With a single sovereign word, Jesus cast them out. They entered a herd of swine that plunged into the sea, visibly confirming the man's liberation.
5. The townspeople found the man transformed: sitting at Jesus' feet, clothed, and in his right mind. A life reordered under Christ's lordship.
6. Yet they asked Jesus to leave, seeming to prefer predictable bondage over disruptive holiness.
7. Jesus commissioned the restored man to tell his family and friends what the Lord had done for him, turning one redeemed life into a powerful testimony throughout a region.





If You Missed a Week Where We've Been *(continued)*



Secrets of the Kingdom: Parables That Both Confound and Reveal Matthew 13

1. Christ's kingdom does not arrive through immediate political triumph, but grows quietly until the final harvest
2. Jesus used parables to reveal spiritual mysteries to His disciples while concealing them from hardened hearts
3. The Word's impact depends on the heart; only good soil produces genuine fruit despite worldly pressures
4. The visible church contains true believers and false professors, growing together until God's final judgment
5. God's kingdom starts from small, unimpressive beginnings but quietly produces a transformative outcome over time
6. True disciples recognize Christ's incomparable value, joyfully surrendering old desires and reordering their lives for Him
7. Believers must faithfully sow the Word without despairing over mixed results, trusting God with the final harvest

If You Missed a Week Where We've Been *(continued)*

Signs & Wonders - The Miracles of Jesus that Mend Body and Soul

1. The miracles of Jesus are signs: they reveal His glory, identity, authority, compassion, and kingdom.
2. Jesus mends both body and soul - but forgiveness of sins and peace with God are the deeper need.
3. His miracles show authority over sickness, sin, demons, creation, defilement, death, and the grave.
4. Miracles show that the kingdom has arrived in Christ: healing, provision, restoration, and resurrection preview the world to come.
5. Miracles call for faith, worship, obedience, and witness, not mere amazement or curiosity.
6. Miracles confirmed Christ and His apostolic messengers. Although they are not normative today in the same apostolic-sign sense, God still hears prayer and acts miraculously according to His sovereign will.
7. Jesus' miracles ultimately point beyond themselves to the cross, the empty tomb, and the greatest miracle: sinners made alive in Christ.





If You Missed a Week Where We've Been *(continued)*



Mountainside Manifesto: The Sermon That Still Shakes the Soul Matthew 5–7

1. We are saved by grace through faith; the *Sermon on the Mount* shows how saved disciples are called to live.
2. Jesus gives disciples (kingdom people) a whole new way to see and live in the world: "*But I say to you.*"
3. The Beatitudes show the character (the *attitude*) of the disciple: humility, mourning, meekness, mercy, purity, peace, and courage.
4. Salt and light remind us to preserve truth and shine visibly for the Father's glory.
5. Jesus fulfills the Law and Prophets and drives righteousness into behavior, attitude, and the heart.
6. How we respond to anger, lust, marriage, oaths, retaliation, enemies, money, worry, and judgment reveal whether we live under Christ's authority.
7. The sermon ends with a searching question: Are we building on sand, or on the rock of Christ's Word?

If You Missed a Week Where We've Been *(continued)*

Come, Follow Me Twelve Ordinary Men, One Extraordinary Call

1. Jesus called ordinary men into extraordinary service. Christ used them to turn the world upside down.
2. John the Baptist pointed his disciples to Christ: "Behold the Lamb of God." True discipleship begins with seeing Jesus as the fulfillment of redemption and salvation.
3. Andrew brought Peter, Philip brought Nathanael, and Matthew brought sinners. A disciple wants others to "come and see."
4. "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" - transformation under Christ's hand.
5. Discipleship begins with being with Jesus - "that they might be with Him," then sent to preach.
6. The Twelve were real men with real weaknesses and varied backgrounds. Christ formed fishermen, a tax collector, a zealot, doubters, bold men, quiet men, and one tragic betrayer.
7. Bonhoeffer reminds us that discipleship is costly, not casual: *When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.*





If You Missed a Week Where We've Been *(continued)*



A Late Night Visitor: Nicodemus and the Mystery of the New Birth

1. John 3 centers on Jesus' declaration: "You must be born again." Religion, morality, heritage, and status cannot replace new life received by faith.
2. Nicodemus was respected and religious, yet Jesus exposed his deepest need: sin and the need for spiritual rebirth through faith
3. The new birth is not self-improvement or religious activity. It is the Spirit's sovereign work, producing true faith and fruit.
4. Like the bronze serpent in Numbers 21, Christ was lifted up so sinners may look to God's provision by faith and live.
5. The gospel's heart: God loved, God gave, and whoever believes in the Son has everlasting life.
6. This confronts cultural Christianity. Admiring Jesus is not enough. True Christianity begins with new life - faith, repentance, humility, and Christ-centered living.
7. *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16*

If You Missed a Week Where We've Been *(continued)*

Zeal for His Father's House - Two Cleansings of the Temple - "Can You Hear Me Now?!"

1. Jesus performed His first miracle at Cana, turning shame into joy and revealing His divine glory
2. Mary said, "Whatever He says to you, do it," calling for immediate obedience
3. Jesus then went to Jerusalem, where the Temple, meant for prayer, had become filled with commerce and a *den of thieves*.
4. In zeal for His Father's house, He drove out the merchants and called for restoring the purpose of true worship
5. He declared the Temple to be "a house of prayer for all nations," not a place of profit
6. A second cleansing later in His ministry confirmed His sustained call to repentance and reverence
7. And His message still confronts the Church today. In the midst of programs, polished liturgies, carefully crafted music, and the quiet pull of commercial ambition, Jesus still stands before His people and asks: *Can you hear Me now?*





If You Missed a Week Where We've Been *(continued)*

Waters and Wilderness: Baptism's Blessing and Triumph over Temptation

1. At His baptism, Jesus publicly identified Himself with sinners and began His public ministry in obedience to the Father
2. The heavens opened, the Spirit descended like a dove, and the Father declared, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," providing one of the clearest displays of the Trinity in Scripture
3. Immediately after His baptism, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to face direct confrontation with Satan
4. Satan offered shortcuts to power, glory, and authority without obedience to the will of God
5. Jesus resisted every temptation by relying on the written Word of God, demonstrating faithful obedience where Adam and Israel had failed
6. The wilderness became the setting where the obedient Son showed His readiness to carry out the Father's mission
7. Before the ministry advanced publicly, the Messiah was revealed by God and proven faithful under testing.

If You Missed a Week Where We've Been *(continued)*

A Carpenter's Son in a Cradle: Genealogy, Mary, and Witnesses

1. The birth of Jesus is surrounded by a remarkable series of witnesses placed by God to confirm the identity of the promised Messiah
2. Angels announced the birth of the Savior, declaring peace on earth and glory to God in the highest
3. Shepherds became the first public witnesses of the good news after seeing the child in Bethlehem and spreading the report widely
4. Simeon recognized the infant Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promise and praised God for allowing him to see the Lord's salvation
5. Anna, a faithful prophetess who had waited many years for redemption, witnessed openly about the child to all who were looking for deliverance
6. All these witnesses demonstrate that God revealed His Son publicly and through credible testimony, not quietly
7. The early years, including Jesus' growth in wisdom and presence in the temple, show His life unfolding under the hand of providence - *He must be about His Father's business*





If You Missed a Week Where We've Been *(continued)*



Before Bethlehem: The Word Before Worlds

1. John begins his Gospel not with the birth of Jesus, but with the eternal existence of the Word before creation itself
2. The Word is the agent of creation, through whom all things were made and by whom all things continue to exist
3. The term *Logos* was familiar in the ancient world and especially influenced by Stoic philosophy which spoke of the Logos as a rational principle governing the universe. John reveals that the Logos is not a force, but a living Person, Jesus Christ
4. John uses the language of the culture as a platform and expands it with divine truth, showing that the true source of life, order, and meaning is the Son of God
5. A central theme in John chapter 1 is witness: God sends witnesses to testify publicly to the truth about Christ
6. John the Baptist is a man sent from God to bear witness to the Light so that all might believe
7. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, meaning that the eternal God entered human history as a person.

If You Missed a Week Where We've Been *(continued)*

Prophecy and fulfillment

1. The Old Testament contains a unified pattern of promises and prophetic expectations pointing forward to a coming Messiah who would redeem His people
2. These prophecies described His lineage, birthplace, mission, suffering, and ultimate victory long before He entered human history
3. Jesus Himself taught that the entire Old Testament points to Him, not merely in isolated predictions but in a coherent redemptive storyline
4. After His resurrection, Jesus declared in Luke 24 that everything written in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled concerning Him
5. Christianity is not built on religious sentiment or moral aspiration, but on fulfilled promises anchored in real history
6. The coming of Jesus was not accidental or improvised, it was the unfolding of God's eternal plan in time
7. The Old Testament does not merely anticipate Christ, it testifies of Him.



Homework:

1. Read
➤ Mat
2. Think

Before we close, may I ask a favor?

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