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## HE WEPT

*Luke 19:41 (KJ2000) And when he came near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,*

As Jesus entered Jerusalem, He knew what blessings were available to the people and that they had not obtained those blessings. He wept not only because they had not accessed that which was available, but He wept over what they were going to reap because they would not repent. He observed. He wept.

He wept then, I believe He weeps now. Then it was the people in Jerusalem, for He knew if the people would but draw near to God, they would not be under the torment and oppression of that time and they could be spared the torment and oppression that was sure to come. He knew they could only draw near to God by the correct observance of the instructions God had given. He knew the people could not observe the instructions correctly unless they practiced repentance in humble reverence -- unless they saw each observation as an opportunity.

Then it was Jerusalem. Now it is the people in His church. If the people of today's church would but draw near God by the correct observance of the instructions God has given (practicing observance in humble reverence), they would not be under the torment and oppression they endure today and they would be spared the torment and oppression that is sure to come.

You may find the writings that follow to be controversial. That notwithstanding, consider what is presented carefully and prayerfully. Meditate upon it as Yakov (Jacob) meditated upon the dream of Yoseph (Joseph) and Mary considered the words of a young Yeshua (Jesus).

Yakov, Yosheph , Yeshua? This is symbolic of the controversy that will be addressed herein. By our traditions we nullify the Word of God. *Matthew 15:6 (KJ2000) .... Thus have you made the commandment of God void by your tradition.* Study any credible source on linguistics. **There was not a language on earth that contained or used a "J" until 1,500 years after the death of Christ.** English speaking Christians have traditionally called the Christ by the name of Jesus for at least the last two hundred years. It has become such a tradition that people are actually offended when others use the proper Hebrew name of our Lord and Savior -- Yeshua (which in Hebrew means "the salvation of God or God's salvation"). In Greek translations, the Messiah (or Christ) is written as "Iesous". "Iesous" was the transliteration the writers assigned for the Hebrew name Yeshua. Somewhere "Iesous" was changed to "Jesus". The tradition is so ingrained that most Christians never even think of asking where the name "Jesus" comes from.

There is a twofold reason for discovering the difference between God's Word and man's tradition:

- Enable God's people to experience the full abundance God intended to bless them with.
- Increase the salvation harvest for the kingdom of God.

Stated another way -- to serve God's purpose, to please God and bless other people.

If in reading that which follows you find yourself convicted or maybe feeling guilty, then consider the following:

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- Conviction is by the Holy Spirit,
- God is not interested in you being guilty but being changed,
- Satan would like to transfer conviction to guilt, shame, condemnation and maybe even anger,

The purpose of this writing is to bring blessing not condemnation.

### Ground Rules:

There are some basic ground rules to be established before you will be able to take this writing and the concepts proposed herein seriously,

1. The Bible is the infallible Word of God written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.
2. God is the same yesterday today and forever. He is not a man that He should change.
3. God is a covenant-keeping God. If He makes a promise, He will not retract it. His eternal promises are just that, eternal -- they are promises that He will honor forever -- eternally.
4. There are no contradictions in God's Word. If we find passages that appear to contradict, we have a lack of proper understanding.
5. Two or more witnesses are required to establish a truth. A minimum of two witnesses are required. If we find a scripture that appears to refute many other scriptures, this condition means we have a lack of full understanding. If we understand scripture correctly, it will align perfectly.
6. If there are two very plausible interpretations of scripture, the one that allows all of scripture to come into agreement is the more correct one.
7. Revelation in an area can only continue as long as a person is willing to seek the Holy Spirit and at least be willing to question if what one understands in that area is based on the traditions of men or the Word of God. If one stops considering new understanding, praying and meditating on its validity, being open to change if firmly convicted, then revelation will cease (at least in that area) and traditions then rule.
8. Godly (God fearing) men who continually receive revelation and do great work in and for the kingdom of God can (and most likely do) have blind spots in their understanding because of traditions of men. Only true humility can treat this affliction.

If you find these ground rules to be unacceptable as a basis for understanding, then stop reading now and put this writing away. Better yet, give it to someone you love who might profit from being able to live life more abundantly.

I personally believe YHWH has never said "Oops." *Isaiah 46:9-10 (KJ2000) Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, **Declaring the end from the beginning**, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:*

God knew what he was doing before He created the earth. He knew the choices that men would make and He already had the plan of redemption formed. Just try to imagine the number in that iterative logistical program. It is a very humbling to understand how limited man's capacity for understanding is in respect to the ability of God. In His redemptive plan, God provided a path that man might not only have life but that we could have an abundant life if man was willing to live under the covering of God.

## Abundant Life

*John 10:10 (KJ2000) The thief comes not, but to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

What is abundant life? Scripture teaches that we should know and understand there will be trouble in the life of the believer. Scripture also teaches that applying the proper principal to the problem produces the promised provision. I believe that the length of time that the believer stays in the problem is dependent on how long he or she takes between the time the problem arises and the time the believer applies the proper principal to the problem. There are scriptures that support that belief. Consider Job. His deliverance from torment did not come until he admitted he had a problem and turned from it. However, once Job turned from his problem and applied the godly principal, he promptly received the promised provision (refer to Leviticus 26: 14-46). If you desire to research this belief, consider the following Nu 5:7; De 4:29-31; 30:1-3; Jos 7:19; 1Ki 8:33-36,47; Ne 9:2-5; Job 33:27-28; Ps 32:5; Pr 28:13; Jer 31:18-20; Eze 36:31; Da 9:3-20; Ho 5:15; 6:1-2; Lu 15:18-19; 1Jo 1:8-10.

Why then do so many believers in our congregations today live in problems that appear to not only be getting worse within their own lives but, progressively worse with each generation?

*Mark 7:13 (KJ2000) Making the word of God of no effect through your tradition, which you have delivered: and many such things do you.*

*Hosea 4:6 (KJ2000) My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you, that you shall be no priest to me: because you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children*

I believe these two scriptures lay the foundation to understanding why we see the decay of abundant life in our society, our community, and even more importantly, our churches, ourselves - our families.

If our traditions have nullified the Word of God, shouldn't we be trying to determine what is God's Word - - - - and what is just our tradition?

I look at the church as a whole today and the rate of disease, poverty/indebtedness, divorce, etc. statistically is no different than that of the world. When the church is statistically no different than the world, what causes the world to desire what we (the church) have? Not only do the church members not live in the blessing (abundant life) they should have, our ineffective witness/testimony cheats the Kingdom of God of the testimony on earth that would bring in an abundant harvest. Refer to Isaiah 43:7-11, God has called, even created, the believer to glorify Him before the nations: that the blind would see and the deaf that would hear and would recognize that there is but only one God and that the God of Israel is the only source of salvation. What poor soul is repelled instead of attracted to what he sees in the church?

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*Ezekiel 33:6 (KJ2000) But if the watchman sees the sword come, and blows not the trumpet, and the people are not warned; if the sword comes, and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand.*

Finally, I am compelled to put these convictions down so they may be shared, for I do not want your blood on my hands. More importantly, I desire that you receive the full blessing God has intended for you.

With God-instilled compassion, I desire to see everyone live in abundance and free of torment. Recognizing that all men are created in the likeness of God, is it not profaning the Name to take it lightly, or even to take the torment of one made in God's likeness lightly?

If you are willing to continue, I ask you join me in prayer.

Father God, we recognize you as God Almighty, El Shaddi, who says and does, who has known the end from the beginning, who is never surprised and orchestrates all things to occur in Your appointed time. You have told us that if we ask anything according to Your will, You will hear us and what You hear, You will do. You have also told us that the things which are not to be known remain hidden, but all that *is* to be revealed has been written. You tell us to study Your Word and meditate upon it that the iniquity within us would be revealed and we might not sin against You. Father God, I ask that You would open the gates of my heart, remove my stiff-necked attitude, break man's traditions in me, and reveal Your Truth to me. In the name of my Lord and Savior, Yeshua (Jesus), I pray, Amen.

It may seem awkward to use the name Yeshua instead of Jesus. I pray that I do not offend but it is the name I will use at different times throughout the text. I also pray that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Yacov will open your mind to reading and hearing what is contained. I pray it will benefit you in your relationship as you walk with God, that not only you might have life but that you have it more abundantly. I pray that God reveal how to recognize that every choice we make is a choice between life and death, how to recognize which is life and which is death - - - - - that **you** may enjoy life.

## **To Set the Captives Free**

Since the fall of man, mankind in his flesh has been corrupted by sin.

*Romans 5:12 Therefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*

We are therefore sold to sin and death as long as we dwell in our flesh. But, through redemption in the Lord and Savior, Yeshua, we can be freed.

*John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. 2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Exodus 34:6-7 (KJ2000) And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful*

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*and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation.*

Now, if God is never changing, should we not believe on His promises?

*Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: has he said, and shall he not do it? or has he spoken, and shall he not make it good?*

*1Samuel 15:29; Psalms 89:35; Habakkuk 2:3; Malachi 3:6; Luke 21:33; Romans 11:29; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18; James 1:17*

One of the promises that God made was that if we were obedient, we would not suffer the diseases of the world or if we did, the believer could expect healing.

*Exodus 15:26 (KJ2000) And said, If you will diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD your God, and will do that which is right in his sight, and will give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon you, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that heals you.*

(De 7:15; 28:60, Mark 16:18, Isaiah 53:5, 1Pe 2:24, James 5:15).

Should we not be expecting the healing scripture promises? I believe we should.

*Mark 16:18 They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*

*James 5:14-15 Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall deliver the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*

*Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.*

And, *Romans 14:23 ... for whatever is not of faith is sin.*

However when I look across the church body, there is the same percentage of divorce, cancer, colds, flu, and social maladies and addictions as there is in the world. We, the church, look just like the world.

Yeshua came to heal and to make free

*Luke 4:16-21 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach*

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*deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*

*John 8:36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.*

If Yeshua came to make us free, why are we not free? Consider that we as believers must die to the old before we can truly be born to the new.

*Matthew 9:16 No man puts a piece of new cloth onto an old garment, for that which is put on to fill it up takes from the garment, and the tear is made worse.*

*James 4:4 You adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever, therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. 1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.*

*(Ro 13:14; 1Co 10:6; Ga 5:17,24; Eph 2:3; Tit 2:12; 3:3; 1Pe 2:11; 4:2-3.)*

If we are the same as the world how then can we be born anew. If we are not transformed, we will remain in the old. If we really desire to walk in the power of God for the glory of God, then we, as believers, must be willing to abandon that which does not agree with the Word of God regardless of what we fear it may cost us.

## Come Let Us Reason Together

**Did Yeshua and the disciples teach from the scriptures?** Here are just a few New Testament references to establish the issue: Mt 21:42; 22:29; 26:54,56; Mr 12:24; 14:49; Lu 24:27,32,45; Joh 5:39; Ac 17:2,11; 18:24,28; Ro 1:2; 15:4; 16:26; 1Co 15:3-4; 2Ti 3:15; 2Pe 3:16

**What scriptures did they teach from? Did they use the New Testament or the Old Testament?** Since the New Testament scriptures were not canonized for a couple of hundred years after all of these men walked on earth no more, this is a settled issue.

**Did any of the Jewish people who knew the Old Testament believe from the scriptures that Yeshua was the Messiah?** Acts 17:12; Acts 21:20; Acts 28:24.

**Were any of these believers Torah observant?** Acts 21:20; Acts 22:12

**Was Paul of Tarsus Torah observant?** Acts 21:24; Acts 25:14; Acts 25:8; Acts 28:17

**Would these Jewish converts to the practice of first century Christianity know Deuteronomy chapter 13?**

**What does first century practice have to do with Christians today?**

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Would not the church of today be better served if it walked in the unity with God and each other that we read of in Acts where:

*Acts 2:41-47 (KJ2000) Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and distributed them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their food with gladness and sincerity of heart, Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as were being saved.*

### The Voluntary Servant

Now that we have established that Yeshua came to set the captives free, let us talk about who we serve and what it means to be a bondservant.

The following New Testament scriptures speak of the believer as a servant of Christ. In context and with reference to the Old Testament scriptures available at the time, we can only believe this to be in the likeness of the voluntary servant (sometimes referred to as bondservant). Ro 1:1; Ga 1:10; Col 4:12; Tit 1:1; Jas 1:1; 2Pe 1:1; Jude 1:1; Re 1:1.

*Exodus 21:2-6 (KJ2000) If you buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. If he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself: if he was married, then his wife shall go out with him. If his master has given him a wife, and she has borne him sons or daughters; the wife and her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself. **And if the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free:** Then his master shall bring him unto the judges; he shall also bring him to the door, or unto the door post; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him forever.*

*Deuteronomy 15:12-17 (KJ2000) And if your brother, a Hebrew man, or a Hebrew woman, be sold unto you, and serve you six years; then in the seventh year you shall let him go free from you. And when you send him out free from you, you shall not let him go away empty: You shall furnish him liberally out of your flock, and out of your threshing floor, and out of your winepress: of that with which the LORD your God has blessed you you shall give unto him. And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you: therefore I command you this thing today. And it shall be, **if he say unto you, I will not go away from you; because he loves you and your house, because he fares well with you;** Then you shall take an awl, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, **and he shall be your servant forever.** And also unto your maidservant you shall do likewise.*

What then does it mean to choose to be a servant rather than be turned loose and free? In context, we are no longer free to make choices on our own. Where we go; What we do; What we say should be reviewed and approved of by the Master prior to the action.

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Why after being set free from the captivity and slavery to the world, do we immediately place ourselves back into servitude? We should submit ourselves as bondservants to Christ out of love for the master who has not only forgiven a debt we had acquired and could never pay but paid the debt for us with His own blood. The great reward is not only do we gain a relationship of love, submitting ourselves to our Lord and Savior Yeshua the Messiah, as a bond servant under the covering of our Lord, not being free to go the way of our own understanding is for our own good.

*Matthew 12:43-45 (KJ2000) When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he said, I will return into my house from where I came out; and when he is come, he finds it empty, swept, and garnished. Then he goes, and takes with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.*

*Matthew 6:24 (KJ2000) No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*

Here is an area that seems be lacking in the teaching of typical Christian doctrine of today. People come to recognition of who and what they are. They come to repentance and say the words, accepting Christ as their Lord and Savior. But they are not taught the true understanding of Lordship and servant hood. Without the discipline and restraint of being a servant, they are free to do whatever they choose. They can, and at least in our western culture, most often do find themselves involved in the same practices and suffering the same or worse consequences as before their "salvation" experience. Is this not exactly what Yeshua was teaching in Matthew 12:43-45.

BOND'SERVANT, n. bond and servant. A slave; one who is subjected to the authority of another, or whose person and liberty are restrained.

From the "American Tract Society Dictionary" we quote the following:

At the establishment of the Hebrew commonwealth, involuntary servitude was everywhere prevalent; and so far as it existed among the Jews, Moses sought to bring it under the restrictions demanded by religion and humanity. The mildest form of bond-service was that of a Hebrew in the house of another Hebrew. He might become bound to this service in various ways, chiefly through poverty, Ex 21:7; Le 25:39-47; to acquit himself of a debt he could not otherwise pay, 2Ki 4:1; to make restitution for a theft, Ex 22:3; or to earn the price of his ransom for captivity among heathen. This form of service could not continue more than six or seven years; unless, when the Sabbatical year came round, the servant chose to remain permanently or until the Jubilee with his master, in token of which he suffered his ear to be bored before witnesses, Ex 21:2,6; 25:40.

Roman slavery, as it existed in the time of Christ, was unknown in the proper observance of Torah.

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In our western mindset, we think of slavery or servitude as an evil thing. But in God's kingdom with a benevolent master, slavery to serve the almighty (who is in control of all things) is where the blessings pour forth. It is the position that brings forth abundant life.

If you are not serving God, you are serving Satan. You may think you are serving your own desires. Thinking you can serve self is a deception -- a lie. You are serving the father of all lies. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Yacob is a covenant keeping God of Truth. Satan is the father of all lies.

## **GOD IS A COVENANT KEEPING GOD**

What does this mean to you? Hopefully it means you believe, with a faith that surpasses understanding, that when God makes a promise it will happen. God was in the beginning and He will be in the end. He does not change. The Father and the Son are one. The Son was with the Father in the beginning and He will be with the Father in the end and of either there is no end.

*Psalms 33:11 (KJ2000) The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.*

*Psalms 102:27 (KJ2000) But you are the same, and your years shall have no end.*

*Isaiah 41:4 (KJ2000) Who has performed and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last; I am he.*

*Isaiah 44:6 (KJ2000) Thus says the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God.*

*Isaiah 48:12 (KJ2000) Hearken unto me, O Jacob and Israel, my called; I am he; I am the first, I also am the last.*

*Malachi 3:6 (KJ2000) For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore you sons of Jacob are not consumed.*

*Romans 11:29 For the gifts and calling of God are unchangeable.*

*James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*

*Ezekiel 24:14 I the LORD have spoken it: it shall come to pass, and I will do it; I will not go back, neither will I spare, neither will I relent; according to your ways, and according to your doings, shall they judge you, says the Lord GOD.*

*Hebrews 1:12 (KJ2000) And as a mantle shall you fold them up, and they shall be changed: but you are the same, and your years shall not fail.*

*Hebrews 13:8 (KJ2000) Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever.*

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*John 8:58 (KJ2000) Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am.*

*John 1:1-2 (KJ2000) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. John 1:14 (KJ2000) And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

*Revelation 1:11 (KJ2000) Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What you see, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamum, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.*

*Revelation 22:13 (KJ2000) I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.*

Knowing that the Father and the Son (the Word) were in the beginning and that God changes not, the believer can be assured promises made in the beginning in the middle and in the end are good. God will never abandon his promises.

*Titus 1:2 In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the ages began;*

*Hebrews 6:18 That by two immutable things, in that it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:*

The scriptures have some interesting examples related to covenant. Let us consider the Book of Ester. ....Even though the wicked Haman had made an evil decree against the Jewish people and the king sought to provide the Jewish people protection, the king could not revoke the decree made in his name.

*Esther 8:8 (KJ2000) Write you also for the Jews, as it pleases you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for **the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse.***

When King Darius had been tricked by the men of the court to destroy Daniel, and the King wished to spare Daniel, the king was quite distressed because a decree in the name of the King could not be reversed.

*Daniel 6:15-16 (KJ2000) Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, **That no decree nor statute which the king establishes may be changed.** Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spoke and said unto Daniel, Your God whom you serve continually, he will deliver you.*

Scripture is full of examples such as the following:

*Isaiah 14:27 (KJ2000) For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who shall annul it? and his hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?*

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*Galatians 3:15 (KJ2000) Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannuls, or adds thereto.*

*Ge 9:16; 17:2,13; 21:27; Ex 6:4; 24:7; Le 24:8; Nu 18:19; 25:12; Jos 24:24; Jg 2:1; 1Sa 18:3; 2Sa 5:3; 7:12; 23:5; 1Ki 5:12; 20:34; 2Ki 11:17; 23:3; 1Ch 16:17; 2Ch 15:12; 23:16; Ne 10:29; Ps 89:28; 105:10; Isa 24:5; 54:10; 55:3; 59:21; Jer 31:31; 32:40; 33:20; 34:8; Eze 16:60; 37:26; Mt 26:28; Ro 11:27; Heb 8:8,10; 12:24; 13:20.*

Now consider the only way to repeal a covenant is if one of the parties dies.

*Romans 7:2-3 (KJ2000) For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he lives; but if the husband dies, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband lives, she is married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband dies, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she is married to another man.*

With this knowledge of covenants and the understanding of an unchanging God, what are we to understand the following to mean?

*Deuteronomy 30:16-20 (KJ2000) In that I command you this day to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that you may live and multiply: and the LORD your God shall bless you in the land where you go to possess it. But if your heart turns away, so that you will not hear, but shall be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I declare unto you this day, that you shall surely perish, and that you shall not prolong your days upon the land, which you pass over Jordan to go to possess. **I call heaven and earth as witness this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live:** That you may love the LORD your God, and that you may obey his voice, and that you may cleave unto him: for he is your life, and the length of your days: that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.*

*Luke 16:17 (KJ2000) And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one dot of the law to fail.*

This covenant with Heaven and Earth called to be the witness is for the promises of blessing and curses associated with choosing life or death.

*Deuteronomy 29:1 (KJ2000) These are the words of the covenant, which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.*

*Deuteronomy 29:9-15 (KJ2000) Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that you may prosper in all that you do. **You stand this day all of you before the LORD your God; your heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, Your little ones, your wives, and your stranger that is in your camp, from the hewer of your wood unto the drawer of your water:** That you should enter into covenant with the LORD your*

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*God, and into his oath, which the LORD your God makes with you this day: That he may establish you today for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto you a God, as he has said unto you, and as he has sworn unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. **Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; But with him that stands here with us this day before the LORD our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day:***

**This covenant is formed not only with the men of Israel but with the children, the wives, and the stranger that was willing to dwell with Israel.** It was made not only with and for those who were there that day but with those who were not there that day – **with future generations**, future generations that would be willing to dwell with Israel?

As believers grafted into the nation of Israel, could this be meant for the believer today? I submit, absolutely. Has the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Yacob ever made a covenant with the gentile nations? – check the scriptures, Not One, unless the gentile is willing to be grafted into the Children of Israel.

*Romans 11:17 (KJ2000) And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree;*

## God's Promises

Let us review what blessings were promised to those who were willing to keep God's instructions.

*Exodus 15:26 (KJ2000) And said, If you will diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD your God, and will do that which is right in his sight, and will give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon you, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that heals you.*

*Deuteronomy 28:1-14 (KJ2000) And it shall come to pass, if you shall hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD your God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command you this day, that the LORD your God will set you on high above all nations of the earth: **And all these blessings shall come on you, and overtake you, if you shall hearken unto the voice of the LORD your God.** Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of your body, and the fruit of your ground, and the fruit of your herds, the increase of your cattle, and the flocks of your sheep. Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading-trough. Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. The LORD shall cause your enemies that rise up against you to be defeated before your face: they shall come out against you one way, and flee before you seven ways. The LORD shall command the blessing upon you in your storehouses, and in all that you set your hand unto; and he shall bless you in the land which the LORD your God gives you. The LORD shall establish you a holy people unto himself, as he has sworn unto you, if you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and walk in his ways. And all people of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of you. And the*

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*LORD shall make you bountiful in goods, in the fruit of your body, and in the fruit of your cattle, and in the fruit of your ground, in the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers to give you. The LORD shall open unto you his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand: and you shall lend unto many nations, and you shall not borrow. And the LORD shall make you the head, and not the tail; and you shall be above only, and you shall not be beneath; if that you hearken unto the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day, to observe and to do them: And you shall not go aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.*

Is your thought, "that is all Old Testament; I live in the new covenant." You may want to read Jeremiah 31. Jeremiah is where the new covenant is described and defined. You may want to jump ahead to section titled T. We will address that latter but for now let us pursue a different discussion -- the scriptures.

Did Yeshua, Peter, Paul, James, John and Phillip teach from the scriptures? Of course they did. What scriptures do you think they used? The letters that make up the New Testament were not assembled or canonized until some three hundred years after the death of those men. The first century church, written of in Acts, only had one concept of the scriptures. The scriptures to them meant the Tanakh or Old Testament.

Since we have established what God promised, that God's promises are eternal and that God is unchanging (He will not back-out on a promise). We are set to ask the question of Why? The question is, "Why is the church of today not living head and shoulders above the world?"

Why do the Believers of today not have the promises that God promised in Deuteronomy? Let us not even discuss Deuteronomy. Why don't we see the signs and miracles following the believers around that we read about in the book of Acts? Do you know anyone whose shadow falls on people and they are healed. I haven't heard of the man whose handkerchiefs are gathered because the touch of the handkerchief would bring healing. What does scripture say regarding this?

*Acts 5:15 (KJ2000) So that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and pallets, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.*

*Acts 19:11-12 (KJ2000) And God did special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.*

*Mark 16:17-18 (KJ2000) And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*

*John 14:12-15 (KJ2000) Verily, verily, I say unto you, **He that believes on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do;** because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified*

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*in the Son. If you shall ask anything in my name, I will do it. **If you love me, keep my commandments.***

Do you believe on Yeshua? I pray you do, for belief in the Messiah is the source of everlasting life. Are you doing the miracles that Yeshua did, or even greater works? Do you believe that this promise of God is true? I must confess. I am not a conduit for works equal to those Yeshua accomplished and I am sure not being a conduit for greater things. In some manner, I have kept God's Word from being manifest through my life with poor choices counter to the Word of God.

If we have the authority to do greater works than our Lord and Savior Yeshua, why do the believers fall to sickness and disease, to financial bankruptcy and debt, to divorce and adultery, and to drugs and addiction? Could it be that we are deceived and do things that nullify the word of God? How could we do that?

*Matthew 15:6 (KJ2000) ....Thus have you made the commandment of God void by your tradition.*

*Mark 7:13 (KJ2000) Making the word of God of no effect through your tradition, which you have delivered: and many such things do you.*

It is through the traditions of men that we make the Word of God of no effect. Let us consider, who the Word of God is.

## **WHO IS THE WORD OF GOD?**

I love the way John states it when he writes:

*John 1:1-3 (KJ2000) In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. John 1:14 (KJ2000) And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

This takes on even deeper meaning when we read Genesis in the original Hebrew and notice there is an Aleph-Tav (two Hebrew letters, the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet) with the word Elohim (Hebrew for God) every time God speaks and creates. In Revelation, Yeshua is identified as the first and the last, the alpha and the omega (the first and last letter of the Greek alphabet). These are the translated equivalent of the Hebrew Aleph-Tav. John was stating the meaning of the unpronounced Aleph-Tav to the readers of the Tanakh. As God spoke, He created. Through His speech, God created. As John said, all things were created through Him -- God's Word, the first and the last, the Alpha and Omega, the Aleph-Tav, Yeshua. God spoke through the first and the last, the Aleph-Tav. The speech of God is recognized in scripture as the pre-incarnate Yeshua (Jesus). Just as interesting is the name of the book of Deuteronomy in Hebrew. It is Devarim which literally translated means -- "the Word repeated." Deuteronomy is a repeat of the instructions that Moses had received from God and Moses had relayed to the people. God spoke these instructions to Moses. Devarim is from the Hebrew

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root word devar which translates as the word. Since Hebrew is a pictograph language, we can examine the picture that devar illustrates. The three letters that spell devar in Hebrew are the dalet-vet-resh. The “Dalet-Vet-Resh” draws a picture which represents “the way to the first born son”. The Word is the way to the First Born Son. **What a coincidence.** The scriptures reveal the Word of God is the way to the First Born Son of God. Yeshua is the Word of God. When God speaks it is the Word of God. It is Yeshua.

### God Said It.

Now we are getting to the interesting part. When God speaks, it is Yeshua that is heard. When God spoke the instructions (the commandments) to Moses, Who was literally delivering the instructions? There can only be one logical answer -- Yeshua.

Wait, If:

- God is the same yesterday, today and forever,
- and Yeshua is the same yesterday, today and forever,
- and the Father and the Son are one,
- and the Word was God, and God's spoken Word is Yeshua
- and Moses heard the instructions from God;
- then Yeshua gave the instructions that are written in the first five books of the Bible to Moses.

Yeshua gave instructions enabling the Children of Israel to know how to choose between life and death. Those instructions were not only for them but for the stranger among them, for their generation and for future generations *Deuteronomy 30:16-20 (KJ2000)*. When you go back and read the instructions, they were perpetual covenants and eternal decrees for all their generations. If God is unchanging, then the instructions would be good for that time, and good for this time. For God to annul those instructions and that covenant would mean God's covenants are not necessarily permanent. If God annulled that covenant would mean that God may change his promises (or that the witnesses, “Heaven and Earth”, have died). If he changed the promises He gave then, could He not change promises that He gave later? If He did away with an “Old Covenant”, what is to say some covenant He gives at a latter date might become “Old”. He might decide to annul it also? But we (the devout believer) can rest in assurance because all scripture agrees. God is a covenant-keeping God. He does not annul covenants, He does not change.

### God Called His People for a Purpose:

*Exodus 19:5-6 (KJ2000) Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a special treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is*

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*mine: And you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak unto the children of Israel.*

God calls His people to be a witness to the world. Refer to Isaiah 43:7-11, I Peter 2:5, Revelation 1:6 and Revelation 5:10. There is an interesting thing that is observed to happen in the scriptures. If God calls someone to perform a task and they delay in fulfilling that purpose, He will call another to fill the purpose that the first called one failed to accomplish. Consider Elijah. God had him hand off the completion of his mission to three others to complete. Consider Peter. Perhaps He was called to the ministry of the Gentiles, but as he settled back in Jerusalem (at least at first), Paul came upon the scene (a Pharisee of the Pharisees) to minister and bring the message to the Gentiles. Think of Adam and ministry of Yeshua. Remember the parable of the grape vines pruned off because they bore no fruit. What was the illustration that Paul gave regarding the olive tree and the branches?

*Romans 11:17 (KJ2000) And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree;*

*Romans 11:24 (KJ2000) For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these, who are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree?*

What if God had called a nation of people to be a kingdom of priest, to live out His instructions to the fullest, that He could righteously pour out His blessing upon them so that the nations of the world could observe. That it would be out of a desire to obtain the same blessings, the nations would decide to up follow the instructions? Would it then be that in following the instructions, they would be practicing the precepts of the Word of God. Now let us remember how it is written:

*Romans 10:17 (KJ2000) So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

Could it be that, when the nation that was called to perform a task for God became so misdirected by the traditions of men that they could no longer perform that mission that God called and added new peoples to that group to carry out the rest of that mission? Maybe something as He did with Elijah? Could it be that He broke off some of the natural branches and grafted in some new called ones from the nations, to perform the purposed mission that was yet unfinished?

*1 Kings 19:13-18 (KJ2000) And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entrance of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What do you here, Elijah? And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and slain your prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left: and they seek my life, to take it away. And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when you come, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: And Jehu the son of Nimshi shall you anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah*

shall you anoint to be prophet in your place. And it shall come to pass, that he that escapes the sword of Hazeel shall Jehu slay: and he that escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which has not kissed him.

## **TRADITIONS THAT NULLIFY THE WORD OF GOD**

Is there perhaps a key in scripture that unlocks the access to the question “What traditions of today nullify the Word of God?” Consider John 14:15 *If you love me keep my commandments.* What are the commandments of Yeshua (Jesus)?

*Matthew 5:18-19 (KJ2000) For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. **Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.***

Yeshua has commanded that not one jot or tittle pass from the law (the instructions – the Torah) till all be fulfilled. He even gives instructions in how to be least and greatest in the kingdom of heaven. He is stating that what He told Moses is to be observed until all is fulfilled. Not all has been fulfilled. **Do you know anyone that is practicing or teaching others to ignore any of the “Laws of Moses”?** Could Yeshua have been talking of some other law? Not a chance. Read Matthew 5: 17-19 in context.

The common reply is quoted from Matthew 5:17

*Matthew 5:17-19 Think not that I am come to destroy(**kataluo**) the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill (**pleroo**).*

The English word “fulfill” in verse 17 is translated from the Greek word “pleroo” Strong’s number 4137. The English word “fulfilled” in verse 18 is translated from the Greek word “ginomai” Strong’s number 1096. There is an interesting parallel to the use of the same two Greek words in Matthew 1:22 in context.

*Matthew 1:22-23 Now all this was done (**ginomai**), that it might be fulfilled (**pleroo**) which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.*

Pleroo is used 90 times in the New Testament and is defined by Strong’s as; to make replete, i.e. (literally) to cram (a net), level up (a hollow), or (figuratively) to furnish (or imbue, diffuse, influence), satisfy, execute (an office), finish (a period or task), verify (or coincide with a prediction), etc.--accomplish, X after, (be) complete, end, expire, fill (up), fulfill, (be, make) full (come), fully preach, perfect, supply.

As in Matthew 1:22, pleroo is most commonly used in context with verifying a prophecy or prediction. Verify this for yourself through the following references:

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Mt 1:22; 2:15,17,23; 3:15; 4:14; 5:17; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35,48; 21:4; 23:32; 26:54,56; 27:9,35; Mr 1:15; 14:49; 15:28; Lu 1:20; 2:40; 3:5; 4:21; 7:1; 9:31; 21:22,24; 22:16; 24:44; Joh 3:29; 7:8; 12:3,38; 13:18; 15:11,25; 16:6,24; 17:12-13; 18:9,32; 19:24,36; Ac 1:16; 2:2,28; 3:18; 5:3,28; 7:23,30; 9:23; 12:25; 13:25,27,52; 14:26; 19:21; 24:27; Ro 1:29; 8:4; 13:8; 15:13-14,19; 2Co 7:4; 10:6; Ga 5:14; Eph 1:23; 3:19; 4:10; 5:18; Php 1:11; 2:2; 4:18-19; Col 1:9,25; 2:10; 4:12,17; 2Th 1:11; 2Ti 1:4; Jas 2:23; 1Jo 1:4; 2Jo 1:12; Re 3:2; 6:11

In context, the use of pleroo and ginomai in Matthew 5:17-18 should be the same as in Matthew 1:22. This would render the translation of Matthew 5:17-18 to read:

*“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but (pleroo)” to validate, verify what the prophets said as true. “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all (ginomai)” is done, finished, completed.*

This is one of the scriptures typically used to say the “law” has been nullified. Does this make sense? Immediately after Yeshua stated that he came not to destroy the law, He states that all heaven and earth shall pass away before even the smallest stroke of the pen written by Moses would pass from the “law”. Yeshua then next states that anyone who breaks the least of the commandments included in the “law” or even teaches likewise will be considered least in the kingdom of heaven.

Even if one were to ignore the context of verses 18 and 19, and attempt to use expire for pleroo, then Matthew 5:17 would read: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but” expire them, to make them null, to make them void. To say “I come not to destroy but to destroy” makes no sense.

Compare this to Luke 16:17:

*Luke 16:17 (KJ2000) And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one dot of the law to fail.*

Let us go back and examine verse 5:19. Yeshua didn't say that the doer or teacher that breaks or teaches to break the least of the commandments of the “law” of Moses (the Torah) would not get into the kingdom, just that the doer/teacher of ignoring the Torah would be considered least in the kingdom. That is reassuring to me because I have both broke and taught against the commandments of the “law” of Moses.

Immediately the defensive cry of “WHAT ABOUT PAUL?” reverberates. Good question. Haven't we been taught that Paul told us how we should not be bound by the law? The question then becomes does this teaching agree with scripture?

## Searching the Scriptures

Just to make sure that we follow the noble example of the Berians and the elders of Rome, **let us examine what the scriptures teach.** *Acts 17:10-12 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming there went into the synagogue of the*

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*Jews. These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and **searched the scriptures daily**, whether those things were so. Therefore **many of them believed**; also of honorable women who were Greeks, and of men, not a few.*

*Acts 28:22-24 But we desire to hear of you what you think: for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against. And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, **both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets**, from morning till evening. **And some believed** the things which were spoken, and some believed not.*

I like the Berians. Wouldn't it be nice to be written of in scripture as being more noble? Why were they thought more noble? "... *they received the word with all readiness of mind, and **searched the scriptures daily**, whether those things were so.*" They searched the scriptures with readiness of mind to see if what Paul was teaching was true.

What about Paul? We will get back to Paul later in the discussion. Instead let us now focus on the Law of Moses that Paul used to persuade some number of Berians, the elders of Rome and all the others whom Paul taught from the scriptures.

We read that Yeshua, the disciples, and apostles taught from the scriptures. In these two examples (Acts 17 and Acts 28), we read that the Berians and the Jewish elders of the Roman synagogues searched the scriptures. How often do we ponder which scriptures they might have taught from?

There were no scriptures at that time but the Old Testament, the Tanakh – the "law of Moses" and the writings of the Prophets. These are the scriptures they searched. Be assured these were not casual readers of the Tanakh either. These were extremely well-studied men. At age 14 when they had their Bar Mitzvah, they would have recited from memory sections of the Tanakh. They would have been questioned regarding which instructions applied to them. This notwithstanding, there were many legalistic traditions of men that had been added (with the good intention of god fearing men) to the scriptures to prevent the transgression of the instructions. Men's traditions necessitate that even the most studied of Biblical scholars search the scriptures. If the scriptures are not searched, man will be unable to tell where God's Word ends and where man's traditions begin. Traditions of men can even overshadow and obscure the Word of God if man is not studious.

So during the first century:

- all the teaching of the scriptures were based on the Old Testament
- based on the Old Testament scriptures and the teaching of the first century church many Jews believed,

This understanding brings us to a question.

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Why did not all who knew the Old Testament scriptures believe?

I submit it was because of their inability to willingly abandon their traditional beliefs. They were so entrenched in the beliefs that they had been taught (beliefs that formed their doctrine) that they chose to be blind to the Truth -- The Word of God. More importantly, what did it mean to a Torah observant Jewish scholar to believe from the scriptures that Yeshua was the Messiah? How did it affect their day to day life? Did they instantly stop being Torah observant? Did it change their understanding of how man achieved a place in the world to come? Let us consider these one at a time:

### **How did it change their day-to-day life?**

If they were truly Torah observant before coming to the revelation that Yeshua was the Messiah, it probably changed their daily actions and activities very little. It probably changed their attitude about why they participated in those activities a great deal.

### **Did they instantly stop being Torah observant?**

Emphatically, No! They did not stop being Torah-observant. Why do I say this? Because it agrees with what God says. Study the scriptures. Yeshua was Torah-observant, Paul was Torah-observant. Oh Yes, Scripture (The Word of God) tells the reader Paul was Torah-observant. In Chapter 21 of Acts (verse 24), Paul takes four men and joins them in a Nazarite vow to prove to all the believers in Jerusalem that he is fully Torah-observant.

### **Did it change their understanding of how man achieved a place in the world to come?**

I believe it did. By the traditions that had been set up by men, men were being taught to earn their salvation by works. This was in direct opposition to what God said in His scriptures. Abraham was counted righteous because he believed God.

***Genesis 15:6 (KJ2000) And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.***

God counted Noah righteous because Noah heard God, believed what God said was true and acted upon it.

*Genesis 6:22- 7:1 (KJ2000) Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he. And the LORD said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.*

Being counted righteous (salvation), comes by faith. How do we know we have faith? We believe what God says is true and we act on it.

*Hebrews 11:4 (KJ2000) By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaks.*

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*1 Peter 1:5 (KJ2000) Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

A large number of the religious leaders in the days of Yeshua were teaching that man earned his salvation by works of the law. If you can earn your salvation, you don't need God. In effect if you can earn your own salvation, you have become your own god. This would be in violation of the first and second instruction of the Torah. The very thought of earning salvation by observing the Torah, violates the Torah. This is what Paul is writing about in his letter to the Galatians.

For the Torah observant Jew to recognize Yeshua is the Messiah, that individual would recognize the principal of salvation by grace as a gift that cannot be earned lest any man should boast.

### **Let's Talk Law**

I was raised with the tongue in cheek, "rules were made to be broken" and "it is only breaking the law if you get caught." I don't believe my parents had any idea what deception these sayings were teaching me. I know out of love for me, had they understood the implications, they would have never even laughed about such statements. My parents had learned from their parents who had learned from their parents before them. But "don't do as I do; do as I say" has the same moral lesson.

This is like the teachings of Christianity today. In the wisdom of the world, when you get old enough or powerful enough to make the rules, the rules no longer apply. The problem this bred for me was I developed a keen ability to break the law and not get caught, or at least avoid the punishment. Without punishment there is no real deterrent for a man walking in the flesh. Then God began to call me and convict me. I realized the need and function of the law. In the kingdom of God, God teaches to be holy for He is Holy. In the kingdom of God the more powerful you become the more closely you are required to adhere to the rules.

Why do men create civil law? TO PROTECT LIFE. Consider the four-way stop sign. Governing bodies realize that if something is not done to protect people navigating the intersection, pain and suffering will be the product. Orderly observance will protect life and eliminate pain and suffering, at least from that cause (wrecks at that intersection). But I am a man of sound judgment and reasoning and compassion, who just happens to be in a hurry – all the time. I notice if I run the stop sign on my side, when no one else is there, no one is hurt and I get through faster. This is the seed from which destruction sprouts. Over some amount of time I develop a habit of not being attentive to the stop sign. One day I am distracted and in a hurry, I don't notice the little elderly lady (maybe my grandmother) that has pulled up in her little car, stopped, and without being aware of the danger has proceeded into the intersection. I plow full throttle into the driver's side door of her car. I didn't kill her. I avoid vehicular homicide. But this little lady with the razor sharp mind is now quadriplegic for the rest of her life. Isolated and alone, she spends the next twenty years bedridden. She suffers for my transgression of the law. Of course I had to pay some fines and some medical bills, but I go on pretty much oblivious to the destruction and pain that she lives out each day. The children's ministry she

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was so instrumental in is now vacant. Who will help the next generation find the path to walking with God?

But men are wise, and in their wisdom, they have assigned officers to enforce the law. What deters me from running the stop sign when no one is approaching the intersection? If my compassion and conscience are not strong enough to be a deterrent, the knowledge that there may be a policeman just out of sight that will levy punishment is a deterrent. Government has given him the legal right to issue tickets that are designed to punish the perpetrator. Why? The policeman has been given authority to protect life. The officer exists as a deterrent in an attempt to minimize pain and suffering. While the actions of the officer may cause pain for the perpetrator, the officer exists to minimize the pain the perpetrator brings to others, and ultimately to the perpetrator himself.

**Praise God this is only an example.** I would hate to know I had left that kind of destruction in my wake. Perhaps I should praise God that He does not bring upon me the knowledge of all the destruction I have left in my wake as a result of my actions. I am not sure how any of us would bear the pain.

Let us take this physical example to its spiritual parallel. Why did God give the “Law”? (Refer to Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.) **God gives us the instructions so that we can choose between life and death.** Some of the instructions bring blessings. The instructions point out those things that bring about curses. It is like the law of the four-way stop sign. God set up instructions to eliminate pain and torment that ultimately lead to death. He even set up an officer to enforce those instructions. Consider that if one walks outside of the covering of God, that person is subject to the torment of the forces of evil. Why did God set it up this way? I believe it is to deter people from violation of the instructions that cause torment and destruction to themselves and others. If people would think about it and take notice of the consequences of their actions, God’s instructions and even the torment of Satan have been set up by God to help people chose life.

Law in our civilization has a negative connotation or an implication of restriction. Was it so for the Greeks? It appears they considered Law not as a burdensome restriction but in the same manner as we, in western civilizations, think of the Law of Physics -- an unavoidable reality. Is this the context they used when they inserted the translation and use of Law for Torah? Gravity is one of the laws of physics. One can chose to ignore gravity but for anyone conscious of his environment, he can and does expect consequences. For example, I can lean forward to progress towards an object in front of me. However, if I don’t extend one foot in front of another in a progression that supports the forward motion, I can expect to fall. I may even break something, like my nose maybe. In this context, it is beneficial for the reader today to understand that there are consequences to violating the “Law” or the instructions.

*Numbers 15:15 One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourns with you, an ordinance forever in your generations: as you are, so shall the stranger be before the LORD.*

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*Numbers 15:16 One law and one manner shall be for you, and for the stranger that sojourns with you.*

*Exodus 12:49 One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the foreigner who sojourns among you.*

*Deuteronomy 4:39-40 Know therefore this day, and consider it in your heart, that the LORD He is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath: there is none else. You shall keep therefore His statutes, and His commandments, which I command you this day, that it may go well with you, and with your children after you, and that you may prolong your days upon the earth, which the LORD your God gives you, forever.*

*Deuteronomy 26:16-19 This day the LORD your God has commanded you to do these statutes and judgments: you shall therefore keep and do them with all your heart, and with all your soul. You have declared the LORD this day to be your God, and to walk in His ways, and to keep His statutes, and His commandments, and His judgments, and to hearken unto his voice: And the LORD has declared you this day to be His peculiar people, as He has promised you, and that you should keep all His commandments; And to make you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, and in name, and in honor; and that you may be a holy people unto the LORD your God, as He has spoken.*

*Deuteronomy 30:1-10 And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you shall call them to mind among all the nations, where the LORD your God has driven you, And shall return unto the LORD your God, and shall obey His voice according to all that I command you this day, you and your children, with all your heart, and with all your soul; That then the LORD your God will return you from captivity, and have compassion upon you, and will return and gather you from all the nations, where the LORD your God has scattered you. If any of you are driven out unto the farthest parts of heaven, from there will the LORD your God gather you, and from there will He bring you: And the LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will do you good, and multiply you above your fathers. And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart, and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, that you may live. And the LORD your God will put all these curses upon your enemies, and on them that hate you, who persecuted you. And you shall return and obey the voice of the LORD, and do all His commandments which I command you this day. And the LORD your God will make you abound in every work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, and in the fruit of your cattle, and in the fruit of your land, for good: for the LORD will again rejoice over you for good, as He rejoiced over your fathers: If you shall hearken unto the voice of the LORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if you turn unto the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul.*

## **Egyptian Deliverance Comparison**

It is ever so enlightening when we compare the deliverance of the Children of Israel to the life of the believer. Found in Egypt (the world) the Children of Israel (the individual) suffered under

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slavery (torment and deception of this life in the world) that became so severe they cried out for God to deliver them. The deliverer had been prophesied. God sends a redeemer, Moses, performing signs and miracles. The children of Israel cry out are redeemed and are set free from bondage. There is a blood covering placed over the houses of those desiring to follow God. We know it as Passover. Then, there is a crossing over. The Children of Israel cross the Red Sea. The root word of Hebrew (eber) means to cross over. The Children of Israel walk out a trip in the Wilderness -- in the world but separated from it. The Children of Israel now have to learn how not to be slaves. God gives them instructions so they can recognize and abandon ways of slavery and paganism so that He (God) can dwell with them and not destroy them. The generation that comes from Egypt had traditions so engrained in their understanding they had to die off, and only those born after the crossing over could pass through the second crossing into the Promised Land.

Notice the Moses -- Yeshua parallels. The individual crushed by the torment of the world finally gives up trying to overcome under his/her own power and cries out to God for deliverance. Yeshua is crucified at Passover. The believer is given his/her blood covering that frees him from the bondage of the curses -- the spiritual consequence of his actions while he was under bondage. The believer is baptized in the Holy Spirit. The believer walks out the laying down of the baggage that he/she brings through the salvation experience due to habits formed through traditions and deceits learned during their time in the world. The believer passes through the salvation experience and is born anew. The old must die and only the new inner man enters into eternity. In this process, while we are in the world but not of it, we must learn to identify the traditions, beliefs and practices we have that keep us separated from the fullness of God's covering. Separated from the fullness of God's covering man is thus exposed to attacks from the forces of the world. Nothing of flesh enters the kingdom of God. Types are never perfect or complete but there are items here that we need to remain aware of in our walk through our wilderness experience (in the world but not of it).

God called His chosen people out of Egypt, gave them instructions that both directed them away from deceit and into truth, and caused them to be noticeably different both physically and spiritually from the rest of the people on earth. The spiritual difference (walking in His Light and His Truth) allowed them to be blessed. The physical difference made them noticeable to the nations when they were blessed. God's plan was that other people would want what God's children had, and even if out of greed or envy, when they would start following the instructions, the people of the nations would come to know God and rely upon Him for their salvation. In the act of imitating the actions of the Torah-observant people of God, to partake of the same blessing, the nations would be practicing the Word of God. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. The instructions (the Torah, the Law) would and did serve as the tutor that brought them to faith in God.

*Isaiah 43:7-11 (KJ2000) Even everyone that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him. Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things? let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth. You are my*

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*witnesses, says the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that you may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and besides me there is no savior.*

### **Why should God desire a people set apart?**

*Isaiah 43:7-11 Even everyone that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him. Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears. Let all the nations be gathered together, and let the people be assembled: who among them can declare this, and show us former things? Let them bring forth their witnesses, that they may be justified: or let them hear, and say, It is truth. You are my witnesses, says the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen: that you may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the LORD; and besides me there is no savior.*

Consider the similarity of language in the writings of Peter.

*1 Peter 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light:*

Why did God give the Children of Israel the Torah (The Law -- The Instructions)? You never study counterfeit money to learn to recognize counterfeit money. You study the real thing. How would the Children of Israel learn to identify Paganism? It was not by teaching them what paganism was, it was by teaching what paganism wasn't. The "instructions" taught what God's ways were and revealed paganism when it was encountered.

Why do I think the Children of Israel needed to be able to identify paganism? It is a counterfeit that draws the believer away from God. It appears to have value but actually is a hideous attempt to destroy the economy of the kingdom of God. Does God care? Consider the Golden Calf. The people erected an idol the way that they had worshipped in Egypt. They even called it YHWH. Because of this transgression three thousand died that day.

### **Instructions and Paganism**

*Proverbs 16:25 There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*

Consider the actions that seem good but defy God. There were those in power at the time Yeshua walked the earth, that for many reasons were unable to see the truth. Undoubtedly some were blinded by greed and ambition, some were so indoctrinated with tradition that they would only recognize a conquering king and likely other reasons either too trivial or too numerous to mention. Take Paul for example. He was a devout believer in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Because of the traditions that he had been taught, he believed those of the Jewish sect known of as the "way" or "of the Nazarenes" were heretics and deserving of death. Paul was a witness to the stoning of Steven, thereby giving his approval.

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Was Paul serving in the official capacity as the witness of the Sanhedrin? Some believe he was.

*Acts 7:58-8:1 And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep. And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.*

Because of these examples of persecution, the Jewish sect, who believed that Yeshua was the Messiah, and mainline Judaism grew further and further apart. It is worth noting that in the first century, Paul and the apostles would enter each city and first start their ministry in the Jewish synagogue. They saw themselves as Jews. They were Jews. They were Jewish men practicing Scriptural Judaism. Even the Jews of the Roman Empire saw “the Way” as a sect of Judaism. When Paul called the elders of the Jews of Rome together, they responded:

*Acts 28:21-22 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judea concerning you, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spoke any harm of you. But we desire to hear of you what you think: for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against.*

Why then do the Jewish people and the Christian people of today not see themselves as two different denominations of the same religion? Due to the bitter persecution over the centuries between the two houses, that is why.

We read many accounts of the persecution of the believers in “the Way” in the book of Acts. History teaches, when the city of Jerusalem was over-run by the Romans in 70 AD, the believers in “the Way” fled, based on the teachings of Yeshua.

*Matthew 24:15-17 When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoever reads, let him understand:) Then let them who are in Judea flee into the mountains: Let him who is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house:*

The believers in “the Way” understood Yeshua’s teaching to be for them and they fled Jerusalem. The non-believing Jews saw their exodus as treason.

In about 138AD, Rabbi Akiva identified Bar Kochba as the messiah. Believers rejected Bar Kochba and would not support the revolution. This made them popular with the Romans but despised by the followers of Rabbi Akiva which included about all of Judaism. The persecution intensified to the point that a prayer was added to many synagogue services that required the denouncing of Yeshua as the Messiah. This made it impossible for the believing Jews to associate with those synagogues for any of the appointed times (New Moons, Shabbat, Passover, Shavuot/Pentecost, Trumpets, Yom Kippur/the Fast, or Succoth/The Feast). The parting grows. The growing number of Gentiles converting to “God Fearers” who also believed was ever increasing. The Jewish believers were growing in the understanding that the eternal

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salvation of “God Fearers” was not dependent on conversion to Judaism but on Scriptural observance. That these additions to the ranks of the believers were not converting to Judaism served to fuel the fire of some of the Orthodox Jews. In the ranks of the God Fearers, there are those who arise and begin to teach themselves. Because of offense that has developed from persecution and exclusion, not to mention the possibility of some predisposition to hatred of the Jews by traditional teaching they had grown up with, some of these start teaching anti-Semitic doctrine.

Constantine comes along and the stage is set for a complete divide of the child from the parent who had given it birth. Remember God’s covenant promise is with the Children of Israel. As Gentiles, we must be grafted into Israel to share in that covenant. Due to the long and bitter battles the Roman Empire has had with the Jewish people and the refusal of the orthodox Jewish people to assimilate all the pagan religions of the Roman Empire, Constantine is recorded to have despised the Jewish people. With Constantine’s conversion to Christianity, there was a conundrum for him to deal with. How do you tell the Jews from the Christians? How do you determine who are Jews that should be persecuted and who are Christians that should be counted as brothers.

The solution was easy. Those who attend the synagogues, those who observe the appointed times, those who eat Kosher, those who observe the Torah, those are the Jews. Those are whom you persecute. This even allowed the assimilated people of the pagan worship of the sun to keep the observance of their sacred holy day – Sunday.

I am sure some of the believers in “the Way” were well enough versed in scripture that they were unwilling to abandon those things of Scripture that made them a set-apart people, but most of those were most likely genetically Jewish anyway. Removing these few hard nosed set-apart (dare I say sanctified) people was not going to be a major obstacle for a battle hardened warrior such as Constantine. Besides, by three hundred AD, there were a vast number of believers from the Nations that did not have generations of tradition based on the observance of the Biblical Feasts, Festivals and Instructions.

### **The Ultimatum Given the Believers – Adapt or Die.**

With the dictate of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire, all the subjects of the Roman Empire were given a choice -- become a professing Christian or die. There was no necessity to give up pagan practices, just profess Yeshua as the Messiah. With the Greek copies of the letters being circulated (the later became the New Testament), by that time, Yeshua may have even been known only by the name “Iesous” in many of the regions of the Roman Empire. Converted Gentiles may not have necessarily even known “Iesous” as a Jew by mid 300 AD.

The ranks of the Church must have swelled practically overnight. Where do you find the people required to serve the needs of so many so quickly? I know in man’s wisdom, any good organizer would rapidly set to work recruiting those already in place and recognized as leaders. One would choose those who had the recognized respect of others in the areas where they lived. How well can they be trained and how fast? Judging from the anti-Semitic teachings, that

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appear in writings of Church fathers such as Origen, Justin Martyr, Hippolytus and Chrysostom, this anti-Semitic rhetoric within the Church started in about 200 AD and was fully developed by 400 AD. By 400 AD, it was being taught by the Church that the Jewish people sacrificed their children to Satan in the synagogues. By 300 AD, it was already widely taught (in the Christian Church) that the Church had replaced Israel in all scriptural references to the eternal blessings intended for Israel (again remember at this time there was no New Testament). Don't take my word. Get on the internet and search out the "origins of anti-Semitism" looking up quotes from Origen, Martyr, Hippolytus and Chrysostom. As a member of the Christian faith, I felt some sense of responsibility and remorse for the injustice perpetrated upon the Jewish people at the hands of Christians.

With Christianity departing from its Jewish roots and identity, the instructions were no longer available to teach the believer the things of God from counterfeits. The Roman Empire used the observance of God's appointed times established in scripture, to identify and persecute Jews. If you observed, you were a Jew. It was that simple, case closed. The Roman levied heavy taxes on the Jewish people. There were laws passed making it a capital offense for any Jews to proselytize Gentiles. Jews were excluded from various professions. The slanderous hate and lies that were spread threatened their ability to congregate at synagogues for worship. It had been written by those recognized as authorities in the Church that Satan worship occurred in those synagogues. This was not the time of tolerance. It was not advantageous to be a Jew or even thought to be a Jew. Observance of the Biblically-ordained Feasts and Festivals (God's Biblically ordained times) would cause one to be labeled Jewish and be the proud recipient of the associated persecution, both social and civil. It appears that those in position of power in the Jewish leadership that feared they were losing that power to this growing sect of Judaism orchestrated the persecution of that sect. Then, the response came. Some who gained power in the leadership of the Christian Church orchestrated a persecution, not only of the Jewish leadership, but all Jews. This persecution hastened the abolishment of the observance of God's appointed times. Ultimately, this orchestrated persecution led to such atrocities as the Crusades, the Inquisitions and the Holocaust.

All this led to a Christian Church that no longer had Biblically directed rituals at Biblically established times. Vacuums are not natural and when a void is created something will naturally rush in to fill it.

*Matthew 12:43-45 (KJ2000) When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walks through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he said, I will return into my house from where I came out; and when he is come, he finds it empty, swept, and garnished. Then he goes, and takes with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.*

Pagan rituals such as Sun Worship (Mithras), and Ostara Worship were used for replacements. It seems the pagans were more easily convinced to give up their god's than their celebrations. Few Christians have much knowledge of the origins of the celebrations they perform. With the Biblical feasts and festivals replaced, the prophetic messianic pictures they revealed were lost.

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The very pictures God had set in place for His people had been discarded for pagan festivals. I am reminded of the scripture "My people die for lack of knowledge".

### **Does God Mind if We Change His Appointed Times?**

First of all, I don't believe man can change God's appointed times. We can misplace and quit teaching the pictures of God's appointed times and thus not be ready to recognize the season when it comes upon us, but we can not change God's appointed times. Ever heard a story about 10 virgins some oil lamps and a bridegroom? Refer to Matthew 25.

There is, however, some evidence that there are consequences to mixing paganism in with the Worship of God. Remember the story about the Golden Calf that Aaron built. Read Exodus Chapter 32. At least 3,000 people died right there.

Remember Nadab and Abihu. They brought a strange fire unto the Lord. They died on the spot - Leviticus Chapter 10.

And just so you don't think God only worked this way in the Old Testament, remember Ananias and Sapphira (Acts Chapter 8), worm eaten King Herod (Acts Chapter 12) and the blinded Elymas, the Magician (Acts Chapter 13).

Let us consider Jeroboam. Throughout the books of Kings, God has the prophets write of the sins of Jeroboam. Eventually the Children of Israel were exiled from the land because they did not repent of the sins of Jeroboam.

*1 Kings 12:26-33 And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. Therefore the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made a house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, who were not of the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Beth-el, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Beth-el the priests of the high places whom he had made. So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Beth-el the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.*

Out of fear that he would lose his position and authority, Jeroboam built idols, built altars in places God did not ordain, made priests of those not ordained of God and changed the times of the festivals. These transgressions are so great that throughout the books of Kings the continual commission of these sins were specifically recorded 1Ki 14:16; 15:30; 16:2,19,31; 2Ki 3:3; 10:29,31; 13:2,6,11; 14:24; 15:9,18,24,28; 17:22.

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These are the sins that moved God to give the northern kingdom of Israel up to the tormentor.

*1 Kings 14:16 And he shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin, and who made Israel to sin.*

Why care? Everyone knows there are consequences to our actions, right? Agreed. However, if you have never been told what real money looks like, if you haven't handled the real stuff literally thousands of times, some one can slip in the counterfeit and you will never know. You can be depleted of the richness that is rightfully yours. You never experience all the blessings of the wealth you were purposed to have because you let someone deceive you. Not only are you cheated, those that you were purposed to bless with your wealth are also cheated. They never have the opportunity to handle the real stuff thousands of times. All they know is the counterfeit stuff. You will never provide to them what you should have had. You may even inadvertently lead them down the same path of ignorance and compound the lack of abundance in their life.

Let us Consider Balak and Balaam. Hired to curse the Children of Israel by Balak, Balaam repeatedly has no choice but to bless them. Because of the covering of God, the Children of Israel were protected at the time. Scripture reveals that Balaam did give Balak the key to being able to curse the Children of Israel. Balaam tells Balak how to have the men of the Children of Israel bow down to the pagan idols of the gods of Balak, thus removing them from the protection of God. By introducing paganism into the camp, the Children of Israel lost the protection of God and lost the provision of life and life abundantly that God purposed to provide. Nu 22:5,7-10,12-14,16,18,20-21,23,25,27-31,34-41; 23:1-5,11,16,25-30; 24:1-3,10,12,15,25; 31:8,16; De 23:4-5; Jos 13:22; 24:9-10; Ne 13:2; Mic 6:5; 2Pe 2:15; Jude 1:11; Re 2:14.

There are some interesting concepts we can learn from the story of Balaam . The story is told in part in multiple places in scripture: Nu 22:5 - 24:25; 31:8-16; De 23:4-5; Jos 13:22; 24:9-10; Ne 13:2; Mic 6:5; 2Pe 2:15; Jude 1:11; Re 2:14. All the parts must be put together to understand the full story,

Balaam was a soothsayer who did communicate with God-the one and only true God. Because he sought personal gain, or what his deceitful heart saw as gain, he did not take God's Word as final when he heard it. When Balak increased the take-home, Balaam sought God's audience again to see if he could entreat God to allow Balaam to partake of the promised riches of the world. God allows Balaam to go but warns Balaam against trying to curse who God has blessed. Remember God knows our heart even when we are unable to recognize our condition. Balaam is no different. God knows the secret desire of Balaam's heart even if Balaam did not.

On the way to meet Balak, God reveals His will through the angel of the Lord. God's will is so obvious that the donkey Balaam is riding can understand it, but Balaam cannot see. With these warnings and admonitions from God, Balaam still tries three times to curse Israel to please Balak and gain worldly reward. Finally after all of God's intervention prevents Balaam from cursing Israel, Balaam teaches Balak how to bring the curse of God upon the children Israel.

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Balaam reveals to Balak that by enticing the children of Israel into participation in acts of Paganism, Balaam's inability to pronounce a curse is immaterial. When the men of Israel indulged in sexual immorality with the women of Midian and bowed down to the pagan idols, the curse of God Himself fell upon Israel. Had Phineahes not slain Zimri and Cozbi the plague that killed 14,000 would have decimated the nation.

How does this apply to our lives? What traditions of man are we involved in that are pagan idolatry that God has said would bring a curse down on those who practiced them? Does this apply to the believer today? We need only consider 2 Peter, Jude and Revelation to get our answer.

Through our traditions, the traditions of men, we have removed the knowledge of the feasts and the festivals from our congregations and replaced them with things of paganism.

*Revelation 2:14 (KJ2000) But I have a few things against you, because you have there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.*

Have you noticed the trend to add Halloween to Church sanctioned festivals. Sure, the leadership calls it Harvest Fest or some other catchy title. But ask any child the next day what kind of celebration he or she went to and they will tell you they went to a "Halloween Party". As parents, we don't want our children to miss out on any of the "fun". I have personally participated in lots of this kind of "fun" and even worse. I don't write this to judge. I just want people to see, hear, wake up and repent before we pass these traditions to the next generation. A generation from now the church will not remember that we substituted Harvest Fest for Halloween and only had the events because, with good intentions, we wanted to give the children an option. Perhaps we did not force the issue because we didn't want to have to confront the issue and tell them that we were different and set apart from the rest of the world. Are we afraid our children will judge us as being mean. Why, did we judge our parents?

And when the next generation forgets that Halloween is a bad thing, they will bring it into the church. Could it be when fully developed, we will even have elements of the cult brought into worship services (graven images or ornate trees). Even the word "church" is of pagan origin.

Consider the passage in Numbers 5:12- 31. God gave the instructions of how a jealous husband was to deal with his wife if he suspected she was defiled by having lain with another man. The priest was to have the woman drink a portion of a jealousy offering. If the woman had committed adultery, she would be cursed. Her belly would swell and her thigh would rot. Now compare:

God is a jealous God. As the Messiah God is husband to the body of believers. As believers participating in paganism is the same as committing adultery against Messiah the groom. Think about the significance of this picture in Messianic context with Messiah as the Priest and the groom and the body of the believers as the bride. What does this mean when the bride plays the harlot with paganism?

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Make no mistake. For the believer to involve himself in paganism is Biblically the same as a wife committing adultery against her husband. Do you really desire to commit adultery against God?

### Why So Rigid?

I have heard the stories of good things that happened at Church Halloween parties. Because I hear of a man that was sentenced to prison and therein received the gospel, I will not advocate we teach children to steal and run drugs so they can be thrown in prison to hear the gospel. Even though he received salvation that changed his life and quiet possibly life of many others there is the possibility of vestiges from that life style that promote deceptions that inadvertently may get passed to the future generations. *The thing one is never exposed to, he never needs to be delivered from.*

We serve a Holy God. He gives instructions and asks us to make the choice to sanctify ourselves (set ourselves apart) and be holy for He is Holy. Why does God separate Himself from that which is not holy (people who are unwilling to sanctify themselves)? Remember Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron? The example is like light and dark. In the presence of pure light, there is no darkness. By definition it cannot exist. Darkness is the absence of light. In the same manner, by definition, that which is not holy cannot exist in the presence of holiness. Like darkness in light, an unholy person would literally vaporize in the presence of holiness. For the protection of those that have not sanctified themselves, God separates the unsanctified from Himself. More appropriately, in the process of participating in that which causes man to be unsanctified, man removes himself from God's presence. There is a consequence, when you separate yourself from God, you leave His covering. Apart from God's covering, man is open to attack from the tormentor. God constructed this for the benefit of man. When the fiery darts of the evil one begin to fall upon us, we head straight for cover. The only cover that can protect man from this attack is the covering of God, which God is perpetually willing to provide.

*Matthew 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*

### Why Sanctified?

What is the big deal about being sanctified? I have heard people give every excuse from:

- all I have to do is lead a good life and believe in God to be saved, to
- I don't think it is important that I know that much about God's Word the preacher will tell me all I need to know.

They are just coming up with excuses for being lazy. I know, I suffer the same myself at times. God gave us instructions to diligently listen and hold fast to His Word. We are to Study to show our selves approved: Meditate upon His Word day and Night that we might not sin against Him.

Why? I mean if I am saved, I get to heaven, right? Scriptures tell us if we will call upon the name of the Lord our Savior (Yeshua Ha Mashiach) we will be saved. Now, Paul tells us that as

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we are saved we become the bond servant of Christ. For the First century believer, this explanation had great meaning. Slavery was abundant in that day. For a Torah observant Jew, owning a slave meant you treated the slave like your own child. Remember Abraham's slave, Eliezer? That did not mean that slaves were allowed to run wild and loose either. They were only allowed to do that which the master told them. Families of that day were much different than today. As a bond servant, the believer should be doing only that which the Master (Yeshua) tells him (you). How do you know the Master's will? You can seek spiritual guidance for that instruction and I suggest you do. But I highly recommend balanced discernment in what you may receive in the way of spiritual guidance. There is a spiritual being that will be more than willing to guide you. He can disguise himself as the angel of light. If you don't have a firm understanding of what is written, you will be deceived.

How did Yeshua resist Satan's spiritual trickery? Yeshua's example in resisting Satan is through proper knowledge and use of the written Word.

If you want to know what you are being directed to do in your walk with God, contact your Master. For the bondservant of Christ, the Master is the Word of God. Guess where you are going to find the Word of God? Moses, Isaiah, Micah, Matthew, John, Peter, and Paul wrote down the Word of God and it has been compiled into the Bible. As Yeshua said "If you love Me, keep My commandments." Man either loves Yeshua or rejects Him. If you love Him and seek to keep His commandments, you have to know His commandments. If you don't get in the Word and study it critically, meditating upon it day and night (that you might not sin against God) how are you going to know His commandments? It could mean the difference between being the least and the greatest in the kingdom of God (or your witness to others that destines them to be the least or worse yet, not even making it into the kingdom).

### **Least in the Kingdom of God**

Are there different levels in the kingdom of God?

Matthew 5:19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Scripture seems to indicate there are different positions to be occupied in the kingdom of heaven. What difference does it make? If you get in you get in, right? I would rather be a door keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. But given a choice do you really desire to be the least? Who desires to show his gratitude to another by seeing what is the very minimum that I can do? Would you be hurt if you went to great lengths to provide for some one and their response was how little can I do so that I am no longer obligated?

Just consider. Every knee will bow and every tongue will confess Yeshua is Lord. I suspect the demons will be in this group bowing. God is King of Kings. Does He rule over hell also? Did not Yeshua descend to Hades and take the keys? Could serving eternity in the lake of fire (still being under the rule and authority of God) be the place where the least in the kingdom of heaven serve?

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### **Don't Look at me -- God Said It.**

*1 Peter 2:9 (KJ2000) But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Ex 19:5-6; De 4:20; 7:6; 10:15; 14:2; 26:18-19; Ps 22:30; 33:12; 73:15; 106:5; Isa 9:2; 26:2; 41:8; 43:21; 44:1; 60:1-3; 61:6; 66:21; Mt 4:16; 5:16; Lu 1:79; Joh 17:19; Ac 20:28; 26:28; Ro 9:24; 1Co 3:17; Eph 1:6, 14; 3:21; 5:8-11; Php 2:15-16; 3:14; Col 1:13; 1Th 5:4-8; 2Ti 1:9; Tit 2:14; 1Pe 1:2; 4:11; Re 1:6; 5:10; 20:6*

Remember Nadab and Abihu? I suspect they did not do anything that a large portion of the camp would not have done if given the opportunity. So why did the fire come forth from God and consume them? Could it be that as we draw near God more is required? To whom much is given, much is expected. Hopefully some doubt is established in your mind that being least in the kingdom of heaven is going to be juuuust fine.

If done with reverent respect, drawing near to God impresses me, in my minds eye, as an awesome thing. If we are called to be a royal priesthood, shouldn't we be prepared and ready, well disciplined and trained for the day when we are called to approach the King? On Yom Kippur does the High Priest make three trips or one trip behind the curtain? We may not need to know that. How many of us will get the opportunity (in eternity) to act as high priest (oh yeah it is eternity). I understand there is but one High Priest. It might be important to know where the showbread goes and what it represents. It is probably worth knowing who can touch the Ark of the Covenant and who can't. I bet Uzzah can give some pointers on that one.

*2 Samuel 6:6-7 (KJ2000) And when they came to Nacon's threshing floor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the LORD burned against Uzzah; and God struck him there for his irreverence; and there he died by the ark of God.*

The point is God gave us the information, told us we were going to be priests and told us to be prepared. Do we really want to be the one pulled up front in the millennial Temple and have to explain why we have no clue what is going on?

*Ezekiel 43:27 (KJ2000) And when these days are completed, it shall be, that upon the eighth day, and thereafter, the priests shall make your burnt offerings upon the altar, and your peace offerings; and I will accept you, says the Lord GOD.*

*Zechariah 14:16 (KJ2000) And it shall come to pass, that everyone that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.*

### **Covenants**

Consider:

- Noah knew the difference between clean and unclean animals – he loaded 7 pair of each of the clean.

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- Able and Cain knew about sacrifice
- The Magi knew from the stars when the Messiah would come.

How did these people know these things? Cain, Able and Noah predate the “Law” being given to Moses. What, in the stars, was known to point to any event related to the Christ? If you trace back in history and study about reading the stars, you will find that there is a teaching about a *sodia* (a Hebrew word) that has 12 different signs - One for each of the twelve months. This teaching taught of the coming Messiah and the redemption of the world. Interestingly, Scriptures tell us that God put the heavens in the sky for a sign. Did Adam who walked and talked with God in the Garden know of these signs? Did these signs and this teaching also include instructions on how to live, how to relate to God and how to relate to your fellow man? Did he teach his children? Over the years did man mess up the story to where it was perverted? And how did God created the stars, by His spoken Word. (Ge 1:14-16, Ob 1:4, Luke 21:25)

Let us now go forward about 2000 years. Moses is brought on to the scene and God speaks to him and gives Moses instructions to write down. These instructions direct man on how to relate to God and how to relate to his fellow man. The instructions are written on tables so they can be referred to such that man will be able to see the difference between God’s ways and paganism. We know from written history, that after about 2000 years, man perverted the instructions given Moses with traditions to a point that the instructions were not being practiced. All the manmade rules created to keep people from transgressing the instructions, kept people from the benefit of practicing the instructions. And God gave the Torah to Moses how, through His spoken Word.

About 2000 years after Moses, Yeshua the Word of God made flesh walks among us. He actually lives the Torah properly, following the instructions in the manner they were intended to be lived. We see the covenant that Moses copied down in writing actually lived out properly, from the heart. Yeshua states that He is establishing a new covenant. It was the one God spoke of to Jeremiah (Chapter 31:31-34). This covenant says that no man shall teach his neighbor for all shall know the Lord. It is the covenant where the Law is written on our hearts. Just as fullness of the Mosaic covenant was not realized until Yeshua came in the flesh the first time, the new covenant established with the nation of Israel, in the days Yeshua walked the earth, has not been realized in its fullness yet. I suspect it will not be realized in its fullness until the second coming of the Messiah. Men are still teaching their fellow man. Will the fullness be realized in the millennial kingdom or in the world to come? Hasn’t it been about 2000 years since Yeshua’s last coming?

Have you read the description of the new covenant. It is described in Jeremiah Chapter 31 beginning in verse 33. What is the covenant? Who is the covenant made with? How is the fullness of the covenant realized?

At His next coming, will God establish the covenant of peace that is prophesied? If so, when will it be realized in its fullness? I believe I see a great war prophesied at the end of the millennial kingdom.

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Will the covenant of peace do away with the covenant of the Torah being written on our hearts? No one would propose such a thing. As the scripture says, a covenant established cannot be annulled unless one of the participants in the covenant is no more. A covenant can never be annulled.

*Galatians 3:15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannuls, or adds thereto.*

When Yeshua came and walked with man in the flesh, He confirmed the Mosaic covenant -- the covenant God gave the children of Israel through Moses. Did Yeshua complete the act of walking that covenant out until the completion of the crucifixion?

It is interesting to hear the explanations of God doing away with covenants made in the Old Testament as if God either was caught by surprise, didn't know what was going to happen when He created the heavens and the earth, or decided to change His mind after 4000 years. I really don't think I would have that much faith in a god that was surprised or was making up the rules as we go along. When God says He changes not, I believe He changes not. If He established covenants with the children of Israel that were promised to be eternal, and we as believers are grafted into the family of Israel and desire to dwell with Israel, those covenants flow down to the believer as eternal.

Each covenant has a sign. In a marriage, rings are exchanged. They are the sign of the covenant. When the wife wears the ring, it is a sign of keeping (holding dear) the covenant, the relationship. Often as a sign of desiring an end to the covenant, or relationship of marriage, one or both of the parties will quit wearing the sign, the ring, thus dishonoring the covenant. What does it mean when man quits keeping the sign of a covenant that God established?

## WHAT ABOUT PAUL?

So far we have established that Yeshua was the unchanging Word of God. We have established that by God's spoken Word to Moses, the Children of Israel received the Torah - an ever lasting covenant. We have established that, according to Yeshua, to violate Torah or teach others to violate Torah would cause one to be least in the kingdom of God (Matthew 5:19). We have established how and why men could have and would have established traditions that nullified Torah - the Word of God.

Why isn't this established knowledge the end of the discussion? Because of the traditions of men associated with the teachings of Paul. I am not the first to think there was the potential for an issue here.

*2 Peter 3:15-17 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him has written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which **are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable twist**, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. You therefore, beloved, seeing you know these things beforehand,*

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*beware lest you also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.*

Let us examine what we know about Paul. The best place to go is the book of Acts. We first encounter Paul at the stoning of Steven. Paul is giving his approval and holding the cloaks of those doing the stoning. In context, some believe he is there as a representative of the Sanhedrin. After a period of tormenting the believers in Jerusalem, the book of Acts recounts Paul's encounter on the road to Damascus. A man named Ananias is sent to minister to Paul.

*Acts 22:12 (KJV) And one Ananias, **a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt [there],***

A devout man according to the law? Why does scripture mention Ananias as a devout man according to the law (the Torah)? Paul was a Pharisee of Pharisees. Paul knew scripture and Torah probably like few other men in history. Paul knew Deuteronomy 13.

*Deuteronomy 13:1-5 (KJ2000) If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke unto you, and he says, Let us go after other gods, which you have not known, and let us serve them; You shall not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: **for the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and you shall serve him, and cleave unto him.** And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he has spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust you out of the way which the LORD your God commanded you to walk in. So shall you put the evil away from the midst of you.*

As a Torah observer, Paul knew that the commandments to which this scripture referred to would be the "Law of Moses". Paul would have considered anyone who taught anything that violated Torah as a test from God. Had Ananias been anything but fully Torah obedient, Paul would have rejected the ministry of Ananias even if Ananias did restore Paul's sight. In fact Paul's knowledge of Torah and zealous desire to do the will of God made him the perfect man for the mission to the Gentiles. By comparing scripture in Acts and Galatians, it can be derived that it was twelve to thirteen years from the Damascus experience until Paul journeyed to Jerusalem to confer with the council. In Galatians, Paul states that they (the council) added nothing to him but to remember the poor. Since James and the council in Jerusalem did give instructions, we can only surmise what they instructed was nothing more than he (Paul) had already intended to teach:

Abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, abstain from sexual immorality, abstain from blood, and abstain from the meat of strangled animals for Moses and the Prophets are taught every Shabbat in every synagogue in every city throughout the world. (Refer to Acts 15:17-20)

What can this mean?

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- These instructions were given to prevent laying a heavy burden on new believers who were unfamiliar with Torah.
- The council recognized that salvation did not come from observing the instructions of Torah.
- The council did give four minimum requirements.
- Why?

The key is the next sentence. The explanation of the why is in the “FOR”. The scripture tells us what these requirements are “FOR”.

Acts 15:20, “For Moses and the Prophets are taught on Shabbat in every synagogue in every city through out the world.”

If new believers (Gentiles) observed the four instructions given, that observance would allow the new believers to enter the synagogues without generating a justifiable scripturally based offense against the Jewish people in attendance. In the synagogues, they would hear the teachings from the scriptures, the Old Testament -- The Law of Moses and the Prophets. James and the elders of the council knew the value of allowing God to convict the new believers. God's conviction would be of benefit to them, rather than man given directives that would ultimately become a burden. The council knew that the difference between legalistic observance and love born submission -- **is not what you do - but why you do it**. When one does as he is instructed, it is a burden or a blessing based solely on the attitude of the person performing the action.

When anyone chooses to do some act, the act will be seen by the performer as being performed:

- To avoid punishment,
- Out of gratitude for the opportunity.

I can remember as a youth mowing the lawn. The first time I was allowed to push the mower, I was elated that I had been judged mature enough to have the opportunity. After the first couple of times that I could not go off willy-nilly doing some mindless antics because I was required to mow the lawn, it became a burden that I had to do to avoid punishment. I now at times enjoy the opportunity, when I have time, to go outside and push the mower and see an instant result to the sweat of my brow. It is an opportunity that I seldom get in my labors any more. The location of the lawn has changed since my childhood but the grass looks a lot like that of my childhood. If an act is performed to avoid punishment, it has a high likely hood of quickly being seen as a burden. The natural tendency is to see the action as a task, an infringement on freedom, and we tend to see ourselves as victims, as our rights being violated. If however we see the activity as an opportunity -- if we pursue its completion out of gratitude for that which we have already received and can never pay for, or as freedom from a torment that burdens us, then being allowed to perform the action is seen as a blessing. By the way, as a bondservant,

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one no longer has any rights. One only does what the Master directs and receives what the Master provides. What do you mean you are not getting what you deserve? I am sure you are correct. I praise God daily that I am not getting what I deserve.

Any action that one is required to perform can quickly become a burden. The same action, when one is given the opportunity to perform it as a privilege, is an uplifting freedom. The same act will burden the one required to perform it (putting them under the curse of performance) and bless the one who is privileged with the opportunity to perform it (granting them freedom). One is legalistic observance, the other is love-born submission. It is an issue of attitude. The council at Jerusalem knew that the new believers needed to be convicted of the benefit of following the instructions of Moses and accept the opportunity, but realize they were not required to observe out of ritualistic regulation.

*Acts 15:21 (KJ2000) For Moses of old time has in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day.*

### Was Paul REALLY Torah Observant?

To the very end! Consider the following scriptures.

*Acts 21:20-27 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, You see, brother, **how many thousands of Jews there are who believe; and they are all zealous of the law**: And they are informed of you, that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that you are come. Do therefore this that we say to you: We have four men who have a vow on themselves; **Them take, and purify yourself with them, and pay their expenses, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, of which they were informed concerning you, are nothing; but that you yourself also walk orderly, and keep the law.** And concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, except only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication. **Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to announce the accomplishment of the days of purification, until an offering should be offered for every one of them. And when the seven days were almost ended,** the Jews who were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,*

What can be gained by this scripture?

There were many thousands of **Torah observant Jews** in Jerusalem **who believed** Yeshua was the Son of God and was raised from the dead.

Paul agreed to pay the price of four others and himself to take a vow to God to prove **he (Paul) was Torah observant**.

Paul had no objection to Biblical sacrifices. To the Torah observant, as long as there was still a Temple standing or a Tabernacle erected, sacrifices were part of worshipping God. **Paul**

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**exhibited no reluctance to the participation in the purification vow.** The purification ritual in which one shaves his head is the Nazarite vow. We read about it in Numbers 6:1-21. It includes animal sacrifices. Paul showed no reluctance to the participation in animal sacrifices in the Temple. This period dates late 50's to early 60 AD. The Temple had not been destroyed and animal sacrifices were still part of the feasts, festivals and Biblical rituals. Paul would have known of the Biblical sacrifices that accompanied the Nazarite vow. He agreed. James felt strongly that the people should know Paul taught nothing against the Torah and was Torah obedient himself. Paul is not recorded as having any objection. In context if Paul had objected, it would have been important enough to record it. The seven days of purification were almost complete and Paul is still participating in the vow and shows no sign of conviction or repentance.

*Numbers 6:2 Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When either man or woman shall separate themselves to vow a vow of a Nazarite, to separate themselves unto the LORD:  
Numbers 6:9 And if any man dies very suddenly beside him, and he has defiled the head of his consecration; then he shall shave his head in the day of his cleansing, on the seventh day shall he shave it.*

*Numbers 6:13-18 And this is the law of the Nazarite, **when the days of his separation are fulfilled:** he shall be brought unto the door of the tabernacle of meeting: And **he shall offer his offering unto the LORD, one male lamb of the first year without blemish for a burnt offering, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish for a sin offering, and one ram without blemish for peace offerings, And a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, and wafers of unleavened bread anointed with oil, and their grain offering, and their drink offerings.** And the priest shall bring them before the LORD, and shall offer his sin offering, and his burnt offering: And he shall offer the ram for a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the LORD, with the basket of unleavened bread: the priest shall offer also his grain offering, and his drink offering. And the Nazarite shall shave the head of his separation at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and shall take the hair of the head of his separation, and put it in the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offerings.*

Paul was sticking this through to the end. He didn't succumb to peer pressure (claiming to be Torah observant when he was not) only to quickly repent. Note that the days (7) are almost full. Notice that in Acts chapter 24, 25 and 28 he repeats his continuous Torah observance. Even if you were to argue that Paul's purification vow is not a Nazarite vow, it does not diminish Paul's willingness to partake of the Temple ceremony to prove his approval of Torah observance.

### Who is this Paul?

*Acts 23:6 (KJV) But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men [and] brethren, **I am a Pharisee**, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.*

*Acts 24:14 (KJ2000) But this I confess unto you, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, **believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets:***

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*Acts 25:8 (KJ2000) While he answered for himself, **Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended anything at all.***

*Acts 28:17 (KJ2000) And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have **committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers**, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.*

Paul is established in the Book of Acts as a Torah observant Jew, a Pharisee of Pharisees who has not violated the Law. In fact, scripture (again the Book of Acts) tells us Paul taught from the Tanakh. Where is the Tanakh referred to in Acts? Anywhere the Book of Acts uses any of the phrases “the scriptures” or “the law and the prophets” or “Moses and the Prophets” it is referring to the writings in the Tanakh. How can this be said? Think about this; there was no New Testament until the mid 300 AD time frame and the Council of Carthage.

If Paul is Torah obedient and taught Jews and Gentiles alike from the Old Testament (that taught in Deuteronomy 13) that no one should teach anyone to violate the Torah, how do we reconcile that current Christian doctrine teaches there is no benefit to being Torah observant?

Could it be there are two paths for Godly observance: one for the Jew and one for the Gentile? Is this consistent with scripture? The Torah teaches there are two parts to the law one of blessing and life, one of curses and death; but there is only one law for the native born and for the stranger who dwells with him. Paul’s writings reject that there are two paths.

Was Paul a hypocrite? Did he deceive people into believing he was Torah observant when he was in the presence of Jews and violated Torah and taught to violate the Torah when no Jews were present? If so, Paul violated the teaching of Yeshua (Matthew 5:19). By Matthew 5:19, Paul would then be considered least in the Kingdom of Heaven. Would it be fitting that so much of scripture be written by such a wretched man – Heaven forbid. If you exclude Paul’s writings, there are few other scriptures used to reject following the teachings of Torah.

But I said earlier that I believed all of scripture is the inspired Word of God and it does not contradict itself. Then by my own rules, I must accept Paul’s writings as the inspired Word of God. I must then understand how Paul’s writings agree with and support Torah. Because of traditions, this is difficult.

Zoologists have taken sparrow eggs from the mother sparrow and submitted them to hard rock music and raised them to be adult sparrows. When they were then reintroduced into environments with other sparrows that were raised by their mothers, these subject sparrows continued to attempt to chirp the confusion instilled by hard rock music and never learned the song of the sparrow.

Like the sparrows once our traditions are established, we tend to resist changing them. Why?

One, it takes work to change and man is by nature lazy. Second, changing from what we know to something different means a trip into the unknown. Man has a natural fear of the unknown. Notice the flesh nature involved with each of these? If we:

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- trust God
- believe He works all things for the good of those called by His name
- believe He is calling us to change,

we should recognize that change, He is calling us to, as beneficial and be excited about the opportunity to change.

We have to ask ourselves a question. Do we trust God? If God said to do something, it is in our best interest to do that thing (or not do that thing what ever the case maybe). God only has our best interest at heart. Giving up that thing that looks good to the world doesn't cheat the believer out of living life to its fullest. It brings the believer to the abundance of life. It frees the believer from that which brings death. That is the purpose of Torah – to teach one how to choose between life and death.

*Deuteronomy 30:19 I call heaven and earth as witness this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live:*

**But Paul was a Jew.**

### Was it Different for Paul?

We established that Paul was Torah observant through the writing of Acts. Some would say, but Paul is a Jew of course he was Torah observant. Was there to be one path for the Jew and one for the Gentile?

*Acts 15:8-9 And God, who knows the hearts, bore them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.*

*Romans 10:12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.*

*Romans 11:17-23 And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree; Boast not against the branches. But if you boast, you bear not the root, but the root you. You will say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Be not arrogant, but fear: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also not spare you. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in his goodness: otherwise you also shall be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again.*

*Galatians 3:28-29 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then are you Abraham's descendants, and heirs according to the promise.*

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*Ephesians 3:5-6 Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:*

*Colossians 3:10-11 And have put on the new man, that is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.*

Not even citing the Old Testament scriptures stating that there is one law for both the native born and the stranger who is willing to dwell with him, we have many testaments to there being one path to salvation for the Jew and Nations alike. This was not a new thought to the Jewish mind at the time of Christ. They knew the Tanakh scriptures that called them to be a nation of priest unto the world. Their “man-born” tradition of that day was the belief that the Gentiles had to convert to Judaism to be saved. Their tradition taught that being born a Jew brought salvation. This was the whole issue with the conversation between Nicodemus and Yeshua in the third chapter of John. Judaism of the time of Christ taught that the Gentile had to be “born again” into Judaism to receive salvation. This produced the issue of conflict the “traditional” Jews had with the teaching of Paul. He understood the “mystery of the Gospel”. By faith in Yeshua as the Messiah the Gentile could be “grafted in” to the “Children of Israel”. The believing Gentile could share in the covenant promise of Abraham, and like Abraham, be counted righteous by faith.

The believing Gentile is not saved separate from Israel but is saved with Israel.

### **But, But, But,**

“But, I have heard it said”; I hear the stammer from here (and you haven’t even read this as I write). One reason God can’t use the believer for the fullness of God’s purpose is the believer has his BUT in the way.

Yes, I was raised with all the scriptures that “traditionally” are used to say that the “Law of Moses” was done away with (even though we have seen Yeshua himself say that was not the case – Matthew 5:18-19).

Let us just touch a few of the issues:

Refer to Matthew 15:1-20 and Luke 11:37-41.

There is the statement made at a table that all things are clean unto you. In context this statement is made at a Jewish (Pharisee’s) table where everything on the table would have been kosher, and the issue that Yeshua had forced was the hand washing ritual. The Jewish mindset of the time saw the table as a “Type” of an alter (a physical manifestation of a spiritual issue). The hand washing ritual had symbolic spiritual connotations and there were even serious debates regarding the proper way to wash the hands. There was great emphasis regarding how the hands should be washed yet the religious men of the day were highly concerned with what others saw and were not looking into the condition of their hearts. Yeshua was attempting to teach them that the condition of their heart was more important to their

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spiritual state than any hand washing ceremony. (Don't misunderstand, there may be merit to understanding the table as a "Type" of an altar.) *Matthew 15:20 (KJ2000) These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defiles not a man.*

### Consider Acts Chapter 10.

The sheet vision of Peter is greatly misrepresented. People would like to say it annulled all kosher requirements. But that is an interpretation taken out of context. In using scripture to prove scripture, the key is found in Acts 10:28.

*Acts 10:28 And he said unto them, You know that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God has showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.*

The issue of the vision was that a Jew was "traditionally" not allowed to enter the house of a Gentile. It was a fence (a physical boundary set up with the intent of preventing a spiritual transgression) that had been built to prevent the Jew from becoming ritually unclean and inadvertently entering the Temple in an unclean state. All Jews that were unclean would know what things, according to the Torah, would contaminate another person and thus make him ineligible to enter the Temple. They would warn one another to prevent even an unintentional violation of entering the Temple in an unclean state. Gentiles, on the other hand, were most likely not going to know what would cause such an offense. They wouldn't even know they caused the second person to be unclean and unwittingly (or possibly maliciously) cause the unsuspecting person (the Jew) to transgress the Temple and the Torah. In an attempt to preclude this possibility the Jewish leadership established a tradition. Jews were not allowed to enter the dwelling of a Gentile. This is the issue that God is addressing. Read with an open mind, in context, this passage is revealed to be an issue that must be addressed before the Gospel will ever get from the Jewish people to the Gentiles. Had God not addressed this issue, the Gentile nations might have not heard the gospel to this day.

### Consider the issue of the teaching in Galatians.

Paul has planted an assembly of believers in Galatia. Some traditional observant Jewish individuals come along. By "traditional" Judaism, the only path of salvation for a Gentile is conversion to Judaism. They (the Judaizers) are trying to sway the Galatian believers to a belief that physical circumcision is required for salvation; otherwise the Gentiles cannot become Jews. Paul is writing to address the issue of salvation by the works of man's hands. If man could perform a deed that would earn salvation, then man would not need God. This very thought violates Torah and that is what he is expressing. Galatians is a book written to refute man earning his salvation by the work of his own hands. This would be tantamount to witchcraft and Paul expresses the same. Paul eloquently addresses the function and relation of faith and works and does it in so few words that most people miss the point. Consider the passage:

*Galatians 3:11-12 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.*

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We are saved by Faith. What then is the purpose of the law?

*Leviticus 18:5* Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD.

*Deuteronomy 30:19* I call heaven and earth as witness this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live:

These blessings and curses that God set were perpetual -- eternal blessings and curses. What was it that Paul wrote in Galatians?

*Galatians 3:15* Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though but a man's covenant, yet confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

A covenant confirmed cannot be annulled. God said it, not me. Read the Book of Ester. That a covenant cannot be annulled is the central theme. Once made, even if it was a bad covenant, a king's covenant was irrefutable law.

Let us look into the Book of Colossians.

This is the place people go, along with passages in Galatians, to say that the observance of the feasts and festivals has no benefit. The Biblical feasts and festivals are prophetic pictures of the Messiah, not only the acts of the past, but a prophetic picture for the future. In context, the passages in Galatians address attempts to earn righteousness through legalistic observance. When taken as a whole, the book of Colossians addresses the issue of Gnosticism and other such religions of special knowledge. The Colossians were Gentile believers surrounded by a Gentile world. As they realized their position, as grafted into Israel, and started observing the Torah instructions, which was open to all who were willing to participate, they were be scorned by those around them. Consider the passages:

*Colossians 2:21-22* (Touch not; taste not; handle not; Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?

*Colossians 2:16-17* Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ.

We see that Paul warns the believers of those deceivers who would say all physical pleasure is harmful to the spirit. The feasts and festivals are times of great celebration in reverence to God where we enjoy what He has provided. This would fly in the face of Gnostic teaching that would instruct the follower to abstain from all things that would bring pleasure to the body. Punishment of the body is the doctrines of men, not the Word of God. And just for all of those who would say "Aha, see all meat is clean. This proves that we shouldn't bother with kosher." The Greek behind this English translation is Strong's 1035 "brosis". It more literally translates as "food or eating." Because of the changes in the English usage of words since the 1600's, we presently think of this word to mean "animal flesh." The reader of the time of the translation would have

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thought of it as meaning “food or eating” and would not have been confused thinking it had to mean “animal flesh.”

Refer to 1 Corinthians Chapter 8.

This is where Paul deals with food sacrificed to idols. And if one reads in context, Paul ends with the statement that he would rather be a vegetarian than ever take the chance of eating animal flesh, if that in so doing, he caused another to stumble. When one looks at it more closely, could Paul be writing a little sarcastically? He was instructed by the Jerusalem council to tell the Gentiles to abstain from food sacrificed to idols. In Revelation, God instructs the church of Smyrna and Thyatira that He has this against them, that they eat things sacrificed to idols. Did Paul not write in Galatians that the council in Jerusalem added nothing to him but that he remember the poor? (I personally believe this is reference to the poor in Jerusalem. Remember his trips back to Jerusalem with gifts from the Gentiles. Torah observance would provide for remembrance of the poor in each locality.) The Torah would forbid eating meat sacrificed to idols. It would be participating in the paganism of the locals which was forbidden. Did Paul in a sarcastic manner tell those with “such high spiritual understanding” and “special knowledge” that they, being above their brothers, were not allowed to do things that might be harmful to the weaker brother, even if the weaker brother only observed such action?

Could it be that this Torah observant, highly educated, scriptural scholar would not be above being a little sarcastic to drive home a point to someone who should know better (and likely does know better) than to even ask such a question? It is hard to believe Paul is going against every other scripture in the Bible and authorizing these people to eat things sacrificed to idols. He is making a point that it would be better to never eat meat than to cause someone to stumble. Could his point be, “Why even ask such a question?”

Remember, this is the man who upon entering the Sanhedrin makes a statement about the High Priest then suggests that he could not recognize the High Priest. Yet can recognize enough of the Sanhedrin members to know that the assembly was made up of some number of Sadducees and some number of Pharisees. Paul with inspiration quickly seizes the opportunity, to avoid the persecution of the Sanhedrin, by setting the two relatively equal numbered groups into a battle over resurrection. This is the same man that had worked special assignments for the Sanhedrin. The most logical explanation for Paul making such a statement regarding the High Priest, was that the actions of the High Priest were so unbecoming of a man in that position as to make that High Priest unrecognizable due to his actions. Paul may not have been above the use of a little sarcasm.

Reference the Book of Romans.

It is sufficient to say that there are two parts to the Torah. One part instructs the follower what God blesses. The other part tells the follower what brings about curses and death. Some are easily identifiable spiritual issues. Some are physical manifestations of spiritual issues. Paul writes a good deal about the Law of Moses in Romans. One thing stands out:

*Romans 7:12 Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.*

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The rest of Romans should be read with the understanding that there are two parts to the Torah:

Blessings and life

Curses and death.

That which was nailed to the cross was the curse of the Law. Those things committed that bring death.

## **THE NEW COVENANT**

But, I am under the New Covenant. No problem. Let us read the description of the New Covenant (better translated as the renewed covenant).

*Jeremiah 31:31-34 Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will make a new covenant (berit chadashah) with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; my covenant which they broke, although I was a husband unto them, says the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, says the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*

The New Covenant here is the Hebrew words berit chadashah. This is the term used for the New Testament by Hebrew speaking people today. The word berit refers to the covenant. The word chadashah is translated as new. The root word of chadashah is chadash which means to repair refresh or renew.

Notice, it is the same Law (the same set of instructions) just written on their hearts instead of on tablets of stone. This covenant (the New Covenant) is made with the Children of Israel and the house of Judah. If you want to be a part of it you better decide your desire is to dwell with them, among them, and be grafted into the family of the Children of Israel. There will be one law for the native born (the Jew) and the stranger (the Gentile) that dwells among the native born (the Jew). This is the same law that was written on the tablets. It hasn't changed. It is the instructions given by a God that does not change.

The covenant made with the Children of Israel was not lived out correctly until Yeshua the Messiah came the first time. I believe that the New Covenant will not be fully realized until his second coming. Do we still teach our neighbor? But when Messiah returns the fullness of this covenant will be realized just as the Law of Moses was lived out correctly when He came as Yeshua.

*Matthew 5:17 Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.*

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He came to fulfill the Torah and live it out properly. He had the proper attitude of the heart. That is the only way it could be lived out properly. When He returns, we will all live it out properly with the proper attitude of the heart.

### **The 2000 Year Phenomenon**

We discussed this some earlier. There is a little known but interesting piece of information. In Genesis, scripture tells us that God set the heavens as a sign. Some have done research and discovered that in its original form the signs of the zodiac came from the Hebrew sodia. There were originally twelve signs; one for each month. The twelve signs each told a story of the Messiah and His redemption of the world. It was probably used in early times to pass the oral stories from one generation to the next. Over the span of 2000 years the picture God was painting got so distorted by man that God called men to a mountain and came down and wrote on stone tablets the instructions and the prophesies that revealed His redemptive plan. Another 2000 years went by and man had so distorted the picture that God came down and walked among men in the flesh and realigned the pictures again writing the message on the hearts of men. Since then, it has been another 2000 years. Has man messed up the picture again? Can we expect God to come down soon to clean up the distortion of His Word?

While types may be incomplete consider the following two stories:

Joseph was the chosen son of his father, Jacob. Joseph's brothers who hated and rejected him, threw him in a pit to die. He was sold for pieces of silver. He comes to be recognized in Egypt (a type for the world) as second only to the pharaoh (who was as god to the Egyptians), and Joseph is recognized as the way to life. The people of Egypt sell all they have and even themselves for this life that only Joseph can deliver to them. When the brothers see Joseph, they cannot even recognize Joseph as their brother because he looks so much like an Egyptian. They cannot recognize him until he reveals himself to them. The offspring that Joseph has from the world are grafted in (adopted) by the father into the family (Joseph's offspring of a woman from the world become children of Israel).

In the story of Ruth, Elimelech found himself in a famine in Israel. He leaves Bethlehem (the breadbasket) and travels to Moab (the deserted). The son of the father marries a gentile. This gentile makes the decision to remain attached to the Jewish family, when the option of going back to her old life is presented, and adopts the God of Israel as her God. After great devastation, only a remnant of the family returns to Israel including the family member who was been grafted in. This grafted in gentile is treated with favor by the kinsman redeemer. The family remnant recognizes the kinsman redeemer as such, and instructs the grafted in family member on how to approach the kinsman redeemer in the proper manner. The kinsman redeemer redeems both the remnant and the grafted in family member and the inheritance is restored.

Ruth is the story told on the festival of Shavuot. According to Jewish tradition, the Torah was given at Mount Sinai on Shavuot. According to Acts, the Holy Spirit visited the believers en mass in Jerusalem about 2000 years later. In Christian circles, we know it more commonly as Pentecost.

## The Life in Acts

I read of the shadow of Peter and the rags of Paul. People wanted to touch them because even in these objects, there was healing power. I don't see that today. I read how the believers were in one accord. I don't see that today. Why not? We each have our traditions and our own beliefs. In the first century church, there was but one belief. What God said was right and everything else was wrong. They walked in unity of belief and unity with God. They had one set of instructions from the scriptures (the writings of Moses and the prophets, the Torah), the instruction God had given. They knew the instructions about blessings and they knew the instruction about curses. They understood the opportunity that was available to them to follow those instructions and be freed from the curses of the world. They knew the Passover feast story. They saw Messiah come to be examined, to be proven without blemish for four days prior to the sacrifice. They saw him bruised and striped but not a bone broken. They recognized the day after his crucifixion when he had taken on the sins of the world as being the feast of unleavened bread, when their houses were purged of leaven - the symbol of sin. They saw him laid in the grave for three days. They saw the empty grave after the third day and recognized He had risen on the festival of the Waving of the Ohmer, or the Feast of First Fruits of the Barley Harvest. All those who knew the picture the festival painted and were not so wrapped up in traditions that they would not have eyes to see, recognized this event. This festival pointed out the Messiah.

Many saw and believed. Many did not.

Can you tell me the other pictures of Messiah that are in the Biblical Feasts and Festivals? Will you be able to see Messiah in the picture of the Feasts and Festivals when He comes again? Will you be so staunchly wrapped in your traditions that you like the religious leaders of that generation will be unable to recognize the season when it is upon you?

When you read Ezekiel 43 and Zechariah 14, you see pictures of what I believe is the millennial kingdom. The scriptures include a temple and a sacrificial system. Not all the sacrifices in the Torah dealt with sin. There were elevation offerings and fellowship offerings and the continual offerings of reverence. Today there is no Temple and according to Torah no place to sacrifice. The prophetic scriptures tell us that when the Temple is restored, the sacrificial service be restored. Do you consider yourself the bride of Christ? Have you prepared yourself by knowing even the least of your intended's system of worship and reverence.

Consider the story of Ester. She could not enter into the king's presence without his approval and recognition. To enter into his presence with out his permission, even though she was the queen, meant certain death. Remember Nadab and Abihu?

Is our God that vengeful and mean? No, He is that Holy. He tells us in the instructions to be holy for He is Holy. Like darkness in the presence of light, un-holiness in the presence of holiness will be consumed like a fire consumes the stubble.

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Remember the sins of Jeroboam. He changed the times of the Feasts and Festivals; he changed the places; he sold the priesthood; and he erected graven images. For these practices, the children of Israel were eventually decimated and dispersed into slavery.

Consider the pictures in the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Tabernacles, the Sabbath, and the New Moon.

We don't even know the instructions. How can we know if we are following them or not? How do we know where we still have pieces of Egypt in our life? God wants us to choose life that we might have life and that abundantly. He has given us instructions. Yes, they will set us apart. Yes, they will cause us to look different. Yes, we will not be able to go do all the things we used to do. Yes, we may not even be able to do the things our neighbors do. Yes, they will limit us from participating in those things that bring about death. But would it be better to be acceptable to man or acceptable to God? And will the real fullness of life come from being acceptable to man or from being acceptable to God? What is right in the sight of God will seem foolishness to the world. And the greatest wisdom of man is mere foolishness to God.

## A Redeeming God

The believer in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Yacov is blessed. We serve a God who is in the business of redeeming, of paying the price to restore relationship, of serving His creation. God set signs in the heavens that would testify of His redemptive plan before He even created man. Think about it. Why did the three wise men come seeking the messiah when Yeshua was born? It was in the signs in the heavens -- the stars -- the signs that God put there. But how did they know about it?

Could it be that during the Babylonian exile the Hebrews recounted the oral (unwritten) traditions relating to the messianic prophesy set as a sign in the heavens? God put the heavenly signs there before man was created. Refer to Genesis and read about it. God placed the stars in the heavens as signs -- before the creation of man - before the fall of man (Adam). God had a relationship with Adam where He walked with man, talked with man and taught man His ways. Before He created man, He created the plan of how He would redeem man. Why? So that He (God) could have a relationship that would enable Him to dwell among man again. *Revelation 22:3-4 (KJ2000) And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be on their foreheads.*

The point is that God has been revealing His message of redemption for man, to man since the beginning through His Word. The Word, who when He walked among men, we knew as Jesus or Yeshua. This plan of redemption has never changed since it was written in the heavens at the beginning of time. You will hear teachings that contradict that understanding; but, God, Himself, has said He changes not.

God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Yacov is all seeing, all knowing and all comprehending. To say God made a promise and then had to change His mind, means that I can't trust God to keep

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His promise. And/or God woke up one day and realized He had made a mistake. Man for his own good must change; God, by His very nature, and for the good of man, can never change.

If God is a covenant keeping God who never changes, and a covenant can never be annulled, why do we talk about an “Old Covenant” and a “New Covenant”?

Is it a tradition of man that does not agree with the Word of God?

## **CAN GOD CHANGE? CAN YESHUA CHANGE?**

First these two questions are not two questions. They are one in the same. From John Chapter 1, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” God can’t change and Yeshua can’t change. God and Yeshua are one (John chapter 17).

Let us consider:

Hebrew’s 13:8 tells us that Yeshua never changes. If He gave Moses instructions that were good for the people to follow then, it follows that those instructions would be good, not only for them then, but for all their generations and also for anyone that wanted to associate with them.

Then, would those things He said in those days be true today?

What did Yeshua say in Matthew 5:19 and 20? What about Paul?

Questions to consider:

1. Did Paul teach from the Scriptures?
2. What Scriptures did Paul teach from?
3. Do you believe the Berians were well versed in the first five books of the Bible?
4. Do you believe the leading Jews (elders) of the region of Rome were well versed in the first five books of the Bible?
5. Did Paul believe it was important for him to observe Torah?
6. Do you believe Paul would desire to preach in a way that would make him or others lead by him to be considered the least in the kingdom of heaven? To quote Paul “God forbid”.

I would advise, not only, that you do not take my word for what the truth is, but that you not take any man’s word. So, let us go to God’s Word.

The Berians were counted more noble for searching the Word of God to determine if what Paul said was true.

How do we reconcile that God has not changed when it is so often preached that the Old Testament was for then and the New Testament is for now?

Jeroboam – The sins of paganism that he authorized, out of fear to retain his control over Israel (the same power God had ordained for him over Israel), ultimately brought destruction to the people of the kingdom of Israel. Jeroboam did not trust God would provide the fullness of His promise to Jeroboam concerning Israel, so he took matters in his own hands.

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Ruth – The book with an underlying theme that reveals that the Gentile and Jew do not receive the provision of the inheritance from the kinsman redeemer until the gentile who accepts the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and dwells with the Jew, learns from the Jew to how to approach the kinsman redeemer.

Ester – The Book that confirms that once a covenant is signed, that covenant made by the King cannot be repealed or annulled until that king is no more.

Job – The book that teaches of legalism in the Old Testament. God allows and even points Job out to the accuser so that, through travail, Job would recognize he was performing his righteous acts so that God would owe him. He was attempting to manipulate God. Was he teaching his children how to stand in right relationship with God? How could he, he wasn't even in right relationship himself.

Deuteronomy Chapter 6 includes the Shema – *Deuteronomy 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: - Shema Israel– Adonai our Elohim is Echad (a unified plural one – not Adon singular but Adonai plural, not Eloah singular but Elohim plural). John 17:21 That they all may be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that you have sent me.* Yeshua the Son and God the Father are one in thought and deed.

The God written of in Deuteronomy is a plural unity-sod the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. What does scripture tell us in the first chapter of John? In the brining was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God and all things were created through the Word And the Word was made flesh and dwelled among us.

*Deuteronomy 13:1-4 If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives you a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke unto you, and he says, Let us go after other gods, which you have not known, and let us serve them; You shall not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. You shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and you shall serve him, and cleave unto him. Deuteronomy 13:17-18 And there shall cleave none of the accursed thing to your hand: that the LORD may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and show you mercy, and have compassion upon you, and multiply you, as he has sworn unto your fathers; When you shall hearken to the voice of the LORD your God, to keep all his commandments which I command you this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of the LORD your God.*

What would be required to be true for you to be able to convince a Torah observant Jew that Yeshua was the Messiah if he knew the scripture above?

What is the difference between observing the instructions correctly and legalism? The action performed is the same act. It is strictly a condition of the heart. This is what the prophet Isaiah wrote about. This is what the book of Job is about. This is what Yeshua taught. This is what Paul writes of in Galatians.

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To perform an act so that favor is merited, is to be able to put God in a place where He owes you. If we could do this, Yeshua shed His blood in vain. We could earn our own salvation. If man could do these things, he would not need God's unmerited favor. If man could earn his righteousness, then man would not need God. In effect we can become god's ourselves, controlling our own destiny. What does it say in the book of Judges? "And in those days there was no king, everyone did what was right in his own eyes".

We all desire to be correct. I am no different. Have you ever stopped to think why? It is a hard question to answer.

Could it be fear is the motivation? Everyone desires to be correct. People respect the man who can tell what is right.

1. If we are correct, there is no need to change. Change is difficult. Why is change difficult? It is difficult to break habits, to adjust to new ways of thinking. It requires effort and, by and large, mankind is a lazy lot.
2. To change means we must do something different than what we do now. Even if in torment, we know that at least we can handle what we are enduring now. What if, when we change, it is worse? Will I be able to handle this new thing?
3. To admit I need to change is to admit I am wrong and have been wrong. Who have I taught this wrong thought to? I will have to admit to them that I have caused them harm, maybe unwittingly, but caused them to walk in error none the less. Will they forgive me? Will they still find me acceptable? Will they still respect me and will they respect what I tell them in the future? Will I lose my ability to influence others and control my destiny?
4. If I am wrong and men find me unacceptable, how will the God of heaven and earth judge me? Will God forgive me of the deception that I have spread and the harm I have caused others?
5. If I change and become really different from the crowd, what kind of persecution will it bring? Will I not be worse off then than now?

These all boil down to **Can I Trust God?** When we see God has called us to change from how and where we are and we start justifying why it will be better for the kingdom of God if we do not change (we are going to not change for the good of the family, the church, the city, the nation, the people), if we will be honest with ourselves, we are questioning if we can trust God.

## To Set the Captives Free

Since the fall of man, mankind, in his flesh, has been sold to sin (*Romans 5:12 Therefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*). We are therefore sold to sin and death as long as we dwell in our flesh. But, through redemption in our Lord and Savior, Yeshua, we can be freed (*John 10:10 ...I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*) It is God's desire that all men be freed from this bondage (*John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting*

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*life. 2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.)* Now if God is never changing (*Numbers 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: has he said, and shall he not do it? or has he spoken, and shall he not make it good?*), should we not believe on His promises? (*Hebrews 11:6 But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. And, Romans 14:23 ... for whatever is not of faith is sin.*) One of the promises that God made was that if we were obedient we would not suffer the diseases of the world or if we did, the believer could expect healing (*Ex 15:26; De 7:15; 28:60, Mark 16:18, Isaiah 53:5, 1Pe 2:24, James 5:15*). Should we not be expecting the healing scripture promises? I believe we should. However, when I look across the church body, I see the same diseases as the world of unbelievers and in the same percentages. In the church I see today there is the same percentage of divorce, cancer, colds, flu, and social malady addictions as there is in the world. We, the church, look just like the world.

*(Luke 4:16-21 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.)*

*(John 8:36 If the Son therefore shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.)*

If Yeshua came to set us free, why are we not free? Consider that we as believers must die to the old before we can truly be born to the new. (*Matthew 9:16 No man puts a piece of new cloth onto an old garment, for that which is put on to fill it up takes from the garment, and the tear is made worse. James 4:4 You adulterers and adulteresses, know you not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. 1 John 2:16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. Ro 13:14; 1Co 10:6; Ga 5:17,24; Eph 2:3; Tit 2:12; 3:3; 1Pe 2:11; 4:2-3.*) If we are the same as the world how then can we be born anew. I submit we cannot. If we are not transformed, we will remain in the old.

From the reading of God's Word, I have come to believe that God loves all His creations and if I love God, I should love what He loves. This would agree with the Biblical teachings of Yeshua.

There are many instructions of God that are in direct opposition to the teachings of typical current Christian doctrine. Where God's instructions are different than your actions you need to change for your own good and the good of those to whom you witness.

## Sabbath and the Traditions of Men

Let us consider the fourth of the Ten Commandments:

*Exodus 20:8-10 Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor, and do all your work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God: in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates:*

*Exodus 31:16 Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to **observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.***

The Sabbath is a perpetual covenant. We know that covenants cannot be broken or annulled. How many of us observe it? How many times did God say it?

Ex 16:23,25-26,29; 20:8,10-11; 31:14-16; 35:2-3; Le 16:31; 23:3,11,15-16,24,32,39; 24:8; 25:2,4,6; Nu 15:32; 28:9-10; De 5:12,14-15; 2Ki 4:23; 11:5,7,9; 16:18; 1Ch 9:32; 2Ch 23:4,8; 36:21; Ne 9:14; 10:31; 13:15-19,21-22; Isa 56:2,6; 58:13; 66:23; Jer 17:21-22,24,27; Eze 46:1,4,12; Am 8:5; Mt 12:1-2,5,8,10-12; 24:20; 28:1; Mr 1:21; 2:23-24,27-28; 3:2,4; 6:2; 15:42; 16:1; Lu 4:16,31; 6:1-2,5-7,9; 13:10,14-16; 14:1,3,5; 23:54,56; Joh 5:9-10,16,18; 7:22-23; 9:14,16; 19:31; Ac 1:12; 13:14,27,42,44; 15:21; 16:13; 17:2; 18:4; Col 2:16

By my count, there are 115 references here. Not one of them says to stop observing the Sabbath. That it changed is a tradition of men. There is good research on this topic in a book "To Long in the Sun". Let us examine the scriptures related to the first day of the week. First it is beneficial to recognize that the Jewish day breaks or begins at sundown not sun up.

*Matthew 28:1 At the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher.*

Mary and the others came to the grave as soon after the Sabbath as possible. They likely were anxious all day and it was not the joyful day of rest usually enjoyed on the seventh day. They got to the grave as soon as they possibly could. Interestingly Yeshua rested in the grave for three days and three nights.

It started four days before Passover, on the appointed day to select the sacrificial lamb and start examining it for blemishes, a scriptural instruction. Yeshua was crucified at sunset, Wednesday (Passover). Thursday was the Sabbath of Unleavened Bread. It appears Friday was the traditional day of First Fruits of the Barley Harvest – the Waving of the Ohmer. That period now includes Wednesday night, Thursday, Thursday night, Friday, Friday night and Saturday (the Sabbath). Three day and three nights are complete. After the first day of the week dawns (Biblically at sun set), Yeshua is risen from the grave. Yeshua rose on the first day of the week alright but it was after He observed the Sabbath rest. I see no explicit instruction to change a perpetual covenant here. My understanding is this first day of the week is the Biblically instructed First Fruits of the Barley Harvest – the Waving of the Ohmer. We Know our Messiah Yeshua as the First Fruit.

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*Mark 16:2 And very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulcher at the rising of the sun.*

This is the same event told from another point. The point above is still valid.

*Mark 16:9 Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven demons.*

The Greek word translated into English as early in both instances of Mark, is Strong's 4404 "proi" from Strong's 4253 "pro". It means "at the break of" from the root of "prior to". Yeshua was risen prior to their arrival and they arrived as soon after first light as they could.

*Luke 24:1 Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others came with them.*

The Greek phrase translated as very early speaks to how extremely early it was on the first day of the week.

*John 20:1 The first day of the week came Mary Magdalene early, **when it was yet dark**, unto the sepulcher, and saw the stone taken away from the sepulcher.*

If the others don't say it explicitly, this scripture does. It was so early on the first day of the week it was still dark. It was the predawn hours.

*John 20:19 Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and said unto them, Peace be unto you.*

As the disciples are huddled in fear, Yeshua comes to them to comfort them. There is still not an instruction given to supersede the perpetual covenant of Sabbath rest.

*Acts 20:7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the next day; and continued his speech until midnight.*

This is the one scripture that speaks to the assembling of the brothers on the first day of the week. Again by the Jewish calendar day begins at sunset. The first day of the week would begin for the Jew at sundown of the Sabbath. Paul rested there on the Sabbath. He may have even taught in the synagogue as was his custom. (Oh yes. He observed the Sabbath. Check out the New Testament references given above). When the people gathered for the Havdalah service, Paul took the opportunity to teach. You don't know what a Havdalah service is? It is the Jewish custom of saying goodbye to the Sabbath and preparing to take the essence of the peace of the Sabbath into the coming week. How do I know it was sundown? Because they had a need for many candles. It was dark outside. Paul preaches from sun down till midnight; is interrupted long enough to bring a youth back to life; eats a little bread; preaches the rest of the night until morning. Then he travels during the light of the next day (the first day of the week), Sunday.

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*Acts 20:8-11 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell upon him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.*

Still, no directive to violate the perpetual covenant of the Sabbath is found here.

*1 Corinthians 16:2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.*

If you have been studying your Biblical Feast and Festivals you will understand this as a first fruits offering. It doesn't have anything to do with Sunday worship services. You think that the Torah observant, Tanakh teaching, Jewish writers of the New Testament did not expect us to know the Feast and Festivals? Consider, the verse from Luke:

*Acts 27:9 Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the Fast was now already past, Paul admonished them,*

Do you know what time of year this is speaking of? I can tell from the context, as Luke assumed all believers in Yeshua as the Messiah would. The Fast is the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). It is the only the Biblically mandated observance of a fast on a particular day. It is the only festival that was known as "The Fast".

We still have no scriptural directive to violate the covenant of the Sabbath. In fact Yeshua tells us He is Lord of the Sabbath. Mt 12:8; Mr 2:28; Lu 6:5.

Where then does this directive of Sunday worship come from? The traditions of men. Find a pre-1860 Catechism. In it will be the explanation to the Catholics how they can know that every Protestant believer still acknowledges the Pope as the authority of God on earth. It is because they observe Sunday worship, rejecting the Sabbath. That tradition was established as Catholic doctrine by a Pope in the 500 AD time period. That Pope made the proclamation that changed the Day of worship for the Catholic from the Sabbath to Sunday. The Catechism recognizes that there is no scripture that authorizes such a change. Since the mid 1800s, the Catholics have removed this from the Catechism. It seems it was causing some kind of controversy. Consider that more than 40 of the 115 references to the Sabbath occur in the New Testament.

To fully explore this issue let us look at two more scriptures.

One is the account of Pentecost in Acts. First, if you read Leviticus 23 carefully, you will find Pentecost always falls on the first day of the week, a Sunday. That is because it is the day after the weekly Sabbath. Jewish tradition actually has changed the observance of that Festival day. Could it be that it allowed some references and scriptural validations of who the Messiah might be that the Jewish leadership of the time wished to avoid trying to explain? Pentecost is the Greek reference to the Biblical Festival of Shavuot – traditionally when the Torah was given at Mount Sinai.

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The second is the reference to the scripture in Revelation when John speaks of entering a trance on the Lord's Day. Some have indicated this happened on a Sunday. There is no scriptural reference to support this. There is a scriptural that states Yeshua is Lord of the Sabbath and God spoke many times of His Sabbath.

Mt 12:8; Mr 2:28; Lu 6:5; Ex 31:13; Le 19:3,30; 26:2,43; 2Ch 2:4; Ne 13:19,22; Isa 56:4,6; 58:13; Eze 20:12-13,16,20-21,24; 22:8,26; 23:38; 44:24

Why do I make such an issue of the Sabbath? Because, ignoring the fourth of the Ten Commandments is the most obvious of the traditions of men that nullify the Word of God in our time. I don't come to condemn anyone. Just the opposite. I desire you should enjoy the fullness of the blessing of God. The sooner we take the steps to walk in God's ways and forsake the traditions of men that nullify His Word, the sooner we will close the doors of access to the enemy and open the door of access for God to pour out the blessing of heaven on every believer. You want to evangelize the lost? Start walking down the street and having your shadow fall on people and heal them. People will be running over each other to hear what you have to say.

*Luke 19:41 (KJ2000) And when he came near, he beheld the city, and wept over it,*

*Matthew 15:9 But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*

*John 6:60-67 Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it? When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Does this offend you? What if you shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life. But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who would betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will you also go away?*

## How Much Difference

You may ask "How much difference can it make?" After all, there have been hundreds of years of Christianity that have operated without observing the instructions, how much difference can it make now? How many believe we are approaching the end of this Biblical age? If so are we not going to find ourselves very soon in a much nearer proximity to God?

*Matthew 7:22-23 (KJ2000) Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? and in your name have cast out demons? and in your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work iniquity (anomia).*

Iniquity – Strong's number 458. Anomia - from 459; illegality, i.e. violation of law or (genitive case) wickedness:--iniquity, X transgress(-ion of) the law, unrighteousness.

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Depart from me you who worked transgression of the law. These are the words of Yeshua.

It is worth taking a look back at a couple of references. Consider Nadab and Abihu or Annaias and Sapphira.

*Leviticus 10:1-2 (KJ2000) And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took each of them his censer, and put fire in it, and put incense thereon, and offered unholy fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.*

*Acts 5:1-11 (KJ2000) But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also knowing it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, was it not your own? and after it was sold, was it not in your own power? why have you conceived this thing in your heart? you have not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and died: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wrapped him up, and carried him out, and buried him. And it was about the space of three hours later, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter said unto her, Tell me whether you sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that you have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them who have buried your husband are at the door, and shall carry you out. Then she fell down immediately at his feet, and died: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things.*

When man walks in the closest of proximities to the shekinah glory of God, what would otherwise be allowable is no longer acceptable or allowable. This appears to be particularly true when God is in the process of presenting a picture of Himself such that men will know how to relate to God properly. With Aaron's sons, God was in the process of setting up a Tabernacle on earth that was to mirror the things in heaven. With Annaias and Sapphira God had just revealed how He expected believers to care for one another. In the last part of the fourth chapter of Acts, God had Luke record how the believers were unselfishly sharing and caring for one another.

Before and after, men performed more grievous acts than any of the four mentioned here. God did not react with the same swiftness or fatalness at the other times. Why could this be? Could it be that at the times God is in the process of great revelation to His chosen people, for the sake of those receiving the picture, God cannot allow His pictures to be corrupted? If the picture is corrupted, people are led in error. At certain times the consequences of such could be the same as those suffered by Nadab and Abihu or Annaias and Sapphira.

Consider Moses. At two different times, God directs Moses to perform an act such that water will flow from the rock. There is an abundance of Messianic teaching regarding the Rock and the living water that flowed from it. For this example let us consider that the first time God instructed Moses to strike the Rock; however the second time Moses was to only speak to the

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rock. It appears Moses was to speak humbly to the rock the second time. Instead Moses struck the Rock. Will it be acceptable to strike the Messiah when he presents Himself the second time?

In the first four chapters of Deuteronomy, Moses states three times “for your sake” when relating that God will not allow Him to enter the Promised Land. Perhaps because the time of entry was so near or the picture of the Messiah so critical, God would not even allow Moses to speak of entering the land. Could it be it that a severe penalty was metered out to Moses so the people would realize striking the rock (the Messiah) the second time would prevent one from crossing over into the Promised Land? Interestingly each time the account is related the Hebrew word translated “for your sake” is a different word (De 1:37; 3:26; 4:21). If the three Hebrew words are put together (galal, patheel and debar), it renders “circumstance laced word”. Knowing that Yeshua is the Word, could this also be a hint of why it was so important that Moses not cross over? Could it be this circumstance was entwined with the Messianic picture and for the sake of the people and the necessity of keeping the picture correct, Moses could not be allowed to cross over?

How could this relate to us today? How much difference could it make? If you are a teacher and there is a picture God desires to portray, what could the consequences be for our errant portrayal of that picture? As we noted before, the instructions have not been taught or observed by Christians for hundreds of years. True enough. But if we are entering the final days before the tribulation, the necessity of presenting the proper picture of Messiah to the chosen people is more critical than ever. The instructions are so entwined with Messianic pictures and understanding the nature of God that not presenting them properly may cause some of the chosen people to take an errant path –striking the Messiah. Consider all the Christians that were taught and died believing replacement theology. Were they chosen people believing an errant teaching that attacked the apple of God’s eye? As we enter the final days of this Biblical age, errant teachings will lead many astray. Check the scriptures.

*2 Corinthians 11:14-15 (KJ2000) And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.*

As a note when John wrote:

Revelation 22:18-19 (KJ2000) For I testify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

What book was he writing of?

When God told Moses to write:

Deuteronomy 4:2 (KJ2000) You shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall you take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

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What book was He speaking of?

The Word of God is the same yesterday, today and forever. His revelation is one – He is one.

*Matthew 24:24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; so that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*

What will keep the elect from being deceived by false teachers and false spirits? I suggest it is by filtering every thing through the Word of God-the Scriptures. Remember Deuteronomy chapter 13?

*1 John 4:1 (KJ2000) Beloved, believe not every spirit, but test the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*

*Acts 17:11 (KJ2000) These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*

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Salvation is by faith. It is the scripturally established doctrine of both the Old and the New Testaments. But without knowledge how do we make the correct choices? If we stay bound to old traditions we not only fail to receive the blessings God desires to pour out on us, but we continue to force God to remain distant, lest He destroy us. With a distance hindered relationship, we fail to present the fullness of the witness and testimony that the world so badly needs. We need to know how to choose life.

We, as believers, need to commit ourselves to be voluntary slaves to Christ, recognizing we never had such a blessed position in life as we have as our Master's bondservant, nor is there anything outside of the service to our Lord that will be so good for us. Out of gratitude for what God has done, we should desire to serve Him forever. As a servant, we should only do what the Master commands. What are His commands?

*Deuteronomy 11:26-28 (KJ2000) Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if you will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which you have not known.*

*Deuteronomy 30:11-20 (KJ2000) For this commandment which I command you this day, it is not hidden from you, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very near unto you, in your mouth, and in your heart, that you may do it. See, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command you this day to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that you may live and multiply: and the LORD your God shall bless you in the land where you go to possess it. But if your heart turns*

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*away, so that you will not hear, but shall be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I declare unto you this day, that you shall surely perish, and that you shall not prolong your days upon the land, which you pass over Jordan to go to possess. I call heaven and earth as witness this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live: That you may love the LORD your God, and that you may obey his voice, and that you may cleave unto him: for he is your life, and the length of your days: that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore unto your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.*

I have had some say to me, the Spirit will lead me into all I need to know. Well and good. But, how do you know which spirit is leading you?

*1 Kings 22:22 (KJ2000) And the LORD said unto him, By what means? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, You shall persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.*

*Matthew 24:23-26 (KJ2000) Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; so that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Therefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.*

*1 Timothy 4:1 (KJ2000) Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to deceitful spirits, and doctrines of demons;*

*2 Corinthians 11:13-15 (KJ2000) For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.*

*Deuteronomy 13:2-3 (KJ2000) And the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke unto you, and he says, Let us go after other gods, which you have not known, and let us serve them; You shall not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God is testing you, to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*

There are deceiving spirits that God will allow to be sent among us to test our faith and belief. If we do not know the Word, the commandments of God, we will be deceived –Where did every first century believer go to get the Word of God to test the spirits? They went to the scriptures, the only scriptures that existed at that time - the Old Testament.

Consider these New Testament references to the Old Testament: Mt 21:42; 22:29; 26:54,56; Mr 12:24; 14:49; Lu 24:27,32,45; Joh 5:39; Ac 17:2,11; 18:24,28; Ro 1:2; 15:4; 16:26; 1Co 15:3-4; 2Ti 3:15; 2Pe 3:16.

## Twenty Questions

As a summary, let us ask some questions.

1. Did Christ and the apostles teach from the scriptures?
2. What scriptures did they teach from? Remember there was no New Testament until about 400 A.D. From these scriptures, many believed.
3. Did at least some of those they taught (who believed) know the Old Testament very well?
4. What does Deuteronomy 13 say about anyone who teaches to disobey any part of the Torah?
5. What does Matthew 5:19 say regarding anyone who teaches another to disobey the Torah?
6. Why did Paul pay the way and accompany four men in a vow at the Temple (that included animal sacrifice)? What was he there to prove? Refer to Acts 21:24.
7. Did Paul believe there was any difference between Jew and Gentile, male or female, free or slave, in matters of salvation? Refer to Galatians 3:28.
8. How many covenant promises did God make with Gentiles?
9. Are you grafted into the Children of Israel?
10. Can a believer be deceived by a lying spirit? Refer to Mark 13: 21-23 and I Kings 22:22-23.
11. How do you nullify the Word of God? By the traditions of men that are just slightly out of alignment with the Word of God. Before long you have Christians honoring a day set apart to celebrate witchcraft.
12. What traditions do you participate in and where did they originate? If you can't find them in the Bible, you may be involved in paganism.
13. What is the problem with paganism? It is a path that leads to death. It is the teaching of Balaam.
14. How do you boil a live frog? You turn the heat up a little at a time allowing the frog to get used to the new setting before increasing the heat any more. Before long the water gets hot enough the frog is no longer alive and then he starts to boil.

Ok, you caught me there aren't twenty questions here. I could have asked what you knew about the separation between a fledgling sect of Judaism (known as "the Way" or Christianity) and mainstream Judaism due to their refusal to join the rebellions of 70 A.D. and the Bar Kochba rebellion in 132 A.D. I could have asked what you knew about a converted Sun worshipper

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named Constantine who proclaimed Sunday as the new day for Christian worship on about 321 A.D. or about the Council of Laodicea that formally recognized the edict of Constantine and made it a Church doctrine in 364 A.D. I could have asked these but I didn't. Instead I ask the following:

What is the purpose of the "Law of Moses"? It is instruction given by God to allow the believer to choose between life and death. The instructions function to point out the things of Paganism in our life. It is the filter that allows us to know from which spirit we are hearing. Without instructions on how to choose, the believer can be deceived. Know the instructions; know the Truth;

### **Choose Life.**

May I be so bold as to ask that we return to the prayer of the first of this paper?

Father God, we recognize You as God Almighty, El Shaddi, Who says and does, Who has known the end from the beginning, Who is never surprised and orchestrates all things to occur in Your appointed time. You have told us, that if we ask anything according to Your will, You will hear us and what You hear, You will do. You have also told us that the things that are not to be known remain hidden, but all that is to be revealed has been written. You tell us to study Your Word and meditate upon it that the iniquity within us would be revealed and we might not sin against You. Father God, I ask that You would open the gates of my heart, remove my stiff-necked attitude, break man's traditions in me, and reveal Your Truth to me. I pray that as many as possible would know Your Truth and walk under Your covering and in Your blessing. Not only that they would be blessed by You, which is Your pleasure, but that they would be, in that blessing, a testimony and a light unto the world.

In the name of my Lord and Savior, Yeshua, I pray, Amen.

CHOOSE LIFE

**CHOOSE LIFE**  
A Logic Chart

