

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

Lesson 24, Chapter 10 continued

Sometimes it is important to pause and take in the panoramic view of the landscape that we have wandered by much too quickly. So as we all take a deep breath, it is my fervent hope that by now in our study of the Book of Romans, even if you haven't yet fully embraced the Hebraic Heritage approach to understanding the Bible, that it has become clear that the more standard way that Romans has been taught over the centuries has a number of shortcomings. Sadly it is not because the fine scholars who wrote these commentaries were not sufficiently educated or because they intended to pass along incomplete or incorrect information. Instead it is that some of them (sometimes without even realizing it) held a deeply ingrained anti-Jewish and anti-Law worldview that was and remains as a fundamental belief and core doctrine of Western Christianity; and it greatly colors not so much the details of their Scripture research but rather their conclusions.

Thus most of what I have presented to you as Bible history and as proper translation of the original Greek and Hebrew Bible manuscripts would in no way bother these great scholars and commentators; however my conclusions would, of course, cause passionate disagreement because these conclusions necessarily confront Church doctrines that they consider long ago decided, untouchable, and sacrosanct. It takes much courage and fortitude on the part of Believers like you to be open to hearing God's Word with some of the filters removed, and thereby adding back in the natural Jewishness that was the inherent culture of the Bible; a Jewish culture that has been intentionally downplayed and filtered out in order to impress upon Christians that our faith is (allegedly) a thoroughly gentile one.

Because of our venture into the New Testament after spending so many valuable years in God's Old Testament, we have many new listeners and readers so I want to reiterate a couple of points so that no one misunderstands my intention or goal for how and what I teach. For those who have studied the Torah and other parts of the Old Testament with me, I ask your patience as you are already well aware of what I'm about to say. Seed of Abraham Torah Class insists on a Hebraic Heritage approach (or Jewish Roots as you may prefer to call it) to teaching the Bible because without it the all-important societal backdrop of the events it records, and the mindset of the writers of the Bible who did the recording, is lost; and all the writers except for probably Luke, were Hebrews. After being a rather garden variety Evangelical Christian for the first 4 decades of my life, I became fully convicted that if one reads and believes the Bible as God's divine Word to mankind, one cannot help but be led to love Israel, recognizing God's limitless faithfulness and concern for them, and to embrace the Jewish people as our elder brothers and sisters in the faith. Also it is immensely helpful to finally comprehend that the Bible is a 100% Hebrew source-document. But when we accept that then we must wrestle with just what that means for those of us who are gentiles.

Because of that reality (and more) Israel and the Holy Scriptures cannot be separated; they are fully and permanently intertwined and dependent upon one another. Remove Israel from the Holy Scriptures and they are gutted of context and humanity. Remove the Holy Scriptures from Israel, and they are just another nation of people like all other nations; gentiles, worshipping gods that don't exist and taking their cue from whatever despot might be leading them at the time.

Yet God asks no gentile to become a Jew, or any Jew to become a gentile in order to partake of His Word, of His covenants, and to worship Him as the one true God. And so that is the position of this ministry. While we spend much of our funds and efforts and time comforting, teaching and tangibly helping the people of Israel, and we spend a modest amount of time studying the Judaism of Yeshua's and Paul's day along with learning about its colorful traditions, by no means do we advocate Christians turning to Judaism or to living a modern-day Jewish lifestyle in order to attain some hoped-for higher level of spiritual growth. That said we have no issue with Judaism or Jewish lifestyle other than its blindness towards the advent of their Messiah, Yeshua the Christ. In fact, we have adopted some Jewish traditions that we find lovely, highly symbolic and meaningful, and most appropriate for celebrating many of the Biblical holy days in light of the coming of our Jewish Savior.

So as we continue in our study of Romans, keep this in mind. The reason that I teach somewhat different conclusions than most of the other Bible commentators is because we have dared to unearth the authentic Jewish ways, meanings, understandings, and common everyday expressions of 1st century Jewish society, and how they studied and worshipped in Christ's era and how all of this shaped what they meant by what they said. These ways and meanings both Yeshua and Paul would not only find familiar, but in fact they too operated mostly the same. I maintain that with such understanding perhaps we can be ambassadors of our Messiah who can help our brothers and sisters in the Church to repent of its anti-Semitism and insistence upon maintaining ancient traditions created by gentile Bishops; traditions that the writers of the Bible actually taught against.

I pray that even if you aren't certain that you can agree with what I just said you would give me an opportunity to prove to you the merit of such an approach to God's Word. And the proof will be this: what I tell you will be backed up with the Scriptures, in context, and it will glorify Yeshua as our Lord and Messiah. If I'm telling you the truth it cannot help but do that. This is because as an honest and informed reading of Romans has already shown us, Christ and the Law of Moses cannot be seen as anything but two closely related and connected entities. Paul insists that Christ is the goal, the essence, the underlying and overarching substance of The Law of Moses. Why is this? Because Christ **is** the Word: the **logos**. And while since the mid-3rd century the Bible has been expanded (at least for Christians) to include the New Testament, prior to that time no such thing existed; only what we typically call the Old Testament. When Yeshua, the Apostles Paul and John, and others referred to Messiah as the Word, the only entity they knew as God's Word was the Old Testament that included the Law

of Moses.

John 1:1-5 CJB

^{CJB} John 1:1 *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.* ² *He was with God in the beginning.* ³ *All things came to be through him, and without him nothing made had being.* ⁴ *In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind.* ⁵ *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not suppressed it.*

¹⁴ *The Word became a human being and lived with us, and we saw his Sh'khinah (glory), the Sh'khinah (glory) of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth.*

And just to make clear His personal position on the continuing relevance of The Law and the Old Testament Prophets, during His famous Sermon on the Mount Christ said this:

Matthew 5:17-19 CJB

¹⁷ *"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.*

I will tell you with just the tiniest bit of a devilish pride that as I led Israel tours I have asked many an unsuspecting Pastor to read those words aloud while the tour group visited the Mount of Beatitudes and watched as a deer in the headlights look came across his face. The Pastors realized what they had just said and it is as though being in that place somehow made it alive and real to them for the first time; and it opened their ears to hear and comprehend something that they had never understood before. For some it lifted a huge burden; for others it caused them to be faced with a painful choice: stick with the purely manmade doctrine of "The Law is dead and gone" for Believers in order to satisfy their denominational leadership, or believe what Christ plainly said at the very spot where they stood. You can make that same choice exactly where you are sitting, and I think you know what you ought to do. But will you? I can assure you that if you are still wavering, to believe Christ in this will lift a huge burden and set

you off on a path to a stronger and more beautiful relationship with Him and His Father than you ever imagined.

As we delved into Romans chapter 10 last week, we found ourselves submerged in deep, but yet rather fundamental, theology. First we learned that zeal for God does not equal, or necessarily result in, salvation. Rather such zeal must be based upon correct understanding. And that correct understanding begins with accepting God's Word as true, and culminates with acknowledgment that Yeshua is our Lord and Savior. If we can't do that, then it is like revving your engine at a stop light; it sounds impressive but you're going nowhere.

Next we learned that there are essentially two different kinds of righteousness; both kinds are legitimate and both kinds are to be present in us. One kind is the saving kind and it is superior to the other kind; it is the kind of righteousness that is given to us as a free gift from God. It comes not by anything we can physically do; it doesn't involve our human deeds or works. Rather it comes from our trust in God's Son as Messiah. It is the kind (the only kind) that gives redemption and eternal life and it is based upon God's great mercy and grace. The other kind of righteousness comes from our physically doing things, our behaviors, that please God. That is, it indeed flows from our deeds and works. It comes from our being obedient to The Law of Moses. It would not be incorrect to call it a self-righteousness; but self in a positive and not a negative sense. Even so this kind of righteousness, while good and pleasing to God, does not save because indeed it is something that **we** do and thus it cannot be pure enough or perfect enough or even achieve the proper requirement to be saved. We cannot substitute one kind of righteousness for the other; and as Believers, we cannot just strive for one kind or the other kind of righteousness. Our obedience and doing righteous deeds in God's eyes is the expected response for Him having given us the gift of a saving righteousness.

After that we found that in John 5:46 & 47 Christ said something rather dramatic that can catch us off guard. It is so amazingly foundational and yet equally amazingly overlooked; it is that we are incapable of believing Him fully, because we can't possibly understand Him fully if we have not **FIRST** believed Moses. What did Moses record for us to believe? The Torah; and the Law of Moses within its pages. For Jews this meant that to properly believe Moses (an expression that means The Law of Moses) they must see that Messiah is The Law's goal and aim. If they can't comprehend that they will not be capable of believing Christ (and that is precisely what happened with the bulk of the Jewish people). On the other hand, for gentiles it means that while we might **THINK** we can fully understand Yeshua by never venturing outside the Gospels and the New Testament, Christ says that's not possible. If you can't believe Moses, then you can't believe Him. And you can't begin to believe Moses if you refuse to even know what he said. As a personal witness I can verify the truth of that. I have learned more about Christ and how to live a redeemed life from knowing the Old Testament than I ever knew before I did. And I have heard the testimonies of countless Believers who say the same thing. This is because The Torah and The Law are the foundation for understanding the need for, and the teaching of, Messiah. The Torah, The Law, and the Prophets provide the prerequisite context for understanding what we read in the New Testament about Messiah.

Without that, we may be self assured that we understand what Yeshua, Paul, John and others are telling us; but we don't. We can't. And with a far more elegant simplicity than I could ever construct, Christ said this exact thing in John 5:46 and 47.

John 5:46-47 CJB ⁴⁶ *For if you really believed Moshe, you would believe me; because it was about me that he wrote.* ⁴⁷ *But if you don't believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"*

Believe it and act upon it for your own good.

And finally in our last lesson Paul taught us that true belief must reside within us, and yet it must be confirmed with what comes out of our mouths. So there must be a sincere inner belief accompanied by an equally sincere outer belief. The location of our inner belief is our heart (meaning, actually, our mind since the heart organ was in that day thought to be where our intellect resided). The location of our outer belief is our mouth. And from our mouth we profess our inner belief to others. But listen again to what Paul said about what happens when we profess with our mouth.

Romans 10:10 CJB *....while with the mouth one keeps on making public acknowledgement and thus continues toward deliverance.*

For Paul this outward verbal expression of our faith was not an option; or as I hear often today from Christians that when it comes to salvation there are Biblical commands that are a "non-essential" (so why do them?). Confession with our mouths that Yeshua is Lord is **not** a "non-essential". But there is something else as well: there is something powerful about speech and the spoken word. A passionate speech can move a nation to better things. Or a passionate speech can move people to war. A well spoken word can transmit light into the dark recesses of people's minds. God spoke the Universe into existence. So never underestimate the power of the spoken word. The idea that our faith is so private and personal that we have no obligation to speak it to others is a false notion. For Paul, if you won't confess your faith publically, you are not the Lord's. And if you won't confess it publically, you are not fulfilling your calling as one of God's elect to tell others about the Good News that saved you.

Let's continue with Romans chapter 10.

RE-READ ROMANS CHAPTER 10:9 – end

Let's spend some time with yet another theological principle that Paul presents us with that on

the surface sounds straightforward enough, but actually it is not at all. It is complex but it is also worth the time to explore because there is more to it than meets the eye.

In verse 9 Paul says that in order to be saved we have to acknowledge that Yeshua is Lord; simple enough. But what does it mean to Paul that Yeshua is Lord? Is Yeshua His master? Is Yeshua his boss and activity director? In Greek the word that is being translated as lord is ***kurios***. It is the equivalent of the Hebrew word ***adonai***, and in its simplest sense it means master. ***Kurios, adonai***, master and lord are equivalents. Your master, your lord, is someone who holds the power of deciding over you. It is also a generic term of respect and honor, and of itself it has no connection to religion or deity. However for Paul it meant something special. But what? This has been a debate within Christianity for hundreds of years. What I want to do rather than giving you the several alternatives (which could take a very long time) is to get to the bottom line (which itself isn't a short discussion). It is this: in the ***Tanach*** (which is the Hebrew word for what gentiles call the Old Testament) God's formal name, which is formed by the Hebrew letters Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh, and which I pronounce Yehoveh but it is more widely pronounced as Yahweh, is used over 6000 times in the original text. And yet, that is not actually how our English Bibles read. The English equivalent or translation of Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh is Jehovah. And at best you'll find Jehovah in an English Old Testament a handful of times; a few dozen at most. Rather, because of a Jewish superstition against saying God's name out loud (or even writing it) that began around 300 B.C. Jews started saying ***HaShem*** (the name), or ***Eloah*** (God), or ***Adonai*** (Lord) or a couple of other Hebrew words in place of saying His formal name.

In Hebrew Bible study when dealing with Scripture passages there is a technique called ***kethiv*** and ***qere***. ***Kethiv*** means "what is written" and ***qere*** means "what is read". That is, the ***kethiv*** of a Hebrew word is to pronounce it just as it is written in the original Scriptures. But the ***qere*** is to move around some of the letters for the original word, or even to substitute a different word altogether for what is written in the original Scriptures rather than pronouncing it as written. So whenever Jews come to the letters Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh in the Bible (God's formal name), they do not use the ***kethiv*** (which would be to pronounce Yehoveh, just as it is written); instead when they see those 4 Hebrew letters they pronounce the words ***HaShem, Eloah, Adonai***, or something else. It is not that any of those is an alternative way to pronounce Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh; they represent authorized substitutes (all manmade of course). Thus, while Hebrew speakers know this and follow this principle, non-Hebrew speakers or novices do not. So in most English translations, what we see is that the Bible translator more or less follows the Hebrew ***qere*** and uses a substitute word when he translates God's formal name.

That means that when we look in our Old Testaments and (when referring to God's name) we see "the Lord said this" or "God did that", 99% of the time the original text uses God's formal name: Yehoveh (the letters Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh). The Greek translation of the Bible does the same thing. The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible is called the Septuagint, and it was created 250 years before Christ was born. What the Septuagint does is to substitute the word ***kurios*** every time God's formal name appears. While the Hebrews did not disturb the

Scriptures and instead left God's formal name intact where it was found in the original, often they wrote the preferred **qere** word (**HaShem, Adonai**) in the margins of the page or scroll, thereby telling the reader what word he should use instead. However the Greek Septuagint took a different approach. The Septuagint went ahead and removed God's formal name from the Scriptures and substituted the word **kurios** (Lord). So when reading the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament) the word Lord (**kurios**) is used over 6000 times when referring to God.

Often we can tell by Paul's Scripture quotes when he is quoting the Hebrew Tanach versus when is quoting the Greek Septuagint (and at times when he is just paraphrasing) because of differences in how those same passages were transmitted over time in the Septuagint versus the Tanach. And so the evidence is that when Paul uses the term Jesus is Lord, he means Lord in the same sense as it is used 6000 times in the Septuagint; he is equating Yeshua to God. So the evidence is that Paul, as did most Diaspora Jews, used the Greek Septuagint as his personal Bible rather than the Hebrew Tanach. Thus when Paul says to confess that Yeshua is Lord he means Lord in the sense of how it is mostly used in the Septuagint: as a substitute for the name of God. And yet, clearly Paul differentiates Yeshua from God the Father. That is, Paul does not see Yeshua as God the Father. To use C.E.B. Cranfield's definition, Paul intends to communicate that **Jesus is Lord** meaning that Yeshua "shares the name and the nature, holiness, the authority, power, majesty and eternity of the one and only true God". It is Paul's way of emphasizing the divine essence of Yeshua. This is important; because the Hebrew term **messiah** (Christ or Savior in English) in no way indicates a divine nature. Messiah in the 2nd Temple period is both a person and a function; it is the one who is anointed by God to rescue Israel from its oppressors and to restore Israel's fortunes. So in the Jewish mindset (Paul's mindset) saying that Yeshua is the Messiah (Jesus is the Christ) merely means that He is the deliverer of Israel, but only in a physical and political way. Not as a superhuman or as a god, but rather as a highly effective human warrior leader. To be clear: Jesus is Lord versus Jesus is Messiah is two entirely different things; Paul sees Yeshua as both. By Paul adding the attribute that Jesus is Lord to the equation means that on the one hand Yeshua is the human being that leads Israel out of its physical and political oppression to Rome; but on the other hand it also means that He is divine and bears the substance and authority of the God of Israel. Paul's meaning was well understood within Jewish circles. So Jesus is Lord is not a throw-away or an extra high degree term of respect; it is a critical theological assertion about who Yeshua is, and His purpose. He is divine and of essentially the same substance as Yehoveh: God the Father. And He has come to deliver His people.

For most, but not all, forms of Christianity, this concept of who Christ is is taken for granted. But for Judaism in Paul's day, such a possibility was controversial. However the idea that the Messiah of Israel could be both human and divine (something that modern Jews say is idolatry) was accepted by a significant segment of mainstream Judaism in Paul's day. So he wasn't alone in this belief nor did he invent the idea. What kept Paul in hot water with the Jewish community was his constantly rubbing elbows with gentiles and even offering them the benefits of the Jewish Messiah.....without them converting and becoming Jews.

This belief of Paul's that both Jews and gentiles could benefit equally from Yeshua's position as Lord and Savior is expressed in verse 12 when he says that there is no difference between Jew and gentile; that everyone who calls on Him will be delivered (saved). Most of that verse is a quote from the Book of Joel. We find in Joel chapter 3 these words:

^{CJB} Joel 3:5 *At that time, whoever calls on the name of ADONAI will be saved. For in Mount Tziyon and Yerushalayim there will be those who escape, as ADONAI has promised; among the survivors will be those whom ADONAI has called.*

Do not let something slip past you; notice the context of this Old Testament statement. It concerns a time when Jerusalem is under siege and a great conflict is underway that precedes the dreaded Day of the Lord. It equates to what Christians call Armageddon. While Joel, on the surface, applies this to Israel, Paul says it means that and something deeper. So using the rabbinical *derash* method of Bible interpretation Paul says it applies not only to Israel but also to all human beings; all human beings, Jew or gentile, who call on the name of God will be saved from the great conflict. Remember what we have learned: for Paul this apocalypse was imminent.....it could happen tomorrow. In fact he certainly expected it before his life span ended, which no doubt is why he chose this particular Scripture reference to make his point. However the larger point was that gentiles were perfectly capable of trusting, as much as were Jews. And thus gentiles are as perfectly capable of receiving God's mercy and grace as is Israel, and being saved.

Paul then sets up a fascinating series of 4 questions that act like consecutive links in a chain. But before we discuss them, we have to ask the question: who is Paul addressing this to? That is when verse 14 begins: ***“But how can they call on someone if they haven't trusted in him?”*** Who is “they”? So is “they” the Jews that Paul has been primarily talking to since chapter 7? Or has he switched and is now addressing gentiles? Or is “they” entirely general and he is addressing Jews and gentiles? A fair argument can be made for any of these viewpoints so Paul has made himself quite unclear to those of us who live hundreds of years after his time. However he wasn't thinking about 100 years into the future, let alone 2000 years. He was addressing people in Rome and dealing with specific issues that existed in his day, in the context of current events. Therefore I think it is most reasonable to see him as continuing to aim this primarily at the Jewish members of the Rome congregation.

Paul returns then to the typical rabbinical method of creating a straw man to debate a point. These 4 questions are brought by Paul's straw man to try to show that Israel cannot be saved by Messiah due to their lack of faithfulness to God, and Paul will refute each question more or less one by one. What the straw man wants to prove is that it isn't really Israel's fault that they aren't recognizing Yeshua as their Messiah, and thus are not calling on His name, because they didn't have a fair opportunity to do so for several reasons. Paul pushes back by saying that Israel has had all the opportunity needed, along with all the advantages attendant to being God's chosen people, to hear the message and be saved but they wouldn't do it. Even so

fault and blame are beside the point; God is so perfectly faithful that He is merely following through with His promise to save Israel despite their hard hearts, deaf ears and rebellion, and that's what Yeshua's purpose is.

Each of the straw man's questions basically says that in order for Israel to call upon Christ to be saved, 4 things needed to happen first. And then he implies that these 4 things never happened. First, says the straw man, it is self-evident that Israel could only have called on the name of Messiah if they had already believed in Him as the Messiah. But, second, they could only have believed in Him as Messiah if they first had the opportunity to know about Him. And, third, how could they have known about Him if no one was sent to tell them about Him? And, fourth, since this message of deliverance was from God, how could there be someone sent to announce the Messiah if God Himself didn't appoint a special person for the task and give him the message, the means, and the authority to deliver it? The straw man even draws upon Scripture to make his case that somebody had to deliver the Good News or no one would know about it. No doubt this passage also makes a strong case that the only people who are authorized to carry the message from God about the Good News (the Gospel) are those whom God has called. And whom has God called? The seed of Abraham. And who are the seed of Abraham? Believers in the Messiah Yeshua, Jew and gentile. Folks, it is us who are being referred to. We have been commissioned by God, through the means of our own salvation, to tell those who are waiting for someone to bring the Good News to them.

Next time we'll see how Paul responded to each of these questions from his straw man opponent.