

**The SAME Jesus:
The Gospel of Mark**
“Oh No! That Won’t Go!”
Mark 2:13-17

Willerup UMC
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Resource Page

Background: Jewish Education

School was an important place in Jewish life going all the way back to Jacob and Esau. By the time of Jesus, all children attended local synagogue schools (like elementary schools) known as **Beth Sefer**. There were more than 500 schools in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus. There were even more in the Galilee region because of the return of the Jewish Exiles from all over the world. Each school would have likely taught in their native languages. (Acts 2:7-11)

Memorization and study of the Torah (first five books of the Bible) was the focus for both boys and girls from age five to thirteen. Boys who showed special interest or ability could go on to **Beth Midrash** (house of study) which was a secondary or high school.

A child became a religious adult at 13 years of age. Girls were likely to marry and begin creating their home life, which was governed by the Torah. The women in Jewish communities were instrumental in creating community life or fellowship. Most women were experts in family, village, and community law because they were the guardians and expected to teach and live out God’s commands. (Proverbs 31) The role of women was crucial to the generational survival of the Jewish people. Boys entered into the workforce in family-run businesses, apprenticed in vocations, or were hired as workers or laborers. Boys were expected to participate in religious life at the synagogue, get married and make positive contributions to society.

During the years of **Beth Midrash**, the boys would listen and learn the ‘question and answer’ method with a particular rabbi while

memorizing the history books of the Bible. The selection process of students was a special honor for the student and for the family. Babylonian Jews returning from Exile during the first century would have been incredibly gifted and knowledgeable—even formidable in the academic arena as rabbis and their students processed the question and answer method during debates with other rabbis and students. This method was also developed by the Greeks in the 3rd century B.C., known as the Socratic Method in their Greek curriculum.

Beth Talmud was for the truly gifted student and considered a type of graduate school. A student would travel and study with a famous rabbi and become his talmudim—disciple. The disciple applied all the wisdom and knowledge of the particular rabbi—their dress, their eating habits, their knowledge of the Torah, history, and then added the memorization of all the Wisdom literature and the prophets of the Bible.

The Oral Tradition was generally known by everyone (women and men), and memorization of the Bible was crucial. In public debates between rabbis and their students, if a scripture was ever misused the audience would have known it.

Consider the following:

1. What age were the disciples when Jesus selected them?
2. Jesus did not select the best of the best students, why?
3. What is the difference between a student and a disciple?

To learn more:

<https://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/3191-bet-ha-midrash>
<https://www.thatttheworldmayknow.com/rabbi-and-talmidim>