

Argumentum Ex Silentio

Argument From Silence

**Does the Silence of the Apostolic Writings Regarding Torah
Observance by non-Jewish Believers in Imply That the Torah
Does NOT Apply to Them?**

Bruce R. Booker

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Fore Word

Argument from silence

From *Wikipedia*, the free encyclopedia¹

“The **argument from silence** (also called **argumentum ex silentio** in Latin) is generally a conclusion based on silence or lack of contrary evidence.² In the field of classical studies, it often refers to the deduction from the lack of references to a subject in the available writings of an author to the conclusion that he was ignorant of it.³ When used as a logical proof in pure reasoning, the argument is classed among the fallacies, but an argument from silence can be a convincing form of abductive reasoning.”

Abductive reasoning⁴

From *Wikipedia*, the free encyclopedia

“**Abduction** is a method of logical inference introduced by Charles Sanders Peirce which comes prior to induction and deduction for which the colloquial name is to have a "hunch". Abductive reasoning starts when an inquirer considers of a set of seemingly unrelated facts, armed with an intuition that they are somehow connected. The term *abduction* is commonly presumed to mean the same thing as hypothesis; however, an abduction is actually the process of inference that

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Argument_from_silence

² "argumentum e silentio *noun phrase*" *The Oxford Essential Dictionary of Foreign Terms in English*. Ed. Jennifer Speake. Berkley Books, 1999.

³ "silence, the argument from". *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*. Ed. E. A. Livingstone. Oxford University Press, 2006.

⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abductive_reasoning

produces a hypothesis as its end result⁵. It is used in both philosophy and computing.”

In this document, I seek to answer the following question that seems to plague the Messianic Community today: “Does the Torah apply to non-Jewish believers in Yeshua?”

I have a “hunch” that much more evidence exists from history and Church practice that it does!

Certainly there is ample evidence in the Apostolic writings of the “New Testament” of the applicability of Torah to *Jewish* believers, one such example is found in Acts 21:17-24:

¹⁷ After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. ¹⁸ And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹ After he had greeted them, he *began* to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. ²⁰ And when they heard it they *began* glorifying God; and they said to him, "You see, brother, ***how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law*** [Emphasis Mine]; ²¹ and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. ²² "What, then, is *to be done*? They will certainly hear that you have come. ²³ "Therefore do this that we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; ²⁴ take them and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their

⁵ Sebeok, T. (1981) "You Know My Method." In Sebeok, T. "The Play of Musement." Bloomington, IA: Indiana. pp 33-34

heads; and all will know that there is nothing to the things which they have been told about you, but that *you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Law* [Emphasis Mine].

However, the lack of Apostolic Scriptural directive of Torah keeping for the non-Jewish believer in Yeshua lends itself to several possible conclusions:

1) that the Torah does not apply to the non-Jewish believer, and only four things are required of them, as found in Acts 15:19-20; cf Acts 21:25:

¹⁹ "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, ²⁰ but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood."

²⁵ "But concerning the Gentiles who have believed, we wrote, having decided that they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication."

2) that only the parts of the Torah recited by the Apostles in their writings apply to the non-Jewish believer. For instance, Shaul cites from the Torah many times in his various epistles to the non-Jewish believers:

⁷ What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? May it never be! On the contrary, I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; for I would not have known about coveting if the Law had not said, "YOU SHALL NOT COVET." (Romans 7:7)

⁸ Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled *the* law. ⁹ For this, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." ¹⁰ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of *the* law. (Romans 13:8-10)

⁸ I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? ⁹ For it is written in the Law of Moses, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING." God is not concerned about oxen, is He? ¹⁰ Or is He speaking altogether for our sake? Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher *to thresh* in hope of sharing *the crops*. ¹¹ If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? ¹² If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ. ¹³ Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the *food* of the temple, *and* those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar? ¹⁴ So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel. (1 Corinthians 9:8-14)

¹⁴ For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the *statement*, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." (Galatians 5:14)

¹ Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ² HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER (which is the first commandment with a promise), ³ SO THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH YOU, AND THAT YOU MAY LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH. (Ephesians 6:1-3)

3) that obviously the Moral Law of Torah (“Ten Commandments”) applies to non-Jewish believers, but all other commandments of the “Old Testament” do not apply to them, or lastly,

4) that the entire Torah (as applies to Israel) applies to non-Jewish believers as much as it applies to Jewish believers, since that is what the Messiah walked out and we all need to “walk like He walked” (1 John 2:1-8). That there was no need for the Apostles to repeat commandments already well established by that time and well defined in the “Old Testament” in their “New Testament” writings. Since the non-Jew will hear “Moses” (Torah) in the synagogue every Sabbath (Acts 15:21), they will come to know the commandments and will learn that it is the “doers of the Word” that will be justified, not hearers only (James 1:22).

Whichever conclusion you hold, it is a fact that the Apostolic Writings of the “New Testament” do *not* spell out a clear directive of Torah observance to their non-Jewish constituents. Yet, having said that, just because non-Jewish Torah Observance is not spelled out in the Apostolic Epistles DOESN’T mean that it wasn’t a part of Apostolic teaching when the Apostles were with the non-Jewish believers in person.

It is important to understand that an Apostolic Epistle is in reality a one-sided letter written to address certain issues occurring in a certain congregation. Remember, one-sided letters give you only

“one-side” of the story. You have to know more detail than what is found in the letter to understand the full context.

Let me give you a humorous example of a one-sided letter in which a reader could come to the wrong conclusion about the writer:

Dear Ma and Pa:

I am well. Hope you are too. Tell Brother Walt and Brother Elmer that the Marine Corps beats working for old man Minch by a mile. Tell them to join up quick before all of the places are filled.

I was restless at first because you got to stay in bed till nearly 6 a.m., but I am getting so I like to sleep late. Tell Walt and Elmer all you do before breakfast is smooth your cot and shine some things. No hogs to slop, feed to pitch, mash to mix, wood to split, fire to lay... practically nothing. Men got to shave but it's not so bad... there's warm water. Breakfast is strong on trimmings like fruit juice, cereal, eggs, bacon, etc., but kind of weak on chops, potatoes, ham, steak, fried eggplant, pie, and other regular food, but tell Walt and Elmer you can always sit by the two city boys that live on coffee. Their food plus yours holds you 'til noon when you get fed again. It's no wonder these city boys can't walk much.

We go on “route marches,” which the platoon sergeant says are long walks to harden us. If he thinks so, it's not my place to tell him different. A “route march” is about as far as to our mailbox at home. Then the city guys get sore feet and we all ride back in trucks.

The country is nice but awful flat. The sergeant is like a school teacher. He nags a lot. The captain is like the school board. Majors and colonels just ride around and frown. They don't bother you none.

This next will kill Walt and Elmer with laughing. I keep getting medals for shooting. I don't know why. The bulls-eye is near as big as a chipmunk head and don't move, and it ain't shooting at you like the Higgett boys at home. All you got to do is lie there all comfortable and hit it. You don't even load your own cartridges. They come in boxes.

Then we have what they call hand-to-hand combat training. You get to wrestle with them city boys. I have to be real careful though, they break real easy. It ain't like fighting with that ole bull at home. I'm about the best they got in this except for that Tug Jordan from over in Silver Lake. I only beat him once. He joined up the same time as me, but I'm only 5'6" and 130 pounds and he's 6'8" and near 300 pounds dry.

Be sure to tell Walt and Elmer to hurry and join up before other fellers get onto this setup and come stampeding on in.

Your loving daughter,

Alice

Were you surprised by the author of the letter? Did you imagine some huge "country bumpkin" jock as the author?

In like manner, one does not really get a good picture of the entire dynamic from a one-sided letter and when it comes to the

Apostolic Writings, especially those of Shaul (Paul), most certainly one should not make a systematic theology out of it, or the letters as a whole. It is easy to twist a one-sided letter out of context and make it say something else.

Let's take the writings of the Apostle Shaul alone. He is the most prolific of all the Apostles, since he is writing to the congregations of believers he is most intimate with. Most of what we call the "New Testament" is written by him. In fact, 13 of the 27 books of the New Testament are attributed to him.

It is from this Apostles' writings that most of the anti-Law (antinomian) theology in the Church is quarried. It is from his writings that many in the Church today (and sadly) many Messianic theologians today, state that Torah observance does not belong to non-Jewish believers.

Yet, we need to ask, "Are we twisting or distorting Shaul when we do this?" It is entirely possible!

Kefa (Peter) writes of Shaul's writings in 2 Peter 3:14-16:

¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, ¹⁵ and regard the patience of our Lord *as* salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, ¹⁶ as also in all *his* letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

The fact that there is a lot of silence from Shaul in his Epistles when it comes to non-Jewish Torah observance doesn't necessarily

mean that he didn't teach Torah observance to them when he was among them!

I have written a number of books, but my books aren't the majority of my teaching! The majority of my teaching is done in person to my congregation! Could this not also have been true of Shaul?

According to the book of Acts, Shaul made three missionary journeys: The first journey, in 46 AD, (Acts ch. 13, ch. 14) led initially by Barnabas, takes Shaul from Antioch to Cyprus then southern Asia Minor (Anatolia), and back to Antioch. The second journey with Silas to Europe began in 50 AD and the final journey, from 53-58 AD, took him to Ephesus, Corinth, Troas and Miletus to Jerusalem. All told, we are looking at twelve years at the minimum. Are we to believe that Shaul only taught what was written in his epistles during the entire twelve years? Are the epistles the only source of teaching to these congregations? Or are they simply addressing issues that the congregations are experiencing at the moment in which he needs to offer Apostolic input?

The Apostle John, when writing about the earthly ministry of Yeshua, which was only 3 to 3 ½ years in length, wrote in John 21:25:

²⁵ And there are also many other things which I did, which if they were written in detail, I suppose that even the world itself would not contain the books that would be written.

Could we also suppose the same about Shaul, that many more books could be written about what he did and taught in the twelve years he ministered in these various congregations!

What I am saying is: that the silence of the Apostolic writings of the “New Testament” regarding a particular doctrine or practice does NOT infer that that a Torah practice or doctrine was “dispensed away with” in the practice or doctrines of the Apostles.

I argue: quite the contrary. Since the model for Shaul to follow was Yeshua the Messiah, and he was asking his congregants to follow him as he followed the Messiah (1 Corinthians 11:1), then many “Old Testament” practices would have been continued by Shaul, as much as they were by Yeshua, who said He “did not come to abolish the Torah and the Prophets, but to fulfill them” (Matthew 5:17-21).

Thus, when it comes to non-Jewish practice set in the Apostolic writings, there is plenty of direction in the Torah, the Prophets, and the Writings of the “Old Testament” to direct the practice of non-Jewish believers in this new faith of theirs.

Tim Hegg, in his *An Assessment of the Divine Intervention Teaching, A Critical Review of “One Law and the Messianic Gentile”* **Messiah Journal** 101 (August, 2009), 46-70 writes of some theologians today who would limit the extent of the teachings of the Apostles only to the boundaries of the subjects they wrote in their Epistles.

He cites one such theologian to say:

“They [the Apostles] never did settle on a theology of Torah concerning the Gentiles, perhaps because of their expectation of the imminent return of Yeshua. I would be very cautious about advancing a theology that the Apostles did not raise.”⁶

⁶ *Messiah Journal*, #101, August, 2009, page 47

Hegg responds:

“The presupposition of such a statement is that the Apostles, who were disciples of Yeshua, did not consider Moses to have given a theology of the Torah that pertained to Gentiles. The scenario that is presented is that the Apostles found themselves in uncharted waters when it came to the question of Gentile believers and their relationship to the Torah.

“But it also proceeds on the premise that the Apostles had the authority to annul, amend, or suspend Torah commandments with respect to Gentile believers, or at least to redefine them against the obvious meaning of the Torah texts themselves. From what other premise could the argument be derived? For the Torah clearly speaks to the place of the “foreigner” within Israel, and that there is to be one Torah for both the foreigner and the native born.”⁷

It is Hegg’s contention (and mine) that sufficient direction has *already* been given in Torah as to the practice and doctrine that both Jewish *and* non-Jewish believers were to observe. The Apostles did not have the authority to change or annul them.

Thus, we could rightly deduce that much of the “silence” in the Apostolic “New Testament” writings could be attributed to the lack of need of additional Scripture (apart from what was already given in the “Old Testament”) which is what Yeshua/ followed. And since Yeshua is the model of a Torah observant believer in God, He is the model that should direct, not only the Apostles, but also all His followers: Jewish and non-Jewish.

⁷ Tim Hegg, *An Assessment of the Divine Intervention Teaching, A Critical Review of “One Law and the Messianic Gentile” Torah Resource*, 2009
http://www.torahresource.com/EnglishArticles/DivineInvitation_Response.pdf

Chapter One – Circumstantial Evidence

In our own courts of law, we understand that we can convict someone of a crime merely by *circumstantial evidence* alone. The fact that we do not have a confession, or that we cannot produce a body, does not mean that there isn't enough evidence available to convict.

Circumstantial evidence⁸

From *Wikipedia*, the free encyclopedia

Circumstantial evidence indirectly proves a fact. It is evidence that requires or allows a trier of fact to make a deduction to conclude that a fact exists. This inference made from a trier of facts supports the truth of assertion (in criminal law, an assertion of guilt or of absence of guilt). By contrast, direct evidence supports the truth of an assertion directly—i.e., without need for any intervening inference.

Testimony that the witness saw the defendant shoot the victim gives direct evidence. A forensic scientist who testifies that ballistics proves the defendant's firearm killed the victim gives circumstantial evidence, from which the defendant's guilt may be inferred.

Similarly, a witness who testifies that she watched the defendant stab the victim gives direct evidence. A witness who says that she saw the defendant enter a house, that she heard screaming, and that she saw the defendant leave with a bloody knife gives circumstantial evidence.

Circumstantial evidence usually accumulates into a collection, so that each piece corroborates the other pieces (the pieces then

⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Circumstantial_evidence

become corroborating evidence). Together they support more strongly the inference that the assertion is true.

What we must do in our studies on the subject of Torah observance by non-Jewish believers is to look at the circumstantial evidence that points to the fact that indeed, they *did* observe the Torah in many respects!

For that, we have history on our side!

Though the Apostolic Writings of the New Testament did not decree Torah observance by non-Jewish believers, the very fact that there is Torah observance by these believers for many centuries after the Apostles lived points to the observance of Torah in various degrees by them.

Who would have taught them these things? Why, none other than the Torah and the Apostles themselves! Why would Shaul incorporate Torah commandments in his epistles if Torah did not apply to the non-Jewish believer?

The heart of the matter is: if, as the Apostle Shaul wrote: “Follow me as I follow the Messiah (1 Corinthians 11:1),” therefore the walk of any disciple is like that of the Master.

Yeshua said, “Make disciples of all the nations...teaching them to obey everything I taught you...” (Matthew 28:19, 20)

How then is the disciple from the nations to walk? The same as the disciple from Israel: as the Messiah walked (1 John 2:1-8)!

Did the Messiah observe the Biblical Holy Days? Then, yes, the disciple must walk that, too!

Did the Messiah observe the Torah, as pertaining to an Israelite?
So, too must His disciple!

As pertains to Israel, so pertained to the Messiah, and so also pertains to *all* believers, whether Jew or non-Jew.

There is but one Olive Tree (Romans 11) to which we are all grafted, whether a “wild” olive branch or a “natural” olive branch. Non-Jews (the “wild” branch”) are grafted in to Israel (the Olive Tree), as are the “natural” (Jewish) branches.

Shaul in Ephesians 2:11-19 writes:

¹¹ Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," *which is performed in the flesh by human hands--* ¹² *remember that you were at that time **separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise,*** [Emphasis Mine] having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ ***But now in Christ you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*** [Emphasis Mine]

¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into one* and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances,* so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, ¹⁶ and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. ¹⁷ **AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR;** ¹⁸ for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer

strangers and aliens, but you are *fellow citizens* [Emphasis Mine] with the saints, and are of God's household..."

In other words, these uncircumcised non-Jewish believers are now a part of Messiah, included into the commonwealth of Israel and no longer strangers to the covenants of promise. Instead, they are now *full* partakers of the promises given to Israel, including the covenants!

The dividing wall is broken down. There is no longer a separation between Jew and non-Jew, between male and female, between slave and free in the Messiah Yeshua! All are one in Him!

It is hypocritical of some Messianic Jews to rebuild that wall of partition by saying to the non-Jew that "Torah does not apply to you, go find a Church somewhere to attend." It is wrong for some Messianic Jews to say that Torah is a "Jewish identifier" that belongs solely to Jewish believers.

Torah is a walk with Messiah that belongs to all those who are His disciples. To say anything less is to make a distinction that Messiah did not make.

Yeshua did not walk (Hebrew: "halacha") one walk for His Jewish believers and another walk for His non-Jewish believers. He walked one walk for all: Torah observant!

Torah was given on Sinai to *both* the native and to the sojourner alike. God did not separate off the sojourners from the natives at the mountain and say to them, "Well, this applies only to my Hebrew people and not to you." No, He gave Torah to ALL those at the mountain: Hebrew *and* non-Hebrew alike!

The Torah was given to the “sons of Israel,” to those of faith from both the natural as well as the wild branches, to borrow a phrase from Shaul.

There is but one walk in which calls all His people to “be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:14-15; cf Leviticus 11:44,45; 19:2; 20:7).

Holiness is the goal for all believers and the walk of Yeshua is the walk all believers must walk if they are to attain that goal. [For more in depth on this subject, read my book, *A Call to Holiness*.]

Since God does not change (Malachi 3:6), neither does His holiness and the Torah reflects the holiness we should be walking (Romans 7:12) and the spirituality we should be living (Romans 7:14). This is the walk that Yeshua walked who was “the same yesterday, today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

So, when we look at the “circumstantial evidence” to support early non-Jewish believers observing the Torah, we must look for the “spent casing” on the ground.

In other words, if we come across a “spent casing”, the brass case of a bullet whose igniter has been detonated and whose bullet is missing, we can reasonably assume that the bullet had been fired.

We did not see the bullet or hear the bullet when it was fired, but the evidence is clear that it was fired.

The circumstantial evidence shows that the bullet was fired: not by whom, or at whom, but indeed it was fired.

We must do the same thing with non-Jewish observance of Torah commands in the Early Church. Even if the Apostolic writing lacks a commandment, yet there is evidently an observance of a Torah command, it did not happen in a vacuum.

Someone, or something, had to have instigated the behavior.

Chapter Two – Keeping Torah Commands not specified in the Apostolic Writings.

The fact that most Torah commandments are not found in the Apostolic Writings of the New Testament leads many to believe that the omitted commands are not incumbent upon New Testament believers.

There are many Torah commandments not found in the New Testament. One such commandment is found in Leviticus 18:23:

²³ `Also you shall not have intercourse with any animal to be defiled with it, nor shall any woman stand before an animal to mate with it; it is a perversion.

Since this commandment is not found in the New Testament, are we to assume that it has been done away with and that we could practice this as believers in Yeshua? Of course not! That would be ridiculous!

Leviticus 18 also commands us not to have intercourse with our sister or brother, or near blood relative or a member of the same sex. Are we to assume by the silence of the New Testament on the matter, that it is ok to do so now that “did away with the Law”? Heaven forbid!

The fact is that by the time of the New Testament writings that we had 1500 years of Torah guidance means that not everything needed to be spelled out for us by the Apostles.

The Apostles did not need to reiterate every Torah commandment to their non-Jewish constituents, since it was assumed that they would hear every Torah commandment in the synagogue every Sabbath (Acts 15:21):

"For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

The Apostles knew that these non-Jews would begin to take the first steps of obedience by keeping the “four” listed in Acts 15:19-20:

¹⁹ "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, ²⁰ but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.

These “four” assumed that by so keeping they would leave their former pagan practice behind, as they were practiced in the pagan religious ritual of the day.

Once they left those pagan practices behind, what would they begin to do? Listen to Moses (Torah) and begin to follow him.

When Shaul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4, he said:

¹³ Until I come, give attention to the *public* reading of *Scripture*, to exhortation and teaching.

In 2 Timothy 3, he said:

¹⁶ All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

We need to remember that the *only* Scripture Shaul and Timothy had at that time *was* the “Old” Testament! There was *no* “New” Testament that the non-Jewish believer could follow!

The early believers had no other guide! Thus, when it came to non-Jewish practice in the Early Church, they had only to look to the Scripture of what we call the “Old Testament” today.

The “Old Testament” then leads them to the Biblical practices found therein.

In fact, in spite of the growing divergence between the church and the synagogue, the Christian communities worshipped and operated essentially as Jewish synagogues for more than a generation.⁹

This meant that the Church looked more “Jewish” than they do today and they certainly did not have the pagan-originated feasts of Christmas and Easter to celebrate!

So, instead of celebrating Saturnalius (which later became known as Christmas), or Astarte (goddess of fertility, or Easter), which they used to do as pagans, they began to follow the Biblical Feasts or even Chanukkah (which Yeshua observed in His lifetime on earth).

The circumstantial evidence of history is there to show the Early Church followed the Biblical practices of the Jews as reflected in the Torah, which, incidentally, does not mean “Law,” but “teachings.”

⁹ *Eerdman's Handbook to the History of Christianity*, copyright 1977, Wm. B. Eerdman's Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI, page 68

It would not be until the *Philocalian Catalogue* in 354¹⁰ that the first mention of Christmas as a festival of the church on December 25 would be referred to. The Christian Sunday was not made a “Day of rest” until Constantine decreed it in AD 321.¹¹

In the late third century came the first deliberate attempts by Christian missionaries to ‘baptize’ features of pagan religions and thus overcome them by absorbing them into Christianity. Churches took over from temples, martyrs replaced the old gods in popular devotion, and the festivals of the Christian year took the place of the high-days and holy days of paganism.¹²

The Venerable Bede, (672-735 CE.) a Christian scholar, first asserted in his book *De Ratione Temporum* that Easter was named after Eostre (a.k.a. Eastre). She was the Great Mother Goddess of the Saxon people in Northern Europe. Similarly, the ‘*Teutonic dawn goddess of fertility [was] known variously as Ostare, Ostara, Ostern, Eostra, Eostre, Eostur, Eastr, Eastur, Austron and Ausos.*’¹³

So, what about what Shaul said in Colossians 2:16, 17:

¹⁶ Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day-- ¹⁷ things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

¹⁰ *Eerdman's Handbook to the History of Christianity*, copyright 1977, Wm. B. Eerdman's Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI, pg. 147

¹¹ IBID, page 122

¹² IBID, page 88

¹³ *Asherah and Easter*, Larry Boemler, *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Vol. 18, Number 3, 1992-May/June

I believe it is important for us to provide an answer to anyone who asks us about our faith, not only about what we believe, but also why we believe it.

This issue requires an answer just as much as any other issue in the Bible, especially in the light of the preceding chapter. So, it will be with as much care that we will answer this.

First, we must place the epistle in the historical context: Shaul (probably about 61) addressed an epistle from Rome to the inhabitants of Colossæ. Colossæ was located 120 miles east of Ephesus in the Lycus River Valley in ancient Phrygia, part of the Roman territory of Asia Minor, now in modern Turkey. It was at one time the chief city of South-Western Phrygia, lying on the trade-route from Sardis to Celænæ.

Now, the believers in Colossæ were, as in most cities of the time, in the minority group. Their non-believing Greek-oriented families, friends, co-workers and employers were in the majority. Those co-workers, friends and relatives, as indeed the believers themselves in their former practice, would have been influenced by not only Greek philosophy, but also by Greek religious practices. It would have been easy to blend in the previous religious practices and philosophical thought into their new-found faith. This is what Shaul is dealing with in his epistle to these believers.

Consider that the cited passage (above) in Colossians (verses 16 and 17) falls between verses 8 and 20:

⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, ***according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world*** [Emphasis Mine], rather than according to Christ.

²⁰ If you have died with Christ *to the elementary principles of the world* [Emphasis Mine], why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, ²¹ "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" ²² (which all *refer to* things destined to perish with use)--*in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men* [Emphasis Mine]? ²³ These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, *but are* of no value against fleshly indulgence.

In context, Shaul is writing against “**philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world,**” and “**the commandments and teachings of men.**” Evidently, they were also blending these man-made pagan things with the Biblical ordinances of their new faith. That’s the nature of the Colossian heresy that Shaul was dealing with and that is the issue that Shaul is dealing with to his non-Jewish believers here.

NEVER does God’s Word allow the blending of the commandments and statutes of God with worldly religion and philosophy (syncretism)! In fact, God’s Word always tells His people not to practice the religion of the pagan nations surrounding them. God does not want to be worshipped however we want to worship Him. He wants to be worshipped in the manner He established in His Word! To blend the Biblical observances with the worldly ones is literally an abomination before God.

That is the context of Shaul’s writings here!

Now, on the judging aspect of this passage: when Shaul warns the believers against other’s judging them, he is *not* writing about *fellow-believers* judging them for their observance of the Biblical

dietary laws or holy days, but against their *pagan* friends, relatives and co-workers judging them for observing the Biblical laws! We are *not* talking about having a bunch of churches down the street from each other judging each other on Biblical practice. We didn't have a bunch of churches down the same street in that day! So for believers to use this passage (as is done today) to stop other believers from "judging" them for not observing a Biblical command is pure nonsense! That was *not* the situation Shaul was addressing with the Colossians at that time. The ones doing the judging were the pagans against the believers!

Consider this: in the Book of Acts we see *many* non-Jewish people in the synagogues scattered through the known world at this time (13:43; 14:1; 18:4). They were either believers in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob or were considering Him as their God.

As they came to believe in Him, they left their old Greek or Roman gods behind and came to recognize that there was but one God. As related by the First Council (Acts 15:21) of what is now called the "church;" Gentile believers sat in the synagogue every Sabbath and who did they hear? They heard Moses (the Torah)!

Of what did Moses speak? Of *many* things: *including* the Biblical dietary laws, the Moedim (Appointed times – holy days) of Israel, and the "new moons." They would have learned that there was but "one law" for the native (Hebrew) and the sojourner (Numbers 15:16: **There is to be one law and one ordinance for you and for the alien who sojourns with you**). They would begin to observe the Biblical holy days, etc., adopting them as their own.

Now, in this context, who is judging them for observing a "Jewish" life-style and religious practice? Not their fellow believers! Rather, their *pagan* relatives, co-workers, and others!

It is interesting to note that the dynamic expressed by Shaul in the First Century is still being played out in the Body of Messiah today! To this very day, when non-Jewish believers come into the Messianic synagogue and hear Moses and begin to observe the Biblical holy days, the Biblical dietary laws, and the Biblical commandments expressed in the Older Testament, they receive criticism from their friends, family and co-workers for observing these “Jewish” religious practices!

“Why are you doing these “Jewish” things? Don’t you know that when you practice these things that you are putting yourself back “under the Law?” “Don’t you know that Christ died to save us from the curse of the Law and that you no longer have to observe these things?”

Funny how much things change that they stay the same. We are *still* wrestling with the dynamic that the early Gentile believers dealt with when relating their new-found faith to their pagan friends.

To use the passage from Colossians to stop Torah Observant believers from “judging” the pagan observances of their fellow believers is simply wrong.

We are called to judge within the Body, otherwise how could Shaul give up to Satan the man who was living in sin with his father’s wife (1 Corinthians 5:1)? If we cannot judge *anything* within the Body of Messiah, how can we use the Scriptures to *reprove* (2 Timothy 3:16) of sin (transgression of the Law – 1 John 3:4)? We can’t!

Instead, the Scriptures are there to allow us to judge *within* the Body. We need to be able to point out sin where sin is (Transgression of the Law – 1 John 3:4) without our fellow

brothers and sisters condemning us for judging them when they transgress the laws of God.

Chapter Three - The Passover Observance of the Church

Throughout the second century, all churches of Asia Minor continued to commemorate Christ's crucifixion (called "Passover" by Jewish Christians) on 14 Nisan. According to Irenaeus, Polycarp (69-155) left Asia in 150 to visit Rome, where Pope Anicetus tried unsuccessfully to persuade him to relinquish his Quartodeciman Passover observance. Polycarp insisted his observance of Passover on 14 Nisan was learned directly from the Apostle John himself (Eusebius, Church History 5:24). Nevertheless, Pope Victor (c. 189-99) rashly condemned Asian Christians as heretics for their unwillingness to abandon Quartodeciman observance. Latin propensities to break all ties with Judaism made little sense to most Eastern Christians. By the fourth century Gentile Christians throughout Syria and Mesopotamia continued to observe Passover on 14 Nisan, causing Constantine no small concern since Easter was then celebrated in the important city of Antioch on a different day than in the West—as it is today. Nicene efforts to reconcile these differences ultimately failed. But when Eastern bishops were coerced at the Council of Antioch (341) to accept the Western system of reckoning Easter after the spring equinox, the break from the Jewish calendar was complete. Good Friday and Easter became solar dates for Gentile Christians, whereas Passover has always been lunar for Jews and Jewish Christians—on the fourteenth day of the new moon of Nisan.¹⁴

¹⁴ Joshua Massey, Part I: *Living Like , a Torah-Observant Jew: Delighting in God's Law for Incarnational Witness to Muslims*, the Network for Strategic Missions, January 01, 2004, <http://www.strategicnetwork.org/index.php?loc=kb&view=v&id=16527&pagenum=6&lang=>

Though the Apostolic writing lacks direct Scriptural command for the non-Jewish believers' Torah observance, do we see circumstantial evidence that the Early non-Jewish believers observed Torah?

There is evidence from the Church's observance of certain Biblical Holy Days (Moedim – Leviticus 23) that they did.

The Apostle Shaul

The Apostle Shaul realized that that Yeshua was a substitute for the Passover lamb that the Jewish people used. He also taught that Christians should still continue to observe Passover:

Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. **For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast**, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).

It is a fact that the Corinthians understood full well what Passover was all about and obviously even observed it!

The Apostle Yochanan (John)

The Apostle Yochanan lived the longest of the original apostles. Yochanan, of course, kept Passover with Yeshua:

⁸ And He sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat." (Luke 22:8)

And later, did Yochanan continue keep Passover on the 14th or did he switch to Easter Sunday?

Notice what the medieval historian and Catholic Priest Bede (also known as "the Venerable Bede") recorded from a Catholic Abbot named Wilfrid who was trying to justify near the beginning of the

eighth century why it was acceptable to not follow the Apostle John's practices regarding Passover:

Far be it from me to charge **John** with foolishness: he **literally observed the decrees of the Mosaic law when the Church was still Jewish in many respects**, at a time when the apostles were unable to bring a sudden end to that law which God ordained...So John, in accordance with the custom of the law, began the celebration of Easter Day in the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month, regardless of whether it fell on the sabbath or any other day (Bede (Monk)).¹⁵

The Second Century Church

Although most who profess Christianity now celebrate it, Easter-Sunday was not observed by the second century Christians in Asia Minor. They observed Passover.

Samuele Bacchiocchi, who wrote the book *From Sabbath to Sunday*, noted that the change to Easter-Sunday and to a weekly Sunday was due to persecution (the *new Gentile hierarchy* he is referring to are Greek bishops in Jerusalem, which took over after the rebellion was crushed):

The actual introduction of Easter-Sunday appears to have occurred earlier in Palestine after Emperor Hadrian ruthlessly crushed the Barkokeba revolt (A.D. 132-135)...

The fact that the Passover controversy arose when Emperor Hadrian adopted new repressive measures

¹⁵ *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, Edited by Judith McClure and Roger Collins. Oxford University Press, NY, 1999

against Jewish religious practices suggests that such measures influenced the new Gentile hierarchy to change the date of Passover from Nisan 14 to the following Sunday (Easter-Sunday) in order to show separation and differentiation from the Jews and the Jewish Christians...

A whole body of *Against the Jews* literature was produced by leading Fathers who defamed the Jews as a people and emptied their religious beliefs and practices of any historical value. Two major causalities of the anti-Jewish campaign were Sabbath and Passover. The Sabbath was changed to Sunday and Passover was transferred to Easter-Sunday.

Scholars usually recognize the anti-Judaic motivation for the repudiation of the Jewish reckoning of Passover and adoption of Easter-Sunday instead. Joachim Jeremias attributes such a development to "the inclination to break away from Judaism."

In a similar vein, J.B. Lightfoot explains that Rome and Alexandria adopted Easter-Sunday to avoid "even the semblance of Judaism."¹⁶

Lightfoot wrote:

The Churches of Asia Minor which regulated their Easter festival by the Jewish passover without regard to the day of the week, but with **those of Rome and**

¹⁶ Bacchiocchi Samuele, *God's Festival in Scripture and History, Biblical Perspectives*, Befriend Springs (MI), 1995, pp. 101,102,103.

**Alexandria and Gaul which observed another rule;
thus avoiding even the semblance of Judaism.¹⁷**

The Fourth Century Church

In spite of the condemnations, Passover was *always* kept on the 14th of Nisan by those who claimed to be faithful to the practices of the Apostle John and the Bible.

However, even after condemnations from Bishops Victor and Hippolytus, even many of those with a Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox background, continued to keep Passover on the 14th of Nisan until at least sometime into the fourth century.

But Emperor Constantine did not like that at all and convened the famous Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. to decide on a universal date:

...the emperor...convened a council of 318 bishops...in the city of Nicea...They passed certain ecclesiastical canons at the council besides, and at the same time decreed in regard to the Passover that there must be one unanimous concord on the celebration of God's holy and supremely excellent day. For it was variously observed by people...¹⁸

Notice what Constantine declared about this:

The commemoration of the most sacred paschal feast being then debated, it was unanimously decided, that it would be well that it should be everywhere celebrated

¹⁷ Lightfoot, Joseph Barber, *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, Macmillan and Co., limited, 1910. Original from the University of California, Digitized Oct 16, 2007, p. 331.

¹⁸ Epiphanius. *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, Books II and III (Sects 47-80), De Fide). Section VI, Verses 1,1 and 1,3. Translated by Frank Williams. EJ Brill, New York, 1994, pp.471-472). A Sunday date was selected, instead of Nisan 14 (which can fall on any day of the week).

upon the same day. What can be more fair, or more seemly, than that that festival by which we have received the hope of immortality should be carefully celebrated by all, on plain grounds, with the same order and exactitude? It was, in the first place, declared improper to follow the custom of the Jews in the celebration of this holy festival, because, their hands having been stained with crime, the minds of these wretched men are necessarily blinded. By rejecting their custom, we establish and hand down to succeeding ages one which is more reasonable, and which has been observed ever since the day of our Lord's sufferings. Let us, then, have nothing in common with the Jews, who are our adversaries. For we have received from our Saviour another way...¹⁹

According to Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*, Book III chapter 18, a more accurate translation of that last line above from the Roman Emperor Constantine should be:

Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd; for we have received from our Saviour a different way.

Thus, from the “circumstantial evidence” of history, we can see that parts of the Church continued to observe the Biblical Passover feast even through to the Fourth Century, when it was by empirical decree dispensed away with.

¹⁹ Theodoret of Cyrus. *Ecclesiastical History* (Book I), Chapter IX. Excerpted from *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Volume 3. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. American Edition, 1892. Online Edition Copyright © 2005 by K. Knight.

Who started the Church on this path? Obviously, it was the Apostles, even Shaul from whom most of the “anti-nomian” (anti-Law) Scripture is quarried.

If the Passover was not applicable to the non-Jewish believer, then why did they observe it for centuries after the Apostles died?

Can we make in inference that other Biblical holy days are applicable as well to non-Jewish believers?

Obviously, since the Church overall still observes Pentecost (Shavuot “Weeks”) another Moed (Leviticus 23:15-21), historical evidence exists of its’ pertinence to non-Jewish believers in the Church.

The fact that there is a lack of Apostolic Scripture to back up non-Jewish observance of these Feasts does not point to the Apostles *prohibiting* the observance of these Biblical Feasts by non-Jewish believers.

Chapter Four - The Sabbath Observance of the Church

According to Luke 4:16, it was Christ's "custom" to go to the synagogue on the Sabbath day. Moreover, at the time of Christ's death and burial, the women who had followed Him from Galilee "rested the sabbath day according to the commandment" (Luke 23:56), indicating that there had been no instruction from Him to the contrary. They were still observing the seventh day of the week! We may, in addition, take note of the fact that the implication of this text is that when Luke wrote the account several decades after Christ's crucifixion he took for granted that no change in Sabbath observance had occurred. He reports this Sabbath observance "according to the commandment" in a totally matter-of-fact way, with no hint that there had been any new day of worship added in the interim.²⁰

The first clear evidence for weekly Sunday observance by Christians comes in the second century from two places--Alexandria and Rome. About A.D. 130 Barnabas of Alexandria, in a highly allegorical discourse, refers to the seventh-day Sabbath as representing the seventh millennium of earth's history. He goes on to say that the present sabbaths were unacceptable to God, who would make "a beginning of the eighth day [Sunday], that is, a beginning of another world. Wherefore, also, we keep the eighth day with joyfulness, the day also on which rose again from the dead."²¹

²⁰ <http://www.biblehistory.com/The%20Origin%20of%20Sunday%20Worship.html>

²¹ *The Epistle of Barnabas*, chap. 15, in ANF, Vol. I, pp. 146, 147

One thing is clear: The weekly Christian Sunday--whenever it did arise--did not at first generally become a substitute for the Bible seventh-day Sabbath, Saturday; for both Saturday and Sunday were widely kept side by side for several centuries in early Christian history. Socrates Scholasticus, a church historian of the fifth century A.D., wrote, "For although almost all churches throughout the world celebrate the sacred mysteries [the Lord's Supper] on the sabbath of every week, yet the Christians of Alexandria and at Rome, on account of some ancient tradition, have ceased to do this."²² And Sozomen, a contemporary of Socrates, wrote, "The people of Constantinople, and almost everywhere, assemble together on the Sabbath, as well as on the first day of the week, which custom is never observed at Rome or at Alexandria."²³ Thus, "almost everywhere" throughout Christendom, except in Rome and Alexandria, there were Christian worship services on both Saturday and Sunday as late as the fifth century. A number of other sources from the third to the fifth centuries also depict Christian observance of both Saturday and Sunday. For example, the Apostolic Constitutions, compiled in the fourth century, furnished instruction to "keep the Sabbath [Saturday], and the Lord's day [Sunday] festival; because the former is the memorial of the creation, and the latter of the resurrection." "Let the slaves work five days; but on the Sabbath-day [Saturday] and the Lord's day [Sunday] let them have leisure to go to church for instruction in piety."²⁴ Gregory of Nyssa in the late fourth century

²² Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History*, book 5, chap. 22, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (NPNF) Second Series, Vol. II, p. 132.

²³ Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, book 7, chap. 19, in NPNF, Second Series, Vol. II, p. 390.

²⁴ Apostolic Constitutions, book 7, sec. 2, chap. 23, and book 8, sec. 4, chap. 33 in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (ANF), Vol. VII, pp. 469, 495.

referred to the Sabbath and Sunday as "sisters."²⁵ And about A.D. 400 Asterius of Amasea declared that it was beautiful for Christians that the "team of these two days comes together"--"the Sabbath and the Lord's day,"²⁶ which each week gathers together the people with priests as their instructors. And in the fifth century, John Cassian refers to attendance in church on both Saturday and Sunday, stating that he had even seen a certain monk who sometimes fasted five days a week but would go to church on Saturday or on Sunday and bring home guests for a meal on those two days.²⁷ It is clear that none of these early writers confused Sunday with the Bible Sabbath. Sunday, the first day of the week, always followed the Sabbath, the seventh day. Furthermore, the historical records are clear in showing that the weekly cycle has remained unchanged from Christ's time till now, so that the Saturday and Sunday of those early centuries are still the Saturday and Sunday of today.²⁸

It was by empirical decree that Constantine changed the observance of the Biblical Passover to the pagan Easter (Council of Nicae, 325 AD) and it was also by such decree that he changed the observance of the Biblical Sabbath to the "Lord's Day", the first day of the week (March, 321 AD):

On the venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in

²⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *De Castigatione* ("On Reproof"), in J. P. Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 46, col. 309 (Greek) and col. 310 (Latin).

²⁶ Asterius, Homily 5, on Matthew 19:3, in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 40, col. 225 (Greek) and col. 226 (Latin).

²⁷ Cassian, *Institutes of the Coenobia*, book 5, chap. 26, in NPNF, Second Series, Vol. XI, p. 243. CF. *Institutes*, book 3, chap. 2, and *Conferences*, part 1, conf. 3, chap. 1, in NPNF, Second Series. Vol. XI, pp. 213, 319.

²⁸ Kenneth A. Strand, *How Sunday Became the Popular Day of Worship*,

agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain-sowing or for vine-planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost.²⁹

It should seem ample evidence to us that there would be no need for such a decree if Sabbath observance in the Church had discontinued, but as with Passover, it was still a hold-over in the Church from its' previous Jewish parent.

A very good book to read regarding the change in the Church from the seventh-day Sabbath to a Sunday observance is that of *From Sabbath to Sunday*,³⁰ written by Samuele Bacchiocchi. His book received the pontifical *imprimatur* (approval) for the scholarship exhibited in his work.

I will not recreate the wheel, so to speak, from what he has already done.

²⁹ *Codex Justinianus*, lib. 3, tit. 12, 3; trans. in Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. 3 (5th ed.; New York: Scribner, 1902), p. 380, note 1.

³⁰ How did the change come about from Saturday to Sunday in early Christianity? To find an answer to this question Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi spent five years at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, examining the most ancient documents available.

The results of this investigation are presented in *From Sabbath to Sunday*, which is a translation and an adaptation of his Italian doctoral dissertation, presented at and published by the Pontifical Gregorian University Press.

The investigation establishes that the change from Saturday to Sunday began approximately one century after the death of Christ, as a result of an interplay of political, social, pagan and Christian factors. The change in the day of rest and worship was not merely a change of names or of numbers, but rather a change of meaning, authority and experience. Essentially it was a change from a *Holy Day* into a *holiday*.

From Sabbath to Sunday has the distinction of being the first book written by a non-Catholic ever to be published by a Pontifical press with the Catholic *imprimatur* (approval). The book has already been reprinted fourteen times in English and has been translated in several languages. Hundreds of scholars of different persuasions have praised this book as a definitive treatment of the early history of the Lord's Day.

Suffice it to say:

- 1) The Sunday observance of the Sabbath is NOT of Apostolic origin.
- 2) Sunday observance is of pagan origin.
- 3) The Biblical Sabbath has NOT been replaced by a Sunday Sabbath.
- 4) The very fact that an empirical decree in the 4th Century to establish Sunday as a Sabbath or day of worship establishes that there were still some Churches in the Empire who were adhering and observing the Biblical Sabbath (from Friday evening to Saturday evening).

So, the circumstantial evidence of history points out that the Biblical Sabbath was still being observed by non-Jewish believers in Yeshua up to the Fourth Century.

With this at the forefront: Who taught the non-Jewish believers about the Seventh-Day Sabbath? Of course: the Torah and the Apostles who kept it.

Does this imply that at least the Seventh-Day Sabbath and the Passover – both of which were observed by the Church until empirical decree in the Fourth Century – were applicable to non-Jews?

The answer is a resounding “YES!”

Chapter Five - What about not being “Under the Law?”

Most of the anti-Nomian (anti-Law) bias in the church stems from the misunderstanding, misuse or twisting of the Apostle Shaul’s writings on the subject.

“For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14).

“Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for God” (Romans 7:4).

“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ has set you free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2).

“And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, that I might win those who are without law” (1 Corinthians 9:20-21).

“But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law” (Galatians 5:18).

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law” (Galatians 5:22-23).

As we read these passages and others like them we can see how easy it is to put together a systematic theology [**Systematic theology** is the study of Christian theology organized thematically (as opposed to historically, as in Historical Theology or Biblical Theology)] that speaks of **“the end of the Law,” “law of sin and death,” “law of bondage,”** etc.

The question is: is that the *real* message Shaul intends to convey through his epistles?

As proof to the Jews **“zealous”** for the law and to the other Disciples, he carries out the Nazarite vow (Numbers 6) to make a statement that he **“walks orderly, keeping the Law.”**

Other passages also tend to indicate his obedience to the Law. In Acts 20:16, Shaul is in a hurry to get to Jerusalem on Pentecost – in obedience to Exodus 23:16 and Deuteronomy 16:10. Observing the Feast of Unleavened Bread – in obedience to Exodus 23:15, the **fast** of Yom Kippur in Acts 27:9 – in obedience to Leviticus 16:3 1, and in other examples of faithfulness such as observing the Jewish Sabbath in Acts 13:14, 44; 16:13; 17:1, 2, 10, 17; 18:7, 8.

So, how can we reconcile Shaul’s obvious **“keeping the Law”** with his statements seemingly contrary to the law? Is Shaul a “people-pleaser” or a spiritual chameleon – being one thing to one group of people and another to some other group of people? I don’t think so.

This leaves us looking for another possible solution to our dilemma, and perhaps the most likely one: Shaul, in his writings,

is being misunderstood -- either through ignorance, or possibly through malevolent deliberation. Kefa leaves this possibility open in 2 Peter 3:15-17 when he says, “...**and think of our Lord’s patience as deliverance, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you, following the wisdom God gave him. Indeed, he speaks about these things in all his letters. They contain some things that are hard to understand, things which the uninstructed and unstable distort, to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.**”

Here Kefa affirms Shaul’s letters as on par with the rest of Scripture which, as you see in his personal obedience to the Law, affirms the continuity and observance of the Law. Yet, he confirms that Shaul’s writings are hard to understand.

Since it stands to reason that Shaul’s writings are virtually the only passages quoted, that are seemingly at odds with regard to the Law and the Church today is overall at odds with the Law, is it possible that the church today is following in the traditions of the “**uninstructed,**” and “**unstable**” men that Kefa was writing about?

Is it perhaps possible to be obedient (and he was) and keep the Law, while still not being “**under the Law.**” Since Shaul was following Yeshua, perhaps it is!

Yeshua was sinless! He was according to the Scripture, “**tempted in all ways as we are, yet without sin** (Hebrews 4:15).” Since sin “**is the transgression of the Law** (1 John 3:4),” He obviously kept the Law perfectly. If the logical premise is that keeping the Law equals “legalism” then Yeshua was the perfect “legalist,” since He kept the Law as pertaining to an Israelite perfectly!

Sorry, I don’t think so! Then, I think we need to seek another answer!

So, when Shaul speaks disparagingly of being “*hupo nomos*” – “**under the law**,” could he not be speaking of “*legalism*” instead of being in obedience to the Laws and commandments of God due to a heart-felt love relationship with Him? There exists a big distinction here, yet Shaul has no way to differentiate between them in “Koine” (“Common”) Greek. This is why it is so dangerous to solely use Shaul’s writings alone in justifying the flaunting, negating, or ignoring of God’s Laws.

It is extremely important to note that there is *NO* separate word in First Century Greek to distinguish between “Law” and “legalism.” Both “Law” and “legalism” use the *same* word in Koine Greek; “*nomos*.”

[...] it will be well to bear in mind the fact (which, so far as we know, had not received attention before it was noted in [Cranfield’s article] the Scottish Journal of Theology, Volume 17, 1964, p.55) that the Greek language of Paul’s day possessed no word-group corresponding to our ‘legalism,’ ‘legalist’ and ‘legalistic.’ This means that he lacked a convenient terminology for expressing a vital distinction, and so was surely seriously hampered in the work of clarifying the Christian position with regard to the law. In view of this, we should always, we think, be ready to reckon with the possibility that Pauline statements which at first sight seem to disparage the law, were really directed not against the law itself but against that understanding and misuse of it for which we now have a convenient terminology. In this very difficult terrain, Paul was pioneering. If we make allowances for these circumstances, we shall not be so easily baffled or misled by a certain

impreciseness of statement which we shall sometimes encounter.³¹

That being the case, when Shaul speaks negatively of the “*Law*,” could he not just as well be speaking negatively about “legalism” which would be *more appropriate*? Legalism is the observance of the Law to seek justification or salvation by it [which can never happen], or as defined by *THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE JEWISH RELIGION*:

The preference of legal rules and norms above moral and spiritual values.³²

If we seek to gain our salvation or merit through the keeping of the Law, we are keeping it out of a sense of legalism. This is, I believe, what Shaul was warning his Gentile readers against. He was *not* telling them *not* to observe the Law.

Further confirmation of this is that the First Council of what is now called the church decided that though new Gentile believers need not be circumcised, nor follow the Law to be saved, every Sabbath they would hear Moses (Law) in the synagogues on the Sabbath (Acts 15:21).

The implication? Gentile believers would hear Moses, and learn that God wants not hearers only, but doers. The end result: they would become *doers* of Moses.

“Moses” (Law) doesn’t save a person. It doesn’t give a person more “brownie points” in his or her relationship to God. But it DOES show a living relationship between a saved person and the

³¹ *THE INTERNATIONAL CRITICAL COMMENTARY, ROMANS*, Copyright 1979, C.E.B. Cranfield, page 853

³² *THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF THE JEWISH RELIGION*, Edited by Dr. R.J. Zwi Werblowsky and Dr. Geoffrey Wigoder, Copyright 1986 by ADAMA BOOKS page 236

God that saved them. It SANCTIFIES that person, making them more and more like the holy God they follow!

Face it: *Many* of Shaul's epistles contain portions of the Law that address problems or issues that they were dealing with. Shaul does not do away with the Law, rather, he affirms it in every epistle!

He says, "...**do we nullify the Law because of our faith? No, we establish it...**" (Romans 3:31).

God, in many places tells us to "**love Him and keep His commandments.**"

Even Yeshua, God's Son says this (John 14:15)!

Somehow, we isolate through our Greek allegorical reasoning our "*love*" for God from our *obedience* to Him. We think that it is possible to truly love Him and ignore His commandments!

However, according to Him, that is *not* truly "loving" Him! *Loving* God and *obedience* to Him are *part and parcel* of the same expression of faith. Faith and works together are essential elements to a living, dynamic relationship with God.

Once again, it was determined by the first council in Jerusalem that Gentiles upon coming to a saving faith would, "**hear Moses**" in the "**synagogues**" "**in every city**" "**every Sabbath**" (Acts 15:21).

According to that Council Moses *IS* important in a believer's life, to *both* Jew and non-Jew!

Chapter Six – The Supremacy of Moses



That Moses is paramount to these Messianic Jewish leaders and is brought into the equation for non-Jewish believers in Yeshua is a statement we must not minimize.

What does this mean to the non-Jewish believer?

If Moses is to be heard by the non-Jewish believer in the synagogue every Sabbath, does that mean that the non-Jew is to ignore him because he does not apply to them? Today, in many Messianic congregations, this is being told to the non-Jewish believer!

No, I don't think so! I believe this statement is here because Torah does apply to the non-Jewish believer in Yeshua! I believe that the Messianic Jewish leaders were applying the same principle as Hillel, when a potential convert to Judaism said he would convert to Judaism if Hillel could give him the whole Torah while he was standing on one foot:

The Talmud in tractate *Shabbos 31a* relates the following well-known story of Hillel:

"On another occasion it happened that a certain heathen came before Shammai and said to him, "Make me a proselyte, on the condition that you teach me the whole Torah while I stand on one foot." Thereupon he chased him away with the builder's cubit that was in his hand. When he came before Hillel, (he also asked Hillel to teach him the entire Torah while standing on one foot)

Hillel replied, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor: that is the whole Torah while the rest is commentary; go and learn it."

What the Jerusalem Council did was to give the first things that a non-Jew had to do once saved. Though these new non-Jewish believers were saved by faith (as were Jewish believers) and not by Torah keeping (circumcision), there WERE things that had to be immediately addressed by these non-Jewish believers, else they would be an offense, not only to their Jewish believing family, but also to God!

Remember, these non-Jews were pagans prior to entering this new faith. Their pagan faith had practices that were forbidden by Torah:

Temple prostitutes (fornication), drinking of blood, pagan sacrifices that were prohibited. These things had to immediately cease in the life of these new believers!

So came the injunction by the Council of "the four." Beyond that, is there any other guidance to holy and sanctified behavior to these new believers? Moses! The Torah!

I have to express a debt of gratitude here for the ministry of *First Fruits of Zion* for bringing this to my attention at their "*Trembling at the Word*" seminar.

Sometimes I find myself at a loss of words to express a concept from Scripture. Though I have understood for quite some time that the Torah was foundational to all Scripture that followed after it, I could not put words to it in quite the same way until I heard it expressed in this way at the seminar. That is: "the Supremacy of Moses."

This concept was introduced at the seminar from the passage that speaks of the time that Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses after he married a Cushite woman.

After all, they said, “Aren’t we prophets, too? Hasn’t God spoken to us as well?” Well, God became very angry at them and spoke to them (Numbers 12) saying:

⁶ He said, "Hear now My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, shall make Myself known to him in a vision. I shall speak with him in a dream. ⁷ "Not so, with My servant Moses, He is faithful in all My household; ⁸ With him I speak mouth to mouth, even openly, and not in dark sayings, And he beholds the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant, against Moses?"

In other words, God said that *all* other prophets following Moses (except, of course, Yeshua) would be spoken to in visions and dreams. *Only* with Moses did God speak “**mouth to mouth,**” meaning He spoke to him *exactly* what He wanted him to say.

This means that Moses (Torah) is foundational to ALL other Scripture that follows him, since to no other prophet did God speak face-to-face. All other words from God through anyone else would be lesser in revelatory power. Only Yeshua, who would be a prophet like unto Moses is greater in revelatory power.

Torah is the foundation for all the rest of the Scriptures. If any book of Scripture—or any prophecy of any prophet—did not agree with Torah, (i.e. the words of God through His servant Moses), then there would be a serious problem. That particular writing could not be canonized or considered Scripture. This has

implications for how we understand the New Testament (Apostolic Scriptures). If we take verses from an epistle Paul wrote to a specific congregation and then use those few verses to nullify the Torah, we have things backwards and upside down! Paul would be shocked. Paul does not trump Moses; he quotes him and relies on Torah for proof-texts.³³

In conclusion, Moses (Torah) is *superior* to all other prophets, save Yeshua Himself. No other prophet after Moses spoke with God face-to-face as did Moses (Deuteronomy 34:10) – and no other prophet ever would – save Yeshua, who IS the Messiah, God Incarnate. Apart from the words and example of Yeshua, no other words are its superior: not Shaul’s epistles, nor Kefa’s, and none others’. *All* other prophets and writers of Scripture were compared with the Torah and if they didn’t measure up – they were thrown out.

Shaul is *inferior* to Moses (since he is tested by him, Acts 17:10-11). NONE of Shaul’s writings would ever have stood as Scripture *unless* they withstood the test of comparison with Moses. To place Shaul’s (or any others’) writings *above* the Torah is treading on dangerous ground. Torah tests *everything* that *follows* it: not the reverse. Shaul does not test Moses; Moses tests Shaul!

So, if it looks as though Shaul seems to be against the Torah, or is doing away with the Torah, or is nullifying even the smallest part of the Torah, we’d *better* start looking for another explanation. [Shaul confirms under oath that he isn’t doing that: Acts 24:14.] Therefore, those who say he *is* doing so fall into the category that Kefa describes in 2 Peter 3:15-16; they are distorting the writings of Shaul, as they do the rest of Scripture.

³³ First Fruits of Zion, Copyright 2004, <http://www.ffoz.org/> USED BY PERMISSION

Even more frightening: are they not guilty of doing the *very* thing that Miriam and Aaron were doing when they speak against the Torah: speaking against Moses? Should they not also fear, for God could say to them: **“Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant, against Moses?”**

Finally, affirmed the perpetuity of Moses and the Prophets in Matthew 5: 17-19, saying that until heaven and earth pass away, not one jot or tittle shall pass from the Law or the Prophets. He said that those who annul even the least of the commandments found therein are least in the kingdom of heaven. They are not lost, they are least.

Chapter Seven - Walking Like the Messiah/Christ

The question of how we should walk as believers in Him, whether we are Jewish or non-Jewish, goes to the essence of what He was and what we should be: holy. The answer to the question speaks to us and says:

The one who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same manner as he walked (1 John 2:6)

We need to realize that as believers in Him, we are to walk as He walked. Not only must we walk His walk in the more obvious ways, but we must learn to walk His walk in those less obvious ways which are just as important to holy living. If we don't, we are making the Messiah a partaker in our sin.

When we became believers in the Lord, we became one spirit with Him. Our body members became members of the Messiah and His Holy Spirit dwells in us.

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Messiah? Shall I then take away the members of Messiah and make them members of a harlot? May it never be!

Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. (1 Corinthians 6:15, 19)

When we sin, He is in us; He is partaking with us: we are defiling His temple. I am sure He doesn't like that, though He realizes as

believers we will sin. We often ignorantly sin because we don't know the Scriptures as we ought or were mis-told.

Sometimes, we do it deliberately; even though we know what the Scripture says. But when we truly repent of our sin (turn around from our sin), ask forgiveness for our sin and choose to do what is right, God will forgive us and heal us.

Since He dwells in us, the Lord expects us to live holy lives. We should *care* what we do with Him living inside of us. We should ask the question "WWJD?" (What Would Jesus (Yeshua) Do?) and search the Scriptures diligently to find the answer. To do that, we must put human tradition and doctrine aside in favor of the Scripture's position and seek to walk as He walked.

That is true discipleship.

What is true discipleship??? It would probably be easier and more to the point to say first what it is *not*: it is **NOT** a belief system. It is *not* knowing correct theology, doctrine, or teaching. It is not being in the right denomination and it most certainly is not correct thinking alone.

The root word of discipleship is discipline. Discipline means to "train by instruction and practice; especially to teach self-control." It sometimes means, "to punish." Discipline is instruction having for its aim to form the student to proper conduct and action. To subject to discipline means to instruct, educate, train, more especially, to train to habits of order and subordination, to bring under control.

Proverbs 16:32 says:

**He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty,
And he who rules his spirit, than he who captures a
city.**

In other words, it is harder to control one's own temperament and spirit than it is to capture a city. We're talking about character here and character is learned, not taught. One can be taught warfare and how to capture a city. There is a science of war and that can be taught.

One learns how to be disciplined. To be like his teacher, a disciple subjects himself to the discipline of his teacher. So when the teacher says, "Come," he comes. When the teacher says, "Go," he goes. When the teacher says, "Do this," the disciple does it.

It is through the training of the Master that the disciple will be equipped to deal with any situation that comes his way, because the disciple learns how to be like the Master. To obtain the Hebraic understanding of what it means to be a *talmid*, or disciple, we need to look to Hebraic sources – not to Greek ones.

When the Greek-thinking Early Church Fathers came into the faith of Yeshua, they replaced the Hebraic understanding of many biblical concepts with Greek ones. That is a given. It's what they knew and brought with them. It was simpler for them to go along with what they were raised in instead of adopting a method of thinking foreign to them.

So, they brought with them the Greek understanding of discipleship – and their concept is radically different than the Hebraic, or biblical, understanding of the term – and the implications of their understanding affects the church to this very day.

Call to Discipleship

In Matthew 28, Yeshua says:

¹⁸ ... "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

This is taken by many believers today as to mean that we must make converts to Yeshua. So, we have “Revivals” where evangelists come and preach the salvation message in the hopes that some will become “saved” in so hearing the message. We have “crusades,” missionary trips, etc., for the same reason. The emphasis is more on hearing the Word and coming to a correct belief system, i.e., believing that God exists and in the atoning sacrifice of on one’s behalf.

Don’t get me wrong: All these are *essential parts* of the call to Discipleship, but the *end result* of the call is what I’m focusing on here in this Chapter and I’ll get to it right away and then explain.

The Greek form of discipleship focuses on correct thinking; a correct belief system. The Hebraic focuses on correct living – living like the Master, and thinking like the Master, of course, but more than that:

It means *walking* like the Master, *talking* like the Master, *doing* what the Master did in *all* aspects of his life!

The differing *results* of the two understandings of discipleship are as different as night and day and is reflective of the differences in the “world-views” of the two groups of people.

World Views in Contrast

A “world-view” is the framework through which an individual interprets the world and interacts in it. The system of beliefs of an individual determines how they approach and judge things that they encounter, whether in the form of beliefs, knowledge, or experiences.

We all have a “world-view” which begins to be taught to us the moment we are born into the world. Our “world-views” stemming from our respective cultures have significant impact upon our lives and how we live them out.

For instance, the differences we have in various world-views affects even our education models (how we teach):

- How we think reflects how we teach.
- What we think determines how we live.

The Greek model of the relationship between a teacher and his disciple requires no examination of the life of either the teacher or the disciple, for the method of learning is entirely mental. Greek teachers are teaching their students how to think and manipulate abstract ideas. The Greek teacher or disciple-maker is not teaching the student how to live. Therefore, the place of learning is within the four walls of the academy.

For example, my Algebra teacher – in Greek thinking – could live a life as a licentious man: he could steal, lie, or live a totally vile lifestyle. Yet, *how* he lives his life is *not* the focus of that which we learn from him. As long as he is competent in teaching algebra, and we learn algebra *from* him, then that is all that is required we learn *of* him. So if we can emulate him in his

manipulation of algebraic equations and come to the same answer as he did, we pass the course of study.

In contrast, the central method of Hebrew discipleship is the examination of the *life* of the teacher. The subject of study is the *life* of the teacher. The lesson to be learned by the student is how to *live* like the teacher. Therefore, while the Greeks learn indoors, seated in chairs and talking about ideas, the Hebrews live life together and examine each others behaviors.

To pass an examination in the Greek educational system is to articulate a certain system of ideas or to prove that one can manipulate ideas like the teacher. To pass an examination in Hebrew discipleship, the student must show he can *do* what the teacher *does*. The rabbis examined their disciples by sending them out to do as they did. Yeshua, the Great Rabbi, was no different.

The Greeks, in the last analysis, were thinkers rather than doers. In time, the Greek world view came to be based on the intellect more than it was on action. To the Greek mind, it is important to have correct thinking (doctrine). Action was not *necessarily* the most important result.

The Hebrews, by contrast, placed more importance in taking the thoughts of the teacher and living them out, rather than *merely* taking thoughts of the teacher and manipulating them. The Hebraic understanding of discipleship is that the disciple needs to *DO* what his teacher *DID*!

It goes without saying that the Hebraic understanding of discipleship takes a greater investment of time and energy on behalf of the teacher than does the Greek understanding. To the Hebrew, this is a life-time commitment. So the teacher invests his time with his disciples and his disciples invest their lives with their teacher. This is the methodology used with His own disciples.

Yeshua calls His disciples to, "Follow Me" (Matthew 4:19, 9:9, 16:24, 19:21; John 10:4, 12:26) and they drop everything to follow Him. By the Gospel accounts we see that they drop their livelihood, they leave their families, and they even lose value over their own lives to follow that of the master!

In Hebrew thought, the disciple is not greater than his teacher; he is an imitation of his teacher! So, Shaul can say to his Gentile readers in 1 Corinthians 4:16, 11:1, **"Imitate me" "as I imitate Messiah."** When people see him walk, they see the teacher walk!

So when people see Shaul's disciples' walk, they see Shaul's walk and when they see Shaul's walk, they see Shaul's Master, Yeshua, walk!

That's what true discipleship is: *walking* like the Master! It entails not just correct thought, but correct *living*! It means asking the "WWJD?" question and answering it with the only system used to walk righteously: Torah, God's commandments.

¹ My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Christ the righteous; ² and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of* the whole world. ³ By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. ⁴ The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; ⁵ but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: ⁶ the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

1 John 2

Are you a true disciple of Yeshua? Then you need to walk like He walked!

Chapter Eight – Conclusion

But with one exception, that is circumcision, it appears that the Torah commandments apply to non-Jews. It is not so much that Shaul is against circumcision itself, for he asks in Romans 3:1-2:

“Then what advantage has the Jew? What is the value of being circumcised? Much in every way...”

The fact that he had Timothy circumcised shows his regard for even this commandment.

What the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 did was to show that circumcision (or any other Torah commandment) does not save an individual. The Judaizers from Jerusalem came down and opened the need for the council by saying to the non-Jew, “You can’t be saved unless you are circumcised according to Moses” (Acts 15:1).

That is the issue and for a non-Jew to seek this for any purpose of works-righteousness or any other purpose is missing the point – Abraham was made righteous by his faith, not by circumcision (Romans 4). Yet, James contrasts this faith only approach with Abrahams salvation by his works (James 2:18-26).

I believe we miss the point when we look at the issue from either one or the other perspective. On the one-hand, with the faith-only approach you have “easy believism” and on the other hand, with the works-righteousness approach, you have legalism.

Neither is correct in and of itself. BOTH must balance out the other.

History shows that the Early Church during the time of the Apostles exhibited the faith/works combination needed in the Body of Messiah today.

The winking at non-Jewish Christian non-observance of Biblical practice in favor of non-Biblical pagan-originated observance by some Messianic Jews is appalling and sad.

I do not believe that we can excuse this in the Apostolic Writings due to a non-Jewish believers' ignorance.