

Smn.: Remez

Scott Ashley

July 14, 2012

Good afternoon, everyone.

Today I'd like to talk about a subject that ties in very much with our studies on the Gospels. And that is the subject of *remez* (say, "remez").

*Remez* is a word you've likely never heard of before. It's a more modern Hebrew word that is *not* found in the Bible, but it *describes* something that *is* found in the Bible.

Like most Hebrew words, *remez* has several different but related meanings. Its general meaning is "hint" or "clue." It's used that way in modern Hebrew. If you want somebody to give you a hint, you say "give me a *remez*."

It's a concept that's difficult to define in English because there's nothing else quite like it in our culture and history. But it is something that has been used for the last 2,000 years by Jewish rabbis and teachers. In our last Bible class and talked quite a bit about the educational system for Jewish school kids in Galilee in the first century. And I've mentioned in previous classes as well.

If you remember it, Jewish children were expected to memorize large portions of the Bible. The boys were expected to memorize the five you are books of Moses by age 12. If they managed that, the boys went on to memorize large portions of the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures. The girls also memorized large portions of Scripture up to your formal schooling up to about age 12.

And of course, every Sabbath and at other times there would be regular Scripture readings and discussion in the local synagogue and at the Jerusalem temple. So the bottom line is that in first-century Galilee and Judea, the people were very scripturally literate. And we also see that reflected in the Gospels.

As a result, Jewish rabbis and teachers would use a kind of shorthand in referring to Bible passages. They would cite a short section of Scripture, or even just a part of a verse, and the audience knew enough to fill in the rest.

As an example, if I said to you, "Oh beautiful, for spacious skies," you would know automatically what comes next—"for amber waves of grain." It's the opening line of "America the Beautiful." If I said to you, "Onward Christian Soldiers," you would know what comes next—"marching as to war."

That's the basic idea. To give you an idea of how it was used 2000 years ago and how it is still used by Jewish teachers today, I'll tell you a story told by the person that I learned a lot of this from. He told of a banquet that he went to in honor of a Jewish professor who was retiring from Oxford University. This professor had spent his career studying the Bible and upholding its true word of God. This professor also had a famous student who had received his PhD under the guidance of the professor, but the student then devoted his career to discrediting and undermining the Bible. In this hurt the old professor greatly.

In the retirement banquet they had a question and answer session, and someone asked the Jewish professor what he thought about the work of this student. He thought for a minute and then said Hebrew word step would be translated into English as, “I have nourished and brought up children.” There was dead silence in the room.

It took this American who was just learning Hebrew a while to figure it out. The professor was quoting the first half of **Isaiah 1:2**. Here's what it says:

**Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth! For the LORD has spoken: “I have nourished and brought up children . . .**

That's the part he quoted in Hebrew—*“I have nourished and brought up children . . .*

He did not quote the last part of verse. He knew he was speaking to an overwhelmingly Jewish audience, and they would know the last part of the verse. What does the last part say?

**. . . and they have rebelled against Me”**

What was he saying about his former student? He was saying that he had taught the truth to the student, but later the student had rebelled against him and the truth he had learned. That's what he answered without actually saying that. He gave part of the answer in a Bible verse, and let his audience fill in the rest.

This is a classic *remez*, where the teacher gives part of a verse and expects his audience to know the text well enough to fill in the rest. And we find this teaching method used again and again and again the Gospels. Jesus uses it, John the baptizer uses it, the four Gospel writers use it, and as we'll see today, even God the father uses it.

So in today's sermon we'll examine several examples of *remez* and see how it's used, how it helps explain some puzzling passages, and how understanding *remez* can add a new depth and level of richness to our knowledge of the Gospels. And as we go through these examples we'll ask ourselves, What is the message were being given by these hints or clues? Because if we don't catch the message, we miss a large part story and lesson for us. So I'll be asking questions throughout the sermon to help us learn and understand what the Gospel writers have recorded for us here.

Let's start with a really easy *remez* and see if we can figure out the hint or clue the Gospel writer is giving us. Who can tell us the first few words of the gospel of John? How does John start his gospel?

**John 1:1**

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.**

John gives us a *remez* in his first three words of his Gospel. He gives us a clue, a hint. What is he referring to in the first three words? What is he referring to that's been written before that his audience will know?

He's referring back to **Genesis 1:1—**

**In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.**

What's John telling his readers? **What's his point?** He's telling them, “Hey, you remember Genesis 1 where it says ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth’? Guess what? I'm going to tell you about that God. Because *I met that God. I touched Him. I handled Him. I listened to Him. He was my rabbi and teacher. Let me tell you the rest of the story about that God who created the heavens and the earth.*”

And as John goes on to explain in **John1:14**—

**14 And the Word [who was with God and was God] became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.**

*Now let me tell you the rest of the story about this God Who came to earth to live among men...*

Let's look at another one that's a little more difficult. **What title does Jesus Christ use most often for Himself?**

**"Son of Man"**

He uses "Son of Man" 84 times in the Gospels in referring to Himself.

Let's look at a few to get a sense of how often He uses it and what He's saying:

**Matthew 10:23** "When they persecute you in this city, flee to another. For assuredly, I say to you, you will not have gone through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.

**Matthew 12:8** "For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

**Matthew 12:40** "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

**Matthew 13:41** "The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness,

**Matthew 16:13** When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"

**Matthew 16:27** "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

**Matthew 16:28** "Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

**Matthew 18:11** "For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.

**Matthew 19:28** So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

**Matthew 20:28** "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

**Matthew 24:27** "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

**Matthew 24:30** "Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.

**Matthew 24:37** "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

**Matthew 24:44** "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

**Matthew 25:13** “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

**Matthew 25:31** “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

Again, Jesus uses this term 84 times in the Gospels to refer to Himself. But *why? Why this particular term? Why this and not something else?* What’s the hint or clue He’s giving us by using that term for Himself? **What’s His point?** Where does this term “Son of Man” appear earlier in the Bible? Anyone?

**Daniel 7:13-14**

**13** “I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him.

**14** Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.

So what’s His point in using this term “son of Man” for Himself? What’s He telling His disciples and everyone around Him when He uses this term?

*He’s saying that He is the Son of Man in Daniel’s prophecy, that He is the one who will be given an everlasting Kingdom that will never be destroyed. Or in other words, that He is the promised Messiah.*

A lot of people read the Gospels and say, Why doesn't Jesus come right out and say that He’s the Messiah? The answer is, *He does—He does it again and again and again.* But He does it in a very Jewish way. He does it by *remez*. And He does it that way again and again and again.

Let’s look at another *remez* over in **Matthew 21:12-16—**

**12** Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves.

**13** And He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’”

**14** Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them.

**15** But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant

**16** and said to Him, “Do You hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes. Have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise’?”

Where does this phrase come from—“Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise”?

**Psalms 8:2 (NLT)**

**2** You have taught children and nursing infants to give you praise.

But is that all there is to it? Is Jesus just talking about these children shouting *Hoshana*, or is He saying something else here?

Let's read the rest of **Psalm 8:2—**

***They silence your enemies who were seeking revenge.***

*What's the message?* What is Jesus saying? What is He calling these priests and scribes and Sadducees who were running the temple and angry at Him for overturning the tables of the moneychangers and driving out those who had turned the temple into a giant bazaar from which they were lining their pockets with the people's gold?

He is calling the Sadducees and priests and their accomplices *God's enemies*. He's just doing it through a *remez*.

Did they understand what Jesus was saying? You bet they did. Mark and Luke have parallel accounts to Matthew 21. Notice how both Mark and Luke end their stories of these events:

**Mark 11:18**

**18 And the scribes and chief priests heard it and sought how they might destroy Him; for they feared Him, because all the people were astonished at His teaching.**

**Luke 19:47-48**

**47 And He was teaching daily in the temple. But the chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people sought to destroy Him,**

**48 and were unable to do anything; for all the people were very attentive to hear Him.**

Did they understand Jesus' *remez*, that He was calling them the enemies of God? You bet they did. And they wanted to kill Him for it. And ultimately they would do just that.

Let's look at another *remez* from Jesus. This is a familiar passage that it's easy to read over and not catch the deeper significance of what Jesus is saying.

**Matthew 11:28-29**

**28 "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**

**29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.**

Is Jesus just saying this off the top of His head, or is He quoting something that has deeper significance? Where do these words come from?

**Part of what He is saying is quoted from Exodus 33:14**, where God is telling the Israelites to go forward into the Promised Land.

**14 And He [God] said, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest."**

Now what is significant about Jesus' words is that a Jew of that day would never say it the way Jesus said it. A Jew would say, "Moses said, God said 'I will give you rest.'" Or "In Exodus God says, 'I will give you rest.'" A Jew would never just come right out and say, "I will give you rest" because those are *God's* words.

And that is Jesus' point. He is quoting God's words directly because He is, in fact, *God*. He said those words originally, so they are *His words*.

Is there another *remez* in Jesus' words here in Matthew 11? Look at **verse 29—**

**29 "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.**

This also is a quote from God speaking, and we find it back in **Jeremiah 6:16—**

**16 Thus says the LORD: “Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls.**

Again, a Jew of that day would never say it the way Jesus said it. A Jew would say, “Jeremiah said, God said ‘you will find rest for your souls.’” A Jew would never just come right out and say, “you will find rest for your souls” because those are *God’s* words. But again, Jesus uses God’s words directly because they are actually His words and He is God in the flesh.

*So what’s the message?* The message is that Jesus is saying that He is God. But He says it through *remez*, not by saying it directly. There are a number of others like this that we won’t cover today due to lack of time.

One of the most amazing examples of *remez* is found in Matthew 11 between Jesus and the disciples of John the Baptist. To set the stage, John the Baptizer has been imprisoned for running afoul of Herod Antipas, one of the sons of Herod the Great, who is ruling over part of Herod’s kingdom. He’s been in prison for some time, perhaps up to a year.

Josephus records that John was imprisoned in **Machearus, which was another** of the fortress-palaces that Herod the Great had built. Here’s what it looks like. It looks a lot like the Herodium near Bethlehem that we talked about earlier.

**Here’s a map** showing where it’s located, near the eastern shore of the Dead Sea in modern-day Jordan. It’s across the Dead Sea from Masada, another one of Herod’s fortress-palaces. It even **looks quite a bit like Masada**, too, especially when viewed from **the air**. In one of these rooms labeled “Triclinium” is probably where John’s head was brought out on a platter to Herod and his wife.

**So John the baptizer** has been imprisoned in a cell in this fortress-palace and he’s wondering what’s going on. He knows he is the forerunner of the Messiah, but this isn’t what he expected. After all, the Messiah is supposed to come and make everything right, so why is he here in this hot, stinking prison cell?

So he sends to of his disciples, his talmidim, to Jesus, as we read in **Matthew 11:2-5**.  
**2 And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples**

**3 and said to Him, “Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?”**

Now this is an odd question. If you’re John and you’re in jail, what questions are you going to want to ask Jesus? First, you’re going to ask, “*Are you really the Messiah,*” and second, if You are, “*When am I going to get out of this stinking jail?*” Instead, the question John sends to Jesus is, “*Are you the Coming One?*” Very curious.

**4 Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and tell John the things which you hear and see:**

**5 “The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.**

Does Jesus answer John’s question? And for that matter, *what exactly is* John’s question? If you don’t know the text, you can’t play.

So where does John get this phrase, “the Coming One”? Does anybody know? Where does that appear elsewhere in the Bible? “The Coming One” comes from **Zechariah 9:9**.

**9 “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey . . .**

This is a well-known Messianic prophecy. And of course, Jesus fulfills it several days before His crucifixion when He rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. This King who is coming was referred to as “the Coming One.”

But why did John use this particular prophecy of the Messiah? There were literally dozens He could’ve used—Are You Abraham’s seed? Are You the seed of the woman? Are you the Prophet like Moses? Are You the Son of David? Are You the Rod from Jesse? Are You the Wonderful Counselor? Are you the Prince of Peace? Why use the prophecy that He would be the Coming One?

This is actually a double *remez* because yes, John is asking if Jesus is indeed the Messiah, the Coming King, but John uses this prophecy because of something in particular this prophecy says this Coming King will do. In Zechariah let’s skip down two verses and see what this King will do—This King says:

**11 “I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.”**

John is saying, “Jesus, I know you’re the Messiah—but if you’re the Messiah, then when are you going to set the prisoners free? When am I going to get out of this jail?”

John asks Jesus a question with a *remez*. He knows Jesus is so familiar with the text that Jesus will automatically make the connection that John is in prison and he wants to know when he’s going to get out. And how does Jesus respond to John’s question? Back to

**Matthew 11:4-5—**

**4 Jesus answered and said to them [John’s messengers], “Go and tell John the things which you hear and see:**

**5 “The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them.**

How is Jesus answering John’s *remez*? Jesus answers with another *remez*. Where are these phrases taken from? They’re taken from several passages in Isaiah.

**Isaiah 35:5-10**

**5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.**

**6 Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing . . .**

**10 And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.**

And also **Isaiah 42:6-7—**

**6 “I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles,**

**7 To open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house.**

And also from **Isaiah 61:1—**

**1 “The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to**

**proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;**

But notice what Jesus quotes from these passages and *what He leaves out*. He says:

**Isaiah 35:5-10**

**5 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.**

**6 Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing . . .**

But He doesn't say that *the ransomed of the LORD shall return*—"ransomed means somebody has been bought back from captivity.

And He says from **Isaiah 42:6-7**—

**6 "I, the LORD, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand; I will keep You and give You as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles,**

He says **7 To open blind eyes**, but He doesn't say: *to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house.*

And also from **Isaiah 61:1**—

He says *to preach good tidings to the poor*; but He doesn't say, **to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;**

So what is Jesus saying to the messengers of John? He's saying, "Yes, I am the Coming One. Yes, I am the Messiah. And the miracles are proof of that. **"The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them."**

But John—My beloved cousin, My fellow rabbi and teacher, My beloved John—is not going to be released from prison. He's going to die in Herod's jail. And I imagine Jesus' eyes were filled with tears as He said this. He knew this was the end of the line for John, just as He would face the end of the line for Himself in a few more years.

Can we know this is what Jesus meant? Yes we can. Because look at His next words to the messengers from John in **Matthew 11:6—Matthew 11:6 (NIV)**

**6 "Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."**

There's nothing offensive that would cause someone to stumble or fall away in saying that the blind see, the lame walk, the deaf hear and the poor hear the good news preached to them. No, the hard words that might cause John to stumble is the *unspoken* message—*you're going to die in Herod's jail.*

I want to cover one more short *remez*, and this one is remarkable because here we see God the Father using a *remez* in **Matthew 3:16-17.**

**16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.**

**17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."**

This voice from heaven, presumably from God the Father via an angel, gives two *remezim* here in **"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."**

The first is from **Psalm 2:1**—



## 1 The LORD has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You.

And the second *remez* here is from **Isaiah 42:1** —

**1 “Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights!** [or “In Whom I am well pleased” — many of these won’t read the same because Isaiah here is Hebrew translated into English and Matthew is Greek translated into English. But if you translated directly from Hebrew into Greek or Greek into Hebrew the wording would be much closer.

So we have seen so far that the Gospel writers like John use *remez*, Jesus Christ uses *remez*, John the baptizer uses *remez*, and even God the Father uses *remez*. I know we hit that one pretty quickly, but we need to move on.

So we have seen *written remez* like the first few verses of John’s Gospel, and we have seen several examples of *spoken remez*. I want to look at another kind of *remez* in the rest of the sermon, and that is an *action remez*—*remez* by actions, or creating a picture by one’s actions. And these are fascinating as well.

Again, we’ll start with an easy and obvious one that we find in **Matthew 3:4** about John the baptizer.

**4 And John himself was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist . . .**

Why does John clothe himself this way? Does this ring a bell for any of you? What is unusual is the leather belt, because most people at the time would’ve just worn a cord or rope around their waist to keep their robes from flapping in the wind. Few could afford the expense of a leather belt. They’re common for us today, but not so much back then. Let’s go back to **2 Kings 1:7-8** and notice this dialog between King Ahaziah and some messengers:

**7 Then he said to them, “What kind of man was it who came up to meet you and told you these words?”**

**8 So they answered him, “A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist.” And he said, “It is Elijah the Tishbite.”**

So the prophet Elijah wore something distinctive, so distinctive that it stood out to these men. He was wearing a leather belt. And we see that John the baptizer is wearing a leather belt. *What’s the point?* What’s the message John is sending by wearing a leather belt?

To answer that, we need to understand John’s mission. Who is John? Let’s go back to **Luke 1:13-17**, which we covered in detail in an earlier class. Notice again the message from the angel Gabriel to the priest Zechariah about the son who would be born to him and Elizabeth.

**13 But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John.**

...

**16 “And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.**

**17 “He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”**

So John’s mission was to be a kind of a second Elijah.

Jesus Christ confirms this over in **Matthew 11:11-14**—

**11 “Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.**

**12 “And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.**

**13 “For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.**

**14 “And if you are willing to receive it, *he is Elijah who is to come.***

So again, John is to be a kind of second Elijah. So what does he do? He *dresses like Elijah*, wearing a distinctive leather belt.

He also does something else to send the message that he is a second Elijah. Let’s notice the two specific places the Gospels describe John as working—

**John 1:28**

**28 These things were done in Bethabara beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing.**

**John 3:23**

**23 Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there.**

Why these two places? Obviously there is water there, but is there another reason John chooses these two places?

**Here they are on a map.**

Aenon near Salim is up here about midway between the Dead Sea and the Sea of Galilee. Did anything significant happen here? This is where Elisha is from, and where Elijah chose Elisha and put his mantle on him to designate Elisha to be his successor. So this is an Elijah place, a significant location in Elijah’s ministry. It’s also not far from where **Elijah was fed by ravens** during the drought and famine.

What about the other spot where John is baptizing, at Bethabara or Bethany beyond the Jordan? **That’s down here near the northern end of the Dead Sea** just across the Jordan River from Jericho. Does this have any connection to Elijah? Yes, it does, because it’s here that **Elijah ascends to heaven** in a fiery chariot after his work is over.

So what is John the baptizer doing? He is wearing a leather belt like Elijah and he is doing his work in places connected with major events from the life of Elijah. He is doing a *visual remez* or an *action remez*. He is not openly telling people he is the second Elijah, but he’s telling them that by his actions and by what he wears. It’s not the way we would convey that message today, but it’s the way messages were conveyed in that time. You might think of some of the rather unusual actions God had His prophets do to send a visual picture to people. This is the same kind of thing.

Jesus does this too. We won’t go there for lack of time, but in Luke 7 Jesus raises the only son of a widow from the dead. He does it at the town of Nain. **Where is Nain?** On the map, it’s right here under the word “Galilee.” You can find it on the back of your Harmony as well. Does anybody else remember a biblical story of a prophet raising the only son of a widow from the dead? You’ll find it in 2 Kings 4, where Elisha raises the son of a widow from the dead. Where did that take place? The names of the towns had

changed, but it took place about half a mile from where Jesus raised the only son of a widow from the dead.

*What's the message Jesus was sending by resurrecting a widow's son from the dead in essentially the same location that Elisha raised a widow's son from the dead? The message is that He is another great prophet like Elisha.*

I want to conclude this sermon with one final *remez*. This is another action *remez*, or you might say an acted-out *remez* by Jesus Christ. We find it over in **John 8:2-11**. This is one that has puzzled us for years because we didn't understand that Jesus is doing a *remez*, and that explains it all. Let's begin here in **John 8:2**.

**2 Now early in the morning He [Jesus] came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them.**

**3 Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst,**

**4 they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act.**

**5 "Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"**

**6 This they said, testing Him,** that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

**7 So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."**

**8 And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.**

**9 Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.**

**10 When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"**

**11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."**

So what's going on here? What's the *remez*, and what does it mean? Look at it again.

**6 This they said, testing Him,** that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and *wrote on the ground with His finger*, as though He did not hear.

**7 So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."**

**8 And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.**

What does Jesus do in response to them trying to trap Him? *He stoops down and writes in the dust with His finger*. So they ask Him again, and He says, let him who is innocent throw the first stone. *And then He stoops down and writes in the dust with His finger again*. He's saying, "Okay, you didn't get the message the first time, I'll give it again."

And as a result of Jesus writing in the dust with His finger, they all file out and leave Him alone. What's the significance of Him writing in the dust? That's the visual *remez*.

Jesus is telling them to look at **Jeremiah 17:13-18**. (NIV) What does it say?

**13 O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you will be put to shame. Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the LORD**

...

What's the point? What's Jesus' message? He's saying: "You have forsaken God. In your evil hearts you're trying to trap Me and you want to put this woman to death. If you want to do that, go ahead, but in your hearts you know that you have forsaken God and your names will be written in the dust and WHOOPH—the next time a wind comes along you will be blotted out and you will be erased as though you never existed.

Did they get the point? Yes, they did. Notice what John says happened next.

**9 Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.**

They got Jesus' message. They knew their Bibles. They knew that their actions were evil and ungodly and they were in danger of having their names written in the dust to be blown away and erased from existence. So they dropped their stones and slowly walked away. This is another very powerful *remez* by Jesus Christ that has its intended effect.

So, to wrap up, **What do we learn from this discussion of *remez*?**

- The culture of that day and place is very different from ours today.

This is just one example, and we're seeing many others as we go through the classes on the Gospels. The way we think and view things is as a result of 2,000 years of Greco-Roman *Western* thinking. Biblical culture is based on *Eastern* thinking, which is quite different. And that leads to our second point, which is:

- If we are to properly understand God's Word, we must first understand what it meant to the audience to whom it was originally written.

This is not to say that the Bible isn't universal, because it is. But we live in a world 2,000 years and 7,000 miles removed from the Holy Land. We live in a modern, technological culture that changes by the day. They lived in a mostly rural, agricultural culture that didn't change for centuries. If we look at the Bible through our lens of today, we're going to get a number of things wrong. We need to look at it through the lens of what the words meant to the people of that day and place.

- God's Word has a depth and richness to which we have only begun to scratch the surface.

God says that His thoughts and ways are so much higher than our thoughts and ways. As we're going through the Gospels, we're seeing ideas and concepts that are very different and in some ways very new to us—like what we've covered today. I've studied the Bible for years and never knew about this concept of *remez*. But knowing it now, I'll never read the Gospels the same way again. This is the mind of God in print, and it will take us many lifetimes to understand it all.

- If we are to understand God's Word as He expects us to, we need to be diligently studying it.

Did you catch that in all of these examples of *remez* that we've seen today, God never explicitly spelled them out for us? Jesus never explained the *remezim* He used. John the Baptist never explained the *remezim* he used. Matthew never explained the *remezim* he

used. Mark never explained the *remezim* he used. Luke never explained the *remezim* he used. The apostle John never explained the *remezim* he used. God the Father never explained the *remezim* he used.

The obvious point is that they all *expected* us to be so familiar with God's Word that we would get the hint—that we would understand the *remez*. That's why I say “understand God's Word *as He expects us to.*” He clearly expects us to understand these uses of *remez*. And the only way you understand it is to be that familiar with God's Word. *If you don't know, you can't play.*

• God cannot *use* His Word within us if we don't *know* that Word—if we're not *putting* it within us.

What did Jesus Christ say the Holy Spirit would do for us? John 14:26 says “the Helper, the Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” So it will *teach us, giving us understanding* in other words, and it will *bring to remembrance* all things Christ has said to us.

But how can it bring to remembrance things that we've never studied and learned to begin with? If we haven't learned it, there's nothing there for God's Spirit to work with. It's a blank slate, an empty bucket. God's Spirit can't help us understand God's Word if we don't know and don't diligently study God's Word.

That's my primary purpose in going through the Gospels in such detail—so that we might learn more about the One we are to model our lives after, so that we might become more like Him in every way. After all, that's what we're here for. As sons and daughters of God, we are to grow to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Jesus Christ. And how can we do that if we're not diligently studying His life in the Gospels and His mind as reflected throughout the rest of Scripture?

This is our calling. Let's be sure we make our calling sure by continually filling our minds with the richness of God's Word.