

## **How Jewish should a Christian be? #1 Slip sliding away**

Hi all,

One late winter a woman who was active in her charismatic congregation started discovering the Jewish roots of her faith. She was so very excited to learn of the 7 Jewish festivals (6 feasts, 1 fast) that God gave Israel as it was all new to her and she was like a child in a candy store. When Resurrection Day drew near in the spring, she was excited to attend her first Passover Seder and discover all the hidden clues about Messiah therein, and started attending a study group focused on Jewish roots of faith.

During that spring and early summer she began going to a local Messianic congregation, attending the Friday night Shabbat and the Saturday gathering for worship. Her attendance at church on Sundays became irregular, and she became convinced that she was right in all things Jewish and the rest of her friends had lesser knowledge. She wasn't outwardly arrogant, just that she felt she had something they were missing, and would later admit she saw them as less spiritual.

### **A turning point**

She did so however in a very uncertain way, as all this revelation of the Jewishness of the Lord caused her to examine everything she had believed to that point in her life of faith, and she was afraid to 'make a mistake' in her faith. She never sat down with a friend to ask 'Is what I've been taught correct in light of the New Testament?', but when she had a question like that she would go back to her teacher (Rabbi) at the Messianic Congregation for clarification. They would study (for instance) Galatians but teach differently about it than what she'd been taught before. She was confused, and though she didn't understand everything they were saying, the rest was so 'right' she went along with it.

Soon, her friends found they could not have a relationship with her aside from her new-found Jewish faith. Gone were the stress-free and relaxed visits over coffee or tea to talk of life and the kids and what the Lord was doing in each other's lives that day and that week. Conversations were one way, tense, dominated by this or that bit of information she had learned at the Messianic Bible classes or service. She too felt disconnected from her friends as she connected with new friends at the Congregation.

She loved the ceremony at the Messianic church with the processional bringing in the scrolls of the Word, the songs with a Jewish beat and lyrics, and the certainty within herself that the more she learned of the Jewish roots of the faith the closer to God she would be, and the more mature in her faith.

### **Justifying her faith or converting her friends?**

She always seemed to be trying to either justifying her new-found faith to them, or convert them to her way of thinking. They were just trying to talk with their friend over coffee what the Lord was doing in their lives, but she seemed to have no real relationship with the Lord Himself or Father any longer, it was more a relationship with the Old Testament and the traditions, rather than the Lord Jesus.

Her friends were happy she was learning so much, but as time passed observations were made among her friends how much they had grown in character and maturity in the Lord over the previous year, while their Messianic friend seemed stagnant in her faith with an underlying sense of discontentment, even fear that if she didn't do thus and so she was in sin or disappointing the Lord. She lost the intimacy she once had with her friends from the church she had attended and been active in for years. She found she no longer had close friends at all.

### **This is the dilemma**

I could go on with story after story of situations similar to the above, and though the players may change and the details may differ, the basics are all there - how Jewish should a non-Jewish (Gentile) believer be?

I've seen equally yoked marriages become unequally yoked as one spouse will go whole heartedly into Messianic faith while the other continues in their Gentile charismatic or other church. I've seen people become spiritual islands to themselves as they either leave churches or are asked to leave because of strains in their relationships with pastors and the people in their church similar to what I've

described above. I've seen pastors grudgingly give in to strong-willed church members who eagerly want to share the Jewishness of their faith in church services that Pastor (in their thinking) doesn't know about, and so much more.

### **A little history**

Throughout Israel's history Gentiles (non-Jewish people) have converted to Judaism and been welcomed into covenant with God. Those converts became fully Jewish. There are notable examples throughout the Old Testament, but I'll only mention 2 here for the sake of space.

The first is the Moabite woman Rahab, the harlot of Jericho, who protected the spies of Israel in her house on the wall of Jericho and let out a red cord (red-redemption) so she and her family would not be killed when the rest of the wall fell around her house. Joshua 6:25 tells us Joshua saved her, her father's household, and all she had, and that she settled in Israel. That's all we are told in the book of Joshua of what became of her in the Old Testament.

BUT we are told in Matthew 1:5 when Matthew gives us the genealogy of Joseph (Mary's genealogy is recorded in Luke's gospel) that Rahab married a Jewish man named Salmon (sal-mon), and that they had a son named Boaz. (Also see Ruth 4:21-22)

Boaz would grow up to be quite successful, and one day noticed a Moabite woman new to the area named Ruth, who had like his own mother converted to Judaism. So he had no hesitation falling in love with Ruth, being from the same country as his mom and had become a believer in the God of Israel like his mom. They married and had a son named Obed, who had Jesse, who had David. Therefore David's great-grandparents were Boaz and Ruth. David's great-great grandparents were Salmon and Rahab. (Now you know why the book of Ruth is in the Bible).

Even up to Pentecost in Acts 2 some witnessing the event were identified as 'proselytes' - Gentile converts to Judaism. (2:10) They became Jewish upon believing in the God of Israel, though born Gentile. That was Old Testament times, pre-Pentecost. Should we be the same way in our day? We will pick it up there next week, until then, blessings,

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### **How Jewish should a Christian be? #2 Context is everything**

Hi all,

Last week I mentioned that even 10 years after Pentecost, if you were born a Gentile and wanted to know the God of Israel, you had to become Jewish. They are called proselytes in scripture, including Acts 2: 10, 6:5, & 13:43.

But when Peter was sent by the Lord to the Roman Centurion's household (Cornelius) the Jews with him were 'astonished' that they received the Holy Spirit in the exact same way THEY did\* - **God included Gentiles in the plan of salvation without them having to become Jewish to do so** - Peter and those with him had no idea until that moment. Look at their surprise: "Then God has also granted the Gentiles repentance unto eternal life!" Acts 11:18 \*Acts 10:44-45

### **Enter Paul**

At that point of revelation, that God had included Gentiles in the plan of salvation without them having to become Jewish to do so, their thinking was still rather inwardly focused. IF a Gentile wanted to know the God of Israel it was the exception to the rule, after all, it was God who initiated the contact with Cornelius and the Romans, not them - their efforts were still to the Jews - if a Gentile came to the Lord it was okay, part of the overflow, but not their focus.

When the Lord appeared to Paul outside Damascus it changed everything. Jesus told him He was called to the Gentiles<sup>^</sup>. This Paul was a Pharisee\*, trained under the noted teacher Gamaliel\*\*, and was called to go out from the Jewish nation to bring non-Jews to Jesus. And Jesus didn't say they had to become Jewish to gain salvation. <sup>^</sup>Acts 26:16-18, \*Philippians 3:5, \*\*Acts 5:34, 22:3

When Paul set out on what we call his first journey, it was to the Gentiles. As recorded in Acts 13:1-4 a group of 5 men were praying, including Paul and Barnabas, and the Holy Spirit spoke through one or more of them to send those two out - thus began the traveling ministry of Paul, as recorded in Acts 13.

Paul's first trip only lasted through chapter 14, and they returned to where they started, Antioch.

### **The confrontation**

Acts 14 ends with Paul and Barnabas returning to Antioch, and it says they 'stayed a long time with the disciples'. There they shared with the (Gentile) believers the amazing things the Lord had done among the Gentiles elsewhere in the Roman Empire. It was a friendly audience obviously, as he was talking to Gentiles about Gentiles and what God was doing in their midst.

Let me interject this observation that is valid for us in house church. Notice the focus of Paul and Barnabas on sharing what God was doing in their midst. When we get together it is to celebrate and share what God is doing in our hearts, in our midst, as Paul and Barnabas did above.

House church meetings are NOT the time to focus on the differences, but rather to concentrate on what we have in common. Differences of opinions like pre-trib rapture or no rapture or other differences of opinion on 'pet' doctrines have no place being argued about in a house church meeting. NO one should be trying to win over those in house church to their particular belief - we are there to further our walk with Him by celebrating what He is doing in our midst, what we have in common. The word 'fellowship' is koinonia, which means 'common' or 'what we have in common'. Stay with that. As Acts 2:42 says: The apostles' (not our own) teaching, fellowship, food, prayer. Simple.

We celebrate as Paul did, what God is doing, what we have in common. The other things are peripheral and have little to do with walking with the Father and Lord on a day to day basis, so they are left at the door in favor of what we have in common and the process of discipleship in the character of Christ.

### **Back to our regularly scheduled program, lol**

Things were about to change for Paul and Barnabas Acts 15 opens: "And certain men came down (to Antioch) from Judea teaching the brethren, unless you are circumcised according to the law of Moses, you can't be saved. When Paul and Barnabas had no small disputing and arguing with them...they decided to go to Jerusalem to discuss this with the apostles and elders..."

Acts 15:5 states it right out, so don't let anyone tell you as some do that the discussion wasn't about obeying the law of Moses: "**But there rose up certain sect of the Pharisees who believed, saying, that it was needful to circumcise them and to command them to keep the law of Moses.**"

### **Acts 15, the decision was made for us all**

As the discussion went back and forth the issue centered on the fact they could not deny God was saving Gentiles, it was just a matter of how Jewish should they become, if at all? Peter (finally) stood up and said this:

"Men and brethren, you know how some time ago God chose me to take the gospel to the Gentiles (Cornelius' house, Acts 10). And He, knowing their hearts, gave them the Holy Spirit just as He did with us, putting no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." v7-8

THAT is the difference that caused Peter's testimony to rise above the rest. The whole argument was about what man had done or what man should do - obey the law of Moses or not? Follow the customs of the Jewish fathers or not? But Peter's argument rose above the rest because He got their eyes off themselves and said "God made the choice...God knew their hearts and gave them the Holy Spirit exactly like He did with us. God put no difference between them and us."

We should always default to look first to what God is doing in someone's heart and work with that, rather than us coming in from the outside with preconceived ideas on what that person should do - look first to what God is doing, and follow His lead. That is what Peter is asking them to do here.

### **And flowing from that revelation...**

Flowing from the fact God Himself had done it, he asked "Why are you then tempting God, to put a yoke upon the disciples which neither our fathers nor us were able to bear?" The yoke being the Old Testament law with their 613 commands - He said it would be tempting God to put that requirement on people since they already had the Holy Spirit.

Peter called the term for the law being a yoke from the lips of Jesus in Matthew 11:28-30 who was speaking of the religious burdens placed on the people by the leaders:

"Come to me all you work hard and are heavily burdened, and I will give you rest. (Salvation is being at rest, at peace with God, no effort on our part to receive). Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Notice Jesus said to take His yoke and learn of Him. This identifies the yoke as a teacher - the Holy Spirit, the teacher, the comforter. A yoke is something in which 2 animals are linked side by side to do a work - a picture of us and the Holy Spirit together to do a work in the Lord. NOT yoked with rules and regulations of the OT Law.

It is with the Holy Spirit we find rest for our souls - this is not salvation, but the soul that Jesus is talking about - our emotions, thoughts, minds, feelings. We will find rest for our emotions with the Holy Spirit teaching us of the meekness and lowliness of Jesus. THAT burden and yoke is light.

That is where Peter got that phrase - and many if not most of those around him that day heard that from Jesus directly as did Peter, so immediately they knew to what he was referring. The contrast was stark: The yoke of Jesus and the Holy Spirit which leads to rest for our emotions and minds, or the yoke of the Old Testament law which neither the Jewish fathers nor the apostles were able to bear. This distinction would later be made by Paul in his letter to the Galatians when he asked in chapter 3 if God did miracles in their lives by the Spirit or by the Law. That is the question before us.

And that's where we'll pick it up next week - who do you want to be yoked together with, the Law or the Holy Spirit? It's one or the other...blessings,  
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### **How Jewish should a Christian be? #3 Balance, Verdict is in**

Hi all,

We ended last week in the midst of the Acts 15 meeting which would decide the fate of Gentile believers in the Jewish Messiah. Peter had shared that it was God who initiated the work among the Gentiles, and He put no requirements on Cornelius' household for the simple reason God gave them the Holy Spirit as He did the Jews. Who were they to add or subtract from what God Himself initiated? Could they improve on what God did by imposing rules and regulations on Gentile converts?

Paul and Barnabas were following what God had already initiated. Peter had stated the OT law was a yoke which neither they nor their fathers could bear, and asked why they wanted to put such a yoke on the Gentile believers when God Himself already gave them the Holy Spirit? What could rules add when they had God living in them.

### **The verdict is in**

James, the Lord's brother, who is mentioned in Matthew 13:55, rose to be the spokesman and leader concerning this issue. James and another of the Lord's brothers, Jude, wrote the books James and Jude in our New Testament. We are told in Acts 12:2 that John's brother James had been executed by Herod.

Notice the balance with which the apostles made their decision. If you've listened to me or read my writings very much you know what I say repeatedly, the Spirit and Word always agree. If you think the Spirit is doing something then you'll find it in the Word and in history. If you think you found a revelation in the Word, you'll also see the Spirit doing it in the body of Christ and down through history. If one or the other isn't in agreement, you need to change what you believe because it has been proven wrong!

What Peter and then Paul and Barnabas' testimonies did was to tell what they believed the Holy Spirit was doing among the Gentiles. James' concern was whether that claim was also in the Word. That is how they would determine if this was God nor not. That is why James starts with this in Acts 15:13-:

"Men and brothers, listen to me. Simon Peter has declared how God initiated His visit with the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. To this the words of the prophets agree, for it is written...therefore my decision is that we don't trouble them, which from the Gentiles have turned to God; But that we do write them to abstain from idols, and sexual sin, and from animals strangled, and blood, for there are many Jews who have lived in those areas for many years."

"Then it pleased the apostles and elders with the whole church to send particular men from them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely Judas and Silas...and they wrote letters to them to be carried with them in this manner:

"From the apostles and elders and brethren we send greetings to the brethren of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia...we have heard that certain who came out from us troubled you with words, which subverted your souls, saying you must be circumcised and keep the (Mosaic) law; but we gave them no such commandment to tell you this."

"It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That you abstain from meats sacrificed to idols and from consuming blood, and meat from things strangled, and from sexual sin. From which if you keep yourself you will do well." Acts 15:12-31

**Side note on 'subverting your souls'.** The Greek word 'subverting' is 'anaskeuazontes' meaning to dismantle things that had been neatly arranged, in the negative - thus subverting, dismantle, pervert, destroy, carry away and remove, to rearrange, unsettle. It was found on papyrus writings from that time as 'to bankrupt'. This is the effect James said, of the requirement that Gentiles should be circumcised and obey the law of Moses - it is an act of subversion of the soul, it bankrupts the soul, it rearranges the soul (mind, emotions) negatively and carries it off in subversion. His words not mine folks. That was the decision of the authors of our New Testament. Think about the weight of their decision. They wrote the New Testament within the context of this Acts 15 decision. All understanding of say, Galatians therefore, is built from their decision here.

### **What their decision means**

The question before them had been should Gentile believers be circumcised and obey the law of Moses? Their answer was no, you don't, but you should have proof of your salvation by giving up your former pagan practices. You see, the 4 instructions, to abstain from idols, strangled meat, blood, and sexual sin are one. They all pertain to pagan idol worship which included sacrificing an animal that was in the pagan way, strangled rather than bled out by puncturing the jugular as the Jews did, followed by drinking of blood and then sex with a temple prostitute. Again, you don't need to obey Moses, but you should prove your walk with the Lord by abstaining from your former pagan ways.

### **You don't have to keep the law of Moses, but there should be an essential break with your former life.**

It is important for us to see James said 'It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and therefore to us' - they merely joined themselves to what the Holy Spirit was making clear, and that act of God could be found in the Word. Case closed, issue settled.

### **Our choice today if we love the Jewish festivals - look at Paul**

Paul was born Jewish, but he spent his ministry among the Gentiles. But his Jewish roots still meant something to him personally. We are told in Acts that Paul made plans to be in Jerusalem during the celebration of Pentecost.

"He said farewell to them, for he said I must by all means be in Jerusalem for this feast." Acts 18:21  
"For Paul determined to sail by Ephesus...so that if it were possible he could be in Jerusalem for the Day of Pentecost." Acts 20:16 (Written about the year 60AD)

As it was 30 years earlier with the Acts 2 Day of Pentecost, just as in our day frankly, there would be Jewish people from all over in Jerusalem for the feast. But there would also be Jewish believers in Jesus attending, and Gentile believers in Jesus as well - and that day meant something different to each of the 3 people groups.

**Paul celebrated the holidays from a position of freedom, not from a position of bondage to keep their practices.** Paul didn't want to attend Pentecost because he had to because of the law, but because he wanted to because it meant something to him emotionally, his personal history and culture. He was part of the decision of Acts 15, which tells us he attended from the vantage point of freedom, not by being forced to obey the Law of Moses. Freedom to celebrate it, or not. Christ is in you, there isn't anything you can do, no action you can take, no giving of money, time, fasting you can do that can add anything to the fact the Father gave you His Spirit and Son.

### **Modern arguments**

For those who wish to ignore the decision of Acts 15, or change it around to believe it was about something it clearly wasn't, the argument falls back to Old Testament passages and sometimes what Jesus said in the gospels. Others pick and choose various verses in Galatians or elsewhere to support their claim.

And that's where we'll pick it up next week - until then, blessings,  
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### **How Jewish should a Christian be? #4 Balance, final**

Hi all,

Last week we covered the founding apostles' decision not to put any requirements for obeying the law of Moses on Gentile believers, and that Paul and the apostles observed the feast of Pentecost by choice from a position of freedom, rather than as being made to do so as one under the law.

But today there are many well meaning and sincere believing Gentiles who explore the Jewish roots of the faith, and of those, some have moved from Paul and the apostle's example of observing (parts of) the Mosaic Law by choice into the belief it is a requirement that pleases God. No one wants to disappoint the Lord, and that is the motivation in part with many of those believers. But there are some things they believe God wants, that isn't true. Here is the most common error:

### **Saturday worship**

Many Messianic Christians will tell you God established Saturday worship as the way to keep the Sabbath. The truth is very different. Exodus 20: 8-11 records the law of the Sabbath, which states that neither they, nor their employees (servants), nor animals may do any work on that day. God quit from creating and they must too. He added in Leviticus 23:3 it is a holy assembly of the family, and emphasized no work may be done on the Sabbath. Consider the Sabbath holy, family time.

The only command for worship God gave Moses was for 3x each year they had to go to (temple), which would be in Jerusalem. (Exodus 23;14, 17- Unleavened Bread, Pentecost, Tabernacles)

The practice of Saturday gatherings for worship started around the rule of John Hyrcanus (164-104BC). In the 300's and 200's BC the Greeks had not only conquered Israel but had also introduced Greek culture throughout the land. Their culture included things new to Jews like gymnasiums, sports, athletics and focus on appearance and the body, changing fashions, theater and the arts, and so on. Soon Greek culture permeated Jewish culture and the knowledge of God was being lost among the population.

A holiness movement arose to 'separate' the Jews from the Greeks, and those leaders realized they needed regular, weekly, 'gatherings' to educate the people, because just going to temple 3x each year

wasn't doing it - there was no national educational policy in place. So these 'separated ones' decided their weekly 'gatherings' would be on the Sabbath, their only day off, in homes, and that copies of the law of Moses would be sent around the country to be read. They determined every 10 families (adult males) would gather in homes on the Sabbath. The Hebrew word for 'gathering' is synagogue, and 'separated ones' in Hebrew is the word Pharisee.

The Pharisees started out as a holiness movement that founded Sabbath worship. By the time of Jesus the holiness movement had done as they tend to do; make up its own rules and regulations which soon became elevated above what God had said. God gave Moses 613 laws, the Rabbi's had over 800 on top of that and soon those became more important to them to keep than God's original law - which is the point of conflict they had with Jesus. So the practice of Saturday services was man's idea, not God's. Christ is in us, every day is Sabbath to us - but not all have this knowledge, or if they know it they don't accept the implications.

### **But Jesus said...**

Very often someone wanting to justify their Messianic faith will quote Matthew 5:18: "For truly I say to you, Until heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle will in no wise pass from the law, until all is fulfilled", as a means of saying the Old Testament law is still required of us today.

The concept of fulfillment is lost on us today, but I can use an example that makes Jesus' point. When a person buys something over time, say a home, and they take out a loan and make monthly payments, they have a mortgage, which is a contract. That contract is the law. It has blessings contained in it and it has curses and penalties as well. If you live within the confines of the contract/law then blessings will be on you, but if not, then that same law can bring you to ruin if you don't keep your part of it.

When a home is paid off the owner becomes the possessor of that contract, of that law. They are no longer under the rules of the contract for they now actually own the home solely in their name. They own the contract. As owners they may do with their home and the contract as they wish, they are no longer required by the contract to maintain the home to the law's standard.

When Jesus uttered 'It is finished' on the cross He was completing the last payment on the contract of the law. The Greek word 'It is finished' is 'tetelestai' (tuh-tell-uh-stye), meaning 'to bring to completion, to finish, to fulfill'. It was used of Generals at a time when they saw they had won the battle and there was nothing left but to take the spoils. Paul alludes to this in Colossians 2:15 when he says Jesus 'spoiled principalities and powers' - Jesus took spoil of them as a victorious soldier takes the spoils of war.

Jesus was the final payment on the contract as Hebrews 9:13-28 says, that the blood of bulls and goats were not a permanent solution, they were merely 'monthly payments' on the contract. But one final payment had to be made, which was the sacrifice of Jesus. Paul wrote it this way in Colossians 2:14-15: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, He took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross, and having spoiled principalities and powers..."

### **Why grace is actually much harder than the law...**

We now possess the law. When Christ moved to live in our spirit it meant we now have to take responsibility for our lives. No longer do we have external rules and regulations telling us what God wants or doesn't want, He moved inside us to walk with us and personally direct our lives. Paul called the law a schoolmaster, a tutor to bring us to Christ, and after Christ has come we are no longer under the schoolmaster, in Galatians 3:24-26. He says we are no longer students, but have been made children of the Most High God. We graduated from the schooling of the law to sonship in the royal family.

We have Christ in us, what rule or regulation or observance can we add to what Jesus did for us? And that was Paul's point in Galatians 3:21 when he said if God could have issued a law that could have given us eternal life, then life would have come through the law - but it could not. The choice God made was to use the law to show us we were sinners and we needed Him, and then knowing a law could not bring life, He decided to re-create our spirit with His Spirit and gave us His Son - far above any law of Moses.

### **Guilty of the whole law**

James, the same one that spoke for all the authors of the New Testament in Acts 15, the brother of Jesus, said in his letter 2:10, that if a person lives by the law and breaks a single law (of those 613 laws of Moses) then he is guilty of all the law. To break 1 law is to break all laws. That was his point. You can't walk with God like that, as Peter said, it was a yoke neither their fathers nor they were able to bear.

Christ in us requires us to take responsibility for our lives and actually live up to the fact Christ is in us. No longer can we blame an external law for our woes and an external God who lives 'out there somewhere'. He is not 'the big Man upstairs', He lives in us. We must therefore take responsibility. We must walk in love from the inside out, not because God commanded from the outside in to forgive. He deals with us internally, so that we may walk with Him and live from the inside out.

It means life is a process and He loves the process and walking with us through the decisions we make every day. Grace in that respect, of taking personal responsibility for our lives and decisions, and suffering the consequences, is harder than having an external law that if we break it, we just go to temple and offer a sacrifice and go on our way. Internally now with grace, we must grow as human beings, we must mature as we live, in Christ.

That freedom to grow is something that some people don't like - they prefer rules and regulations because they offer security and stability. They see goofy behavior among some charismatics so they run to orthodoxy or the sacraments or a church with a set, predictable, schedule of service and expectation of behavior. They have a tragedy or near tragedy in their lives that can't be explained by their church doctrine so they search out the cause and effect of the OT law, or many other reasons.

Others just want to know the Jewish roots of their faith, and get pulled in to a fear based, 'I might offend God isn't this what He wants?' faith that affirms them in the ancient rituals. I don't find fault with the motivation of wanting to know the Jewish roots to our faith, but I do find fault when I see a person brought under bondage, believing error. If someone wants to celebrate feasts and fasts, Passover Seder or even Purim or Hanukkah by choice and to learn of the roots of the faith, more power to them - amen for that. Just do so as Paul and the Gentile believers did, by choice, not by force, guilt, or mistakenly thinking God is more pleased with you if you do that.

Christ is in us. There is nothing you can do, give, sacrifice, or say that can improve on that. And there is great peace to those who live by this rule, as Paul said as he closed his letter to the Galatians in 6:15-16: "For in Christ Jesus being circumcised or not being circumcised means nothing, only a new creation. As many as live by this rule then peace is on them, and mercy, and on the Israel of God."

The new creation in Christ is what matters - nothing is greater than the recreation of the human spirit by God's Spirit - Christ is in you. What more do you need? What can any effort in this life add to that?

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### **Additional thought: Not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill**

Hi all,

The response to the series 'How Jewish Should a Christian Be', has been very good, but I feel the need to take 1 extra week to go into detail on Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:17-18, this time from a different perspective:

"Do not think that I've come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. Truly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass, not one jot or tittle will pass away from the law, until all is fulfilled." (jot and tittle being the smallest unit of Hebrew grammar)

### **The Dilemma**

For many Messianic Christians this verse is both the foundation and the justification for practicing parts of the Old Testament law, for they read it this way in their mind:



"I have not come to abolish the law, therefore it continues to be binding." They understand the fulfillment as being ongoing and not complete until Jesus returns, because Hebrews 10:16 says this:

"This is the covenant I will make with them after those days, says the Lord; I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them."

They are both correct, and incorrect. We're more in agreement than not, though confusion reigns in the hearts of many on this matter. Most of us are in complete agreement with Hebrews 10:16, for we recognize God's laws are written in our hearts as well. We therefore agree with Paul's statement of Romans 13: 8-10 that to love God with all your heart and to love your neighbor as yourself fulfills the Mosaic Law.

Some disregard Paul's teachings of Romans and Galatians, thinking that because God's Law is written in our hearts these Laws are best fulfilled by external obedience to the Mosaic Law, or parts of it, to this day.

They may do things to be more Jewish-like; Like refer to Jesus as Yahweh, or call the Bible the Torah, or base their focus on Old Testament scripture. Many start attending Saturday Messianic meetings replete with a processional walking in the scrolls of the Torah, prayers in Hebrew, and such - thinking God is more pleased with them than He is with their charismatic or non-charismatic friends. Not all are like that of course, many just want to know the Jewish roots of the faith with good and pure hearts - so allow me in this brief space to make some generalities.

What they do, they do unto the Lord, and He accepts them so I do too. But my purpose is to teach the ways of the Father in balance, so let us examine this issue.

To believe they are to live by the external Mosaic Law means they are in a dilemma. James, the Lord's brother and leader in Acts 15 who determined God was not making the Gentiles obey the Law of Moses so neither would these future authors of the New Testament, said in James 2:10: "Whoever keeps the Law, and is guilty in one point, is guilty of the whole law."

That makes those who believe that Jesus' fulfillment of the Law means the external Law is an ongoing binding force today, hypocrites, for they must either obey all 613 Laws of Moses, or pick and choose just how much under the Law they will live - breaking the very thing they think they are obeying. That is being hypocritical.

An example would be the Mosaic Law saying their clothes cannot be of mixed fibers, meaning no cotton/polyester mix is allowed. No wool blends. To break that is the same as murder, for under the law, sin is sin no matter how it is committed. To be guilty of one is to be guilty of all, as James said.

### **You can't have it both ways**

Jesus either came to fulfill all three parts of the Mosaic Law: The Sacrificial, Moral, and Sanitary/dietary Laws, or none at all. If the cross was the final sacrifice, then that sacrifice covered it all - otherwise Jesus' sacrifice on the cross was incomplete.

### **Let us reconcile how the Law can be in our hearts, yet we don't have to obey the Laws of Moses**

If Jesus fulfilled the Law, then why are God's laws written in our hearts?

In His statement, Jesus sets the word 'abolish' against the word 'fulfill'. Abolish means to violently destroy. He was saying He was not there to violently destroy the Law, but to fulfill that Law. Grammatically speaking, the way He structured the statement, means He was not there to prevent the fulfillment of the law, He came to enact the fulfillment of the law - His life's purpose was to fulfill the law.

He told the frightened disciples on resurrection day that He fulfilled it, in Luke 24:44: "This is what I told you while I was still with you; Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms."

Jesus fulfilled over 300 prophecies about Messiah - found in the prophets and Psalms.

He fulfilled the purpose of the Law - which according to Galatians 3:24-25 was to bring us to Christ. He fulfilled the Law's demand for the perfect sinless obedient life - James 2:10 - if you break 1, you break them all.

### **The tipping point**

Jesus said in Luke 16:16: "The Law and the Prophets were until John (the Baptist)." They were UNTIL John, for John preached repentance and prepared the hearts of the people for Jesus' fulfillment of the Law and Prophets.

### **In Him; He in us, we in Him - answers the question how the Mosaic Law is still in force today**

Jesus fulfilled the Law, then died, taking that fulfillment with Him to the grave. Then He was resurrected which according to Hebrews 9:16-26, means He became the Executor of His own Estate. Having fulfilled the Last Will and Testament of the Old, He is now the Executor of the New Testament. He possesses the Old and overrides it with the New.

In this way, in this sense, Jesus' fulfillment of the Law of Moses is an ongoing fulfillment because He is alive. He is now immune to the curse of the Law - and anyone in Him is immune to the curse of the Law as well. In Him we are shielded. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us..." Galatians 3:13

Having God's Law written in our hearts means Christ is in us, the Executor of His own Estate - and He from the inside out directs us to live within His personal ongoing fulfillment of the Law. We have Christ in us to convict us when we lust after someone or some thing. We have Christ in us to convict us when we lie, when we steal, when we dishonor God, and so on.

Because Jesus fulfilled the Law, and He is in us, His fulfillment is ongoing in our lives, moving us ever closer to maturity in Him. That is how Paul could say to love God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself, fulfills the Law - because Christ in you is doing that and directing you in that.

It means we MUST walk with Him in life so that He may direct us. It means reliance on external rules and regulations take us away from the intimacy of walking daily and moment to moment with Christ. He fulfilled the requirements of the Law, and then moved His fulfilled Life inside of us so that we walk in that same fulfillment - Love God #1, and your neighbor as yourself, and you fulfill the Law.

I hope this makes sense...I trust the Father to give the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, that the eyes of our understanding may be enlightened. Blessings, new subject next week, really!

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