

Understanding Paul

There is no other writer who had greater influence in the separation of Jews and Christians and Christians and the Law of Moses than the Apostle Paul. Paul's discourse on the law in Romans and Galatians has created the doctrine that Christ replaced the law. And Paul's discourse about Hagar and Sarah in Galatians 4:21-31 directly led to doctrines of replacement theology of the Jews by the Christians.

So, it is important to understand Paul and to understand the law. The first step in understanding Paul is understanding to whom he is speaking and at what time. He is speaking to Gentiles in Romans and Galatians, young Christians who need guidance and growth. And he speaks about the law and about Israelites as they existed at that time. So, for example in Romans 10 Paul says that the Israelites are not saved:

Romans 10:1-5 Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. Moses writes about the righteousness that is by the law: The person who does these things will live by them."

First, what is Paul's definition of saved in this passage. Is he saying that the Israelites are no longer God's people? No, he is saying they are not saved by Jesus. That they are still God's people is made clear in Paul's discussion of grafting in the wild branches to the olive root (Romans 11:11-24). But he is saying that the Israelites have transgressed, and because of this salvation has come to the Gentiles (Romans 11:11).

The truth of the matter is that the Israelites are under God's old Covenant, the Law of Moses. And Jesus is the Law of Moses (John 1:1; John 1:14). Because of this the Israelites have access to eternal life if they follow the commandments of the law of Moses.

Leviticus 18:5 Keep my decrees and laws, for the person who obeys them will live by them. I am the Lord.

This is verified by Paul in Romans 10:5 which we quoted above, 'The person who does these things will live by them.' But, under the old Covenant, the Law of Moses, with transgression of the law comes God's judgement and curse which also is part of the law (Leviticus 26:14-45). Jesus who is the Word of God and the Living Torah pronounced judgement on Israel in Luke 19:

Luke 19:41-44 As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring peace – but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

As Paul said in the verse quoted above, " Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness." (Romans 10:3). By adding so many commandments to the Law of Moses the Sanhedrin in effect were saying that they could speak for God and define righteousness and by so doing became blind to the fact that the Messiah had actually come from God to establish the prophesied and long-awaited New Covenant. For this sin the tribes of Judah

and Benjamin were once again to be removed from the Land and scattered amongst the nations until 1948.

They are returned in 1948 because in the Law of Moses under the old Covenant God says:

Leviticus 26:44,45 Yet in spite of this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them or abhor them so as to destroy them completely, breaking my covenant with them. I am the Lord their God. But for their sake I will remember the covenant with their ancestors whom I brought out of Egypt in the sight of the nations to be their God. I am the Lord.

And so, in 1948 God restored Israel as a nation and God always has and will continue to honor his old Covenant with the Jews. Christians do not replace the Jews but have been grafted in amongst them.

Romans 11:17,18 If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not consider yourself to be superior to those other branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.

So, when Paul was speaking in Romans and Galatians about the Israelites in language that seemed like the Jews were condemned it is because he was speaking about a people who had just been judged by Jesus Christ and were about to be, in Paul's near future, (in 70 A.D.) sacked, destroyed, and dispersed amongst the nations. Yes, they were condemned. By the old Covenant, and according to the old Covenant. But also, according to the old Covenant, God remembers His people forever and will always restore them.

We must also remember that God will keep all of his promises. And God promises that the days are coming when all the people of Israel and all the people of Judah will know him through the New Covenant which is Jesus Christ (Jeremiah 31:31-34). With no other nation on earth has God made that promise that all of them will know him through Christ one day.

Jeremiah 31:36 "Only if these decrees vanish from my sight," declares the Lord, "will Israel ever cease being a nation before me."

So, as Paul makes clear in Galatians Christians are saved and have received the Spirit under the New Covenant which is Jesus Christ. The New Covenant where Jesus writes the law on our hearts and in our minds (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Paul calls the New Covenant Grace but Jesus himself made it clear who he was:

Luke 22:20 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

So, we have the old Covenant the Law of Moses the written Word of God who is also Jesus. And we have the New Covenant the law written on our hearts and minds by Jesus. Both covenants exist side by side in the world today. We see the Jewish nation restored in Israel through miracles by God and kept in existence by God's continued help and support. And we see Christians that have taken God's Word to the ends of the earth and translated the Bible into every tongue through miracles by God and kept by God's continued help and support.

God's Word in our hearts cannot abolish the law of the Old Testament since God's Word is the Law. It is simply in our hearts now. It is wrong for Christians to ignore the Torah and ignore the festivals and holidays that God has established since each of them has meaning and a purpose that God wishes us to be involved with.

There is a day coming when all of God's people will be under the New Covenant. But that day will not come until Jesus has fulfilled all of the Law of Moses in the old Covenant. When Jesus went to Nazareth on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue and stood up to read;

Luke 4:17-21 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Jesus fulfilled part of the law and the prophets when he walked the earth. But why was everyone looking at him? Because he had stopped reading in the middle of a verse. In the middle of a sentence. Let's read what Jesus has yet to fulfill;

Isaiah 61:2-7 *to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor* and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of joy instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of splendor. They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations. Strangers will shepherd your flocks; foreigners will work your fields and vineyards. And you will be called priests of the Lord, you will be named ministers of our God. You will feed on the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast. Instead of your shame you will receive a double portion, and instead of disgrace you will rejoice in your inheritance. And so you will inherit a double portion in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours.

Until Jesus returns as the Messiah on the day of vengeance of our God, and restores order to the land, the law and prophets haven't been fulfilled and the old Covenant will still be in effect. But after that we will all have the New Covenant and the Millennium reign of Christ.

Paul never intended to imply that Christians replaced the Jewish people. Nor did Paul intend to imply that Jesus replaced the law. Jesus came to fulfill the old Covenant law and establish a New Covenant law written on our hearts and minds.

God's Word became His law and God's Word became the Savior of the whole world.

John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."

Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through him. He is the Living Torah and the Word of God, He is the Law of Moses and was the way to the Father for the Jews at Mt. Sinai. Now, he is available to the whole world as the Living Torah and through the New Covenant will save the world by writing his Torah on our hearts and minds.

May Yeshua HaMashiah keep your hearts and minds,

A Voice in The Wilderness