

Paul, The Law and The Jewish People

Matthew chapter 5 begins this way:

CJB Matt. 5:1-16 *Seeing the crowds, Yeshua walked up the hill. After he sat down, his talmidim came to him, ² and he began to speak. This is what he taught them:*

³ *"How blessed are the poor in spirit! for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.*

⁴ *"How blessed are those who mourn! for they will be comforted.*

⁵ *"How blessed are the meek! for they will inherit the Land!*

⁶ *"How blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness! for they will be filled.*

⁷ *"How blessed are those who show mercy! for they will be shown mercy.*

⁸ *"How blessed are the pure in heart! for they will see God.*

⁹ *"How blessed are those who make peace! for they will be called sons of God.*

¹⁰ *"How blessed are those who are persecuted because they pursue righteousness! for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.*

¹¹ *"How blessed you are when people insult you and persecute you and tell all kinds of vicious lies about you because you follow me!*

¹² *Rejoice, be glad, because your reward in heaven is great- they persecuted the prophets before you in the same way.*

¹³ *"You are salt for the Land. But if salt becomes tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except being thrown out for people to trample on.*

¹⁴ *"You are light for the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.*

¹⁵ *Likewise, when people light a lamp, they don't cover it with a bowl but put it on a lampstand, so that it shines for everyone in the house.*

¹⁶ *In the same way, let your light shine before people, so that they may see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven.*

Immediately after He made that series of statements about 'how blessed are the poor in spirit, the meek, those who show mercy, those who seek peace', etc., Yeshua suddenly pauses when He realizes that the huge Jewish crowd listening to Him (and perhaps those who would read His words in the coming centuries) might misunderstand what He was saying. Why? Because by now in Jewish history the Synagogue that was run by Pharisees had become a parallel

organization to the Temple of the Priests who were Sadducees. While the Priesthood only believed in and taught the Biblical Torah, the Pharisees taught Jewish Law...Tradition. Every Jew in his vast audience was part of one synagogue or another. So, He perceived that they might have thought He might be perceived as a kind of Rabbi who was pronouncing a new set of laws and commands. I can imagine Him standing up, looking around and making eye contact, and then earnestly cautioning His rapt listeners using these words of Matthew 5:17-19:

CJB Matthew 5:17-19 *"Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. ¹⁸ Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah- not until everything that must happen has happened. ¹⁹ So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Right away the people listening to Him knew He wasn't speaking about Jewish Law...Tradition...but rather He was referring to the Law of Moses because saying "the Torah and the Prophets" was a customary way of referring to the totality of the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament) in that era (Paul also used that term). Yeshua said that He did NOT do the very thing that a majority portion of His Believers, worldwide, today say that He did: and that his words hereby abolish the Law of Moses and replace it with His own commands. I come before you today to challenge the modern doctrine of the Law being dead and gone. This subject, which has not been seriously challenged in a very long time within Church government, is most appropriate at this time because of the last days of mankind's salvation history that we appear to have entered.

Little has divided the gentile Church from our earliest faith roots as but an offshoot of Judaism more than the definition of what the modern-day effect of the Old Testament Biblical Law ought to be upon Christians. My intent is therefore to establish a context for us (as Believers) to comprehend the Law of Moses within the boundaries of the overall Bible and our faith, perhaps in a different way than you have considered it; and I want to do this by FIRST

establishing the point of view of Paul, who is at once the most difficult, most controversial and at the same time, the most prolific New Testament contributor.

Let's start by defining the term "The Law" because there is more to it than meets the eye. When a Christian sits down to discuss The Law with a Jew, the two parties have entirely different concepts of what the discussion is going to be about. Christians think of The Law as being a series of strict rules and commands, do's and don'ts, accompanied with blessings and "curses" as found in the Old Testament. Jews on the other hand see The Law as consisting of far more than what is written in the Old Testament. Judaism says that Moses did NOT write down all that God gave him. Most of what God told Moses was handed down and passed on by word of mouth, from generation to generation, over the centuries. And, by sheer volume, this additional Law called the Oral Law far outstrips the written Law (that which is Old Testament scripture). But there is also something called Halachah. It is expressed in Jewish Law (sometimes called Rabbinic Law) which was created and designed to give the Hebrew people laws and ordinances that can be observed outside the Laws of Moses, due to the present absence of a Temple and Priesthood, which are necessary to enforce the Law of Moses. It also claims that these Jewish laws are proper interpretations of the Law of Moses. This Law eventually became more popularly known among the Jews by another name: **Tradition**, and this is also included under the general heading of "Torah".

Now, it is easy to become drowned in a sea of terms and expressions that non-Jewish Believers are unfamiliar with. But, more problematically, these terms and expressions are regularly found in the New Testament. This has led to all sorts of Christians doctrines being established that are based purely on a misunderstanding of the terms.

With this Jewish definition of The Law in mind...that is, it is an amalgam of The Law of Moses and manmade Traditions... let me state for you the Jewish position **about** the Law; and even more important to our lesson today, their perspective on how Christians deal with the Law because it is this perspective that in turn gives rise to Jewish **opposition** to Christianity.

To begin, Judaism sees Christians as having declared all the rulings and commands of the Law as null and void. So that it is clear, they are meaning both the Law of Moses and Jewish Law.

Second, Judaism says that Christians believe that the Law was an essentially negative and faulty institution. In this case Judaism is referring primarily to the Law of Moses.

Third, Jews believe that Christians see God's attribute of grace as strictly a New Testament innovation that played no role among Israel's religion prior to Yeshua. And, they hold that Believers in Jesus say that there is now a distinction...a chasm... between God's Law and God's Grace, that the two things are mutually exclusive, and therefore a person must choose one over the other. This leads to a great and non-recoverable divide between the faith of Jews and the faith of Christians. Their conclusion is that Christians MUST believe that the God of the OT is a fundamentally different god than the God of the New Testament.

Now, interestingly, the Jews are not too far off the mark in their perception of what the Church believes, are they? There is a thread of belief woven tightly throughout mainstream Christianity... that I have recently decided to call Constantinian Christianity... that the god of the Jews is the subject of the OT, and the god of the Christians is the subject of the NT. The only possible outcome, then, is that the Old Testament Law is for the Jews, and the New Testament grace-by-faith is purely for gentile Christians.

Since the definitions of the terms, we use are critical to any conversation, then I'm going to repeat myself during this lesson. Jews don't make a particularly clear distinction between the biblical Law of Moses and the manmade Jewish Law (Tradition), because they hold that their Tradition is but proper interpretation of The Law of Moses. As for the term Constantinian Church, I'm speaking of the formalized religious organization that was created in the 4th century A.D., at the urging of the Emperor of Rome at that time, who as Constantine. Over some decades a few so-called Councils of religious leaders were convened to create a brand new, having never before existed, religion that was of, by, and for gentiles. Jews were strictly excluded. In fact, because part of the foundation of this new entity was to be rid of any Jewish influence, the motto for all their faith rules and

principles was: "If the Jews do it, we don't". Thus, Sabbath was changed from Saturday to Sunday. All the biblical feasts were abolished (eventually replaced by Christmas and Easter), and the Law of Moses was abolished. This is what has been known ever since as "The Church". It is nothing that existed in Jesus's day, or in Paul's day, or until 300 years later. There is no relation between the faith the followers of Christ practiced and the Constantinian Church other than that Yeshua of Nazareth is the Savior and Messiah. So, any thought that "the Church" as we know it started with Jesus is not only anachronistic, it is simply incorrect historically and factually.

As regards The Law and grace, Jews will argue that grace is part and parcel of God's Law (and by this I mean The Law of Moses). And, that grace is (for instance) the entire point of the Levitical Sacrificial System whereby an innocent animal pays the price of atonement for men's sins. They see the Law as a divine gift to mankind of the greatest benefit and providing marvelous joy. Further, they believe that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The very first Believers who were overwhelmingly Jews, did NOT hold to the theological viewpoint that the modern church (the Constantinian Church) has developed as its core theological principle.....the anti-Law view. From a historical perspective, it was only around 100 years or so after Christ's death when gentiles began to establish themselves into the leadership class of this Messianic movement (as the first followers of Christ were called) that was when this anti-Law view began to take seed.

Jews see that most Christians believe that now, because of Jesus, the Law is dead and gone, having been replaced by ***grace by faith*** (and they point to Paul as having said that). But did Paul actually hold that view? Did Paul believe and/or teach that the Law was to be abandoned and replaced because it had always been bad and inferior? Let's examine Paul a bit, because Paul's words are the primary source of Constantinian Christian doctrine.

To begin, we must bear in mind that Paul was not just any typical Jew; he was highly educated in Jerusalem at the esteemed school of Gamaliel, and was well on his way up the religious social ladder. Paul was an esteemed Rabbi, and few knew the Law of Moses as well as Jewish Law as Paul knew it. Now, the controversial question for us is, after Paul's encounter with the risen Christ on

the road to Damascus, did Paul give up the religion of his forefathers for something new? Did he stop observing the Law of Moses...or even stop seeing validity in Jewish Law... and instead go on a crusade to convince other Jews to give it up, and for gentiles never to take it up? Was it his intent that followers of Jesus were to never again celebrate any of the Biblical Festivals, or they should quit going to the Temple, or they should shun the 10 commandments of Mt. Sinai that were set down by God and given to Moses?

Let's begin to get our bearing on Paul, the man, by reading a small excerpt from Acts.

Let's read Acts 21: 15-26

CJB Acts 21:15-26 *¹⁵ So at the end of our stay, we packed and went up to Yerushalayim; ¹⁶ and with us went some of the talmidim from Caesarea. They brought us to the home of the man with whom we were to stay, Mnason from Cyprus, who had been a talmid since the early days. ¹⁷ In Yerushalayim, the brothers received us warmly. ¹⁸ The next day Sha'ul and the rest of us went in to Ya'akov, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹ After greeting them, Sha'ul described in detail each of the things God had done among the Gentiles through his efforts. ²⁰ On hearing it, they praised God; but they also said to him, "You see, brother, how many tens of thousands of believers there are among the Judeans, and they are all zealots for the Torah. ²¹ Now what they have been told about you is that you are teaching all the Jews living among the Goyim to apostatize from Moshe, telling them not to have a b'rit-milah for their sons and not to follow the traditions. ²² "What, then, is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. ²³ So do what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow. ²⁴ Take them with you, be purified with them, and pay the expenses connected with having their heads shaved. Then everyone will know that there is nothing to these rumors which they have heard about you; but that, on the contrary, you yourself stay in line and keep the Torah. ²⁵ "However, in regard to the Goyim who have come to trust in Yeshua, we all joined in writing them a letter with our decision that they should abstain from what had been sacrificed to idols, from blood, from what is strangled and from fornication." ²⁶ The next day Sha'ul took the men, purified himself along with them and entered the Temple to give notice*

of when the period of purification would be finished and the offering would have to be made for each of them.

Clearly James the Just (here called **Ya'acov**), the supreme leader of the ecclesia (followers of Yeshua) in Jerusalem didn't think Paul had quit observing the Law. But, there were rabble-rousers among the religious Jews who accused Paul of TEACHING against the Law. James the Just had the perfect solution to the problem: put Paul to a public test. Paul was told to go with certain men, described as **brethren**... meaning Messianic Jews... Jewish Believers in Yeshua...who had taken the vow of a Nazarite, and to go through the standard purification rituals as called out by the Law of Moses, which accompany these vows. James, brother of Jesus, fully expected Paul to comply. And, here in Acts 21 we see that Paul did as was suggested without balking!

So, either Paul was the worst sort of hypocrite, or he indeed believed Jesus that the Law of Moses wasn't abolished. If we're going to take Paul in proper context, we must begin by asking ourselves a very basic question: did He **agree** with Yeshua on every point, or did he not? And at the heart of that question is: did Paul teach what Jesus taught about the Law or did he teach something different?

Let's revisit the Sermon on the Mount.

READ MATT 5:17-19

CJB Matthew 5:17-18 ***"Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. ¹⁸ Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah- not until everything that must happen has happened.***

Yeshua definitively said in His sermon that He has NOT abolished the Law, nor should anyone ever SAY it has been abolished, nor should it ever be taught that even SOME of the laws and commands have been modified let alone replaced. So, did Christ tell several thousand people at the Sea of Galilee that His coming and His teachings did NOT abolish or replace the Law, but then a few years later, speaking from His throne in Heaven, He said the opposite to Paul, and then sent

Paul off with the instruction to tell people NOT to obey the commands of the Torah? I can tell you from talking to numerous Pastors, that the majority believe that all the commands Christ gave during His life became null and void upon His death on the cross. This is why the modern-day Church has begun a general de-emphasis of the Gospels and replaced it with a deepening emphasis on Paul's letters. Certainly, this is not universal, and just as certainly it isn't spoken out loud...it is subtle.

It is my position that the Law of Moses is something that never should have been removed from its holy place in the lives and faith walks of Yeshua's followers. Its place is clearer, fully contemporary, and it is more important to our faith than ever, today, IF we have the eyes to see and the ears to hear... IF we are truly looking for truth rather than merely being intent on hanging onto our beliefs and opinions that have made us so very comfortable and our lives as Believers quite easy.

I want to give you just a few points to ponder about the true Biblical nature and character of the Law of Moses as it is explained in the Scriptures.

1) **The Law was never created to be a source of justification or salvation.**

The law was not for redemption, ever at any point in history. The Law was created and given to a people (the Hebrews) who were **already** redeemed. God didn't redeem Israel by means of the Law; God FIRST redeemed Israel from Egypt by His grace, as a free gift of deliverance, and some months after Israel's redemption He brought them to His holy mountain to give them His Law. I propose that this same pattern is unchanged and is intended for all Believers; FIRST we receive Christ, THEN we receive His commands. Because without first receiving the Lord we have no ability to properly carry out His commands in the spirit they were intended. Let me say this another way: The Law, the Torah, is a manual for living the redeemed life; it is not (and never was) a means to salvation from our sins and into eternal life with God.

2) **The Law tells us what sin is, and shows US our sinful natures.**

The Law, the Torah, gives us the **knowledge and consciousness** of sin. I suspect that most of you accept that rather easily and in fact that is standard doctrine in most Church denominations. Yet in the same breath it

is equally as often said that the Law was and is ONLY for the Jews. Now let me ask you a question: if God intended that the Law was ONLY to be studied and obeyed by the Jews how is it that a gentile Christian can say that Jewish-only Law is OUR source for the knowledge and consciousness of sin since it supposedly does not apply to us? If not the biblical law, then where does our knowledge of sin existing in us come from?

3) The Law brings about God's wrath.

Let's read Romans 3:28 through 4:3.

CJB Romans 3:28-31 *Therefore, we hold the view that a person comes to be considered righteous by God on the ground of trusting, which has nothing to do with legalistic observance of Torah commands. ²⁹ Or is God the God of the Jews only? Isn't he also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, he is indeed the God of the Gentiles; ³⁰ because, as you will admit, God is one. Therefore, he will consider righteous the circumcised on the ground of trusting and the uncircumcised through that same trusting. ³¹ Does it follow that we abolish Torah by this trusting? Heaven forbid! On the contrary, we confirm Torah.*

CJB Romans 4:1-3 *Then what should we say Avraham, our forefather, obtained by his own efforts? ² For if Avraham came to be considered righteous by God because of legalistic observances, then he has something to boast about. But this is not how it is before God! ³ For what does the Tanakh say? "Avraham put his trust in God, and it was credited to his account as righteousness."*

The context for this vital section of Paul's Book of Romans is summed up in Romans 3:31 when we see that Paul makes the point that trusting in Messiah does not abolish the Law and in fact actually validates it! But the punch line of this entire statement is framed in verse 2 of Romans 4 where it speaks of justification. And, Paul says that if someone tries to use their obedience to the Law as righteousness before God, **as a means to justification**, they will incur God's wrath. Why? Because obeying the Law is wrong? Is it obedience to something that is faulty or no longer exists? No; its because justification is NOT what God created the Law to be able to do. This was never its purpose. Trust in God is the ONLY means to justification. And, with the advent of God on Earth,

Jesus Christ, faith in Christ is the one and only means to justification for Jew or gentile. Yet, says Paul, that hardly means that obedience to God's laws and commands is now irrelevant. Do you see this? Look: a car and an oven are 2 different things for 2 different purposes. I can no more drive my oven to work, than I can bake a cake in my car. Does that make one faulty and the other perfect? Does the existence of one abolish the existence of the other? Jesus said that His personal purpose in His first advent was to fulfill the perfection of the Law, not to abolish it. For without the Law, how will we know what pleases and displeases God? How will we know what sin and holiness is? Many mainstream Christians have said to me that they don't need the Law, the Holy Spirit will tell them what they need to know. My question to them has always been: how do you know that the Holy Spirit is speaking to you? How do you know if it might not be the Adversary whispering in your ear, or perhaps even your own thoughts? Only trust in Messiah is needed for Salvation; but the Law remains fully valid and is there to teach us right from wrong, sin from holiness. It gives us a hard, objective reference point to check to see that if what we're thinking we're hearing from the Holy Spirit is actually that. If you believe the Holy Spirit is going to tell you something different from God's written Word, then you don't know God and you don't know His Word.

After we become saved is the TIME when we should begin to seek this knowledge of the Law, and to learn it so that we know how to properly incorporate it in our lifestyles that make us reflective of God's will and ideal. Do it in reverse, and you indeed can get an unholy legalism.

4) **The Law acts as a protector.**

By our being obedient to the *principles* of the Law, we are living within a Kingdom of Light and Truth designed by the Creator. The Lord constantly tells His people not to wander outside of the boundaries of this Kingdom, because outside is nothing but deceit and darkness and death.

A good question right about now ought to be, how do we 21st century Believers who do not live in an ancient Hebrew culture, obey the Law in the way and spirit that Paul prescribes? Step one is by seeing that the Law and the Grace of Christ as not mutually exclusive, but rather as complementary. Christ redeems, the Torah teaches, guides and protects.

The intent of the Law is to teach God's principles and that is what we should focus on. The New Testament rests on the foundation of the Torah, and the NT generally expects its readers to already know the principles of the Law.

Let's return for a moment to how Judaism views the "righteousness before God" aspect of the Law. One of the prime assumptions within the Constantinian Church is that Jews endeavor to work their way to Heaven by being obedient to the Law and so Judaism is a religion totally reliant on human deeds and behavior as a self-justification, while Christianity is a religion 100% based on grace. It might surprise you to know that Jews do NOT believe that being obedient to the Torah (the Law) is what takes them to Heaven; that is because Jews don't believe that after death one even GOES to Heaven to live with God (at least a Heaven as Christians think of it).

I think this quote from a well-known Rabbi and an equally well-known Jewish website says it best:

QUOTE: Some people look at these teachings and deduce that Jews try to "earn our way into Heaven" by performing the mitzvot. This is a gross mischaracterization of our religion. It is important to remember that unlike some religions, Judaism is not focused on the question of how to get into heaven. Judaism is focused on life and how to live it. Non-Jews frequently ask me, "do you really think you're going to go to Hell if you don't do such-and-such?" It always catches me a bit off balance, because the question of where I am going after death simply doesn't enter into the equation when I think about the mitzvot. We perform the mitzvot because it is our privilege and our sacred obligation to do so. We perform them out of a sense of love and duty, not out of a desire to get something in return.

Jews believe that the greatest joy they can attain during their life on earth is to know that their obedience to the Law of Moses is pleasing the God of Israel, and there is practically no thought of what happens when life is over.

Christianity has sort of moved toward a different extreme; for Christians, bodily lives on earth are often viewed as having but modest meaning and instead all

thoughts and efforts point towards what happens after death and all the rewards that come with it. Works and behavior are seen as having limited roles in the life of a Believer; instead, it's the inner self and good intentions that count.

Having learned what we have today about the Law, I close with a prophecy that is probably nearly before us in its advent:

RSV 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 *Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to meet him, we beg you, brethren, ² not to be quickly shaken in mind or excited, either by spirit or by word, or by letter purporting to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. ³ Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, ⁴ who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.*

Who is this man of lawlessness? We all understand that he is the Anti-Christ, don't we? But what does the term lawlessness refer to? Roman law? Syrian law? Jewish Law? American law? Is the anti-Christ simply a modern super-scofflaw like Jessie James or Bonnie and Clyde or Saddam Husein who has no regards for the laws created by societies and nations? The only plausible meaning is The Laws of Moses. God's laws. God has little use for the infinite variety of men's laws and at Judgement Day we are certainly not going to be measured by local civic law codes. This man of lawlessness is a man of Torah-lessness. A Man of Law of Moses-lessness. He is a man who will thumb his nose at God's laws and commands, and God's definitions of good and evil because the man of lawlessness's god is Satan.

The Law of Moses is important and valid for us not only for the several reasons we've discussed, but because if we don't know the Law we will hardly be able to recognize the Anti-Christ who will be primarily known by his being anti-Law...being against God's Torah.

If ever there was common ground for Jews and gentiles before Our Messiah came, it is obedience to the Law. It remains so to this day and will continue as Messiah said, "until heaven and earth pass away".