**The Early Christians and the Law of Moses  
*Andrew Roberts***

**Introduction and Background:**

1. “Faith in Christ and knowledge of the gospel is the exegesis and fulfilling of the law.” (Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies*, 4:21:130).
2. Background: Baur & Bauer – Theories of The Early Christians and the Law of Moses
   1. F.C. Baur (1792-1860) and the “Tubingen School”
      1. Ferdinand Christian Baur, a German New Testament scholar who proposed a sweeping revision of the traditional understanding of Christian origins.
      2. He latched onto evidence of controversy in the early churches, such as 1 Corinthians 1 and Galatians 2, and argued that the best understanding of early Christianity was one of a struggle between 2 Christianities: Peter’s version and Paul’s version.
      3. As he looked at the earliest Christian writings (canonical and non-canonical), Baur argued for a “Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis” process unfolding in Church history.
         1. Thesis: Jesus was a Jewish prophet who practiced the Law of Moses perfectly and taught his followers to do the same. This Christianity has a distinctly Jewish flavor. Its hallmarks include a strong commitment to the Law, Circumcision, and Jewish nationalism against Gentiles. It is Judaism plus the belief that Jesus is the Messiah. Peter and the rest of the twelve (pillar apostles) supposedly championed this view.
         2. Antithesis: Jesus is God. Paul is the champion of this Christianity that was Universal (not national) and Spiritual (not legalistic). This was a religion especially for Gentiles.
            1. In this school of thought, Paul is the second founder of Christianity.
            2. According to Baur, the controversy continued unabated well into the 2nd Century.
         3. Synthesis: The resolution of the struggle was the Catholic Church that emerged at the end of the 2nd Century. Paul’s Christianity more or less won out but there are elements of Judaism/Jewish Christianity in Catholicism.
         4. The NT Canon: Baur attributed it to Catholicism – shows the mix of writings of the 2 Christianities, as well as late Catholic forgeries pretending at harmony and unity in the early church. Baur particularly pointed out the Book of Acts, which shows Peter and Paul cooperating, as late and inauthentic. Of course Baur needs Acts stripped from the Canon. That book alone sweeps his theories to the curb!
      4. In fact, many of Baur’s theories, as he presented them, were discredited in the late 19th century and 20th century because archaeological evidence and studies of the Patristic writings showed that Baur’s chronology was all wrong. N.T. documents really are first century documents and the Catholic Church did not compose the documents he suggested in the 3rd century or later.
      5. Yet, his basic story of Peter Vs. Paul (Jewish Vs. Gentile Christianities) is still championed today with some necessary alterations. Ex: *The Jesus Seminar*
      6. Yet we will observe that in the Book of Acts, the Apostles Hold a Consistent Interpretation and Application of the Law of Moses in their Mission. There is one gospel.
   2. Walter Bauer (1877-1960).
      1. The famous lexicographer published his book on Early Church History, in 1934, then an update in 1964. His 1964 book appeared in English in 1971 entitled *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*.
      2. He surveyed the early church, region by region, and argued that in many places the earliest discernible form of Christianity was often a form that later came to be labeled as heresy.
      3. Much like F.C. Baur, Walter Bauer said that Orthodoxy was achieved by a process of many theological debates and power plays. The Catholics won.
      4. Walter Bauer’s perspective is more complex than F.C. Baur because now it’s not just Peter Vs. Paul, but Marcion and others must be included.
      5. Walter Bauer’s American champion and next-generation exponent has been Bart D. Ehrman. Ehrman in *Lost Christianities,* *Misquoting Jesus,* and *Jesus Interrupted*.
      6. Did it matter originally? Could churches in Galatia differ in their faith and practice from churches in Syria or Judea? Was sound doctrine determined by geography? Was regional schism God’s master plan for the church?
      7. The Book of Acts shows that the Holy Spirit was given as both the inspiring God-breath to the apostles and the certifier, credentialing their message.
   3. Current exponents of “The Jesus of History Vs. the Christ of Faith” paradigm can all tip their hats to the theories of Baur & Bauer. But the nuts and bolts of these theories have a lot to do with Early Christians and the Law of Moses.

**Body**

1. **The Apostles’ Consistent Interpretation and Application of the Law of Moses in their Mission**
   1. The Apostles’ Mission: Evangelize the world.
      1. Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8; Col. 1:5-6. The apostles were witnesses bearing testimony to the good news that Jesus is the Christ, also that salvation and righteousness are available through Him, and following Jesus means a new life. The apostles will make disciples, followers of Jesus. The disciples are first called Christians at Antioch (Acts 11:26).
         1. They are carrying the gospel and proclaiming it – that is evangelizing.
         2. They are making disciples of Christ or Christians – that is Christianizing.
      2. What would it mean to evangelize the world? Contemporary activities to Evangelizing: Hellenizing, Judaizing, and Proselytizing. What did those things mean? Is Evangelizing anything like those?
      3. The Apostles were not Hellenizing. Hellenizing was when a non-Greek (a non-Hellene) began to behave as if he were Greek; the person was said to “Hellenize.” They imitated and adopted Greek language, culture, dress, philosophy, etc. This means that only non-Greeks could Hellenize, not the Greeks themselves. The element of imitating somebody else is integral to the meaning, so the natural members of a group or nation cannot be said to imitate themselves.
         1. Hellenizing was a Jewish controversy in first century Palestine. The circumstance of Jews living outside Palestine and dispersed among the Gentiles was known as the Diaspora. It had been going on since the Babylonian Exile – that Jews had lived in colonies or ghettos in Gentile lands. In Acts we see the reality of tensions between Jews themselves over Hellenizing.
         2. The Palestinian Jews. They largely spoke Aramaic in the time of Christ. They lived in close connection to the Temple and could more easily observe and practice the Law of Moses especially with the Temple cult.
         3. The Diaspora Jews. These are more readily accused of Hellenizing. They lived in colonies or even ghettos throughout settlements of the Roman Empire. They spoke Greek. Around Jerusalem, Greek speaking Jews were called Hellenists while the locals were called Hebrews (Acts 6:1; 9:29).
         4. In Acts 2, the baptism of the Holy Spirit is shown, in part, by speaking in tongues. How is it that so many Jews at Jerusalem speak so many languages (Acts 2:8-11), indeed “languages or dialects to which they were born?” Answer: Diaspora Jews had made their pilgrimage to Jerusalem for Passover and remained for Pentecost. For some of these Jews, it is perhaps the first and only time in their life they might actually see the Temple and participate in these religious rites.
         5. Finally, on Hellenizing, the majority of the Roman population spoke Greek. Certainly Diaspora Jews did. The Law of Moses, the main Bible that people used was the Septuagint (LXX) – the Greek translation of the Hebrew canon that came out of Alexandria, Egypt, approximately 200 BC.
         6. The Apostles had to move in and out of both Hebrew and Hellenistic culture to Evangelize, but they were not Hellenizing. They weren’t trying to get people to think and act like Greeks, or imitate Greeks.
      4. The Apostles were not Judaizing. What would it mean to Judaize? When a non-Jew began to behave as if he were Jewish, he would be said to “Judaize.” Gentiles could Judaize, not Jews. This implies that when Christians are said to Judaize, these Christians are of Gentile, not Jewish origin.
         1. The apostle’s consistently refused to teach Gentiles to become Jews. Rather, they taught Jews and Gentiles alike how to be saved in Jesus Christ.
         2. The apostles called Gentiles to “turn to God” but it was by Faith in Jesus Christ not by Judaism or Torah observance (Acts 15:14, 19; 26:17-20).
            1. The apostles’ message was a new way.
            2. Salvation and righteousness was not by circumcision or keeping the Law of Moses. That would be Judaizing.
            3. Yet, Gentiles truly were repenting and “turning to God” – The real God, the true God.
            4. This new way is really something! Because Moses has had people reading him and preaching him for many generations and he is still read in the synagogues every Sabbath – yet that didn’t get the Gentiles turning to God. But the gospel does (Acts 15:21).
         3. God does not “bait and switch.” Judaizing Gentile converts would be “bait and switch.” If the gospel brought them to God then Gentiles need to continue in the gospel, not get the Law of Moses dumped on them. If they had wanted to become Jews, there were already synagogues in town preaching the Law of Moses. That’s not what they signed up for.
            1. The Acts 15 epistle (Acts 15:23-29) should be seen in the context of this conclusion:

Gentiles turning to God is good.

This is all God’s will.

So these Gentile Christians are ***not going to be*** getting circumcised and ***not going to be*** keeping the Law of Moses.

* + - * 1. The Acts 15 epistle (Acts 15:23-29) should be seen in the context of this discussion:

Because of the above conclusion(s), what is necessary for Gentiles in their discipleship?

What is a reasonable burden on these Gentiles who have turned to God by the gospel?

What will promote unity and fellowship in churches where some Jewish Christians will likely pursue Torah observance, other Jewish Christians will relax Torah observance, and Gentile Christians ***will not be instructed*** to start Torah observance.

* + - * 1. The Book of Acts repeatedly answers 4 things:

Abstain from things polluted by idols – idolatry (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25).

Abstain from blood (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25).

Abstain from things strangled (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25).

Abstain from sexual immorality – fornication (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25).

* + - * 1. Jewish Christians would not need to be taught these things, if they were Torah observant; they already practiced this abstinence as taught in Leviticus 17-18.
        2. It does seem like the Holy Spirit and the apostles take a page from Leviticus on this. In Leviticus 17-18, laws for Israel’s land are laid down. Yet, “Strangers” in the land are specifically named as needing to abide by these same instructions. Thus, in times past, Jews and Gentiles had lived together in harmony, though Gentiles had not been fully Torah observant.

“Strangers” abstain from things offered to idols (Lev. 17:7-9 esp. v. 8)

“Strangers” abstain from sexual immorality (Lev. 18:6-26 esp. v. 26)

“Strangers” abstain from blood (Lev. 17:10-14 esp. v. 10, 12, 13)

“Strangers” abstain from things strangled (Lev. 17:13-16 esp. v. 13, 15). In this text there are regulations for slaughtering animals, strangling & improperly slaughtering would violate these directions.

* + - 1. The Apostles’ failure to preach Torah observance was controversial in the early church but also a determined choice.
         1. Have you ever gotten flack for what you did not say in a sermon?
         2. It appears for some Torah observant Christians in Jerusalem that being a Jew goes without saying. You don’t tell a Jew to become a Jew, you just have to tell them that Jesus of Nazareth is really the Messiah. Yet, if Christians are going to start preaching to Gentiles, you MUST tell them to become a Jew – you have to Judaize them – and THEN tell them that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. Don’t you?
         3. Acts 15:1, 5 appears that some Jewish believers thought that the Apostles were neglecting some teaching that needed to be overtly pronounced so these Gentiles can really be saved. Judaize them!
         4. It’s astonishing how that Torah observant believers in Jerusalem did not back down from correcting apostles and encouraging Judaizing!

When Peter returned from Cornelius’ house (Acts 11:1-3).

Self-appointed preachers that the apostles did not commission (Acts 15:1-2, 5, 24).

The apostles were silent on circumcision and Torah observance for Gentile converts (Acts 15:24).

* + - * 1. But the apostles were saying that Jews will be saved in the same manner as Gentiles – Faith in Christ (Acts 15:11).
        2. Not only are the apostles not Judaizing, because Gentiles don’t need to observe Torah in order to be saved, but neither are Jews being saved for their Torah observance. Mind you, Peter is recorded as saying that, not Paul (Acts 15:11)!
        3. That is something for Jewish Christians to consider and decide if they want to stick with the apostles. Reading many N.T. letters, it would seem that some Jewish brethren thought it best to disagree with the apostles and attempt to Judaize Gentile believers in the name of Jesus Christ. That became Ebionite doctrine (see below: VII. B.).
      1. The Jerusalem meeting (Acts 15) clarified what message the apostles preached and what they did not preach. They were not Judaizing.
      2. The world had seen Judaizing but the Apostles weren’t doing it.
    1. The Apostles were not Proselytizing. They were not winning people (Jews or Gentiles) to a sect of Judaism.
       1. Within the Judaism of the first century there were accepted parties. The Book of Acts identifies Jewish sects:
          1. Sadducees (Acts 5:17).
          2. Pharisees (Acts 15:5; 26:5).
       2. The Pharisees did some proselytizing, inducing Jews, especially Diaspora Jews, to join their party (Matt. 23:15).
          1. Granted, Matt. 23:15 may be another way of saying “Judaizing,” working hard to find a Gentile from somewhere beyond the sea and converting him to Torah observance.
          2. Yet, given the Diaspora and the Pharisee’s leading influence in synagogues, the verse may well be speaking of the sectarian spirit of Pharisees who made Jews into Pharisees throughout Diaspora synagogues.
          3. I favor this reading because the “Woes” are on Pharisees particularly and so one has become “twice as much a son of Hell” for becoming a Pharisee, as opposed to simply becoming a Jew.
       3. Were the apostles launching a new sect of Judaism? Were they proselytizing? According to Baur & Bauer and their followers, that’s really what Peter and the Pillar Apostles were doing. Christianity was largely a Jewish reform movement. Paul took it and turned it into something else.
       4. Proselytizing would be reaching Jews and indoctrinating Jews, not reaching out to Gentiles, especially, but persuading Jews to join their party. Imitate the Party. Be like the Sect. Is that what the Apostles were doing?
       5. No! The Apostles were not about creating another Jewish sect.
       6. The Baur & Bauer’s of the world teach that the N.T. and other historical evidence shows early Christians were another sect of Judaism like Pharisees, Sadducees, or Essenes. But, of course, the Christian sect eventually took on a life of its own and became its own world religion.
          1. It’s reasoned that early Christians are a sect of Judaism because they went to the Temple (Acts 2:46-5:42).
          2. It’s reasoned that early Christians are a sect of Judaism because they frequent synagogues (Acts 6:8-9; 9:1-2; 13:14; 17:1-3).
          3. It’s reasoned that early Christians are a sect of Judaism because they are called a “sect” in the Book of Acts (Acts 24:5, 14; 28:22).
       7. Later we will give special attention to the early Christians in and around the Temple as well as synagogues (see below: IV. and V.). For now, let’s consider the label “sect” that would accompany proselytizing.
       8. Luke is careful to only put the term “sect” in the mouths of the Christians’ adversaries, never the Apostles. “Sect” is not a word of Christian self-identification.
          1. Tertullus: “the sect of the Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5).

Paul: “according to the Way which they call a sect…” (Acts 24:14). Paul clarifies the adversary. The adversaries call Christians a sect but they don’t see themselves that way.

Paul shows that, unlike the parties that exist due to their peculiar take on this or that Scripture, he believes “all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets” (Acts 24:14).

* + - * 1. Jews in Rome: “this sect…spoken against everywhere” (Acts 28:22).

In response, Paul “explained” Jesus and the kingdom of God from the Law and the Prophets (Acts 28:23).

* + - 1. Terms of Christian self-identification in the Book of Acts.
         1. The Way (Acts 9:2; 18:25-26; 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22; 22:4).
         2. The Holy Ones – Saints (Acts 9:13, 32, 41; 26:10).
         3. The Disciples (Acts 6:1-2, 7; 9:1, 25; 15:10).
         4. The Brethren (Acts 6:3; 10:23; 11:12).

“Brethren” was also a term for Jewish fellowship (Acts 2:29; 9:17; 28:21).

* + - * 1. The Church (Acts 8:3; 9:31; 14:23).
        2. The Kingdom of God (Acts 19:8-9; 28:23).
        3. Christians (Acts 11:26; 26:28-29).
      1. The Apostles were not showing another way to be Jewish or a new way to be Jewish. Their message was altogether new and different. They were not proselytizing or launching another sect of Torah observant Jews. The world had seen proselytizing, and that is not what they were doing.
    1. They were Evangelizing, they were Christianizing.
       1. They proclaimed that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah – the long awaited Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36; 3:13; 4:10-12).
       2. The assurance of this is the resurrection of Jesus Christ, to which they were witnesses (Acts 1:8; 2:32; 3:13-15; 4:20; 5:30-32; 17:31; 26:16).
       3. Remission of sins and salvation is in Jesus Christ for all mankind (Acts 2:38; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 22:16).
          1. Acts is the book of conversions.
          2. Acts 2-7 Jews are converted to Christ, both Palestinian as well as Diaspora Jews.
          3. Acts 8, Samaritans are converted.
          4. Acts 8, Ethiopian Treasurer – a foreign Jewish proselyte is converted.
          5. Acts 9, A Pharisee is converted.
          6. Acts 10-11, Gentiles are converted.
       4. Converts to the gospel should imitate Jesus Christ and live differently than the world – be like Jesus. The apostles will teach and show them how (Matt. 28:19-20; Matt. 10:25). This is Christianizing!
       5. Jew and Gentile alike can choose to be citizens of the Kingdom of God and Jesus is the king. Regardless of country, culture, background or past, the gospel invites all to take part (Acts 1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 26:22-23; 28:23, 31).
          1. This choice to become a Christian was radical.
          2. Tertullian wrote, “Christians are made, not born.” (*Apol*. 18:4)
          3. All Christians were converts because all Christians made a choice to change religion. In the ancient world you were born to your religion.
          4. Thus, all Christians were viewed as “apostates” from the religion they were born into and expected to maintain.
          5. The N.T. reports that Jew and Gentile converts alike suffered & will suffer persecutions for the sake of Jesus.

Jewish believers (Matt. 10:17-23; Acts 8:1-3).

Gentile believers (Acts 14:21-22; 19:21-41; 2 Tim. 3:10-12).

* 1. How did the Apostles View and Use the Law of Moses in their Mission?
     1. The Apostles, like Jesus, held the Law of Moses (all Old Testament writings) as Scripture. They had a high view of the OT!
        1. It is God breathed (2 Tim. 3:15-17).
        2. It is true and sound (John 17:17).
        3. “There is no question that Jews of late antiquity held a high view of the inspiration of the Jewish Scriptures, a fact that becomes readily apparent when one reads ancient Judaic literature. In the words of James Kugel, virtually all ancient interpreters presupposed that ‘Scripture is perfect and perfectly harmonious… [an] assumption [that] goes well beyond the rejection of apparent mistakes or inconsistencies. It posits a perfect harmony between the various parts.’ The homogenous assumption of Jews of Jews of this period was that ‘all of Scriptures is somehow divinely sanctioned, of divine provenance, or divinely inspired’ (*The Bible As It Was* [Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 1997] 20-23” (Pickup, “New Testament Interpretation of the Old Testament…” 359).
        4. It is accepted and believed as it stands.
           1. It is unbreakable (John 10:35).
           2. Because the Law of Moses is what it is and says what it says, Paul follows Jesus and the Way and worships the same God as Israel (Acts 24:14).
        5. The term “Law” might be used in accommodative manner encompassing Scripture in various genre of the Old Testament. “When New Testament writers spoke of the law they made reference to books in every division of the Old Testament – the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms (Lk. 24:44).” (Jenkins, *The Theme of the Bible*, 69)
           1. Genesis 16:15 (Gal. 4:21)
           2. Exodus 20:17 (Rom. 7:7)
           3. Leviticus 19:18 (Mt. 22:35-39)
           4. Numbers 28:9, 10 (Mt. 12:5)
           5. Deuteronomy 6:5 (Mt. 22:35-37)
           6. Psalm 82:6 (Jn. 10:34)
           7. The Prophets – Isa. 28:11 (1 Cor. 14:21)
        6. The Apostles used it all. The early Christians saw Jesus everywhere in the Old Testament. The Law of Moses was the great ally in corroborating their controversial testimony: That Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah.
        7. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment and explanation of the Law of Moses (Acts 26:6)
     2. OT Scripture is the great ally in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Acts 26:22-23; 28:23).
        1. Apostles appealed to common knowledge of the OT (Acts 15:21).
        2. Apostles appealed to common belief in OT (Acts 26:3, 27).
        3. Apostles appealed to written copies of the OT (Acts 17:1-3, 10-11).
     3. The Apostles quoted and expounded the Law of Moses in various ways but all showing Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ. Jesus is the explanation of it all! NT writers quote the OT extensively, though their sense of quotation will not always follow our current standards of quotation in modern writings. The following list shows various use of OT in NT exposition of the doctrine of Christ.

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| 1 Peter 3:18-24 | OT: Types | NT: Antitypes |
| Galatians 4:21-31 | OT: Allegory | NT: Reality |
| Colossians 2:11-17 | OT: Shadows | NT: Substance |
| Ephesians 3:1-12 | OT: Mystery | NT: Manifestation |
| 2 Corinthians 3:4-18 | OT: Veiled | NT: Unveiled |
| Acts 3:18-26 | OT: Prophecies | NT: Fulfillment |

* + 1. The Apostles proclaimed continuity from OT to NT.
       1. There is one God, the same God for Jews and Christians, now fully known in Jesus Christ.
       2. The OT shows God’s prophecies and plan from the beginning, come to fruition in Jesus Christ.
       3. The same Holy Spirit who had brought about the OT was active in the Apostles – He was moving again, leading, and they were His instruments. Through them, the Holy Spirit was manifesting power (in signs and wonders) and knowledge (in revelation to be preached and penned).
       4. The inspired Apostles recognized something else about the OT, though perhaps reluctantly, it prophesied inclusion of Gentiles in the great work of God that they were leading.
  1. The Apostles’ Mission was greater than the Jewish Nation. The Gentile Mission: Parallels in Peter and Paul.
     1. Galatians 2:7-8 has been twisted by the likes of Baur & Bauer to say there were multiple gospels, at least 2. Not so!
        1. Gal. 1:6-9 – only one gospel and no apostle, angel, or any man can alter it.
        2. Gal. 2:2-3 – Paul’s confidence bolstered that all apostles taught the one gospel.
        3. Yet there were two groups of people: circumcised and uncircumcised.
        4. A better understanding is that the focus of ministry in the balance of their lives will be different and this by God’s will.
        5. But striking similarities in the gospel ministry of Peter and Paul in the book of Acts show that God initially led them to preach to Jews and Gentiles in the same ways.
     2. Initially they both preached the gospel to Jews: Peter (Acts 2); Paul (Acts 9:20-30; 26:19-20).
     3. Special revelation – Visions from the “Lord” – directed them to Gentiles: Peter (Acts 10:9-16; 11:12); Paul (Acts 22:17-21; 13:1-4).
     4. They both were sought by others & brought to Gentiles: Peter (Acts 10:17-23); Paul (Acts 11:25-26).
     5. God confirmed both their Gentile ministries by miracles: Peter (Acts 10:44-48; 11:15-17; 15:8-9); Paul (Acts 15:12).
     6. Peter and Paul (and all the Apostles) were Partners in the gospel.
        1. The one gospel was preached to the Jew first and then to the Greek (Rom. 1:16).
        2. Paul’s ministry initially seems to be more focused on Gentiles (as he is involved in much travel beyond Palestine, according to the Book of Acts).
        3. Yet Peter did not always stay in Jerusalem and work exclusively with Jews. Peter traveled all over Judea and Samaria (Acts 8-9) and made his way to Antioch of Syria at some point (Gal. 2).
     7. Peter and Paul affirmed each other’s place and work as apostles and preachers.
        1. Peter called Paul a “beloved brother” and said that Paul’s epistles are Scripture and carry the weight of all Scripture (2 Pet. 3:15-16).
        2. Paul said God worked in Peter for an apostleship and also called him a “pillar” (Gal. 2:7-9).
  2. With Baur & Bauer, the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament is viewed as parallel to the imagined rivalry of Peter and Paul. Peter is for Law & Jewish nationalism while Paul is for Grace and universal spiritualism. A civil war in the church left Paul and the Gentiles as victors. The New Testament trumps the Old Testament. As we have seen, there is no such divergence or animosity between Peter and Paul. But what of the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament?
  3. An Accurate Illustration: The John-Law Parallel. The relationship of John the Baptist to Jesus Christ parallels the relationship of the Law of Moses to the Gospel. The relationship of John the Baptist to Jesus Christ parallels the relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament.
     1. John the Baptist corresponds to the Old Testament and Jesus Christ corresponds to the New Testament.
        1. John the Baptist is a Levite, the son of a priest named Zacharias (Luke 1:5, 13). John the Baptist is also a prophet – the last prophet before Jesus (Matt. 11:7-15). He echoes the Law (the Levites were the teachers of the Law), with its sacrificial system (the priests offered sacrifices and worship) and the prophets.
        2. Jesus came preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14) and shed His blood for a new covenant (Luke 22:20). He echoes the gospel, the new covenant.
        3. John the Baptist was maternally related to Jesus – they were family, they were cousins (Luke 1:36). So, too the OT and NT are connected and related in that both came from God (Heb. 8:7-10).
        4. Thus, there is continuity. They are not enemies. They each have their role and Jesus is preeminent.
        5. Passages that open our eyes to pay attention to John and Jesus in this light (Matthew 11:13; Luke 16:16). John, himself, is a line of demarcation in God’s plan for redemption. John the Baptist is a breakpoint between the Law & the Prophets and the gospel of the Kingdom.
     2. John’s ministry came from God (Luke 1:15-17); The Law and Prophets came from God (2 Pet. 1:21).
     3. John started in the wilderness (Luke 3:2-3; Mk. 1:4-5); The Law came to Moses in the Sinai wilderness (Exo. 19:1-2).
     4. John’s work was to identify the Christ (John 1:29-34). This was done by the Spirit descending as a dove on Jesus of Nazareth at His baptism; The Old Testament’s job was to identify the Christ by prophecies and promises (Luke 24:27, 44-45).
        1. We could also understand John sending messengers to Jesus in this light (Luke 7:18-24). It’s not just John’s testimony that identifies Jesus, but all of the Old Testament markers.
        2. Jesus’ response is to tell John what his disciples witnessed Jesus do. What they saw was the very Messianic miracles prophesied in Isa. 49:8-9 and which Jesus announced He’d do in Nazareth (Luke 4:18-21).
     5. John said, “One comes after me…” (John 1:27) and “I have been sent before Him” (John 3:28). John is a Precursor, pointing to a Successor. John tells us that he has a role and a work but he’s not the end of the line. John knew his work was temporary.
        1. Moses is a Precursor, pointing to a Successor. Deut. 18:18-19 – Moses said a Prophet was coming after Him. That was Jesus (Acts 3:22-26)! Moses knew there was a temporary aspect to His work and authority.
        2. The Old Covenant is a precursor pointing to a successor! Jer. 31:31-34 – Jeremiah prophesied a New covenant. Jesus shed His blood for a new covenant (Matt. 26:28; Heb. 8:7-13). The old covenant said a new covenant was coming. It recognized, within itself, that it was temporary.
     6. John lead people to Jesus (John 1:35-42); The Old Testament leads people to Faith in Jesus (Gal. 3:23-25).
     7. John said, “One comes after me who is preferred before me” that is, ranks higher than me (John 1:27). The Old Testament came first chronologically but the New Testament is greater in rank and preferred. It can accomplish what the OT could not.
        1. Romans 8:3 – Some things the Law could not do because of weakness in flesh – but Jesus the Son could do it. The gospel is preferred!
        2. Acts 13:39 – By Christ we can be justified, but the Law of Moses could not justify you. The gospel is preferred!
        3. Gal. 3:21 – the Law could not give life but the Son can. The gospel is preferred!
     8. John’s joy was fulfilled in Jesus (John 3:29). The Old Testament is fulfilled in Jesus (Matt. 5:17-18). Far from being negative, this was joyful for all those who loved God and desired the Christ to come.
        1. Especially the cross shows Jesus’ earthly work was finished; all Scripture was fulfilled (John 19:28-30; Lk. 24:26-27).
        2. Especially at the cross, we see the Old Testament is nailed to it (Col. 2:14-17; Eph. 2:13-16). Fulfillment language.
     9. John said, “He must increase but I must decrease” (John 3:30); The Old Covenant is growing old and vanishing away (Heb. 8:13).
        1. John the Baptist had disciples but Jesus was gaining more disciples (John 3:22-26; 4:1).
        2. As the gospel was preached, more and more Old Testament Jews became NT Christians (Acts 2:40-41, 47; 4:4; 5:14). Thus, the Old Testament is decreasing while the Gospel is increasing.
     10. John said, “Follow the Son” (John 3:31-36); The Old Testament is saying, “Jesus is Lord” (Acts 17:1-3; 26:22-23; 28:23). Follow the Christ.
     11. John’s message and baptism yielded to Christ’s Salvation (Acts 19:1-7). The Old Testament system yielded to the New Testament way of Salvation (Acts 15:1, 5, 6-12).
         1. John’s disciples were instructed and baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 19:5).
         2. The Holy Spirit’s presence sanctioned all of this (Acts 19:6).
         3. Some Jewish Christians thought you have to obey the OT to be saved (Acts 15:1, 5).
         4. Peter showed that Jews will be saved like Gentiles (Acts 15:11). Meaning all are saved alike by the Gospel and not the OT system.
         5. The Holy Spirit’s presence and power in miracles sanctioned all of this (Acts 15:6-12).
     12. When did John’s ministry stop? When it pleased God to end it. John would continue to do his work until then. John would serve his role in identifying the Messiah and pointing people to Him. Likewise, the Old Testament system continued to operate until it pleased God to end it.
  4. Conclusions: Peter, Paul and the rest of the Apostles were on the same page. They were not Hellenizing, Judaizing, or Proselytizing. Rather they were preaching the gospel and showing a new Way, a new People of God. They Evangelized. They held a high view of OT Scripture as they consistently interpreted and applied the Law of Moses as consummated in Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the same OT was foretelling and authorizing their Gospel Mission to the Jew First and also to the Gentiles. The OT Yields to the NT, just as John the Baptist yielded to Jesus Christ. While there were dissenting views and interpretations, these dissenters did not arise from among the apostles.
  5. So, did the apostles get it right? After all, some early Jewish Christians challenged the apostles, especially as it came to the OT and Gentile Torah observance. Who is to say that the Apostles were right?

1. **The Holy Spirit as Revelator and Certifier to the Apostles’ Mission and Doctrine**
   1. The Baur & Bauer’s of the world make it sound like early Christianity was every man doing what was right in his own eyes.
      1. If a teacher claimed to be a leader, even an apostle, then he was accepted as one.
      2. If a writing claimed to be Scripture, then it was just accepted that it was. And followed.
      3. As this was all contradictory by ethnicity (along Jew/Gentile lines) or geographically (Gnostic doctrines in Asia Minor/ Catholic doctrines in Rome). Heated debates and controversies raged.
      4. Only late, 3rd & 4th centuries, because of councils and intervention by the State was a cohesive canon hammered out.
      5. The winners wrote the Bible. Christianity is explained by religious Darwinism. Is this so?
   2. Certainly the Book of Acts shows that there was controversy along ethnic lines (Jew/Gentile – Acts 10-11, 15). There was controversy within Judaism (Hellenes/ Hebrews – Acts 6). There was even controversy within families (Matt. 10:21-22, 34-39)!
   3. But there was one gospel, revealed by God to the apostles and prophets. There was Truth and there was error. There were not 2 or more Christianities. The Holy Spirit saw to that.
   4. Apostles are chosen by the Lord, not men.
      1. The eleven took precautions NOT to be seen as appointing the next apostle (Acts 1:15-26). Casting lots.
      2. Jesus appeared to Paul and selected him (Acts 9:1-19; 22:6-21; 26:12-20).
   5. The Holy Spirit inspired apostles and prophets in preaching, teaching.
      1. Jesus’ promise of this (Matt. 10:17-20; John 14:26; 16:12-14).
      2. Peter’s testimony to this (2 Pet. 1:19-22). Notice, the same Holy Spirit that moved Moses and the prophets is now active again, moving Apostles!
      3. Paul’s testimony to this (1 Cor. 2:9-13).
      4. The apostles said it was the Word of God they spoke and wrote (1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Cor. 14:37; Eph. 3:3-4).
   6. The Holy Spirit authenticated, credentialed, the work of the apostles.
      1. Signs of an apostle (2 Cor. 12:11-13). Especially the ability to lay hands and impart Spiritual gifts (Acts 8:14-25).
      2. The signs and wonders (Mark 16:14-20; esp. v. 20).
      3. Miracles worked among Jewish converts (Acts 2:43).
      4. Spirit falling on Cornelius & household (Acts 10:44-48; 11:12-18; 15:7-8).
      5. Miracles worked among Gentile converts (Acts 15:12).
   7. Conclusion: Apostolic Authority
      1. Peter & Paul both wrote as possessing authority (2 Pet. 3:1-2; 2 Cor. 12:8; 13:10).
      2. Apostles were the examples to follow and set forth the pattern that pleased God (Phil. 3:17; 4:9; 1 Cor. 11:1).
      3. Christians were to keep the doctrine and practices apostles taught, whether in person or by letter (2 Tim. 1:13; 2 Thess. 2:15).
      4. Walking orderly as a Christian, was maintaining apostolic faith and practice (2 Thess. 3:6, 14).
      5. John’s warning to test teachers and their teachings: Are these things really from apostles (1 John 4:1, 6)? If not, then it is error and falsehood.
   8. Respect for Apostolic Authority and thus, Apostolicity, were primary considerations for Early Christians viewing a document to be inspired and including it in the NT canon.
      1. Apostolicity: “This term simply means that something goes back to the time of the apostles” (Gonzalez, *Essential Theological Terms*, 15)
   9. Extant writings of early Christians (sometimes known as Patristic Fathers, sometimes known has Church Fathers) demonstrate recognition of authoritative N.T. Scriptures - early. (See Pickup, “The Canonicity of the Bible”)
      1. Clement of Rome, penned *1 Clement* (AD 95). He was a preacher and bishop in Rome, writing a letter to the church at Corinth. He either directly quotes or makes allusion to the following N.T. books: 1 + Synoptic Gospels, Rom., 1 Cor., Gal. Eph. Phil. Heb. & possibly John’s Gospel, Acts, Jas., 1 Pet.
      2. Ignatius, penned 7 letters (AD 110). He was a bishop at the church at Antioch (Syria) and was arrested and taken to Rome for execution in 110 AD. On the Trip he wrote 7 letters; 1 to Rome & 6 to various churches in Asia. He either directly quotes or makes allusion to the following N.T. books: Matt., John, Rom., 1 Cor., Gal. Eph. Phil. Col., 1 Thess., Heb., 1 Pet. & possibly Luke
      3. Polycarp, penned a *letter to Philippi* (AD 110). A bishop of the church at Smyrna. Is thought to have personally known the apostle John. He wrote a letter to the church at Philippi and either directly quotes or makes allusion to the following N.T. books: Matt., Luke, Rom., 1 Cor., Gal. Eph. Phil. 2 Thess., 1 & 2 Tim., Heb., 1 John, 1 Pet. & possibly John, Acts, 2 Cor., Col., 2 John.
   10. Eusebius wrote *Ecclesiastical History* (325 AD). In book 3, chapter 25 entitled, “The Sacred Scriptures Acknowledged As Genuine And Those That Are Not,” he systematically recounts the N.T. canon of the church in his day.
       1. First, he lists the Accepted Scriptures. It’s the same 27 books that we have in our N.T. According to him, there was only dispute about James, Jude, 2 Pet., 2 & 3 John, “although they are known and approved by many.”
       2. Then he lists the rejected writings. These were considered good and helpful to the church but they were not to be considered Scripture. Example: *Shepherd of Hermas, Epistle of Barnabas, the Didache* (teachings of the Apostles).
       3. Finally he lists heretical writings. These are not only NOT SCRIPTURE, but they are not good. They are false teachers posing as apostles.
       4. Eusebius wrote: “Thus, we may have it in our power to know both these books and those that are adduced by the heretics under the name of the apostles, such, namely, as compose the gospels of Peter, Thomas, Matthias, and others besides them, and the Acts of Andrew and John and the other apostles, which no one belonging to the succession of ecclesiastical writers has deemed worthy of mention in his writings. Indeed, the character of the style itself is very different from that of the apostles, both the thoughts and the purposes of those things that are advanced in them, deviating as far as possible from sound orthodoxy, evidently proves they are the fictions of heretical men. Therefore, they are to be ranked not only among the spurious writings but are to be rejected altogether as absurd and impious.” (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*. Book 3, Chapter 25).
       5. This quote is so helpful because it shows us what Christians before his time understood about the canon and what constitutes genuine scripture. And it never was passing resolutions in a council. For the early Christians, if a book was genuine scripture it had to be…
          1. Apostolic. Either an Apostle or one of their inner circle was trusted to be the writer. And that’s why imposters would take names of Apostles and put them on their books.
          2. Early acceptance. Early is first Century. The first Christians and on down knew this writing was sacred scripture. Eusebius writes in AD 325 and he’s aware of what church writers had quoted as scripture and what they had not. He refers to a “succession of ecclesiastical writers” and that means Christians for some time had already cited these works, preached on them, and wrote about them.
          3. Church Usage – Were preachers and bishops using the writings in worship, public reading, debate, exposition, etc.? He mentions ecclesiastical writers.
          4. Consistent message – read these other books and you’ll see “the character of the style is different.” They “deviate as far as possible” from the gospel and what scripture is like.
          5. And so, if the writings claimed as Scripture, lacked these 4 things, depending on what they lacked, they were either rejected but helpful, like the *Shepherd of Hermas*, or they were impious fictions of heretics!
   11. What was the criteria for Canonicity?
       1. Apostolicity, Apostolic Origin – authors were either the apostles or an inner circle of apostles. Apostolic = inspired and authoritative
       2. Universal and Early acceptance of the writing as Scripture.
       3. Church usage in worship and public reading/instruction.
       4. Consistent message – containing theological outlook similar or complementary to existing scripture.
   12. The Holy Spirit then, showed that the Apostles got it right about interpreting the Old Testament and setting forth the New Testament. There was “orthodoxy” in a sense from the beginning because there was “apostolicity.” As doctrine and practice aligns with “apostolicity,” it should be accepted. Yet if “orthodoxy” shifts away from “apostolicity” it becomes “heterodoxy” or even “heresy.”
   13. The authoritative power of Councils in later Church History, are, themselves, departures from “apostolicity” and thus should be understood as “heterodox” bodies.
   14. These heterodox bodies (church councils) came along too late to fashion a New Testament canon. Furthermore, believers had been deciding what faith and practice to follow for centuries prior to these councils. Their decisions are well understood in light of their attitude toward the apostles and apostolic (NT) writings. (See below: VI & VII)
   15. To this point we see that Baur & Bauer (and their followers) are erring in their own revisions of early church history. The apostles had a consistent message among themselves. It was true and verified by the Holy Spirit. This apostolicity was the greatest influence on the NT canon and that is why we read a cohesive gospel message. The church did denounce and oppose certain writings because they were viewed as less than “apostolic” and some were egregiously anti-apostolic.
   16. Yet, it appears some Jewish Christians were doing some awfully Jewish things. How do we understand this behavior? Were there two Christianities after all? The apostle Paul is the case study.
2. **Paul: Being Israelite and Keeping The Faith**
   1. It ain’t easy being Paul!
      1. Consider his self-identifications.
         1. An Israelite, seed of Abraham, tribe of Benjamin (Rom. 11:1).
         2. Jew by nature (Gal. 2:15).
         3. Circumcised the 8th day, Hebrew of Hebrews (Phil. 3:5; 2 Cor. 11:22).
         4. I am a Pharisee (Phil. 3:5; Acts 23:6).
         5. I am “altogether” a Christian (Acts 26:28-29).
         6. I am an apostle (1 Cor. 15:8-10; Rom. 1:1-6; Gal. 1:1-2; etc.).
         7. I am chief sinner (1 Tim. 1:15-16).
      2. Consider his self-satisfaction of integrity.
         1. Always lived in good conscience (Acts 23:1; 24:16).
         2. Kept the faith (2 Tim. 4:7).
   2. Paul’s behavior, as recorded in the Book of Acts, compared with his letters, has been explained by some as an evolution of theology. But “evolution,” “journey,” or “growth process” are entirely wrong words!
      1. Paul’s words: Trance & Vision (Acts 22:17-21).
      2. Paul’s words: Revelation (Gal. 1:11-12, 17; Eph. 3:3-7).
      3. Paul’s words: Received the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:10-13).
   3. A radical change occurred wherein Saul of Tarsus shifted his zeal for the Law of the Lord to a zeal for the Lord of the Law (Gal. 1:13-24).
      1. Saul of Tarsus and Zeal for the Law of the Lord (Psalm 19:7; Gal. 1:14; Acts 22:3-5).
         1. Saul the persecutor (1 Tim. 1:13).
         2. Saul the blasphemer (1 Tim. 1:13).
      2. Apostle Paul and Zeal for the Lord of the Law (Acts 9:1-6; Gal. 1:23-24; 1 Cor. 15:9-10)
      3. When Paul followed Jesus as Lord, the Law of Moses all made sense (Rom. 10:1-4; 2 Cor. 3:4-18).
   4. Paul’s behavior must teach us about The Faith revealed to him, The Faith he preached, and The Faith he kept.
   5. Did Paul practice what he preached? First, let’s consider what he preached (in some of his letters) about the relationship of the Law of Moses to the Gospel of Christ (The following notes follow Ferguson, “Christian Use of the Old Testament” 357-364).
      1. Reading Galatians 3-5.
         1. At issue: Who are the sons of Abraham and heirs of the promises?
         2. Paul’s 3 arguments (Gal. 3:1-14).
            1. Religious experience – Galatians received the Spirit through faith in preaching the gospel, not by Torah observance (Gal. 3:1-5).
            2. Scriptural argument – Faith made Abraham acceptable to God and faith marks his sons, not fleshly descent (Gal. 3:6-9).
            3. The nature of law, itself – condemnation for not keeping it perfectly and life by keeping it perfectly (Deut. 27:26; Lev. 18:5) – contrasted to another principle of justification, namely life by faith (Gal. 3:10-14; Hab. 2:4).
            4. The key concept of these verses is Faith. “In Christ Jesus” the curse is removed and the blessings come upon Gentiles.
         3. Paul illustrates the promise of God to Abraham by a will (Gal. 3:15-18).
            1. Even men (equal parties) do not annul or add to their own covenants.
            2. God (greater and perfect, thus not an equal party) made a promise – a covenant – with Abraham.
            3. Giving the law 430 years after the fact did not annul the promise – covenant- to Abraham.
         4. Paul then considers, “Why then the law?” (Gal. 3:19-22).
            1. It was added because of man’s sins.
            2. It was a moral guide, a custodian or pedagogue – child leader.
         5. The law was Temporary (Gal. 3:23-25).
            1. Now Christ has overcome sin!
            2. The law is obsolete.
            3. Now that Christ has come, now that a faith system has been instituted, the law has served its function.
            4. The Christian is no longer under the Custodian – no longer under the law.
         6. The Christian is in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26-27).
            1. Christians are sons of God.
            2. Christians do this by faith.
            3. Upon baptism into Christ, they put on Christ and are in Christ!
         7. The question of Abraham’s descendants is settled (Gal. 3:28-29).
            1. Christians are the offspring of Abraham by faith not by flesh.
            2. Whether Jew or Gentile, those in Christ are the spiritual seed of Abraham.
            3. Those in Christ are the heirs!
         8. The illustration of sonship (Gal. 4:1-10)
            1. Being an heir but living under the guidance of a slave.
            2. Until full age comes and then the son is out from under the slave.
            3. Jesus came in fullness of time and redeemed from law, now all are adopted as sons in Christ.
            4. The Spirit you received calls God, “Father” – further evidence you are a son.
            5. Going back to Torah observance is regressing to being subject to the slave again and forfeiting the blessings of sonship and promise.
         9. Paul’s personal appeal (Gal. 4:11-20).
         10. Paul’s allegory drawn from the law (Gal. 4:21-31).
             1. When we recall that the issue with Judaizers concerned identifying the true sons of Abraham and how one received the promises given to Abraham, this story is aptly chosen and the allegory pointedly made.
             2. Abraham has 2 children by 2 women – Hagar the Slave and Sarah the Free.
             3. Ishmael born according to natural courses.
             4. Isaac was born as the child of promise and came by the power of God.
             5. Several parallels drawn between the relations of Ishmael and Isaac and the relations of Jews and Christians.
             6. Forceful conclusion: “Cast out the slave [the covenant at Sinai].”
         11. Practical Conclusions of all this stated (Gal. 5:1-12).
             1. To accept circumcision as a religious rite was to obligate yourself to keep the whole law – it was an integral part (v. 3).
             2. That cuts one’s self off from Christ (v. 2, 4).
             3. Seeking justification by the law is to depart and reject the system of grace.
             4. Circumcision is nothing; the law is nothing; to be in Christ is everything (v. 6).
         12. Alternative basis for ethics (Gal. 5:13-25).
             1. Removal of the law doesn’t mean that any kind of behavior is acceptable.
             2. Moral guidance is provided by a source other than the Law.
             3. Instead of the choice being between the law and the passions of the flesh, there is a third alternative. A new kind of life.
             4. Life lived under the direction of the Holy Spirit.
             5. The Holy Spirit’s guidance and leadership over Christian people is a distinct advance of the NT over the OT (Heb. 6:4).
         13. Summary: The NT in Christ is founded on the promise to Abraham, not on the Law of Moses. Paul’s teaching about justification by faith instead of by the law shows the gospel is universal. The Law of Moses was given to Jew and one was born into relation with it. The faith principle for justification, as opposed the flesh principle was available to Gentiles – all people. Under the Christian age one has the privilege to choose his own ancestors. He can become a part of the people of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob.
      2. Reading Romans 7:1-7.
         1. The Christian is free from the law.
         2. The illustration of marriage (v. 2-3). The woman’s husband died and she is free to marry another.
         3. The person himself died and is free from the law to marry Christ (v. 4-6).
         4. The marriage illustration is tied to the death of Christ as the means by which a Christian dies to the law.
         5. Death frees a man from the law (v. 1).
         6. The Christian is dead to sin (Rom. 6:1-11), so he is dead to the Law (Rom. 7:4, 6).
         7. The law to which the Christian has died is the Mosaic Law, with its 10 commandments (Rom. 7:7).
         8. Freedom from sin and freedom from the Law of Moses does not mean freedom from moral guidance but is followed by freedom in the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-2). Christians follow the Spirit, because the coming of Christ rendered the law inoperative (Rom. 10:4).
      3. Reading 2 Corinthians 3:6-18.
         1. The New Covenant of the Spirit that gives life.
         2. The Letter kills. Letters carved in stone are a ministry of death – 10 Commandments.
         3. This is commentary on Exodus 34:29-35.
         4. Contrasts:
            1. Death Vs. Spirit.
            2. Condemnation Vs. Righteousness.
            3. Faded Vs. Permanent.
         5. Veil language:
            1. The veil over Moses’ face hid the fact that the glory was fading.
            2. When Moses turned to the Lord, he removed the veil.
            3. Paul does not veil himself when preaching the New Covenant.
            4. Moses’ veil symbolizes a veil which lay over the law and over the Jews when they read the Law. When people turn to the Lord (Jesus) then the veil is lifted and they understand the OT correctly.
         6. The Old Covenant is passing away and the New Covenant remains and is more glorious (v. 11).
      4. Reading Colossians 2:11-17.
         1. “Circumcision” has occurred in baptism. The sign of covenant with God and also sins are removed. Not physical operation though.
         2. Man has been freed from legal requirements of Torah observance.
         3. No one is to judge the Christian in the matter of dietary regulations, annual festivals, new moon, and weekly Sabbath prescribed in the law.
         4. Such things are the shadow, but Jesus is the reality. If you have the reality you don’t go chasing shadows.
         5. Thus one will not be saved for doing it or sin by leaving it undone.
      5. Reading Ephesians 2:11-18.
         1. Jews and Gentiles are united as one new people of God because the law is abolished in Jesus’ death on the cross.
         2. The Law of Moses was a barrier between Jews and Gentiles. It had to be removed to make salvation available to all men and create a new spiritual community.
      6. Reading Hebrews 7:1-10:18.
         1. Jesus’ priesthood superior to Levitical priesthood (Heb. 7).
            1. Jesus is from tribe of Judah but OT priests are Levites.
            2. Jesus’ priesthood must be from a different order.
            3. A change in priesthood means there was necessarily a change in the law (Heb. 7:12).
            4. So integral was the priesthood to the law that if one accepts the priesthood of Christ he must accept a new & different law. Yet if one is to keep the Law of Moses, he must keep the Levitical priesthood. This forfeits the priesthood of Christ.
         2. Covenant, Sanctuary, and Sacrifice (Heb. 8-10).
            1. A change in law means a change in covenant (Heb. 8:6-13). The new covenant is better for its better promises.
            2. Jeremiah prophesied a new covenant (Jer. 31:31-34) and implied deficiency of the old. The Old Covenant is ready to vanish away in the time of the Hebrew author (Heb. 8:8-13).
            3. Better promises of a better covenant are due to the better sacrifice of the new priest. The better sacrifice is made in the heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 9:1-12, 23-25).
            4. The new covenant begins with the death of Christ (Heb. 9:15-17).
            5. This death is the sacrifice offered by Jesus, who is both priest and sacrificial victim (Heb. 9:12-14, 26-27). The first sacrifices are abolished by the perfect sacrifice of Christ (Heb. 10:5-10).
            6. The Law of Moses with its priesthood, sanctuary, sacrifices, and covenant are all shadows and has been replaced by Christian reality: Jesus Christ (Heb. 10:1-18).
      7. Conclusion: There are two different covenants, two different systems of religion: the Law of Moses and The Gospel/Faith of Jesus Christ. It is all or nothing (Gal. 5:3; Heb. 7:12). If one takes Christ, he has chosen a different kind of relationship with God.
   6. Second, let’s consider some of Paul’s letters and what he preached about acting “for the gospel’s sake” toward non-Christians (Jew or Gentile).
      1. Reading 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.
         1. Paul regards himself no longer under the Law of Moses.
         2. Christ is Paul’s Lord and he is under law to Him.
         3. When Paul preaches among Gentiles, he is not Torah observant.
         4. When Paul preaches among Jews, he is Torah observant.
         5. Conclusion: Torah observance is an expedient for gospel work.
      2. Reading 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1.
         1. The new way, “the church of God” listed distinctly from Jew or Greek (v. 32). Don’t offend any of them knowingly.
         2. Be mindful of your example and the consciences of others.
         3. Always seek the profit of others and especially that others will be saved (v. 33).
         4. Paul is setting the example in this (11:1).
      3. Reading Romans 14:1-15:2.
         1. A prescription for peace and unity in a church composed of both Jew and Gentile Christians.
         2. The specific examples of eating meat and observing days is directly applicable to Torah observance.
         3. So long as it is understood the kingdom of God is not about these things, then don’t disrupt or trouble the kingdom of God over them. Let a brother’s personal conscience and conviction guide him.
         4. Again, this places Torah observance in a realm of personal choice, personal conviction, and expediency.
         5. Christian Jews did not have to start living like Gentiles to please the Lord, and Christian Gentiles did not have to start living like Jews to please the Lord. But they all needed to live for the Lord (Rom. 14:8).
   7. Third, the Apostle Paul’s behavior, recorded in the Book of Acts, is exactly what we’d expect to find if Paul believed all that he wrote in his epistles.
      1. Paul’s evangelism method – go to synagogues first, in towns that have them.
         1. Acts 13:14; 14:1; 17:1-2, 10, 17; 18:4-6, 19; 19:8-9
         2. It was his custom to go to synagogues first (Acts 17:1-2).
         3. Sometimes he preached in synagogues without opposition (Acts 13:5; 17:10-12; 17:17; 18:19).
         4. Also, when he preached at synagogues, there were God-fearing Gentiles mixed in the crowds as well (Acts 13:16, 26; 17:17; 18:4; 20:21). Paul was an equal opportunity evangelist.
         5. Paul saw consistent results in the synagogues – some Jews and Gentiles believed Jesus is the Christ.
         6. Thus Paul is both an apostle to the Gentiles and a teacher of Israel.
         7. When Jewish resistance to the gospel made teaching in synagogues impossible, Paul turned his focus to Gentiles in the town (Acts 13:44-48; 18:6; 28:28).
         8. But to go to synagogues and be accepted and invited to speak, you’d have to look and act Jewish. To the Jew he became a Jew and that would mean Torah observance.
         9. But there were prices to keeping these synagogue doors opened to him. To keep these doors opened, Paul would have to submit himself to the standards, even discipline, of the synagogues. “Flogging was an ordinary punishment used by Jewish authorities. *Mishna Makkoth 3* lists various offenses that were punished by flogging, e.g., a number of offenses connected with food and ritual purity. In all probability it was such an offense that caused the flogging of Paul, namely the eating of unclean food (cf. 1 Cor. 8:8; Rom. 14:14). The setting for this would be Paul’s contact with Gentile Christians.” (Reidar Hvalvik, *Jewish Believers In Jesus*, 132).
         10. It is perhaps in connection to this commitment that Paul suffered the beatings from the Jews (2 Cor. 11:24) because the synagogue’s punishment for violating Torah to associate with Gentiles would be a beating. Once he’d paid for his “transgression” he’d be in good standing with the synagogue again. But it shows ongoing association with Jews and Gentiles.
      2. Paul Circumcises Timothy (Acts 16:1-3).
         1. Amazing timing on this since Acts 15 showed that circumcision and Torah observance were no part of salvation in Jesus Christ.
         2. Timothy would be delivering a letter telling others they need not be circumcised (Acts 16:4)!
         3. Yet this is done for the sake of Jews that knew Timothy’s family. If Timothy’s mother is Jewish and he is circumcised then he is ethnically and culturally Jewish and may easily travel with Paul in and among Jews and synagogues.
         4. This is Torah observance for the sake of the Jews and the sake of the gospel mission but it is not Torah observance for the sake of Timothy’s salvation.
         5. Circumcision, itself, is a matter of indifference (Gal. 5:6; 6:15; 1 Cor. 7:19). It is OK for Jews to circumcise as Jewish identity – ethnicity. But Paul objected to insisting Gentiles had to be circumcised for salvation because this added to the gospel and changed it and obscured it.
      3. Paul Takes a Vow (Acts 18:18).
         1. “It showed that he [Paul] often voluntarily lived ‘Jewish’ even to the extent of assuming a Jewish vow.” (Lenski, *Acts*, 763)
         2. To be ethnically Jewish is not against the gospel Paul preached. Nor to maintain that ethnicity.
         3. Could it be a Nazirite vow? We can’t be sure, but that may fit best.
            1. Nazirite vows (Numbers 6:1-21).
            2. “According to the Mishna, the vow could be taken for life, or for a limited period of time, though not less than 30 days (*m. Naz*. 6:3).” (Reidar Hvalvik, *Jewish Believers In Jesus*, 140).
            3. Perhaps this vow had to do with his blessed deliverance and ministry at Corinth (Acts 18:9-17)? That would explain why it would end at the port city of Cenchrea before sailing. He could take his hair with him to burn at Jerusalem. He does stop at Jerusalem before returning to Antioch (Acts 18:22).
            4. The Nazirite vow is a purely voluntary undertaking.
            5. And, a Gentile could not enter the temple for the votive sacrifices and thus never take a Nazirite vow.
            6. This would be a peculiarly Jewish thing to do. But Paul was a Jew and this vow was not anything that compromised the truth or freedom of the Gospel.
      4. Paul travels to participate in religious festivals (Acts 18:21-22; 20:16).
         1. The obvious point: Paul did not cease to be a Jew after coming to faith in Jesus Christ.
         2. His attitude toward observing days and feasts became pragmatic.
            1. If Gentiles were being taught feasts due to Torah observance as gospel, then Paul was against it (Gal. 4:10).
            2. Yet there is nothing wrong, in and of itself, to observe days or not observe days, so long as you honor the Lord (Rom. 14:5-6).
         3. I personally wonder if Pentecost felt like a “home coming” of sorts for Christians by Acts 20:16. Paul’s desire to make Jerusalem for that may have had as many “Christian” personal motives – reunions with apostles and brethren – as “Jewish” personal motives of celebrating harvest.
         4. Regardless, Paul was confident that being in Jerusalem for the feasts would not offend Jews, Gentiles, or the church of God (1 Cor. 10:32).
      5. Paul observing the Sabbath (Acts 13:14, 44; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4).
         1. Clearly Paul was with Jews (and God fearing Gentiles) in these Sabbath synagogue assemblies.
         2. Paul was pragmatic in preaching Christ on Sabbaths from the Law and Prophets.
         3. Christians should not judge or be judged about “Sabbaths” (Col. 2:16-17).
         4. Yet, Paul observed the first day assemblies of Christians (Acts 20:6-7).
         5. For Jewish Christians, a Sabbath would be default custom and there’s nothing wrong with observing it, in and of itself.
      6. Paul agrees to James’ plan and sponsoring vows at Temple (Acts 21:17-30).
         1. Rumors are circulating about Paul among Torah observant Jewish Christians (Acts 21:21-22).
            1. “You teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses.”
            2. Telling Jews that they ought not to circumcise their children.
            3. Telling Jews that they ought not walk according to the customs.
         2. Given our study we can safely say…
            1. Paul was preaching the gospel, like the other apostles, but he was not promoting Torah or Torah observance in the synagogues and churches he worked among.
            2. Paul was not Judaizing Gentiles, so he was not preaching or promoting Torah Observance.
            3. All of that silence when he had many opportunities for “Pro-Torah-Talk” might cause Jews to wonder if he was against it.
            4. Furthermore, Paul was combating Judaizing teachers for the sake of the gospel and Gentile brethren. His polemics fell equally against Torah observance for Gentiles or Jewish confidence that Torah observance saved souls instead of Christ.
            5. One can see how he might be misunderstood to be discouraging Jews from their ethnicity, customs, or even observing Torah.
         3. James and Paul agree that these rumors must be halted and this false perception corrected. They’re also agreed that this changes nothing that they’ve been preaching to Gentiles (Acts 21:23-25).
            1. 4 men who doubtless have taken the Nazirite vow.
            2. By sponsoring their vow – paying to provide all necessary sacrifices, it will show the Jewish brethren that they’ve heard wrong about Paul.
            3. Paul walks orderly.
            4. Paul keeps the law.
         4. Again, Paul’s origins and his expedient understanding of Torah observance for gospel gains allows him to do this without difficulty (1 Cor. 9:19-23; Acts 21:26-27). Being a Jew, and having taken similar vows in the past, would also make this an easy thing for Paul to do – though perhaps expensive.
         5. But, Paul had been seen in the city with Trophimus the Ephesian, and that was all the excuse his (non-Christian) enemies needed to start a riot (Acts 21:28-30).
   8. To harmonize all of this, the gospel was a distinct system from the Law of Moses. Torah observance was a matter of expediency for Paul’s gospel work. Paul might personally choose to observe Torah because of his ethnic background, his personal habit and comfort, or as an expedient to evangelize Jews. Yet Torah observance was not compulsory or essential to salvation. That’s how he would be an Israelite and keep the Faith.
   9. In the Book of Acts the early Christians are seen meeting in the Jerusalem Temple regularly, as well as synagogues throughout Palestine and the Diaspora. How does this relate to the Law of Moses?
3. **The Early Christians In The Jerusalem Temple**
   1. The Christians met in the Temple and its environs, but was it really just another day at the Temple?
      1. Acts 2:46-47 looks pretty sweet. How long did it last? Some scholars suggest that the first Christians were supported by the people because of their exemplary Temple dedication and participation. Perhaps another picture emerges from the Book of Acts.
      2. We are told significant reasons the church gathered at the Temple.
         1. The early Christians’ commitment to Apostolic Doctrine.
            1. The church was committed to hearing it and the Apostles kept going to the Temple (Acts 2:42, 46; 5:12, 42).
            2. The Apostles followed Jesus’ example in this (Lk. 19:47-48; 22:53; Acts 26:26).
            3. The Apostles were commanded to go preach there (Acts. 5:19-21, 25, 42).
         2. The logistics of a large congregation (Acts 3:11; 4:4; 5:12). Yet, the Christians were also gathering in homes just as regularly (Acts 2:46; 5:42).
      3. Consider that a standing, operating Temple was not a bad thing for the early Christians!
         1. All of the events recorded in the Book of Acts and the vast majority of the NT was written while the Temple stood and functioned in Jerusalem.
         2. For Christians, this allowed teaching Christ with the visual aids.
         3. For Christians, the Temple was an evangelism magnet: Diaspora Jews migrated to the Temple regularly and could hear the gospel.
      4. Controversy with Temple leaders (Acts 4:2-22; 5:17-32, 40-41). Clearly Christians were NOT just blending in and going with the flow of regularly scheduled Temple activities. The Apostles were not teaching a reform Judaism, their doctrine filled Jerusalem from the Temple and it was interpreted as hostile to the high priest (Acts 5:27-28).
      5. Saul of Tarsus showed that Christians weren’t welcome (Acts 8:1, 3) and he acted by Temple authority (Acts 22:4-5).
   2. Accusations against Christians concerning the Law of Moses and the Temple.
      1. Stephen (Acts 6:11-14).
         1. Accused of speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God (v. 11)
         2. Accused of speaking blasphemous words against this holy place [Temple] and the law.
         3. “Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us.”
      2. Paul (Acts 21:28).
         1. Accused of teaching all men against the people.
         2. Accused of teaching all men against the law and against this place [Temple].
         3. Accused of bringing Gentiles into the Temple and defiling it.
      3. But observe how both Stephen and Paul use the Law of Moses as their defense against the accusations that they’ve blasphemed it.
         1. Stephen gives a recounting of the OT (Acts 7:1-50), showing by the Law how Israel always rejects God’s messengers and that God doesn’t dwell in temples made with hands.
         2. Paul speaks in Hebrew (Acts 21:40) the nearly lost language of the Law of Moses, underscoring his claim to zeal for God and the Law (Acts 22:3-4). Paul name drops Ananias as a character witness and he is devout according to the Law (Acts 22:12). Paul even called out Ananias the High Priest for breaking the Law by striking him (Acts 23:2-6).
      4. Early Christians rarely got to quietly go about their business at the Temple. They were watched, harassed, and falsely accused. On the other hand, they were also actively evangelizing the Jewish population that had gone to Temple for Torah observance.
   3. What Christians Knew About the Temple.
      1. There are some similarities between the accusations leveled at the Apostles, Stephen, and Paul. They were all teaching the same doctrine. What were they telling the brethren? What did Christians know about the Temple? They knew:
         1. The Temple was corrupted by the leaders – Jesus showed that (Luke 19:45-48; 22:52-53; John 18:12-14). The same gang was running the Temple when the Apostles met them (Acts 4:5-6)
         2. God does not dwell in temples made with hands (John 4:19-24; Acts 7:48-50; 17:24-25).
         3. Things “made with hands” become idols, even the Temple (Acts 7:39-43, 47-50).
         4. The Veil was Torn (Matt. 27:51; Mk. 15:38; Lk. 23:45).
            1. This is often understood as communicating that now there was not separation between God and His people.
            2. Yet, the veil was because God’s holy presence appears in that place (Lev. 16:2; Exo. 25:21-22).
            3. No veil, no God there to receive the blood of atonement or speak with prophets from the mercy seat.
            4. God has exited the building.
         5. There was another Temple, the genuine Temple – Christians were the Temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19-20)!
         6. There was another Sanctuary (Heb. 8:1-3; 9:23-24). The true Holy place of Heaven.
         7. There was another High Priest and priesthood (Heb. 7:11-27; 1 Pet. 2:9-10; Rev. 1:6). Jesus Christ is the High Priest and all Christians are priests.
         8. Jesus was going to destroy the Jerusalem Temple (Matt. 24:1-2; Lk. 21:5-6) – historic accounts of the Jerusalem church’s behavior during both Jewish revolts (AD 70 & AD 135) shows that they accepted the judgment was from God. Then Jewish Christians particularly suffered great persecution at the hands of the other Jews for being traitors.
            1. Stephen is accused of saying this (Acts 6:14).
            2. What is ironic is that while Jesus did destroy the Temple (via Roman armies), it was the Jews themselves that “changed the customs that Moses had delivered to us.” The Jews themselves developed Rabbinic Judaism after the Temple fell. God did not reveal it and Moses did not teach it either.
   4. Remember that plenty of Jerusalem Temple customs are not contrary to the gospel. Although Gentile saints wouldn’t be allowed to participate in all these things, if Jewish Christians desired to, it wouldn’t be wrong.
      1. Prayer – The Temple is a house of prayer (Luke 19:46; Acts 22:17).
      2. Peace or Thank offerings. Completely voluntary and not for expiation of sin.
         1. “The properly eucharistic offering among the Jews, in its theory resembling the meat offering and therefore indicating that the offerer was already reconciled to and in covenant with God. Its ceremonial is described in (Leviticus 3:1)… The peace offerings, unlike other sacrifices, were not ordained to be offered in fixed and regular course. The only constantly‐recurring peace offering appears to have been that of the two firstling lambs at Pentecost (Leviticus 23:19). The general principle of the peace offering seems to have been that it should be entirely spontaneous, offered as occasion should arise, from the feeling of the sacrificer himself (Leviticus 19:5).” (*Smith’s Bible Dictionary*)
      3. Votive offerings like the Nazirite vow and its completion (Num. 6:1-21). Also voluntary.
      4. Almsgiving (Gal. 2:10; 6:10).
      5. A Jewish Christian may well choose to express their devotion and praise to God for the blessings of Jesus in these familiar ways. Whether a Jew chose to be strictly Torah observant or relax Torah observance, these things may well be common and customary expressions of piety that do not contradict the gospel.
   5. It was not the task (and probably not the desire) of early Christians to be anti-Temple or destroy the Temple. It was God’s Mt. Moriah and He would deal with it as He saw fit. The Apostle’s saw the Temple and its officers as God’s high priest (Acts 23:4-5). Like King David of old, they wouldn’t lay their hands on the Lord’s anointed. God would deal with Jerusalem… in fact, much like He did with King Saul.
   6. Yet, when the Jerusalem Temple was destroyed, never to be rebuilt, it was not the end of Christianity. Nor did Christianity have to undergo drastic reformulations of their worship or assemblies to compensate for it. Unlike Judaism and the Synagogues.
4. **Early Christians in the Synagogues**
   1. Gospel preaching was done in synagogues first.
      1. Stephen and Jerusalem (Acts 6:8-10).
      2. Paul and missionary journeys (Acts 13:14; 14:1; 17:1-2, 10, 17; 18:4-6, 19; 19:8-9).
      3. As Jewish believers learned the gospel they may have continued meeting on Sabbath. But they were also being instructed about the First Day of the Week.
   2. What were first century Sabbath services like at the synagogue?
      1. It’s interesting to consider what was going on during Sabbath services at synagogues. A typical construction of a Sabbath service would be:
         1. The *Shema* (Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Num. 15:37-41)
         2. The *Tefilah* – 18 Benedictions, these prayers would be led by a priest if one were present (Num. 6:24-27)
         3. Reading from the Law
         4. Reading from the Prophets
         5. Sermon
      2. In recent decades, scholarship has shied away from the notion that early Christians simply adopted synagogue services *en bloc* for their own worship assemblies.
      3. F.F. Bruce states the traditional scholarly understanding of synagogues, at least until the late 20th century. “Here a service of worship could be carried out without offering sacrifices, yet following as closely as possible the order of the sacrificial worship in the Jerusalem temple. As time went on, the importance of synagogues as the centres of Jewish community life steadily increased, in Palestine itself as well as in remoter parts, until the day when the temple worship came to an end (in AD 70) and the synagogue was left to perpetuate the religion and life of Judaism” (F.F. Bruce, *Israel & The Nations*, 113).
      4. This is a view of synagogues heavily influenced by early Rabbinic literature (AD 200 or later). Yet when one looks to NT sources as well as pre-AD 70 sources, one sees nearly an inverted picture. That is, the synagogue was primarily the centre of Jewish community life as school, community center, and justice hall exercising judicial oversight over a Jewish community within Gentile towns. Only after the fall of the Temple, does the role of the synagogue change into a place where “a service of worship could be carried out without offering sacrifices” (See Levine, McGowan, McKinnon, Smith).
   3. Distinct Christian Assemblies.
      1. The Christian assembly for worship might cursorily appear like synagogue meetings but really it was quite different.
         1. Christians have a different emphasis.
         2. Once you worship on a different day, you may have distinctive ideas.
         3. Christians were assembling on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2)
      2. Sunday Worship was a weekly reminder of the centrality of the Resurrection for Christians.
         1. It’s the Lord’s Day, not a Sabbath day. Radical!
         2. Christians pray, but no set prayers (no *Shema* or *Tefilah*). Christians pray in the name of Jesus! Radical!
         3. Christians Broke Bread to remember that Jesus died for them. This Lord’s Table invited Jew and Gentile to table fellowship. Radical!
         4. Christians took collections to support gospel work, gospel workers, and relieve needy saints. Jews and Gentiles were equally aided and blessed by the funds. Radical!
         5. Christians read Scripture, certainly OT (LXX) writings but they also read letters by the Apostles which were considered Scripture. OT Prophets and Psalms were preferred in the Christian assemblies that were interpreted for Christ and Christians. The NT documents taught the Christians their faith and practice.
         6. Christians sang! “It seems the early Christians loved to sing” (Leon Morris, “The Saints and the Synagogue,” 50).
      3. Christian assemblies could occur anywhere: Temple, houses, synagogues, schools, upper rooms, down by the river, etc.
      4. Christian assemblies were important. Though persecution would discourage some saints from meeting as a church, they are exhorted to assemble (Heb. 10:23-25).
   4. The Reformulation of the Synagogues following the Jerusalem revolts of AD 70 and AD 135.
      1. Jewish attitudes toward Christians, especially Jewish Christians, get really ugly.
      2. Synagogues changed the *Tefilah*
         1. The *Tefilah* is the cornerstone of a synagogue service meaning prayers. It’s also referred to as *Amidah* (standing. Because they stand to pray) and *Shemoneh Esrei* (meaning 18) because it consists of 18 Benedictions that would compose this part of the prayers.
         2. After the Temple fall (AD 70), another subsequent failure of a Jerusalem revolt in AD 135, and forced expulsion from the land, all Jews were soon Diaspora Jews. Synagogues became even more important to Judaism.
         3. The Synagogue prayers reflected the Jew’s religious and political situation. The Twelfth Benediction (out of 18) became an imprecation. The Jews prayed, “For the apostates let there be no hope. And let the arrogant government be speedily uprooted in our days. Let the *Nazarenes* and the *heretics* be destroyed in a moment. And let them be blotted out of the Book of Life and not be inscribed together with the righteous. Blessed art thou, O Lord, who humblest the arrogant" ([www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud\_0002\_0003\_0\_02999.html](http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/judaica/ejud_0002_0003_0_02999.html))
         4. Christians, referred to as Nazarenes (Acts 24:5), were now cursed along with the Roman government and clearly identified as heretics in the daily prayers of the Jews in synagogues.
      3. Synagogues Rejected the LXX for a New Greek Translation of Jewish Bible, Aquila’s Version.
         1. Christians claimed such ownership of LXX, Jews forsook it.
         2. Aquila was a Jewish proselyte from Pontus. Possibly he was a Christian before converting to Judaism.
         3. He published his Greek translation of the Old Testament about AD 130.
         4. Aquila’s translation soon became popular among Jews, and perhaps as a reaction to Christians using LXX.
         5. Aquila’s translation is noted for being extremely literal.
         6. Aquila sought to create a translation exclusively for the use of Greek speaking Jews in synagogues. Not for Christians.
      4. With such measures, Christians (whether they were Torah observant Jews or not) were unwelcomed.
      5. Yet, the new Jewish approach of spiritualizing worship at synagogue, even calling synagogue “temple” – adopting “spiritual sacrifices” – where did it come from? There’s no clear record of Synagogue psalmody prior to Rabbinic Judaism. Where did they get the idea that everybody in the assembly can sing and not just a levitical choir?
      6. While some popular ideas may suppose that early Christians were adopting synagogue practices and views, it seems more likely that Jews, dispossessed of their temple, began understanding and formulating worship as the Christians had been teaching and practicing for nearly a century by the time of the Bar Kochba Rebellion (AD 135).
   5. Thus far in our study we’ve seen in the Book of Acts how the Apostles respected the entire OT Canon as Scripture. While Jewish saints might still observe Torah as their ethnic heritage or even as a gospel expediency, Gentiles were not to be bound to Torah observance as part of the gospel. Torah observance is a matter of conscience and personal liberty. It is not bad, in and of itself, but it is not essential to salvation. And if Torah observance begins to blur or alter the gospel, it must be corrected. How did these views and values survive into the next century following the Apostles? Points VI and VII show Early Christians and the Law of Moses beyond the Book of Acts.
5. **Post-Apostolic Approaches to The Law of Moses**
   1. Now that we have considered the New Testament about the relationship of the OT to the NT, it is interesting to see how this was understood by other early Christians following apostolic times.
   2. Reading *The Apostolic Fathers*, one finds that quite early on there were questions about the Christian’s relationship to the Law of Moses. How should it be interpreted and applied? What is interesting is how quickly attitudes toward the Law of Moses among Christians seem to shift.
   3. Below are quotations from 3 early works with some comment.
   4. *The Epistle of Barnabas* (ca. AD 70-135)
      1. This epistle has two parts, the first doctrinal and the second more practical. The first part deals with the questions: How ought Christians to interpret the Jewish Scriptures? What is the nature of the relationship between Christianity and Judaism?
         1. The *Epistle of Barnabas* is a Christian commentary on properly interpreting the Old Testament.
         2. The writer clearly puts forward the Allegorical approach which is ancient and well-respected by the time of this epistle.
         3. Philo of Alexandria was interpreting the OT in allegory a generation or two before this letter was penned.
         4. “Developed by the Greeks, the allegorical method assumes the existence of and seeks to uncover the hidden spiritual meaning of a text, which may be quite different from (and at times, seemingly unrelated to) the apparent (and often considered to be superficial) meaning” (Lightfoot, Harmer, and Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers*, 159).
         5. “This does not mean, however, that the so-called *Epistle of Barnabas* denies the historical character of the Old Testament. On the contrary, most of the narratives of the Old Testament are historically true, and Pseudo-Barnabas does not doubt them, although he does affirm that they point to Jesus…All these things really happened, but their deeper significance was in the fact that they announced Christ.” (Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, 84-85)
         6. In the following excerpts we note:
            1. Awareness of the OT giving way to the NT.
            2. Animal sacrifices are abolished for spiritual sacrifices.
            3. The Jews are an example of God’s people who broke their covenant so Christians must not be like them.
            4. The OT has been give to Christians. Christians are able to properly interpret it, having proper hearts and faith in Jesus.
            5. Abraham is the father of those with faith, even those who’ve not been circumcised.
      2. “For he has made it clear to us through all the prophets that he needs neither sacrifices nor whole burnt offerings nor general offerings, saying on one occasion: ‘What is the multitude of your sacrifices to me?’” (*Epistle of Barnabas* 2.4)
      3. “Therefore he has abolished these things, in order that the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is free from the yoke of compulsion, might have its offering, one not made by man.” (*Epistle of Barnabas* 2.6)
      4. “To us, therefore, he says this: ‘A sacrifice to God is a broken heart; an aroma pleasing to the Lord is a heart that glorifies its Maker.’ So, brothers, we ought to give very careful attention to our salvation, lest the evil one should cause some error to slip into our midst and thereby hurl us away from our life.” (*Epistle of Barnabas* 2.10)
      5. “For this reason, brothers, he who is very patient, when he foresaw how the people whom he had prepared in his Beloved would believe in all purity, revealed everything to us in advance, in order that we might not shipwreck ourselves by becoming, as it were, ‘proselytes’ to their law.” (*Epistle of Barnabas* 3.6)
      6. “Be on your guard now, and do not be like certain people; that is, do not continue to pile up your sins while claiming that your covenant is irrevocably yours, because in fact those people lost it completely in the following way, when Moses had just received it…By turning to idols they lost it. For thus says the Lord: ‘Moses, Moses, go down quickly, because your people, whom you led out of Egypt, have broken the Law.’ And Moses understood and hurled the two tablets from his hands, and their covenant was broken in pieces, in order that the covenant of the beloved Jesus might be sealed in our heart, in hope inspired by faith in him.” (*Epistle of Barnabas* 4.6-8)
      7. “Observe what a wise lawgiver Moses was! But how could those people grasp or understand these things? But we, however, having rightly understood the commandments, explain them as the Lord intended. He circumcised our ears and hearts for this very purpose, that we might understand these things” (*Epistle of Barnabas* 10.11-12)
      8. “Now let us see whether this people [Christians] or the former people [Jews] is the heir, and whether the covenant is for us or for them… Observe how by these means he has ordained that this people [Christians] should be first, and heir of the covenant… ‘Behold, I have established you, Abraham, as the father of the nations who believe in God without being circumcised.’” (*Epistle of Barnabas* 13.1, 6-7)
   5. *Epistle to Diognetus* (ca. AD 150-225)
      1. This epistle is actually an open letter to the world introducing and defending Christianity to the empire.
         1. The letter explains how Christians are unique from pagans and Jews. The author lays out what Christians find objectionable about paganism and Judaism and then proceeds to speak of what Christians do believe and practice.
         2. This is really the first apology, brief and well written.
         3. These selections are limited to show what *Diognetus* says about Jews and Christians.
         4. In the following excerpts we note:
            1. The author casts aspersions on Jews for Torah observance.
            2. There is no appreciation that Jews sacrificed animals or observed the other statutes because they were found in the Scriptures.
            3. Any unifying attitude of 1 Cor. 10 or Rom. 14 is missing and the message comes through that Jews only persist in such things because they are mistaken, foolish, hypocritical and fussy.
            4. Christians are in the world but not of the world and their ability to live within the culture while being persecuted by it is contrasted with Jews who isolate themselves from the culture.
            5. Yet, Christians have suffered persecutions from Jews.
            6. Yet, The church sings the praises of the law and exults the prophets: The OT is as much the Church’s Scripture as the Gospels or the traditions of the apostles.
      2. “Since I see, most excellent Diognetus, that you are extremely interested in learning about the religion of the Christians and are asking very clear and careful questions about them – specifically, what God do they believe in and how do they worship him…neither recognizing those who are considered to be gods by the Greeks nor observing the superstition of the Jews.” (*Epistle to Diognetus* 1).
      3. “And next I suppose that you are especially anxious to hear why Christians do not worship in the same way as the Jews. The Jews indeed, insofar as they abstain from the kind of worship described above, rightly claim to worship the one God of the universe and to think of him as Master; but insofar as they offer this worship to him in the same way as those already described, they are altogether mistaken…the Jews, thinking that they are offering these things [burnt offerings, blood, animal sacrifices] to God as if he were in need of them, could rightly consider it folly rather than worship.” (*Epistle to Diognetus* 3.1-3)
      4. “But with regard to their qualms about meats, and superstition concerning the Sabbath, and pride in circumcision, and hypocrisy about fasting and new moons, I doubt that you need to learn from me that they are ridiculous and not worth discussing. For is it not unlawful to accept some of the things created by God for human use as created good but to refuse others as useless and superfluous? And is it not impious to slander God, as though he forbids us to do any good thing on the Sabbath day? And is it not also ridiculous to take pride in the mutilation of the flesh as a sign of election, as though they were especially beloved by God because of this?... So then, I think you have been sufficiently instructed to realize that the Christians are right to keep their distance from the thoughtlessness and deception common to both groups and from the fussiness and pride of the Jews.” (*Epistle to Diognetus* 4.1-4, 6)
      5. “For Christians are not distinguished from the rest of humanity by country, language, or custom. For nowhere do they live in cities of their own, nor do they speak some unusual dialect, nor do they practice an eccentric life-style… But while they live in both Greek and barbarian cities, as each one’s lot was cast, and follow the local customs in dress and food and other aspects of life, at the same time they demonstrate the remarkable and admittedly unusual character of their own citizenship. They live in their own countries, but only as aliens; they participate in everything as citizens, and endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign country is their fatherland, and every fatherland is foreign.” (*Epistle to Diognetus* 5.1-2, 4-5)
      6. “By the Jews they are assaulted as foreigners, and by the Greeks they are persecuted, yet those who hate them are unable to give a reason for their hostility” (*Epistle to Diognetus* 5.17)
      7. “Then the reverence of the law is praised in song, and the grace of the prophets is recognized, and the faith of the Gospels is established, and the tradition of the apostles is preserved, and the joy of the church exults.” (*Epistle to Diognetus* 11.6)
   6. *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin Martyr (AD 100-165)
      1. Justin Martyr is one of the classic apologists.
         1. In *Dialogue with Trypho*, Justin the Christian is talking everything over with Rabbi Trypho.
         2. They argue for their own faith and against their opponents, both being well versed in the Bible.
         3. In the following excerpts we note:
            1. Justin recognizes two covenants and says he knows that the former foretold the establishment of the latter. Jesus Christ is the final and trustworthy covenant.
            2. Justin is tolerant of Jewish Christians who observe Torah so long as they don’t bind it.
            3. Justin’s perspective accords with the Book of Acts very well, as well as Galatians and the balance of the NT.
            4. Yet Justin and Trypho are both aware of other Christians who say that souls will be lost for practicing Torah at all.
      2. “We [Christians] have not believed through Moses nor the Law; otherwise we would act the same as you [Jews]. Now I have read, Oh Trypho, that there would be a final law and the best covenant of all, which it is now necessary for all people to observe who are seeking after God’s inheritance. For the Law given at Horeb is already old and is yours [Jews’] alone, but this law is for everyone in general. When one law is placed against another, it annuls the previous one, and a testament [covenant] that comes afterwards likewise brings to an end the former one. Christ was given to us as the eternal and final law and as the trustworthy covenant.” (Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 11.1-2)
      3. This next quote is quite lengthy, but Trypho and Justin discuss that there are Jewish Christians who remain Torah observant. Justin judges that so long as they don’t press their Torah observance upon their Christian brethren then they’ll be saved and welcomed in the fellowship. However, it is clear that Trypho believes Justin is lost for not being a Torah observant Jew and Justin believes Trypho is lost for not being a Christian.
         1. “[Trypho, a Jew, is speaking]: If some wish now to live in observance of the ordinances laid down by Moses and also believe on this Jesus who was crucified, acknowledging that he is God’s Messiah who will absolutely judge all and to whom belongs the eternal kingdom, can these also be saved?...
         2. “[Justin replies]: As it seems to me, O Trypho, I say that such a one will be saved, if he does not strive to persuade other people (I mean those from the Gentiles who have been ‘circumcised’ from their error through Christ) to observe these practices with him by saying they will not be saved unless they observe in every respect these practices, even as you said at the beginning of our discussion when you declared that I would not be saved unless I observed these things…
         3. “[Trypho said]: Why then did you say, ‘As it seems to me, such a one will be saved,’ unless there are some who say that such persons will not be saved?”…
         4. “[Justin answered]: There are, Trypho, and they do not attempt to have fellowship by keeping company with or welcoming to their houses such [Jewish believers]. I do not agree with them. But if those [Jews] through weakness of judgment wish to continue to observe the ordinances from Moses that they are still able to keep, which we understand to have been appointed on account of the hardness of heart of the [Jewish] people, after placing their hope on this Christ and observing the eternal natural laws of righteousness and godliness, and choose to live together with the faithful Christians (as I said before) without persuading them to be circumcised like themselves, to keep Sabbath, or to keep any other such ceremonies, then I declare that we ought to welcome and have fellowship with all these as kinsmen and brethren…
         5. “If some of your race, Trypho,” I said, “who say they believe on this Christ, compel those from the Gentiles who believe on Christ to live in every respect according to the law laid down by Moses or choose not to have fellowship in associating together with them, of these, in the same way, I do not approve…Those from the seed of Abraham who live according to the law and do not come to faith in Jesus as the Christ before the end of life I likewise declare will not be saved, especially those who cursed and do curse those who believe that Jesus is the Christ” (Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 46-47)
   7. With these 3 examples we see a high view of Scripture and the OT canon. There is an understood continuity from OT to NT. The same God is in view of these religions but Jesus is the fulfillment of the OT and the NT is quite different and spiritual in its approach to worship and pleasing God. Among the Christians there is respect for Jesus and the Apostles as the “foundation” for the Faith.
6. **Early Anti-Apostolic Approaches To The Law of Moses**
   1. This section shows others who professed to be Christians yet they show little continuity with apostolic doctrine or practices.
      1. These two groups have a low view of Scripture. They change the canon all around to suit their teachings. They do not confess continuity between the Testaments.
      2. These two groups have a low view of Jesus. Both deny His identity as being fully God and fully man.
      3. These two groups have a low view of the Apostles. Apostolicity was not valued or determinative of their canon or doctrines.
      4. Thus I label these groups anti-apostolic. By definition they would be heretical. But they are early and stand out for their views on the Law of Moses.
   2. The Ebionites (AD Second Century)
      1. The existence of the Ebionites provided all the grist for the mill of the Baur & Bauer theories. While not named in the Book of Acts, or the New Testament, they are addressed in later writings such as Irenaeus, Origen, Eusebius and Jerome.
      2. These are ethnically Jewish or they are Judaized Gentiles who hold that salvation in Jesus is tied to Torah observance.
      3. “Ebionite” comes from a Hebrew word meaning poor. These are the poor and downtrodden spoken of in the OT (especially Psalms) that God will deliver. Jesus encouraged His followers to be “Poor in Spirit.” And so, these Jewish believers likely took this name to themselves, envisioning themselves as the genuine, poor, remnant people that God will deliver.
      4. In the following excerpts we note:
         1. Ebionites reject 3 of the 4 gospel witnesses.
         2. Ebionites reject the apostle Paul, calling him an apostate.
         3. Ebionites reject the virgin birth or that Jesus Christ is “Son of God.”
         4. Ebionites demand Torah observance as part of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
         5. Ebionites also practiced some NT rites, like Sunday assembly.
      5. “The Ebionites use only the Gospel according to Matthew, and they reject the apostle Paul, saying that he was an apostate from the law. As to the prophetic writings, they endeavor to explain them in a peculiar manner. They practice circumcision, and they observe those customs that are according to the law. They employ a Jewish manner of life to such an extent that they adore Jerusalem as if it were the house of God” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 1.26.1).
      6. “Vain are also the Ebionites who do not receive by faith into their soul the union of God and man, but remain in the old leaven of (human) generation; and who do not wish to understand that the Holy Spirit came in Mary… therefore also what was generated is… the Son of the Most High God…, who wrought his incarnation and displayed a new generation; that as by the former generation we inherited death, so by this generation we might inherit life. Therefore do these men reject the commixture of the heavenly wine and wish it to be water of the world only; not receiving God so as to have union with him…” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.1.3).
      7. “They [the Ebionites] live conformably to Jewish customs saying that they are justified according to the Law. Therefore it was that he was named both the Anointed of God and Jesus, since not one of the (rest) kept the Law. For if any other had practiced the commandments of the Law, he would have been the Anointed. And they themselves also, having done the same, are able to become Anointed Ones; for they say that he himself was a man like all.” (Hippolytus, *Against Heresies* 7.34.2)
      8. “The Sabbath and the rest of the discipline of the Jews they observed just like them, but at the same time, like us they celebrated the Lord’s day as a memorial of the resurrection of the Savior. Wherefore, in consequence of such a way of life, they received the name Ebionites, which signified the poverty of their understanding. For this is the name by which a poor man is called among the Hebrews” (Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl*. 3.27.5-6).
      9. “Since they [Ebionites] want to be both Jews and Christians, they are neither Jews nor Christians.” (Jerome, *Epist.* 112.13)
   3. The Marcionites (AD Second Century)
      1. Marcion was a dynamic preacher and professed Christian.
         1. He made his own Bible. Marcion rejected the OT from his Bible completely and the NT was limited to Luke and the Pauline letters.
         2. He set the Law of Moses and the Gospel against each other & concluded that the God of the OT is not the God of the NT.
         3. Marcion’s Christ did come to destroy the Law of Moses, nor fulfill it.
         4. Marcion blazes a trail for various Gnostic leaders and sects to follow over the next 2 centuries.
         5. Tertullian especially arose to answer Marcion and his followers. Yet clearly Marcion’s ideas and approach had legs to trouble Christians for generations.
      2. In the following excerpts we note:
         1. Marcion taught there are many gods.
         2. Marcion taught animosity between the Creator and the Christ.
         3. Marcion taught discontinuity in OT and NT instead of continuity.
      3. “The separation of the law and the gospel is the special and primary work of Marcion… These are Marcion’s *Antitheses*, that is “Contrary Oppositions,” which endeavor to set forth the disagreement of the gospel with the law, in order to argue from the diversity of the principles and of the two documents that there is a diversity also of gods. Therefore, with this very separation of the law and the gospel it is suggested that the god of the gospel is other than and opposed to the god of the law.” (Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 1.19.4-5)
      4. “For certainly everything that Marcion has undertaken, especially by first erecting the *Antitheses*, he compiled with this in mind that he might establish a diversity between the Old and New Testament and thereby a separation of his Christ from the Creator as belonging to another god and alien to the Law and Prophets.” (Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 4.6.1)
   4. With these 2 examples we see a low view of Scripture and canon. There is a disregard, if not hostility toward any continuity from OT to NT. It is not the same God in these teachings. Among these groups there is a low view of Jesus Christ and the Apostles are not the standard and source for true gospel information.
   5. While early Christians had many challenges and changing fortunes due to persecutions without and false doctrines within, they are continually commended to the Word of God as the Truth and sustenance to guide them through it all (Acts 20:32; 2 Tim. 3:14-4:5). The Word of God includes the Old Testament and the New Testament, The Law of Moses and the Gospel of Christ.
7. **The Law of Moses for Every Christian**
   1. If we follow the Apostles’ example – their recognition, respect, and use for the Old Testament Scriptures, we see several blessings and benefits in them for every Christian of every age.
   2. The Old Testament Points to Christ (John 5:39, 45-47).
      1. The Old Testament bears witness of Christ and continues to point to Him.
      2. This is the reason that Christians cannot give up the Old Testament and it is also the reason it is not authoritative.
      3. Road sign analogy: Road signs are very valuable in directing a person to his destination but are passed by when he reaches his destination (Gal. 3:24-25). So to, the OT provides road signs pointing to Christ. But Christ is the goal and the authority. One no longer depends on the witnesses when he has the object of their testimony to examine for himself.
      4. The Jews studied the Law as an end in itself but instead of being life-giving in itself, it pointed away from itself.
   3. The Old Testament Shows the Unfolding Purpose of God (1 Pet. 1:10-12).
      1. The prophets didn’t understand all that they said or wrote.
      2. Yet they served Christians because Christians can understand it.
      3. It all makes sense in Christ. The gospel reports what the prophets predicted.
   4. The Old Testament Instructs in Salvation (2 Tim. 3:15-17).
      1. The Bible of the Early Christians was the Old Testament, truly the LXX.
      2. Yet it was understood in light of Jesus Christ.
      3. The Old Testament canon was accepted with faith in Christ.
      4. The Old Testament was supplemented by the teachings and interpretations of Jesus and the apostles.
      5. That’s why our NT today is the norm of Christian faith and practice. It’s the inspired record of the fulfillment and inspired interpretation of all that came before it in Jesus.
      6. The Christian Faith is the key and standard for understanding the Old Testament.
   5. The Old Testament Provides Righteous Examples to Follow:
      1. By Faith, they pleased God (Heb. 11).
      2. Persevere like Job (Jas. 5:8-11).
      3. Pray like Elijah (Jas. 5:16-18).
   6. The Old Testament Provides Warnings Against Disobedience.
      1. The Israelites’ punishment in the wilderness warns us that we must endure to enter our rest (Heb. 2:1-4; 3-4).
      2. Israel’s stubborn and trying behavior should not be repeated by saints (1 Cor. 10:1-11). They are our examples.
      3. Notice, the fulfillment of the OT has come upon Christians (1 Cor. 10:11).
   7. The Old Testament Gives Hope (Rom. 15:4).
      1. Hope is confident expectation.
      2. Christians have hope because of who God is (Rom. 15:13).
   8. The Old Testament Reveals the Nature of God.
      1. The God revealed in the OT is proclaimed in the NT. It’s the same God.
      2. Jesus Christ is the Son of God.
      3. Christian doctrine of God goes beyond OT but it does not contradict it at all.
      4. The Law declared God’s love (Deut. 7:7-8, 13) but Jesus Christ shows the love (1 John 4:7-10).
   9. The Old Testament Greatly Informs the Christian’s Worldview.
      1. The Law provides a philosophy of history and nature.
      2. The Beginning – the Bible doctrine of Creation.
      3. Sanctity of human life.
      4. God is active in human affairs.
      5. God is ultimately in control and achieves His purposes through human processes.
      6. All nations and events are within His perception and providence.
   10. The Old Testament Shows the Pattern of God’s Revelatory Activity.
       1. Like Stephen observed, Israel always rejects the prophets (Acts 7)
       2. We observe things like:
          1. A recurring Exodus motif.
          2. A pattern of suffering THEN exultation.
          3. God makes promises and then keeps them in His time.

**Conclusion**

1. All in all, I believe Clement said it best: “Faith in Christ and knowledge of the gospel is the exegesis and fulfilling of the law.” (Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* 4.21.130).
2. The early Christians were those (both Jewish and Gentile) people who accepted this fulfillment as the apostles preached it. The Law of Moses, while appreciated and read as Scripture within the Church, was not the standard of faith and practice for the Church. Rather apostolic doctrine, contained in the New Testament, supplied the Faith and the Pattern. This was all understood as the plan and will of God. The Old Testament yielded to the New Testament. Under the New Testament, Torah observance was a matter of ethnic expression, individual liberty, personal scruple, and at times, gospel expediency. To require Torah observance for salvation or fellowship was to corrupt the gospel and would be anathema.
3. But the gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation. As people chose this religion, this new Way, they were admitted to a new community with distinct assemblies and worship: The Church of Christ.

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