

## Mosaic Teacher of the Law

The eschatological expectations among the Prophets and Qumran were for a Messianic teacher, “the interpreter of the Law” (Isa. 42:4).<sup>1</sup> John Collins argued that “the interpreter of the Law” was likely at Qumran to be connected with the priestly “Messiah of Aaron.”<sup>2</sup> This expectation floated the possibility that the founder of the Qumran community might be this “teacher of righteousness.”<sup>3</sup> Perhaps, the notion emerged from the idea of a prophet like Moses or the son of David, Solomon who was a wise teacher as well (1 Kgs. 3:12; Prov.; Eccl.).

Part of the results of the new Judaism and the new Jesus studies is to recognize that at least a segment of Judaism expressed a deep commitment to the Mosaic Law as a covenant document from God, to be obeyed, if Israel was to be blessed. That is, Israel is already in covenant with God, so that they are not trying to obtain this initial blessing. N. T. Wright says it this way, “The Torah was the boundary-marker of the covenant people: those who kept it would share the life of the coming age.”<sup>4</sup> So this covenantal nomism was the way Israel had of maintaining relationship with God, particularly in difficult times. For example, the *Testament of Moses* 9.6 expresses this Jewish attitude from: Mattathias against Antiochus IV to Bar Kokhba against Hadrian, “Let us die rather than transgress the commandments of the Lord of Lords, the God of our fathers.” This reflects the earlier commitments of Daniel and his three friends, who insisted on keeping kosher and not participating in idolatry (Dan. 1:1–21 and 3:1–20).

Israel interpreted God as establishing them in covenant nomism, as within the Mosaic Covenant such that they must obey the Law or cease to have God’s blessing as a people.<sup>5</sup> These Jews saw this passion for the Law as a realization of the New Covenant in which God was giving them a “new heart” and a “new spirit.”<sup>6</sup> As a result, Israel insisted on circumcision, kosher, and Sabbath keeping as expressions of this purity.<sup>7</sup> Likewise Tobit, captive in Ninevah, did not eat their food.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, when Judith ingratiated herself with Nebuchadnezzar’s general Holofernes so she could kill him, she took all the kosher food to eat through the fourth day when she carried out the deed.<sup>9</sup> In the LXX version of Esther 4:17 she reminds God that she has not eaten food from Haman’s table or drunk wine of libations. Another instance is that seven brothers and their mother were tortured and executed on orders of Antiochus IV rather than eat pork.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the Egyptian Jews kept separate

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<sup>1</sup> 4Q174 (4QFlor) 1.11–12 (different from the “branch of David” but possibly identified with the priestly Messiah); CD 6.7; 7:18 (identified with the star but different than the Davidic Messiah).

<sup>2</sup> John Collins *The Star and the Scepter: The Messiah of the DSS and Other Ancient Literature* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), pp. 114–115; cf. 4QFlor 1:6–11; 4QTestim 13–17; CD 7:18–19; 4Q541.

<sup>3</sup> 4QpPs (4Q171) 3:13–16; 1QpHab 1.13; 2:2, 8–9; 5:10; 7:4–5; 11:5; CD 1.11; 20.1, 28, 32. In these texts the *torah* was taught, not replaced by the “teacher of righteousness.”

<sup>4</sup> N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), p. 301.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., *Jdt.* 5:17–21; 8:18–23; *Pr. Azar.* 6–14; CD 10.14–11.18.

<sup>6</sup> As in Jeremiah 31:31–34 and Ezek. 36:24–37:28 so too in: *Jub.* 1:22–25; 1Q3 4, 5; 1QH 4, 5, 18; 4QShir Shalb; CD 4Q266 frag. 2 1.6–8; B 19.12–13; 1QpHab 2.3; 11.13; 4Q434 frag. 1 1.4; 4Q437 frag. 1 1.14.

<sup>7</sup> E.g., *Jub.* 2:17–33; 15:11–34; *Jdt.* 10:5; 12:2.

<sup>8</sup> *Tob.* 1.10–12; 4:12–13.

<sup>9</sup> *Jdt.* 10.5; 12:2, 9–19; 13:8.

<sup>10</sup> 2 Macc. 7.

from Gentile's food and worship which led to hostility between them.<sup>11</sup> Antiochus attempted to force cultural conformity by forbidding aspects of the Law that distinguished Israel from other people, like circumcision and ordering Jews to worship foreign gods.<sup>12</sup> While circumcision was practiced by some other groups, its practice was a strong affirmation of Jewish male identity.<sup>13</sup> Many of the Jews abhorred pagan sacrificial meat as evidenced when Antiochus ordered some Jews to eat pork and food sacrificed to idols but Eleazar and others refused and were tortured and killed.<sup>14</sup>

Covenant nomism informed national policy in Israel as well. For example, the Hasmonean John Hyrcanus (135-104 B.C.) broke off an important siege because of the coming of the Sabbath year.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, in the *Letter of Aristeas* 139–42 it says “In his wisdom the legislator (Moses)...surrounded us with unbroken palisades and iron walls to prevent our mixing with any of the peoples in any matter... So, to prevent our being perverted by contact with others or by mixing with bad influences he hedged us in on all sides with strict observances connected with meat and drink and touch and hearing and sight, after the manner of the Law.”<sup>16</sup> Additionally, in 63 B. C. when Pompey hemmed Jews in Jerusalem, he raised the earthworks on Sabbath without firing missiles; the Jews would not fight the Roman troops under their noses because the Jews would only defend themselves on the Sabbath if they were attacked.<sup>17</sup> In fact the Jews strict observance of Sabbath kept Jews from service in imperial armies, for it became a characteristic feature that marked off Jewish communal life.<sup>18</sup>

The Jews risked their lives to be faithful to the Mosaic Covenant. For example, in 5 B.C. Herod had erected a golden eagle over the temple as a votive offering, and two learned teachers (Judas and Matthaïas) inspired the young men to pull down the image.<sup>19</sup> Herod responded with having many of them arrested, tried and burned alive. Furthermore, Josephus describes instances such as that in 26 A. D. when Pilate introduced Roman standards and a bust of Caesar into Jerusalem. Here Jews were ready to die rather than transgress the Law.<sup>20</sup> A large group followed him to his residence in Caesarea and sat outside his house for five days. When they were summoned to tribunal and troops surrounded them with drawn swords, the Jews fell to the ground extending their necks and exclaiming that they were ready to die rather than to transgress the Law. Pilate was impressed and withdrew the standards. Likewise, in 41 A. D. Caligula ordered Petronius to set up his statue in the Temple, Josephus claims that the protestors said, “slay us first before you carry out these

<sup>11</sup> 3 Macc. 3.4–7; 7.11.

<sup>12</sup> 1 Macc. 1:48 and 2:15-28.

<sup>13</sup> Philo, *Migr. Abr.* 89–93; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.10.5.

<sup>14</sup> 2 Macc. 6:18–31; 4 Macc.5:1–6:30 also *Joseph and Aseneth*.

<sup>15</sup> Josephus, *War* 1.157–60; Jews compliance with Sabbath law was well known in the ancient near East (Josephus, *Ant.* 14.10.12; *Ag. Ap.* 2.2, 39; Philo, *Vit Mos.* 2.21; and even more so in sectarian Judaism [*CD* 10.14–11.18; *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*; *Temple Scroll*=11Q19]).

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in James Dunn and Alan Suggate, *The Justice of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993).

<sup>17</sup> Josephus, *War* 1.145–7.

<sup>18</sup> Horace, *Sat.* 1.9.69–70; Philo, *Som.* 2.123–24; *Leg. Gai.* 158; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.252; 14.10.12; 14.237. 16.2.3; 16.2.4.

<sup>19</sup> Josephus, *War* 1.651–5; *Ant.* 17.149–67.

<sup>20</sup> Josephus, *War* 2.169–74; *Ant.* 18.55–59.

resolutions...we will sooner die than violate our laws.”<sup>21</sup> Their hope was that God would intervene and prevail with blessing from the Mosaic Covenant.<sup>22</sup> These examples reflect merely a sample of Israel’s commitment to Yahweh under the framework of corporate covenant nomism.<sup>23</sup> It is in this framework of sectarian Judaism that the hope for a Messiah, includes that He be a definitive teacher of the Law.<sup>24</sup>

In contrast to this sectarian covenant nomism, Israel repeatedly rebelled and brought Israel into covenant curse and Gentile dominance (Deut. 9:7; 28:15–30:20; 2 Kgs. 17:23; Neh. 9:32; Isa. 9:1–2; Ezek. 21:3; 20:31; Mic. 5:3–4).<sup>25</sup> Their precarious condition was confessed by *Baruch* 1.18–19.

We have disobeyed Him, and have not heeded the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in the statutes of the Lord that he set before us. From the time when the Lord brought our ancestors out of the land of Egypt to this day.

This rebellion was due to Israel’s unfamiliarity and disregard for the Mosaic covenant. Judaism’s hope for the Kingdom was in part a divine work that would make Israel a transformed New Covenant people (Deut. 30:1–6; Jer. 31:33–34).<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, when Israel was dispersed in *diaspora*,<sup>27</sup> a Divine re-gathering was the hope of the *diaspora* Jews as they anticipated God’s covenant blessing.<sup>28</sup> However, this hope did not remove Israel from their obligation to the Law, rather God would enable them to be faithful to the Deuteronomical framework present in the Mosaic covenant (Deut. 30:8–18; Jer. 31:29–30).<sup>29</sup> So that another part of the possibility of the Kingdom, was that there would be this Messianic teacher that would guide Israel in understanding and complying with the Mosaic covenant framework. This expectation is to be seen in Isaiah 42:4, which identifies that the Servant of Yahweh would establish justice upon the earth by bringing

<sup>21</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 18.261–4 and 271.

<sup>22</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 18.267.

<sup>23</sup> I realize that challenges to this view have been marshaled. Probably the most formidable challenge was raised by Mark Adam Elliott in his *The Survivors of Israel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000). However, the impact of this work on this question is in my opinion significantly diminished because of the highly selective sectarian selection of documents it surveys and admits it surveys (pp. 13–26). At this point I believe E. P. Sanders and James Dunn to be presenting a broader reflection of Judaism of this era (cf. *IQM*; *IQS*; *CD*; Josephus, *War* 1.5.2; 2.8.14; 2.162–3; *Ant.* 13.10.6; 13.172; 13.288; 17.2.4; 18.12–15, *bYom.* 19b; *bNidd.* 33b; *Life* 12; *Yadayim* 3.7; 4.6; *Makkot* 1.6; *Niddah* 4.2; perhaps *Pss. Sol.* 1.8; 2.3; 7.2; 8.12–13; 17.5–8, 23). Additionally, Biblical texts like James, Matthew and Acts indicate that Jews and Jewish Christians were zealous for the Law.

<sup>24</sup> *4Q174 (4QFlor)* 1.11 (different from the “branch of David”); *4QpPs (4Q171)* 3:13–16; *IQpHab* 1.13; 2:2, 8–9; 5:10; 7:4–5; 11:5; *CD* 1.11; 6.7; 7:18 (identified with the star); 20.1, 28, 32.

<sup>25</sup> *1 Esdr.* 8.73–74; *2 Esdr.* 9.7; *Bar.* 1.13, 18–19; 2.6; *CD* 1.13–21; *IQS* 2.4–5; *IQH* 2.8–19; *IQpHab* 2.1–4; 5.3–8.

<sup>26</sup> *CD* 6.19; 8.21; 20.12; *IQpHab.* 2.3.

<sup>27</sup> Meaning: Jews living outside their home land of Israel.

<sup>28</sup> E.g., *Ps. of Sol.* 8.28; 11.1–4; 17.28; *T. Mos.* 4.9; Philo, *Praem Poen.* 162–63; *2 Bar.* 78.7; *Tg. Isa.* 53.8; *Tg. Hos.* 14.8; *Tg. Mic.* 5.1–3; *Ex. Rab.* 6.4; *Num. Rab.* 5.9; *Deut. Rab.* 8.2; and an allegory to love God through the Law in *Song Rab.*

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Doug Kennard, “Jeremiah and Hebrews: Mosaic, Davidic, and New,” paper presented at ETS, Mar. 1994.

law to the people. Isaiah explains that the people in the kingdom era would be expectantly waiting for His law.

Second Temple Jewish literature expected the Teacher of Righteousness to come and teach the righteous Jews God's Law and revelation in a New Covenant form.<sup>30</sup> He will serve as a rival to the man of the lie, a wicked priest who tried to destroy the Teacher of Righteousness. However, the Teacher of Righteousness (as the Messiah of Aaron)<sup>31</sup> will prepare those faithful to the Law for eschatological blessing of everlasting life<sup>32</sup> instead of the judgment God will mete out on the unfaithful.<sup>33</sup>

Jesus enters upon the scene characterized as "a teacher of the people," by the Gospels and Josephus.<sup>34</sup> Such a designation of teacher is the most common way in which Jesus is referred, especially in Matthew and Luke.

A supreme example of Jesus teaching of the Law is in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount. The sermon is in a very similar style to that of the rabbis of His day, in a midrash (interpretation) style, much evident in the oral torah and the later Talmud.<sup>35</sup> Much like these teachers, Jesus teaching goes beyond Law conformity to press application home in the life of His listeners.<sup>36</sup> However, within the sermon there is a focused section to teach the Law. Jesus' kingdom teaching to Jews incorporates the Law as the ethic to be lived toward the Kingdom. The Law is the framework for Jesus' context and the context of Matthew's Jewish-Christian readership.<sup>37</sup> The other Synoptic Gospels merely treat the binding nature of the Law as a non-emphasized historical feature of Jesus' ministry<sup>38</sup> while Matthew emphasizes Jesus' binding the Law upon His disciples and his readership. In all the gospels, but especially in Matthew, Jesus radically teaches and lives the Law in three ways. 1) Jesus maintains a more pervasive internalizing of the Law than the Law itself requires. This should be seen as a New Covenant internalization of the Law (Jer. 31:33).<sup>39</sup> 2) Jesus emphasizes the priority of the Law's design over against its

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<sup>30</sup> *1QpHab* 1.11–13; 2.1–3; 7.1–5, 10–11; 8.1–3; 9.9–10; 11.4–8, 13; *4Q165* frag. 1–2; *4Q171* 3.14–17; 4.3–4, 26–27; *4Q173* frag. 1 4.

<sup>31</sup> *1QpHab* 2.2–9; *4Q171* 3.15.

<sup>32</sup> *CD* 3.12–16, 20; *Tg. Onq. Lev.* 18.5; *Tg. Pseudo-Jonathan*; *Sipre Lev.* 193 on Lev. 18:1–30.

<sup>33</sup> *1QpHab* 2.2–10; 5.3–8.

<sup>34</sup> Mt. 4:23; 5:2, 19; 7:29; 9:35; 11:1; 13:54; 15:9; 21:23; 22:16; 26:55; 28:15, 20; Mk. 1:21–22; 2:13; 4:1–2; 6:2, 6, 30, 34; 7:7; 8:31; 9:31; 10:1; 11:17; 12:14, 35; 14:49; Lk. 4:15, 31; 5:3, 17; 6:6; 11:1; 12:12; 13:10, 22, 26; 19:47; 20:1, 21; 21:37; 23:5; Jn. 3:2; 6:59; 7:14, 28, 35; 8:2, 20, 28; 9:34; 14:26; 18:20; Acts 1:1; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.63.

<sup>35</sup> B. Z. Bokzer, *Judaism and the Christian Predicament* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1967), p. 194..

<sup>36</sup> E.g., Baba Mezia 88a; Mekilta on Ex. 18:20; cf. Loader, William. *Jesus' Attitude Towards the Law: A Study of the Gospels*. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).

<sup>37</sup> Anthony Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1994), However, I would date the composition of Matthew as before the destruction of the temple, since Matthew's comments of Jesus on this topic appear to reflect prophecy awaiting fulfillment rather than having been fulfilled, but likely after the Gentile ministry had begun; cf. Overman, J. Andrew. *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990); Levine, Amy-Jill. *The Social and Ethical Dimensions of Matthean Salvation History*: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles..." (Matt. 10:5b). *Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity*, Vol. 14. (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1988).

<sup>38</sup> Cf. the next two chapters: "The Gospel of Mark and the Controversy of Jewish Traditions" and "Jesus' Relationship with Gentile and the Law."

<sup>39</sup> Rabbinics saw that there was a continuity of Law into the Messiah's New Covenant ministry and the Kingdom to come (*Gen. Rab.* 98.9; *Eccl. Rab.* 11.1; *Mid. Tanh.*, *Ki Tavo*, par. 4; Midrash fragment, *BhM*

permissions. 3) Jesus emphasizes the priorities that the Law sets up within itself. For example, Jesus emphasizes the generosity and compassionate love beyond the Law's statements. Each of these radical extensions is consistent with the Law and a New Covenantizing of the Law at that. So that, for Jesus in Matthew, the way of salvation is via the Messiah and a New Covenant embracing of Law. This is not surprising in its context, since the whole Jewish community would have thought the same thing<sup>40</sup> though each version of Judaism would differ on the extent of what this means. In fact, the charge that sectarian Jewish communities would have against a pan-Judaism is that of not being faithful enough to the Mosaic Law.<sup>41</sup> In this way, Jesus could be seen as cultivating and raising up a new sect of Judaism (that becomes Jewish-Christianity), with the same charge against Judaism, they were not faithful enough to the Law. We will develop Jesus' agenda for the Law first in this chapter, largely out of the Sermon on the Mount.

This tension for legitimacy of Jesus' Law teaching among Judaism is responded to by the Jews in two ways: 1) the Jews question Jesus' Law commitment based on: a) His healing on the Sabbath, and b) His permitting Himself to be touched by the unclean and, 2) then the Jewish leadership out right question and test Jesus' authority as a scribe. These agendas of others are important challenges and must be dealt with to demonstrate Jesus' consistency as the Teacher of righteousness and the Law. These issues will constitute the second half of this chapter.

While this chapter is an attempt to develop the historical Jewish Jesus, it is also Matthew's Jewish emphasis for his Jewish-Christian readership. Matthew thinks that Jewish-Christians should live a New Covenant expression of the Law, unto Kingdom. However, this presentation should be balanced in at least two other ways by the voices of Mark on traditions (next chapter) and Luke on the Law for Jewish Christians, while Gentile believers are included in salvation (chapter after that). Only after we see Luke's resolution can we appreciate Matthew and Mark's important but incomplete contributions, and thus maintain them all in tension.

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6.151–52; *Halakbot G'dolot*, ed. by Azriel Hildesheimer (Berlin: Mekize Nirdamim, 1888, written in the 9<sup>th</sup> cent.), p. 223 top; Abraham Azulai, *Hesed l'Avraham* 13c–14a; Hayyim Vital, *Sefer haHezyonot*, p. 160; *Mid. Talpiyot* 58a; *Yemenite Midrash*, pp. 349–50; Levi Yitzhaq of Berdichev, *Imre Tzaddiqim*, ed. Tz'vi Hasid (Zhitomir: n. p., 1899), p. 10 [5b].

<sup>40</sup> E. P. Sanders. *Jesus and Judaism*. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985); *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1983); *IQM; IQS; CD*; Josephus, *War* 1.5.2; 2.8.14; 2.162–3; *Ant.* 13.10.6; 13.172; 13.288; 17.2.4; 18.12–15, *bYom.* 19b; *bNidd.* 33b; *Life* 12; *Yadayim* 3.7; 4.6; *Makkot* 1.6; *Niddah* 4.2; perhaps *Pss. Sol.* 1.8; 2.3; 7.2; 8.12–13; 17.5–8, 23.

<sup>41</sup> *IQpHab* col. 8–12 on the wicked priest; *4QoNah* 1.6–7; 2.2, 4; *IQM; IQS; CD; bYom.* 19b; *bNidd.* 33b; *Life* 12; *Yadayim* 3.7; 4.6; *Makkot* 1.6; *Niddah* 4.2; perhaps *Pss. Sol.* 1.8; 2.3; 7.2; 8.12–13; 17.5–8, 23. Josephus, *War* 1.5.2; 1.97; 2.8.14; 2.162–3; *Ant.* 13.10.6; 13.172; 13.288; 13.380; 17.2.4; 18.12–15; contrary to Mark Adam Elliott, *The Survivors of Israel, A Reconsideration of the Theology of Pre-Christian Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

Matthew 5:17-20; The Law and the Kingdom Salvation Paradigm<sup>42</sup>

Jesus Himself lives the Mosaic Law zealously in a New Covenantal manner. Furthermore, in Matthew, Jesus mandates a zealous teaching and living of the Law as part of His way for His Jewish followers to head toward the Kingdom.

In Matthew 5:17, “Do not think that” is a rhetorical device designed to set aside potential misunderstandings. It does not require there to be a popular opinion in need of polemic, for the phrase is used in Matthew 10:34 with no evidence of a pacifist group in Jesus’ disciples. Furthermore, the device does not require an absolute antithesis, for certainly Jesus urged peace as a Kingdom virtue (Mt. 5:9) in spite of His insistence that conflicts would come (Mt. 10:34). So that when Jesus points out that His purpose for coming is not to abolish but to fulfill, His insistence on His disciples doing the Law and Prophets can permit teaching consistent with the Law and Prophets but with qualifications not immediately apparent in His brief statement.

The “Law or the Prophets” here mean the O.T. or the Scriptures of Jesus’ day (Mt. 7:12; 11:13; 12:5; 22:40; Lk. 16:29, 31).<sup>43</sup> The disjunctive “or” makes it clear that neither is abolished. The prophets answer the Law, so that the referent does not change when only the Law is mentioned in verse 18.

Jesus calls His disciples to see that their lifestyles need to be about fulfilling the Law and the Prophets. “Abolish” means a destruction or removal from experience (Mt. 24:2; 26:61; 27:40). Jesus denies that He will destroy or remove the Law from the experience of His disciples. “Fulfill” (πληρῶσαι) means to fill or complete. There is no evidence that πληρῶσαι translates the Aramaic ܩܡ (*qum*) meaning “establish, validate, or confirm” the Law. The LXX never uses πληρῶσαι to render ܩܡ (*qum*) or cognates. Instead, the verb πληρῶσαι renders the Hebrew מל (ml), which means “fulfill.”

Matthew’s use of the verb πληρῶσαι is to fill up a pattern, not that of a one to one correspondence.<sup>44</sup> In Matthew 5:17 the issue is not Jesus’ keeping the Law and the Prophets so that He might be a perfect human able to die in our place. The issue is that the ethical lifestyle of Jesus’ disciples (reflective of His teaching) is to fit within the Law and the Prophets, and contribute toward identifying them with the Kingdom.<sup>45</sup>

In Matthew 5:18, “For truly I say to you” emphasizes the connection with the preceding is very important. This “amen faithfully” emphasizes the connection with the preceding, showing why Jesus’ disciples need to fit within the Law pattern in identifying themselves with the Kingdom.<sup>46</sup>

The Law is still in effect such that even the smallest letters and stroke remain binding (Mt. 5:18; Lk. 16:17). The smallest Hebrew letter is *yod* or י.<sup>47</sup> The *yod* is the

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<sup>42</sup> This discussion appreciates the Jewish *kēlāl* teaching pattern of a general principle stated first and then developed through examples. The details are consistent with that of: W. D. Davies and Dale Allison *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988), vol. 1, pp. 481–503.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. 4 *Macc.* 1:34; 2:5–6, 9; 9:2; Josephus *Ant.* 17.151.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. discussion on Mt. 1–3 use of fulfill in “Born to be King.”

<sup>45</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:485–487.

<sup>46</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:487–491.

<sup>47</sup> I realize that the typeset *yod* is smaller than most instances of manuscript written *yod*, but the argument still holds up as is evident by the following manuscript quotes and second Temple discussion about *yod*.

center of much rabbinic discussion as the smallest letter. For example, rabbi Honnah said that rabbi Acha described a tradition from rabbi Hoshai.

The letter yod which God took out of the name of Sarai our mother was given half to Sara and half to Abraham. A tradition of rabbi Hoshai: The letter yod came and prostrated itself before God, and said, ‘O eternal Lord, thou has rooted me out of the name of the holy woman.’ The blessed God answered, ‘Hitherto thou hast been in the name of a woman, and that in the end [viz. in Sarai]; but henceforth thou shalt be in the name of a man, and that in the beginning.’ Hence is that which is written, ‘And Moses called the name of Hoshea, Yehoshua.’<sup>48</sup>

This Jewish teaching is concluded “So you see not even the smallest letter can pass from the Bible.”<sup>49</sup> The name *Yehoshua* is that of Joshua or Jesus, so *yod* matters if you say “Jesus.” This is speaking in terms of the sages, as John Fisher quotes:

If the whole world were gathered to destroy the *yod* which is the smallest letter in the Torah, they would not succeed (*Canticles Rabbah* 5.11; cf. *Leviticus Rabbah* 19). Not a letter shall be abolished from the Torah forever (*Exodus Rabbah* 6.1).<sup>50</sup>

When sages declared that Solomon threatened to uproot a *yod* from the Law, God responded that He would instead uproot a thousand Solomons.<sup>51</sup>

Likewise, every stroke (a very small extension on several Hebrew letters which distinguish these from similar ones [ה and ח, or ו and נ or ן, or ר and ד, or כ and ב]) is retained in the Law. Even Luke joins Matthew in identifying that “it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one stroke of a letter of the Law to fail” (Lk. 16:17; Mt. 5:18). The rabbis also speak directly to the absolute importance of every stroke in the text.

It is written (Lev. 22:32) לֹא תִחַלְלֵנִי אֶת־שֵׁם קָדְשִׁי *Ye shall not profane my holy name:* whosoever shall change ח into ה, destroys the world (for then לֹא תִחַלְלֵנִי written with ה, makes this sense, *Ye shall not ‘praise’ my holy name.*) It is written (Ps.150:6) כָּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תִּתְהַלֵּל יְהוָה *Let every spirit praise the Lord:* whosoever changeth ה into ח destroys the world. (It would read “*Let every spirit profane the Lord.*”) It is written (Jer. 5:12), כָּחֲשׁוּ בַיהוָה *They lied against the Lord:* whosoever changeth ב into כ destroys the world. (It would read “*Like the Lord they lied.*”) It is written (Deut. 6:4) יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה אֶחָד *The Lord our God is one Lord:* he that changeth ד

<sup>48</sup> *b. Sanh.* 20.3.

<sup>49</sup> *b. Sanh.* 107ab; *p. Sanh.* 2.6.2; *Gen. Rab.* 47.1; *Lev. Rab.* 19.2; *Num. Rab.* 18.21; *Song Rab.* 5.11.3–4.

<sup>50</sup> John Fisher, “Jesus Through Jewish Eyes: A Rabbi examples the Life and Teachings of Jesus,” a paper presented at the Evangelical Theological Society, Nov. 2003.

<sup>51</sup> *p. Sanh.* 2.6.2; *Ex. Rab.* 6.1.

into  $\neg$  destroys the world. (It would then read “*The Lord our God is another [god].*”).<sup>52</sup>

Much like the rabbis claiming that the world would be destroyed if strokes were changed, so to Jesus claims that the strokes of the Law will be preserved until heaven and earth pass away (Mt. 5:18). In a parallel construction, the descriptive event that heaven and earth *will pass away* (παρέλθῃ) is mentioned as contrast for not even the slightest letter or portion of a letter from the Law *will pass away* (παρέλθῃ). Jesus affirms that what the Law says about all its minutia being preserved is still applicable for His disciples. Using the same verb “*pass away*” (παρέλθῃ) Jesus makes the same kind of parallel statement in Matthew 25:35 “Heaven and earth *will pass away*, but My words *will not pass away*.” In both these statements, the ethical binding condition is in view and not merely a remembrance or preservation of words. The two “until” (ἕως) clauses in Matthew 5:18 designate the duration of the binding authority of the Law. The first “until heaven and earth pass away” means “until the end of the age” or “never, as long as the present world order persists.” The second “until” (ἕως) clause “until all is accomplished” is parallel to the first. The word πάντα (“all” or “everything”) probably refers to the prophecies in the Law or the whole O.T. that carry on through the whole eschatological Kingdom program. An example of the Law’s prophecies that have not happened yet would be that Israel will be regathered into the land in a responsive believing condition (Deut. 30:3–10). So then until the present order of the world realizes the complete description of this O.T. program, the Law and the rest of the O.T. are still binding upon Israel.

This doctrine of the immutability of the Torah is consistent with the Jewish teaching that understood the Torah would in the future be understood better than it had to that point (Jer. 31:33).<sup>53</sup> Therefore, Jesus’ revisions and intensifications are consistent with the practice of the Jewish rabbis affirming the Torah.<sup>54</sup>

In Matthew 5:19, “these commandments” refer to the ethically binding material in the O.T., especially the Law.<sup>55</sup> In Matthew, ὅς (“this” or “these”) never points forward, so Jesus does not include His commands of Matthew 5:20–7:27 within “these commands.” It is possible that “these commands could include Matthew 5:3–16. Matthew elsewhere uses the verb cognate to “commandments” (ἐντολῶν) of Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 28:20 (ἐνετειλάμην) but the noun as used in Matthew 5:19 is never used of Jesus’ teaching. Much more likely than referring to the preceding discussion of Matthew 5:3–16, is the immediate context concerning the continued ethical relevance of the Law. Here it cannot be restricted to the Ten Commandments since all the O.T.

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<sup>52</sup> *Tanchum* 1.1 (*Tachum* is a compilation of midrashic comments which feature the *derashot* of Rabbi Tanhuma Bar Abba, a Palestinian *amora*. His principal teacher in *halakhah* and *aggadah* was Rabbi Huna; cf. John Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, Book House, 1979), vol. 2, p. 102.

<sup>53</sup> *I Macc.* 4:46; *b. Sabb.* 151b; *Lev. Rab.* on 7:11–12 and 11:2; *Yal.* on Prov. 9:2; and *Midr. Ps.* 146.7; cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:492.

<sup>54</sup> E.g., *11QTemple* or Hillel introduction of the prozbul (*m. Seb.* 10.3–4).

<sup>55</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:496.



program is still in effect within this age, even those funded by the minutia of the Law. Furthermore, the kind of commands that Jesus has in mind with regard to the Law, and these commands come from all over the Law, even several minor laws beyond the focus of the Ten Commands.

All these commandments are still binding so that they inform the disciple's life and teaching. The one who by lifestyle or teaching *annuls* or *loosens* (λύσῃ) one of the *least* (ἐλαχίστων) commandments has consequences in his life of being *least* (ἐλάχιστος) in the Kingdom. Likewise, the one who keeps and teaches the commandments has the consequences of greatness in the Kingdom. Least and greatness refer to gradation with the Kingdom ranks as is evident elsewhere in Matthew (11:11; 18:1–4). Least and greatness probably does not refer to exclusion and inclusion, for Jesus is not placing the disciples under a standard of absolute perfection to be included; there is still a place for poverty of spirit and forgiveness. John Fisher concludes:

No one can break or set aside even the least of the commands, without jeopardizing his future status (v. 19). As if this were not enough, he concluded this section (v. 20) by emphasizing that his followers needed to be even more observant and devout than the Pharisees, going beyond even their exemplary practice of the traditions!<sup>56</sup>

Jules Isaac summarizes this as, not only did Jesus “not overthrow the Law... or empty it of its content, but on the contrary I increase that content, so as to fill the Law to the brim.”<sup>57</sup> So part of Jesus correct teaching of the Law includes the full implications and complete meaning of the spirit of the commandments. In effect, this New Covenant spirit of the commandments is building a “fence around the Law,” which would be indicative of the Aramaic for “fulfill” (קָיִם/*qum*) and consistent with what earlier sages had done.<sup>58</sup>

Jesus points out that entrance into the Kingdom requires a practice of righteousness surpassing the scribes and Pharisees (Mt. 5:20). Jesus' criticism here is not that the scribes and Pharisees were not ethically good, but rather that they were not good enough. As the scribes and the Pharisees taught the Law from “Moses seat,” they could encourage their society to be good, but their pattern of life did not match their teaching (Mt. 23:2-3). They placed a burden upon the people that was too heavy for even them to comply, with such peripheral matters as tithing, clothes, baths, and monuments for the dead (Mt. 23:4–36). Later Jesus confronts the negative qualities in the scribes and Pharisees that needed to be transcended. Their fundamental failure was a disregard for the weightier matters of the Law, such as Kingdom, the Messiah, justice, mercy, and faithfulness. In the Jewish leaders' radical externalizing of the Law they show themselves to be hypocrites, appearing to be righteous, while they themselves were full of robbery, self-indulgence and lawlessness. Jesus was instead calling for a proper valuing of the Law from the weightier matters down to the minutiae.

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<sup>56</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:496.

<sup>57</sup> Jules Isaac, *Jesus and Israel* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 66.

<sup>58</sup> E.g., *Pirke Avot* 1.2; cf. Lachs, Montefiore, Finkel, Friedlander, *The Jewish Sources of the Sermon on the Mount* (New York: KTAV, 1991); Philas Lapide *The Sermon on the Mount* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1986).

The righteousness that is required in the passage is not a past positional righteousness; for the passage is on *doing and teaching the Law*, and *looking ahead* to that which will in the future provide entrance into the Kingdom. So to these Jewish disciples, Jesus identifies that those who will enter the Kingdom identify themselves by a radical practice of righteousness that surpasses the scribes and Pharisees' practice and teaching of the Law. Jesus has already shown Himself to be a practitioner of such righteousness (Deut. 6:13–14; 8:3; Mt. 4:4, 7, 10). Of course such a radical practice of righteousness is evident in the preceding beatitudes (Mt. 5:6, 10) but also in Jesus subsequent teaching. Probably also the woe side to the Sermon on the Plain indicates what needs to be transcended: the rich, well fed, laughing life, of which all speak well (Lk. 6:24–26).

It is in this light that Jesus' comments to the rich young ruler support in a practical manner what has been taught so far in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 19:16–26; Mk. 10:17–30; Lk. 18:18–30).<sup>59</sup> Jesus is asked "What good thing shall I do that I may obtain everlasting life?" Here obtaining everlasting life is analogous to entering the kingdom and being saved (Mt. 19:16, 23, 24, 25; Mk. 10:17; Lk. 18:18, 24–25).<sup>60</sup> Jesus' answer for this Jewish ruler is to keep the commandments of the Law. Jesus does not say to try to do the Law until you find out you can't and then throw yourself on the mercy of God; Jesus says keep the Law. This should not surprise us because it is what Jews repeatedly expected and Christian Jews for several centuries tried to live.<sup>61</sup> Since God alone is

<sup>59</sup> Also corroborated by *The Gospel of the Nazareans* 1, as recounted by Origen, *Com. on Mt.* 15.14.

<sup>60</sup> Second Temple sources support this point as well (*IQS* 4.6–8; *CD* 3.20; *4Q181* 1.3–4; *1 En.* 37.4; 40.9; 58.3; *4 Macc.* 15.3; *Ps. Sol.* 3.12).

<sup>61</sup> Jer. 31:31–34 and Ezek. 36:24–37:28; *Jdt.* 5:17–21; 8:18–23; 10:5; 12:2, 9–19; 13:8 *Pr. Azar.* 6–14; *Jub.* 1:22–25; 2:17–33; 15:11–34; *IQ3* 4, 5; *IQH* 4, 5, 18; *4Q Shir Shalb*; *Tob.* 1.10–12; 4:12–13; *1 Macc.* 1:48; 2:15–28; 2 *Macc.* 6:18–31; 7; 3 *Macc.* 3.4–7; 4 *Macc.* 5:1–6:30; *T. Jud.* 26; *Joseph and Aseneth*; Josephus, *War* 1.145–147, 157–60, 651–655; 2.169–74; *Ant.* 13.252; 14.237; 17.149–67; 18.55–59, 261–4, 267, and 271; cf. N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), p. 301; E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London: SCM/ Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977); *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1983); *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* (London: SCM Press, 1990); and *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63B.C.E.–66 C.E.* (London: SCM Press, 1992); and James Dunn, *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990); *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways, A.D. 70 to 135* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992); and *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), especially interesting is N. T. Wright's chapter "The Law in Romans 2," pp. 131–150. Furthermore, Biblical texts like James, Matthew and Acts indicate that Jews and Jewish Christians were zealous for the Law. However, especially at focus is Matt. 5:17–48 and 19:16–22; cf. Anthony Saldarini *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994) and Doug Kennard, "The Way to Kingdom Salvation: Synoptics and the Law" a paper presented at ETS Mid-West regional meeting in March, 1992; "The Law in James" a paper presented at ETS Mid-West regional meeting in March, 1993; "Paul and the Law" a paper presented at ETS Mid-West regional meeting in March, 1996; A. F. J. Klijn, "The Study of Jewish Christianity," *NTS* 20 (1973–74): 419–31; J. E. Taylor, "The Phenomenon of Early Jewish Christianity: Reality or Scholarly Invention," *Vigilae Christianae* 44 (1990): 313–34 and Jesus Maria Velasco and Leopold Sabourin, "Jewish Christianity of the First Centuries," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 6 (1976): 5–26; A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects* (Leiden: Brill, 1973); Georg Strecker, "Appendix 1: On the Problem of Jewish Christianity," in Bauer, *Orthodoxy*, p. 257; Georg Strecker, "The Kerygmata Petrou," in Edward Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, eds. *The New Testament Apocrypha*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), 2:102–27, esp. 210–22 and 270–71; Georg Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudoklementinen*, *TU* 70, no. 2 (Berlin: Akademie, 1958, revised ed. 1981); Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1949) and his later abbreviated synthesis *Jewish Christianity: Factual*

good, Jesus' answer points to God's commands. Even Mark and Luke (who do not emphasize the keeping of the Law as does Matthew) declare on Jesus lips that keeping the Law is the way to everlasting life (Mk. 10:17–19; Lk. 10:25, 28; 18:18–20). Or as N. T. Wright describes it, the Kingdom is obtained by following “Jesus in finding a new and radicalized version of Torah-observance.”<sup>62</sup> Jesus further clarifies that the commandments He has in mind are those like the fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth of the Ten Commandments, and Leviticus 19:18, all of which have financial overtones.<sup>63</sup> Jesus recognizes that the Law has as its primary focus on the loyalty relationship to the Lord (Mt. 22:37–38) however, Jesus focuses on the human side of the Law here emphasizing the love relationship to others which shows whether one truly loves the Lord (Mt. 22:39). Jesus has in mind here particularly those commandments that others can see and benefit from or at least not suffer under their violation. The last one, which is of course beyond the Ten Commandments, sums up all the minutia of relationships one to another in the Law (Mt. 19:19; 22:39–40). The young man affirmed that under a legally tight reading of the Law, he had kept all these commands. However, he senses that in some way, he is still failing through a lack in his life. Whereas, in the Mark and Luke account, Jesus is the One who declares that the rich young ruler still lacks (Mk. 10:21; Lk. 18:22). Jesus offers him completion (which He has commanded in Mt. 5:48) and obtaining his goal of the Kingdom by means of a radical extrapolation of Leviticus 19:18; to really love your neighbor as yourself means sharing the proceeds of the sale of your possessions with those in need, the poor. Jesus does not develop the attitude of being willing to give to the poor; His emphasis is on doing: keeping the commandments, selling and giving (Mt. 19:16, 17, 21). Giving up these possessions would enable the young man to follow Jesus in His itinerant ministry as Peter and the disciples had done (Mt. 19:21, 27). Perhaps Matthew includes Jesus' statements of giving to the poor for purposes of the itinerant ministry, to address issues in his readers' lives such as: the poor from famine, or the itinerant dispersion of the Jewish Christians outside their homeland due to persecutions. If the young man had complied, he would have had Kingdom treasure as the disciples were to receive (Mt. 19:21, 29). Unfortunately, the young man was unwilling to pay the price of Jesus' radical Law demands. His departure provided an opportunity to instruct the disciples in the near impossibility of a rich person pursuing the Kingdom. The primary focus of the Law is evident as serving God, rather than money (Mt. 6:24). The fact that the young man went away with his riches shows that ultimately he was unwilling to serve God. In this case the Kingdom is missed for failure to keep the Law.

At this point Peter chimes in and says “Behold, we have left everything and followed you; what gain will there be for us?” (Mt. 19:27). Jesus reassures the disciples that they have complied with this radical paying the cost of the Law, and that they will have a unique role of judging Israel (Mt. 19:28). In fact, everyone who has left house and

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*Disputes in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969); Robert E. van Voorst, *The Ascents of James: History and Theology of a Jewish-Christian Community*, SBLDS 112 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989).

<sup>62</sup> N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 307.

<sup>63</sup> These commandments are from the broadly Protestant numbering of the Decalogue. All the synoptic gospels list the fifth command last after the others, however, Luke 18:20 reverses the first two (giving the order as: seventh, sixth, eighth, ninth and fifth, and Mark inserts “do not defraud after the ninth and before the fifth command. Neither Mark nor Luke has Leviticus 19:18 as does Matthew.

family members for Christ's sake shall receive many times as much and will inherit everlasting life (Mt. 19:29).<sup>64</sup>

### Matthew 5:21–48; Jesus Teaching of the Law

Interpretation of the Law is a political act of control in society. Small changes in behavior signify major changes in outlook, and mark one group off from another. The early Jewish Christian community saw Jesus' Kingdom teaching in a new flexible enough arrangement that appreciated their Jewish heritage (like new wine skins; Mt. 9:16–17).<sup>65</sup> The agenda of this section is set primarily by what Jesus identifies to be significant for Kingdom and secondarily by how Jesus responds to questions and issues asked of Him. These questions asked expose rigidity of those around Jesus' context that will try to tear the garment or burst in rejection.

Jesus' emphasis is on the practice of keeping the Law, for the way to the Kingdom is matched by His teaching of the Law as well. Jesus is the supreme example of the fact that the one who keeps and teaches the Law shall be called great in the Kingdom (Mt. 5:19). Given ample opportunities, none of His opponents accused Him of violating the Law (Mt. 26:59–60; Mk. 14:55–56; Jn. 8:46; 18:23). The Orthodox Jewish scholar Pinchas Lapide described Jesus as a traditional observant Jew.

Jesus never and no where broke the law of Moses, nor did he in any way provoke its infringement—it is entirely false to say that he did...In this respect you must believe me, for I know my Talmud...This Jesus was as faithful to the law as I would hope to be. But I suspect that Jesus was more faithful to the law than I am—and I am an Orthodox Jew.<sup>66</sup>

The second main portion of the Sermon on the Mount, the six “antithesis,” contains the major section where Jesus teaches the Law. However, the pattern of “*and* (δὲ) I say unto you” is quite consistent with the structure of oral torah and the rabbinic form of teaching the Law.<sup>67</sup> John Fisher summarizes the rabbinical pattern as evident from Rabbi Ishmael (one of the foremost scholars cited in the Talmud and alive in Jesus day), “One might hear so and so...but there is a teaching to say that the words should be taken in *this* sense.”<sup>68</sup> Then John Fisher concludes, “the point being made by the formula is that to some people Scripture appears to have a certain meaning, but that apparent

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<sup>64</sup> Actually, the text sandwiches family members between houses and lands.

<sup>65</sup> This text should not be seen as a cause to reject the Mosaic Law emphasis of Jesus teaching; cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 2:112–117.

<sup>66</sup> Pinchas Lapide, in Hans Kung, “Jesus in Conflict,” a dialogue between Pinchas Lapide and Hans Kung, in *Signposts for the Future*, edited by Hans Kung (New York: Doubleday, 1978), pp. 74–75.

<sup>67</sup> Bozker, *Judaism and the Christian Predicament*, p. 194; John Fisher, “Jesus Through Jewish Eyes: A Rabbi examples the Life and Teachings of Jesus,” a paper presented at the Evangelical Theological Society, Nov. 2003.

<sup>68</sup> *Mekita* 3a, 6a...; John Fisher, “Jesus Through Jewish Eyes”; cf. Solomon Schechter, “Rabbinic Parallels to the New Testament,” in *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, edited by Israel Abrahams (New York: KTAV, 1967), vol. 1, p. 16 and reprinted in *Judaism and Christianity*, edited by Jacob Agus (New York: Arno Press, 1973), pp. 427–428.

meaning is an incomplete, or inaccurate understanding.”<sup>69</sup> Thus, these statements are Jesus rabbinical corrections as New Covenant extensions of the Law. Normally, what followed was some form of the verb “to say” such as “there is a teaching to say,” which leaves the authority in the logic of the argument. However, Jesus’ authoritative, “I say,” with the “I” emphatic in all the “I say” statements, utilizes the rabbinical pattern to present Jesus as the final or supreme authority. In the rabbinic literature God is the one who occasionally undertakes these corrections.<sup>70</sup> So that Jesus is utilizing a prerogative normally associated with God. This approach goes beyond the above rabbinical pattern and the prophet pattern “Thus says the Lord,” to highlight that Jesus is the authority. Therefore, the authority of Jesus in this teaching role is being emphasized throughout this section. It is quite clear that Jesus’ teaching does not annul or loosen (λύσῃ) any teaching of the Law (Mt. 5:19). As in Jesus’ dealings with the rich young man, mandating that the young man radically keep the Law, so Jesus’ authoritative teaching should be considered to be consistent enough with the Law to be teaching the Law (Mt. 5:19). Since Jesus’ teaching is calling the disciple to internalize the Law, it is helpful to remind oneself that the Law always has had a central concern for the Law being internalized and not merely externally done (Deut. 6:5–6; 10:16).

### Love

One of the last points of this section but the priority and summary of the Law is love (on the basis of the question in Matthew 22:36–40). Jesus identifies the greatest commandment in the Law as “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” Such a love for God should captivate one’s whole being. Such a focus on love resonates with the Jewish traditional understanding that the Love of God is the greatest commandment (Deut. 6:4–5; Lk. 10:26–27).<sup>71</sup> The second command is like it in loving your neighbor as yourself (Mt. 22:39; Lk. 10:27).<sup>72</sup> This love emphasis is so critical that the whole Law and the prophets depend upon (or are suspended from) this backbone of love (Mt. 22:40). This whole section of Jesus as Law teacher should then be seen as explaining aspects of this love relationship. The affirmation of love as the core does not deny any of the specifics of the Law for Jesus is recognized as teaching the Law correctly and thus not annulling any (Mk. 12:32–34). In fact, it is the very same answer a lawyer had earlier given to him when Jesus asked him to summarize the Law (Lk. 10:26–27). An affirmation that this so identifies one as not far from the Kingdom (Mk. 12:34). A practicing of this radical love commitment obtains the inheritance of everlasting life as sons of the divine Father (Mt. 5:45; Lk. 10:25, 28). It is a common occurrence to love those who love you back, for even tax-gatherers and Gentiles do this. Such a mutually beneficial love has a way of funding the tradition of love within the community and hate beyond the community (Mt. 5:44).<sup>73</sup> The Law was

<sup>69</sup> John Fisher, “Jesus Through Jewish Eyes,” an early example of this practice is in: *Mekhilta* on Ex. 19:20.

<sup>70</sup> Midrash Tanhuma, Jer. 4:2 on goodness; cf. David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: University of London Press, 1956), pp. 55–62.

<sup>71</sup> *b. Šabb.* 31a; *b. Ber.* 63a; Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 2.206.

<sup>72</sup> Rabbi Akiba considered love of neighbor in Leviticus 19:18 to be the great commandment (*Sifra Qed.* 4.200.3.7; *Gen. Rab.* 24.7).

<sup>73</sup> For example, Qumran, the Essenes and other Jews maintained a love within the community and a hate to outsiders (*IQS* 1.4, 10–11; 2.4–9; 9:21–23; *IQM* 4.1–2; 15.6; *IQH* 5.4; *b. Ber.* 33a; *b. Sanh.* 92a; Josephus,

clearly more radical than that, in its command to love sojourners (Lev. 19:19, 33–34; 22:39).<sup>74</sup> Jesus radically extends the concept of neighbor, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, to any who show mercy (Lk. 10:29–37). Even a despised individual such as a Samaritan<sup>75</sup> who inadvertently happens upon someone in his travels is a neighbor. The issue of compassion takes precedence over issues of ritual cleanliness.<sup>76</sup> The compassion shown costs: time, effort, and money, but it was right to recover the man from his plight. Jesus commands the resistant lawyer to follow the same pattern and to show mercy to others who can never repay his service. However, among Jesus’ disciples He commands an even more radical extension of love to include even personal enemies who persecute you (Mt. 5:44).<sup>77</sup> This love of one’s enemies should include doing good deeds to them and praying for your persecutors (Mt. 5:44; Lk. 6:27–28). Jesus shows a prime example of loving and praying for the welfare of His persecutors during His crucifixion (Lk. 23:34). To evidence such broad love to one’s enemies is to evidence a quality of sonship to the Father, for the Father provides sun and rain for both righteous and unrighteous alike (Mt. 5:45).<sup>78</sup> The disciple is not to settle on common mutuality but is to seek perfect righteousness in evidencing love as the Father is perfect (Mt. 5:48). Such perfection would be maturity, following Jesus and full obedience to the Father’s will (Mt. 5:48 in its context; 19:21). The specific issues that make up the rest of this sermon flow out from this commitment to love.

## Murder

Jesus begins His legal teaching with the sixth law of the Ten Commandments, “You shall not commit murder” (Ex. 20:13; Deut. 5:17) and the consequences of murder being judgment before the court (Mt. 5:21). In the Law the word *trsh* (תִּרְשֶׁהָ) means murder or unlawful violent death. The Law expands this to include primarily willful murder as is done out of a context of hatred, rather than manslaughter (Num. 35:16–31). The word is also used of “capital punishment,” which should be done to a murderer, and the word also is used of the one who commits “manslaughter,” which of course is accidental (Num. 35:27; Deut. 4:42). The organization of the stipulations in

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*Bell.* 2.139). The commitment is present in rabbinic Judaism (*Sipra* on Lev. 19:18 and *Mek.* on Ex. 21:35) and outside Jewish tradition (Polybius 18.37.7; Hesiod, *Op.* 342–3, Solon, frag. 1.3–5; Plato, *Tim.* 17d–18a; *Rep.* 375c; *Meno* 71e; Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.5–6; cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:549–552).

<sup>74</sup> Other O.T. and Second Temple texts which anticipate Jesus expansive love include also: Ex. 23:4–5; 1 Sam. 24:17–19; 2 Sam. 19:6 LXX; 1 Kgs. 3:11; Job 31:29 (cf. Eusebius, *Dem. ev.* 1.6); Ps. 7:3–5; Pr. 24:17–18 (cf. *m. ’Abot* 4.19); 24:29; 25:21–22; Jer. 29:7; Jon. 4:10–11; *Test. Iss.* 7.6; *Jub.* 7.20; 20.2; 36.4; Philo, *Decal.* 108–10.

<sup>75</sup> There is antipathy between Jew and Samaritans in this second temple Judaism (Jn. 8:48; *Sir.* 50:25–26; Josephus, *Ant.* 18.2.2; *B.T. Sanh.* 57a, where a Samaritan is not worthy of receiving aid from a Jew).

<sup>76</sup> There is no evidence in Jesus’ parable that the Jew is dead (as is developed in *Mish Berak.* 7.7), but these religious leaders do not even want to check his condition, but rather avoid the injured.

<sup>77</sup> Jewish parallels include: *Ep. Arist.* 207, 227, 232; Philo, *De. virt.* 116–18; *T. Gad.* 6.1–7; *T. Zeb.* 7.2–4; *T. Iss.* 7.6; *T. Benj.* 4.2–3; 2 *Bar.* 52.6; 2 *En.* 50.4; *b. Ketub.* 68a; *m. ’Abot* 1.12; 2.11; 4.3; 5.16. Early Christian literature echoes this love of enemies: Acts 7:60; Rom. 12:14, 17–20; 1 Cor. 4:12–13; 1 Thess. 5:15; 1 Pet. 3:9; Polycarp, *Ep.* 12.3; Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 3.18.5; *Ps.—Clem. Hom.* 3.19; *Ep. Apost.* 18; 2 *Clem.* 13.4; Justin, *1 Apol.* 14.3; Athenagoras, *Supp.* 12.3.

<sup>78</sup> Several rabbinic texts affirm that God is good to the just and the unjust (*b. Ta’an.* 7a; *Mek.* on Ex. 18.12; *Pesiq. R.* 48.4; *b. Sanh.* 111a; 2 *Bar.* 12.1–4).

Deuteronomy include issues of chapters 19:1–22:4 within the umbrella of this command.<sup>79</sup> These issues include manslaughter, rules for capital punishment, capital punishment of a rebellious child, rules for warfare in taking life and taking a wife, forgiveness in untraceable homicide and appropriate care in issues which cause disputes (such as boundaries, legal witness, inheritance, and possessions belonging to others). Internalization of the Law would certainly exclude angry plots and attempts to defraud another. Jesus' authoritative teaching extends the Law by going to the source and rooting out all anger, consistent with Jewish tradition<sup>80</sup> and commanding a zeal for reconciliation (Mt. 5:22–26). Jesus forbids anger (ὀργιζόμενος) and any verbal expression which begins to show itself like calling a brother a fool.<sup>81</sup> In this context a brother could be a family member or a fellow traveler heading toward the Kingdom (Mt. 4:18, 21; 5:9). The Aramaic word רכע transliterated as *raca* means “fool, imbecile, or blockhead.” The Greek word Μωρέ (*mōre*) would also mean “fool,” but for the Hebrew speaker it might also have had overtones of “apostasy, rebellion and wickedness,” through the Hebrew word מרה (*mrh*).<sup>82</sup> Since both words mean fool, the judgment should be seen as the same: eschatological condemnation, which excludes one from the Kingdom. Within this framework, where one's legal religious duty included offering sacrifices at the altar (for recovering from sin as well as for gratitude), the more important duty is to live peacefully with all. Such peacemaking as to be reconciled with a brother takes precedence over one's sacrificial duty (Mt. 5:24–25).<sup>83</sup> However, when reconciliation is complete then the Kingdom bound Jew should bring his sacrifice to the altar for Covenantal purposes like atonement, forgiveness, and peace (Lev. 1–7). This complies with Judaism's valued piety and ethical behavior as more significant than issues of formal observance of religion.<sup>84</sup> Elsewhere, Jesus underscores the need to reconcile to maintain a community heading toward the Kingdom (Mt. 6:14–15; 18:21–35). To emphasize the urgency of reconciliation, Jesus uses a standardized story (elsewhere used in Luke 12:58 to warn Israel of its eschatological judgment) to emphasize that judgment will be meted out to the fullest extent. In this context at least debtors' prison is intended with its bondage until

<sup>79</sup> Stephen A. Kaufman, “The Structure of the Deuteronomy Law” *Maarav* ½ (1978–79): 105–158.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. *T. Gad.* 4.1–7; *Tg. Ps.-J.* and *Tg. Onq.* on Gen. 9.6; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Deut. 5.21; *Der. Er. Rab.* 11.13; *m. 'Abot* 4.21; *b. Qidd.* 39b; *b. Ned.* 22b; *b. Pesah.* 66a–b; *IQS* 6.26; 7.2–4; *Sifre Deut.* to Deut. 19:10–11 and 22:13; *T. Sotah* 5.11; *b. Kidd* 41a; *Tosefta Derech Eretz* vol. 2 quoted from David Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Magnes Press, 1988), p. 117; Geza Vermes, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 31.

<sup>81</sup> Similar to *Sir.* 28.3–4.

<sup>82</sup> D. A. Carson, “Matthew” *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), vol. 8, p. 149.

<sup>83</sup> The Jewish practice would have sacrifice complete the reconciliation process (Lev. 1–7; *Ep. Aristaeas* 170–1; *Sir.* 34.18–19; 35.12; Philo, *Special Laws* 1.236f.). Continuing this practice, Matthew 5:23–24 and Acts 18:18; 21:23–27 supports Jewish Christian participation in Jewish sacrifices. In contrast, *The Gospel of the Ebionites* 7 as recorded by Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30.16.4–5 has Jesus condemn such practice of Jewish sacrifices. Of course, the Law prescribes the Levitical sacrifices for Israel (e.g. Lev. 1–7, 16–17:9). Additionally, the O.T. describes the Kingdom era under the Messiah as continuing to practice these sacrifices that atone (Jer. 33:18; Ezek. 43:18–46:24), though the Hebrews 10:1–8 ceases the sacrifices for now for any new Covenant people who would be disturbed by their reminder, and *Lev. Rab.* 9.7, written four centuries after the destruction of the Temple (i.e. 5<sup>th</sup> cent. A.D.), ceases the ritual sacrifices in the Messianic Kingdom.

<sup>84</sup> 1 Sam. 15:22; Hos. 6:6; *T. Isaac* 4.18–22, 39; *m. B. Qam.* 9.12; *b. Yoma* 87a.

the full debt was paid but there may be a parallel with verse 22 which would mean that fullest judgment might entail eschatological condemnation, which excludes one from the Kingdom. Jesus has taken the Law (which forbids angry plots and attempts to defraud another) and radically extended it under His own authority (consistent with Jewish tradition) to forbid anger and to mandate a zeal for reconciling with others. Jesus' teaching is a consistent Jewish extension of the Law.

### Adultery

The second point of the Law that Jesus takes up is the seventh law of the Ten Commandments, "You shall not commit adultery" (Mt. 5:27; Ex. 20:14; Deut. 5:18). In the Law, the Hebrew word  $\text{נָאֵפֶקֶת}$  (*n'p*) and the Greek word  $\mu\omicron\iota\chi\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  means "an illicit sexual relationship." Such an act of adultery would occur if any man or woman would have a sexual relationship with another human or animal other than one's spouse. Such adultery was condemned by the participants' being killed in capital punishment (Lev. 20:10–21). The organization of the stipulations in Deuteronomy includes issues of chapters 22:5–23:18 within the umbrella of illicit mixtures and epitomized by this command.<sup>85</sup> The core of this section is the resolution of claims and practices of illicit sexual relationships (Deut. 22:13–30; Ex. 22:16–17). While capital punishment was executed upon proven claims, the claims against one who is vindicated bring a fine upon the faulty claimant. Furthermore, the sexual act of a man with a betrothed virgin requires them to get married (with no divorce) and pay the girl's father a dowry for her. Other issues in this section of the Law, include rules concerning: appropriate clothing, obtaining food, access to the assembly, ceremonial cleanliness in the army, preservation of escaped slaves and exclusion of prostitution. Internalization of the Law would exclude any mental plots of illicit sexual relationships. Such an exclusion of adulterous eye and heart is common in the Jewish traditions.<sup>86</sup> Jesus' authoritative teaching extends the Law's idea of adultery in one's heart (consistent with Jewish tradition) to *looking* upon a woman to *desire* her. The word  $\beta\lambda\acute{\epsilon}\pi\omega\nu$  constitutes a simple *look*. The word  $\epsilon\pi\iota\theta\upsilon\mu\eta\sigma\alpha\iota$  means to *desire* even in a positive manner (Mt. 13:17) but here it means *lust*. The simple act of looking upon, to lust seems to carry simplicity of internalization that extends beyond the Law but is consistent with it. Such a view censors internalization of lust, such as occurs even when there may not be a woman present, like internet porn or fantization. Then Jesus makes his New Covenant extension of the Law; if a body part such as an eye or a hand causes you to stumble, excise it<sup>87</sup> so that you do not end up perishing in hell. The

<sup>85</sup> Doug Kennard, "A Biblical Theology of the Structure of the Book of Deuteronomy," p. 32.

<sup>86</sup> *IQpHab* 5.7; *IQS* 1.6; *CD* 2.16; *11QTS* 59.14; Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 2.183, 217; *Yoma* 29a; *Test. Iss.* 7.2; *Reub.* 4.8; *b. Nid.* 13b, bar.; *Shab.* 64ab; *Lev. Rab.* 23.12; *Mek.* of R. Simeon 111; *Jub.* 20.4; *T. Isaac* 4.53; *Sifre* on Num. 15:39; Sextus, *Sent.* 233; *Pesiq. R.* 24.2; cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:522; C. G. Montefiore *Rabbinic Literature and Gospel Teachings* (New York: KTAV, 1970), p. 41 for quote of these texts; Geza Vermes, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew*, pp. 32–33; "A Summary of the Law by Flavius Josephus," *NT* 24(1982): 303.

<sup>87</sup> The removal of body parts for convicted criminals was sometimes done (Deut. 25:11–12; Judg. 16:21; Josephus, *Vita* 171–173, 177; *Bell.* 2.642–644; *b. Pes.* 57b) but it is probably not encouraging maiming but rather the seriousness to make sure that you miss hell (cf. *Ps.-Clem. Rec.* 7.37; Origen, *Comm. on Mt.* 15:1). In the resurrection, amputated body parts were thought to be restored to the righteous (2 *Macc.* 7.11). The point here is that Jesus' appeal which identifies adultery with heading for damnation underscores the



concept of hell (γέενναν) is the eschatological place of judgment modeled after the valley of Hinnem, once associated with pagan rites of Molech, but in Jesus' day it was used as a rubbish pit with smoldering fires. Stumbling (σκανδαλίζει) is the sin of falling away in Lawlessness and unbelief (Mt. 13:21, 41–42, 57–58; 18:6–9). Those who stumble over Jesus are condemned in judgment. Persecution or affliction or perhaps restricting access to Jesus can set up the possibility of stumbling. Jesus' disciples experienced a temporary betrayal (σκανδαλισθήσεσθε) when Jesus was taken and they all fled (Mt. 26:31, 33). Usually such stumbling was not temporary, for those who fell were damned like: Satan, Pharisees, Nazareth occupants, and eschatological traitors (Mt. 13:57–58; 15:12; 16:23; 24:10). The strong language presents an extreme insistence upon abstaining from any form of mental adultery. The repetition of “stumbling” and “hell” shows that compliance with Jesus' radical extension of the Law is imperative. If one permits unbelief or lawlessness in his life (permitting: desiring lust concerning a woman), then that person is in serious threat of damnation.

### Divorce

The next point of Law that Jesus considers is the permission and process of divorce (Deut. 24:1–4; Mt. 5:31). Deuteronomy permits the husband to divorce his wife if he has found some indecency (עֲרֻת / *rwt*) in his wife. This indecency (עֲרֻת) is best taken as indecent exposure or public nakedness (Gen. 9:22–23; 42:9, 12; Ex. 20:26; 28:42). Even in the near context, the word is used of indecent public exposure (that is, excrement needs to be buried and not left exposed, Deut. 23:13–14; עֲרֻת). In this Deuteronomy instance, עֲרֻת / *rwt* cannot mean be sexual immorality, for the punishment of sexual immorality is not being sent away in divorce but rather capital punishment (Lev. 18:6–19; 20:11–21). In this Deuteronomy instance, legal dissolution of marriage is permitted for indecency. This legal framework was taken in divergent views in Jesus' day. Qumran judged that divorce and remarriage was illicit in all circumstances because God *made* the “male and female” and “they *became* one flesh”.<sup>88</sup> In mainstream Judaism, opinion was divided among the school of Shammai, which permitted divorce with the possibility of remarriage to another for gross indecency,<sup>89</sup> and Hillel, who

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graver seriousness of adultery over the Law's capital punishment practice. Some may appeal to Jesus activity in John 8 or 4 to soften the judgment on an adulteress. However, Jn. 7:53–8:11 is not in the earliest or best manuscripts and if one includes it here its presence distracts from the continuing argument of John. The same could be said for the other placement in the text (after 7:36 or 7:44 or 21:24 or Lk. 21:38), so I do not consider that this pericope is Scripture. There is also something awkward and perhaps a frame-up for only one participant to be accused. In the other situation with the woman at the well, though Jesus knows her through prophecy to be a serial divorcee and an adulteress (Jn. 4:18), Jesus uses the opportunity to bring this non-Jew and her village into the Kingdom way. To bring her to trial would require witnesses catching her in the act; instead Jesus has her convert to the Kingdom.

<sup>88</sup> CD 4:21 justifies no divorce on the basis of original design, the pattern in the ark during the flood, and the command for the king not to multiply wives in Deut. 17:17 which is interpreted as no second marriage while wife is still alive; because the ensuing defilement of another in intimate sexual union would separate the previous marriage partner (*IQA* Gen. 20.15 Abrahams prayer against loosing Sarah to Pharaoh), thus an argument against polygamy in *11Q* Temple 57:17–19; cf. Angelo Tosato, “The Law of Leviticus 18:18: A Reexamination,” *CBQ* 46(1984):199–214.

<sup>89</sup> These followed this interpretation: Philo, *Spec. leg.* 3.30; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.253; *Sipre* on Deut. 24:1.

permitted divorce for real or imagined offenses, including an improperly cooked meal. For example, the Hillelite rabbi Aiba permitted divorce and remarriage to another even for a case of a roving eye for pretty women, the sin Jesus has just condemned in Matthew 5:28–29.<sup>90</sup> Josephus even permitted divorce “for any causes whatsoever.”<sup>91</sup> Others tried to diminish divorce as a practice because they saw its abuse to be so devastating.<sup>92</sup>

The discussion of divorce was conducted concerning a male perspective in all the Biblical texts except perhaps Mark 10:12 where there is some concession to non-Palestinian circumstances where a woman could more easily divorce her husband.<sup>93</sup> Divorce was envisioned as a possibility for Jewish women living at the colony at Elephantine in Egypt in the fifth century B.C., because a number of Aramaic marriage contracts mention it explicitly,<sup>94</sup> but the evidence for such a practice in Israel itself is almost nonexistent.<sup>95</sup>

Jesus stands out starkly in contrast to most of these views as He through a New Covenant manner extends the Law. Matthew 5:31 begins with δέ, implying that the preceding argument continues; divorce is the moral equivalent to adultery. For Jesus, God’s design sets the priority: therefore do not divorce or try any other form of separation because God has joined the two together (Gen. 2:24; Mt. 19:3–6; Mk. 10:5–9).<sup>96</sup> Jesus admits that the Mosaic process of divorce was permitted for those who have hardness of heart. Jesus was not annulling the Law as some of the divergent views in the first century context evidence that they annulled the Law. That is, Jesus permits those who are willfully rebellious from God’s design to have a legal loophole which permits divorce, but such an option is precarious at best. However, Jesus transcends the issue of the legal and permissible, to a higher order of what is right by God’s design. The remainder of Jesus’ teaching on divorce reflects a moral problem which is comparable to adultery.

The statements in Matthew 19 and Mark 10 are roughly equivalent in emphasizing design priority over legal permission. The statements in Matthew 5:32 and Luke 16:18 come in contexts that emphasize the binding nature of the Law. Three passages make it clear that the husband commits adultery (μοιχεύσεις) if he remarries after divorce (e.g., Mt. 19:9; Mk. 10:11). Mark 10:12 clarifies that the wife also commits

<sup>90</sup> *M. Gittin* 9:10 or 90b.

<sup>91</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 8.23.

<sup>92</sup> *b. Gittin* 90b; *m. Gittin* 9:10; *Sifre Deut.* 269.

<sup>93</sup> *Elephantine papyri* in Ernst Bammel, “Markus 10:11f und das jüdische Eherecht” *ZNW* 61(1970): 95–101; and Philo, *Spec. Laws* 3.30 in Susan Treggiari, *Roman Marriage: Iusti coniuges from the Time of Cicero to the Time of Ulpian* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), pp. 441–46.

<sup>94</sup> A. E. Cowley, *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C. Edited with Translation and Notes* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), p. 45; Joseph Fitzmyer, “The Matthean Divorce Texts and Some New Palestinian Evidence” *Theological Studies* 37(1976):205; “A Re-Study of an Elephantine Aramaic Marriage Contract (AP 15),” in *Near Eastern Studies in Honor of William Foxwell Albright*, edited by H. Goedicke (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971), pp. 137–68; cf. E. G. Kraeling, *The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri: New Documents of the Fifth Century B.C. from the Jewish Colony at Elephantine* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), pp. 142–43 (*BMAP* 2:9), 206–207 (*BMAP* 7:25); compare *AP* 9:8.

<sup>95</sup> There is only one instance, Josephus, *Ant.* 15.7.10.

<sup>96</sup> Some claim that Jesus’ absolute prohibition echoes the view of *Tobit* 6:18 “she was destined for you [to be with in marriage] from eternity,” however, Jesus’ rationale merely goes back to the design of creation (Gen. 1:27; 2:24); Joseph Fitzmyer, “The Matthean Divorce Texts and Some New Palestinian Evidence” *Theological Studies* 37(1976): 203.

adultery (μοιχεύσεις) if she remarries after divorce. Furthermore, if anyone would happen to marry a divorced woman, then even this previously unmarried individual would commit adultery (μοιχεύσεις) in marrying a divorcee (Mt. 5:32; Lk. 16:18). Unlike the Mark and Luke passages which have no exception clauses, the two Matthew passages do have exception clauses to the effect of “except for the cause of unchastity” (πορνείας). For example, Matthew 5:32 says that a husband who divorces his wife except for the cause of unchastity (πορνείας) makes her commit adultery (μοιχεύσεις).

The word πορνείας includes every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse including the complete semantic field of μοιχεύσεις.<sup>97</sup> For anyone who is married, the two words are synonymous; a married person who does πορνείας does μοιχεύσεις and a person who does μοιχεύσεις does πορνείας. The illicit sexual act speaks of a deed, not a characteristic of life (such as being a perpetual adulterer or prostitute). However, acts described by these words are sexual immorality in which the Law required the participants to be executed under capital punishment (Lev. 18:6–19; 20:11–21). That is, the sin in the Law’s exception clause (indecency or public nakedness) is not as grave a sin as sexual immorality (πορνείας), since divorce is permitted instead of death sentence.

The exception clauses in Matthew do not render divorce acceptable. Remember that the whole discussion of divorce and remarriage has been rendered equal to adultery (by the δέ; Mt. 5:31), and rebellious by the disregard for God’s design and involvement in making the couple one flesh (Mt. 19:3–6; Mk. 10:5–9). There is no substantial reason for Matthew’s exception clause to be read into Mark or Luke, since they are themselves inspired Scripture. Mark and Luke have not included an exception clause, and their texts are understandable without any exception clause. Therefore, any remarriage of a divorced person is an act of adultery for both persons being married (Mk. 10:10–12; Lk. 16:18). Thus, the exception clause in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 does not prevent adultery in a remarriage situation if the divorce was motivated by immorality. Remember Jesus’ ethic on this point of the Law is more restrictive than the Law in its appeal.<sup>98</sup> Therefore, Jesus’ exception clause cannot be softening and expanding the Law’s exception clause. If Jesus is saying that it is acceptable to divorce a wife for her sexual immorality, then He is denying several commands of the Law that required capital punishment (Lev. 18:6–19; 20:11–21) and rendering Himself under His own declaration to be least in the Kingdom and therefore self-contradictory (Mt. 5:18–19; Mk. 10:11–12; Lk. 16–18). Not only does the prior context call for a higher ethic but the subsequent context shows that the disciples got the point that a higher ethical order was demanded, as evidenced by their statement, “if the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry” (Mt. 19:10). Furthermore, Jesus affirms the disciples in their conclusion, that some for various reasons will prefer celibacy. Those who prefer celibacy have it as a gift (Mt. 19:11) even though it might have been a condition from birth or a condition of employment or a condition for Kingdom service (Mt. 19:12). Jesus concludes His discussion of celibacy by urging those able to accept the preference of a celibate life to accept such a life. So that, this higher ethic is not encouraging divorce, but rather

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<sup>97</sup> In Mt. 15:19 and Mk. 7:21 these words are synonyms; cf. *BDB*, pp. 528 and 699.

<sup>98</sup> Jesus appeals to: God’s design, God’s involvement in making the couple one flesh, and Moses’ permission to accommodate moral hardness of heart (Mt. 19:4–8).

warning that a person does an adultery deed if they divorce and remarry (Mt. 5:32; 19:9). That is, one who remarries after divorce does the deed of sexual immorality (πορνείας). Therefore, the exception clause describes that a divorcee commits sexual immorality (μοιχεύσεις) in the act of remarriage, except in the case that they have done so previously, in which case an additional act of sexual immorality does not render them immoral for they are already in an immoral condition. This interpretation permits the inspired passages without the exception clause to declare that remarriage is sexual immorality (μοιχεύσεις; Mk. 10:11–12; Lk. 16:18), and the whole travesty of divorce and remarriage to be a violation of sexual immorality (μοιχεύσεις), unless they have already violated sexual immorality (πορνείας; Mt. 5:32; 19:9). In English the phrase is: “Anyone who divorces his wife makes her commit adultery (μοιχεύσεις) provided she has not already committed adultery (πορνείας).” The verbal construction of the consequences of the divorce force the divorced wife into the act of adultery (μοιχεύσεις). This does not mean that a divorced wife becomes a prostitute and starts taking in clients. The grammatical description of the consequences are an act of adultery and not necessarily a characteristic lifestyle of being an adulteress. In this first century context, for the average divorced woman to make her way virtually requires her to remarry (unless she has significant wealth) in order to deal with her vulnerability and come within the oversight of a man in a male dominated society (e.g., Ruth 1:20–21; Isa. 1:23; 10:2; 54:4; Jas. 1:27). The act of remarriage would be an act of adultery (Mk. 10:12). Or perhaps this making her commit adultery (μοιχεύσεις) builds off the preceding verses which discuss the committing of adultery (μοιχεύσεις) through the process of internalized lust (Mt. 5:28). That is, in the same way that a man may lust after a woman, prompted by the visual stimulation, so a divorced woman may lust after a man, prompted by the experience of the sexual intimacy which marriage brought and divorce removed. The exception clause fits, in that if she has already done the deed of adultery (πορνείας) in mind or body then she is not somehow in her divorce being forced to do adultery (μοιχεύσεις) by the divorce; she already did adultery (πορνείας) by her own choice.

### Oaths

The next point which Jesus takes up is vows, insisting that Jesus’ followers should be outstandingly honest, and thus need no oaths. Jesus summarizes the ancient teaching on vows to be “you shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord” (Lev. 19:12; Num. 30:2; Deut. 23:21; Mt. 5:33). Likewise, oaths taken in the name of the Lord were binding and perjury was strongly condemned in the Law (Ex. 20:7; Lev. 19:12; Deut. 19:16–19). Every oath contained an affirmation or promise and an expressed or implied appeal to God as the guarantor, which made the oath binding. Once Yahweh’s name was invoked the vow was a debt that had to be paid. To protect from taking the Lord’s name in vain, oaths began to refer to other things than God Himself. By Jesus’ time, a sophisticated casuistry had developed in order to assess which oaths were binding and which were not. This casuistry appears to have been the result of

rabbis' fighting abuses of vows among the masses.<sup>99</sup> Their way of fighting abuses was to develop ways of differentiating between the binding and non-binding oaths. Under their casuistry, non-binding oaths included swearing by heaven, by earth, by Jerusalem, by the temple, by the altar, and by one's own head (Mt. 5:34–35; 23:16–22).<sup>100</sup> On the other hand, binding oaths included swearing by Yahweh, toward Jerusalem, by the gold of the temple, and the offering on the altar. Such techniques encouraged evasive oaths, and therefore deception. If oaths, designed to encourage truthfulness and greater certainty (as when God swears by an oath; e.g., Gen. 15), became occasions for clever lies and causistical deceit, then Jesus abolishes oaths consistent with second Temple integrity (Mt. 5:34–37).<sup>101</sup> When Jesus is charged to speak under oath, He refuses and simply replies “You have said so” (Mt. 26:63–64).

Jesus recognizes that oaths are used and does not condemn them or contradict his higher ethic (Mt. 23:20–22). The use of oaths indicates that all oaths are related to God and therefore binding. Swearing by heaven is swearing by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it (Mt. 5:34; 23:22). Swearing by earth is swearing by the footstool of God's feet and thus by God (Mt. 5:35). Swearing by or toward Jerusalem is swearing by God since it is the city of the Great King (Mt. 5:35). Swearing by the Temple is swearing by the God who dwells within the Temple (Mt. 23:21). Furthermore, God and the Temple are more important than the gold of the Temple, which the Pharisees and scribes saw as binding, because God and the Temple sanctify the Temple gold (Mt. 23:16–17). The altar is more important than the offering on the altar, because God and the altar sanctify the offering (Mt. 23:18–19). So the supposedly non-binding oath of swearing by the altar actually includes the binding oath of swearing by the offering within it (Mt. 23:20). All these casuistic oaths are actually binding and obligate the one who swears them because they are actually swearing by Yahweh.

The issue in Matthew 5:34–37 is forbidding oaths where there is abuse; He is not annulling the Law. God binds Himself by an oath when He established covenant grants (Gen. 9:9–11; 15:17–18). The Law even requires Israel to vow to obey Yahweh in suzerainty treaty (Deut. 27). Jesus is not absolutely excluding all oaths; He even testifies under oath (Mt. 26:63–64).<sup>102</sup> What the Law permits as a way to evidence the truth, Jesus forbids, calling His disciples to a higher standard than the Law (Mt. 5:34, 37). So,

<sup>99</sup> Saul Lieberman, *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1942), pp. 115–143.

<sup>100</sup> *CD Geniza* A 15.1–5; *11Q19* 53.11–54.7; *m. Šebu.* 4.13; *m. Ned.* 1.3; *m. Sanh.* 3.2.

<sup>101</sup> Jas. 5:12. This stand is similar to the rabbinic teaching in: *Eccl.* 5.4; *Sir.* 23.9; and *Baba Metzia* 49a. It is also similar to that of the Essenes, except for only their entrance oath; cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 15.370–71; *War.* 2.135; *Bell.* 2.134–5, 139; Philo, *Omn. prob. lib.* 84; Stoaes, *Eclogae* 1.41.44. However, the Dead Sea scrolls are ambiguous on the issue (*11QTemple* 53–54; *CD* 7.8; 9.9–12; 15–16; *IQS* 5.8; 6.27). Certain Jewish texts identify doubling, as it appears here in Matthew 5:37 “yes, yes” and “no, no” as a legitimate oath (*b. Šebu.* 36a; *2 En.* 49.1–2), but that clearly is opposed to the sense of Jesus' command here.

Deliberate abstaining from oaths (like Jesus advocates) is part of integrity within Judaism, wherever possible (Philo, *Omnis probus* 84; *Spec. Leg.* 2.2; *Decal.* 84; Josephus, *War* 2.135). There is also some aversion to oaths in the Non-Jewish world (Sophocles, *OC* 650; Cicero, *Pro Balbo* 5; Plutarch, *Quaest. Rom.* 2.127d; *Mor.* 46A; Epictetus, *Ench.* 33.5; Marcus Aurelius, *Antonius* 3.5; *Diogenes Laertius* 8.22; Iamblichus, *Vit. Pyth.* 47). The early church followed this no oath policy but said it as: “let your yes be yes and your no no” (Justin, *1 Apol.* 16.5; Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 5.99.1; 7.67.5; *Const. Apost.* 5.12.6; *Ps.-Clem. Hom.* 3.55; 19.2; Eusebius, *Dem. ev.* 3.3; Epiphanius, *Haer.* 19.6.2; *2 Jehu* 43).

<sup>102</sup> Paul also testifies under oath (Acts 26:63–64).

like the previous issue on divorce, the divine priority of simple honesty transcends oaths in the disciples' lives.

Jesus calls his disciples to say that which is within their own control. Therefore, you should not make an oath by your head for you cannot even change the color of your hair (Mt. 5:36). Rather a simple statement of yes or no is the best way to reflect honesty (Mt. 5:37). Any further complexity that might confuse a simple honest answer is from the evil one,<sup>103</sup> and thus identified with the way to hell in contrast to the Kingdom.

### Insisting on Legal Rights

The next point of the Law which Jesus takes up is the issue of insisting on legal rights, which He replaces with generosity, even if it dishonors the giver. He quotes the *lex talionis* passage of “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.” (Mt. 5:38). The *lex talionis* context provides the legal framework to guide the judges for any crime to an appropriate punishment, excluding excessive abuse or leniency (Ex. 21:22–24; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21).<sup>104</sup> Jesus calls his disciples to transcend the Law by not insisting on their legal rights by not resisting the evil one (Mt. 5:39a). Out from this general teaching Jesus applies illustrations that explain it.<sup>105</sup> For example, if you as an individual are slapped<sup>106</sup> by someone who is evil, you are to turn the other cheek, thus permitting a continuation of the violation of your rights (Mt. 5:39). In the second Temple culture, such abuse or being taken advantage of would mean dishonor. However, Jesus' disciples were to allow themselves to be dishonored if it provided an opportunity to be generous instead. Jeremias identified that such a blow to the right cheek might likely be given to Jesus' disciples as they follow Him and are considered heretics by the Jewish leadership.<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, if anyone attempts to press a legal claim against you (as in a suit for your shirt or the Roman impressments commanding civilians to carry luggage of military personnel a Roman mile), then be doubly generous and give more than is asked (Mt. 5:40–41). So the disciple is to give up his outer cloak as well instead of fighting the legal action, even though this cloak is a possession (Ex. 22:26; Deut. 24:13).<sup>108</sup> Likewise, Jesus' disciple should carry the Roman soldier's baggage twice the legal requirement.<sup>109</sup> A person who owns possessions can insist on his legal rights in keeping them to himself. However, Jesus' disciple is commanded to be generous like the Jewish traditional emphasis on mercy (Mt. 5:42).<sup>110</sup> If someone asks for a possession the disciple is to give it to that person as his own. If someone wishes to borrow something,

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<sup>103</sup> The article (τοῦ) before evil (πονηροῦ) indicates a person (Mt. 4:1; 5:39; 6:13; 13:38).

<sup>104</sup> *11QTemple* 61.10–12; *Jub.* 4:31–32.

<sup>105</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:538–540 analyze the similarity of Matthew and *Didache* 1:4–5, in contrast to Luke 6:27–36.

<sup>106</sup> Slapping on the right cheek probably means to strike the cheek with the back of the hand as in an insult (Job 16:10; Ps. 3:7; Lam. 3:30; *1Esdr.* 4:30; Arisophanes, *Ra.* 149–150; *m. B. Qam.* 8.6).

<sup>107</sup> J. Jeremias, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Philadelphia: FBBS, 1963), p. 29.

<sup>108</sup> cf. *b. B. Mes.* 78b; 113b.

<sup>109</sup> This would normally mean carrying the pack for two miles, though the Western text says two more miles, for a total of three.

<sup>110</sup> *b. Bava; Metzia* 24b, 30b; *b. Avodah Zera* 4b.

the disciple is to loan it to the person.<sup>111</sup> Jesus is not annulling the Law but calling His disciples to a higher ethic of generosity in not insisting on their legal rights. Part of this generosity is to forgive those who make these demands upon you.<sup>112</sup> Such generosity reflects the love that summarizes the whole Law.

### Conclusion

Jesus' Kingdom way incorporates the Law as part of the ethic to be lived in order for His Jewish disciples to obtain Kingdom everlasting life. Jesus radically extends the Law in three broad patterns. 1) The first radical extension of the Law is through a more pervasive internalization of the Law. This approach is evident in Jesus' treatment of: anger, adultery, and seeking God's Kingdom and righteousness. This approach is clear indication that Jesus' is calling His disciples to a New Covenant approach to the Law. 2) The second radical extension of the Law emphasizes the priority of design over permission. This approach is evident in Jesus' treatment of commitment in marriage, honesty and Sabbath strictness. 3) The third radical extension of the Law emphasizes the priority of generosity. This approach is evident in Jesus' treatment of legal rights, practical love, judging and Sabbath healing. It is quite clear that Jesus, especially as Matthew portrays Him, requires His Jewish disciples to keep the Law in order to obtain the Kingdom, and its everlasting life.

### Jewish Legal Controversies with Jesus

#### Sabbath

The Jewish commitment to Sabbath meant that some Jews waited until Sabbath was over to carry the sick to Jesus (Mk. 1:29–32; Lk. 4:38–40). However, Jesus healed on the Sabbath without disputes arising, sometimes because He was among friends (Mk. 1:29–31; Lk. 4:38–39). At other times Sabbath synagogue healings would take place without dispute because those present were simply amazed at the healing (Mk. 1:21–28). Sabbath compliance was deep within Jesus' own followers for the believing Jewish women waited until Sabbath was past to attend to Jesus' body after His death (Mt. 28:1; Mk. 16:1; Lk. 23:56–24:1).

In the gospels, the most repeated issue on which the religious leadership question Jesus is the violation of Sabbath. This issue rises especially during Jesus' healing ministry. This issue is important to the Law, since: 1) the Sabbath Law is in the Decalogue, 2) the severity of the command to "rest from your work" places the violator under sentence of capital punishment, and 3) keeping Sabbath is the everlasting sign of the everlasting Mosaic Covenant (Ex. 20:8–11; 31:12–17; 34:21; 35:2; Num. 15:32–36; Deut. 5:12–15).<sup>113</sup> Those who failed to see beyond the pursuit of their business found the

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<sup>111</sup> Mt. 5:42; Lk. 6:30; cf. Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:36–37; Deut. 15:7–11; Prov. 28:27; *Ecclus.* 4.1–10; 29.1–2; *Tob.* 4.7; *Jub.* 9.1–12.4; *T. Zeb.* 7.2; Heb. 10:34. There are also rabbinic texts in which the sages are encouraged to give even to deceivers (e.g. *b. Ketub.* 68a).

<sup>112</sup> The rabbis likewise urge a person not to seek redress or retaliation but pray for and forgive the offending party even if he does not ask for forgiveness, cf. *T. of Jos.* 18:2; *Tosefta Baba Kamma* 9:29–30; *Yoma* 23a.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. *Jub.* 2.29–30; 50.6–13; *CD* 10.14–11.18; *m. Šabb.* 7.2; *Sipre* on Num. 15:33.

Sabbath an irritation to disobey (Amos 8:5; Jer. 17:19–27; Neh. 13:15–22). However, faithful Jews saw its observance was a delight (Isa. 58:13–14). Furthermore, Sabbath keeping was well known as a characteristic which marked off Jewish communal life.<sup>114</sup> As we evaluate this issue, it is important that we do not read Jesus activity as severely unraveling the Law, which we have just seen Jesus supports.

Deuteronomy's development of Sabbath idea emphasizes generosity, within its rest (Deut. 5:12–15; Ex. 23:12). For example, the sabbatical moratorium extends the seventh day to include a seventh year release of debt and obligation of servitude (Deut. 14:28–16:17). Between the seventh year releases (both temporally and structurally within the section) is the charge to be generous in lending to a brother Israelite and the needy (Deut. 15:7–11). Even Jewish Christianity later conceived of the Kingdom as through the lens of remaining future Sabbath rest for the people of God (Heb. 4:9). This blessing in Sabbath indicates that at the heart of the sabbatical release is *generosity* meeting needs in a manner that does not make oppressive obligations on the debtor. This Deuteronomic ideal predisposes Jesus to view the Sabbath as a time of release and freeing the oppressed. This is most apparent in His healing ministry. For example, when a woman bent over for eighteen years was healed, the Synagogue official became indignant at Jesus healing on the Sabbath. Jesus responded, “You hypocrites, does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the stall, and lead him away to water? And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is whom Satan has bound for eighteen years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?” (Lk. 13:14–16). In the wake of this healing and explanation, the people joined the woman in praising God (Lk. 13:13, 17).

In response to some Jewish strictures Jesus identified that “the Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath” (Mk. 2:27). Jesus' approach is instanced also in second Temple Judaism.<sup>115</sup> This approach sees Sabbath as an aid to humans in providing rest, God's generosity, and a time to focus on God, and not a time to be restrictive about the benefits God would have available for those who are His.

In second Temple Judaism, there was considerable debate over what sort of concessions were permitted within the generosity of the Sabbath. A number of texts show considerable restrictiveness concerning healing on the Sabbath.<sup>116</sup> Other texts show concessions of leniency that were broadly recognized including: saving of a life, alleviating acute pain, curing snake bite and cooking for the sick.<sup>117</sup> Quoting Isaiah 58:13 the rabbis also allowed acts of service to others as in deciding on grants of charity, watering your animals, or making arrangements on a child's education (e.g., Lk. 13:15).<sup>118</sup> As Jesus summarized, “it is Lawful to do good on the Sabbath” (Mt. 12:12; Mk. 3:4). So Jesus healed on the Sabbath (Mt. 12:13; Mk. 3:5; Lk. 13:10–13; Jn. 5:8;

<sup>114</sup> Horace, *Sat.* 1.9.69–70; Philo, *Som.* 2.123–24; *Leg. Gai.* 158; *Vit. Mos.* 2.21; Josephus, *Ant.* 13.252; 14.10.12; 14.237. 16.2.3; 16.6.2–4; *Ag. Ap.* 2.39.

<sup>115</sup> E.g., *Mek. Abbata* on Ex. 31:13.

<sup>116</sup> *CD* 10.14–11.18; *4Q265* frag. 6; *4Q218* frag. 1; *4Q251* frag. 1–2; *m. Šab.* 22.6; 14.4; 19.2; *m. 'Eduy* 2.5; *t. Šabb.* 16.22.

<sup>117</sup> *I Macc.* 2.29–41; *Šabb.* 18.3; *T. Šabb.* 15.14; *Šabb. M. Eduyoth* 2.5; *M. Šabb.* 6.3; *Yoma* 8.6; 84b; *b. Yoma* 85b; *M. Yoma* 8.6; *T. Yoma* 84.15; *Mek.* on Ex. 22:2 and 23:13.

<sup>118</sup> John Fisher, “Jesus Through Jewish Eyes: A Rabbi Examines the Life and Teachings of Jesus” A paper presented at ETS, Nov. 2003; countering this the more rigid sectarian Jewish community at Qumran prohibited helping an animal give birth or out of a pit on Sabbath (e.g., *CD* 11.13–14; *t. Šabb.* 14.3).



7:23). Which healing, the rabbis say is a permitted good to occur on the Sabbath, in contrast to Jesus' opponents.<sup>119</sup> Also, the rabbis frequently used the quotation from Hosea 6:6, as Jesus did in Matthew 12:7, to argue that helping others was of greater importance than observing the rituals and customs.<sup>120</sup> Since good deeds were God's business, they were allowed.<sup>121</sup> The basic rabbinic principle was as Jesus said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mk. 2:27).<sup>122</sup>

The most obvious example of potentially violating the command to not work on the Sabbath is the instance in which Jesus said to the paralytic "Pick up your mat and walk" (Jn. 5:8). On this point, rabbi John Fisher says, "Upon examining early Jewish sources, we find that what constitutes work was yet to be fully defined. So for example, carrying things within a walled city (Jerusalem) was not always considered work."<sup>123</sup> However, burdens were not to be carried (Jer. 17:21–22).<sup>124</sup> When Jesus caught up with the healed paralytic, Jesus told him to not sin anymore (Jn. 5:14). Perhaps, if a paralytic carried his mat it was a demonstration of praise, but if he kept it up, he would have harm come to him because he was being viewed as sinning and the Jews were seeking Jesus' life (Jn. 5:10–14). In this second Temple context, Josephus describes that many of the traditional Sabbath regulations were not in force in Jesus' time.<sup>125</sup> The Pharisees in the gospel accounts insist upon the strictures of Sabbath-keeping so tightly as to annul other features of the Law. As we have seen on questions that are not fully settled, Jesus took clear positions, usually opposed the extreme views of Shammai, sometimes in favor of those of Hillel, as on Sabbath.<sup>126</sup> As Safri concludes "Jesus' Sabbath healings which angered the head of the synagogue were permitted by tannaitic [early rabbinic] law."<sup>127</sup> In fact, as Samuel Cohon develops, "What is puzzling to Jewish students is that the attitude about the Sabbath as reflected in rabbinic Judaism is near to that ascribed to Jesus and remote from that ascribed to his opponents."<sup>128</sup> While this is true, there are traditional texts to which the Pharisees of the gospels could appeal, but Jesus answered their argument with a wisdom appeal.<sup>129</sup> The Pharisees counseled together to destroy

<sup>119</sup> *m. Šabb.* 22.6; *M. Yoma* 8.6; *Mek.* on Ex. 22:2 and 23:13; whereas other Pharisees oppose treating minor medical cases on the Sabbath (*m. Yoma* 8.6; *t. Šabb.* 12.12–13; 17.14; *p. 'Erub.* 10.11; *Ma'aš.* Š. 2.1.4).

<sup>120</sup> *Suk.* 49b; *Rab.* on Deut. 16:18.

<sup>121</sup> *Šabb.* 150a.

<sup>122</sup> *Mek. Sabta* 1; *Mek.* on Ex. 31:14, 104a; *Yoma* 85b.

<sup>123</sup> John Fisher, "Jesus Through Jewish Eyes: A Rabbi Examines the Life and Teachings of Jesus" A paper presented at ETS, Nov. 2003; additionally, *Eccles Rab.* 9.7 and *m. Šabb.* 7.2 permitted carrying the sick on Sabbath.

<sup>124</sup> *CD* 11.8–9; *4Q251* frag. 1–2.

<sup>125</sup> John Fisher, "Jesus Through Jewish Eyes: A Rabbi Examines the Life and Teachings of Jesus" A paper presented at ETS, Nov. 2003.

<sup>126</sup> *T. Šabb.* 16.21–22; *b. Šabb.* 5b, bar., 18b; *Gen. Rab.* 7.2; *Josephus*, War 2.147; *CD* 10.9; 11.4–5; Strabo 16.2.40; Mart. *Epig.* 4.43; Suet. *Aug* 76; cf. Bernard Lee, *The Galilean Jewishness of Jesus* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988).

<sup>127</sup> Shmuel Safri, "Religion in Everyday Life," in *The Jewish People in the First Century* edited by S. Safri & M. Stern (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), vol. 2, p. 805.

<sup>128</sup> Samuel Cohon, "The Place of Jesus in the Religious Life of His Day," *JBL* 48(1929): 97.

<sup>129</sup> *CD* 10.15–11.18 and especially 11.13–14 argue that one should not lift an animal out of a pit on the Sabbath; cf. *4Q* 265; *Miscellaneous Roles* fragment 7, 1.6–9; *m. Besa* 3.4. However, Jesus obviously takes issue with this view when He asks the question, "What man shall there be among you, who shall have one sheep, and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it, and lift it out? Of how much more

Jesus when He violated their view (Mt. 12:13–14; Mk. 3:5–6; Lk. 6:10–11). However, John Fisher shows an example of this resonance of Jesus and the rabbis in the event of eating heads of grain on the Sabbath, in light of sowing and reaping being forbidden (Ex. 16:25–30; 34:21; Lev. 19:9–10; 23:22; Deut. 23:24–25; Mt. 12:1–5; Mk. 2:23–28).<sup>130</sup>

In the first century, it was also apparently the general opinion, at least in Galilee, that it was acceptable not only to pick up fallen ears of grain but also to rub them in one's hand to get to the grain. Some Pharisees objected to this practice, but according to others it was perfectly permissible. The Talmud itself says: "Bundles which can be taken up with one hand may be handled on the Sabbath...and he may break it with his hand and eat thereof" (*Shabbat* 128a). This certainly allows for what the disciples did; their actions fall well within the bounds of acceptable practice.<sup>131</sup>

When questioned on the Sabbath healings, Jesus gave a standard Jewish response. As John Fisher continues to explain Jesus' Jewish response to such queries.

He made these replies in typical rabbinic fashion and form as well, frequently using a specific kind of homily called *yelammedenu*. This involves a question addressed to the teacher, followed by his answer based on a *midrash* (interpretation) or *halakah* (authorized opinion). The Sabbath passages (Mt. 12:1–13; Mk. 2:23–28; 3:1–6; Lk. 13:10–17; 14:1–6; Jn. 5:1–16; 7:22–23) record Yeshua's response in this form, in which he cited an interpretation of Scripture or an accepted rabbinic opinion, e.g., "Is it lawful to save life or let it die on the Sabbath?" (*Yoma* 35b). In fact, his argument closely parallel that of the somewhat later Rabbi Ishmael (*Yoma* 85a), particularly in Mark 3. In typical rabbinic fashion he also frequently cited both the principle and an example which helped clarify it. In making his case in situations such as this, he used a variety of familiar Jewish concepts, *halakic* conclusions and rabbinic methods.<sup>132</sup>

Part of the regular rabbinic argument about the needs of life overriding the Sabbath restrictions, include David's taking the tabernacle bread (1 Sam. 21:6; like Jesus mentioned in Mt. 12:3–4; Mk. 2:25–26),<sup>133</sup> and the Temple offerings and circumcisions made on the Sabbath (as Lev. 24:5–8 and Num. 28:9–10 require these sacrifices, they

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value then is a man than a sheep! So then it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." (Mt. 12:11–12; Lk. 14:5).

<sup>130</sup> Cf. 4Q159; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.231–9; *m. pe'a passim*; *b. B. Mes.* 92a.

<sup>131</sup> John Fisher, "Jesus Through Jewish Eyes: A Rabbi Examines the Life and Teachings of Jesus" A paper presented at ETS, Nov. 2003. Gleaning from another's field was permitted (Deut. 23:25; Ruth 2:2) but the Essenes would not even permit scooping up water on Sabbath (*CD* 11.1–2) and the extremists excluded gleaning on Sabbath (*p. Ma'aš* 2.6; *CD* 10.14–11.18; *Jub.* 50; *m. Šabb.* 7.2). Cf. *b. Šabb.* 127a; S. Pines, "The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianities According to a New Source," *The Israeli Academy of Sciences and Humanities Proceedings* [Jerusalem], 2(1966): 66.

<sup>132</sup> John Fisher, "Jesus Through Jewish Eyes: A Rabbi Examines the Life and Teachings of Jesus" A paper presented at ETS, Nov. 2003; cf. Samuel Cohon, "The Place of Jesus in the Religious Life of His Day," *JBL* 48(1929): 98; Asher Finkel, *The Pharisees & the Teacher of Nazareth* (Leiden: Brill, 1964), pp. 163–172.

<sup>133</sup> The availability of the bread implies that the bread had just been changed, which occurs on the Sabbath.

were offered on Sabbath [1 Chr. 23:31] and Jesus pointed to in Mt. 12:5; Lk. 7:22–23).<sup>134</sup> So the Pharisees are hypocrites in fault-finding when Jesus, the disciples and the priests transcend the Sabbath by the Law.

It is important to notice that Jesus entered into discussions with others concerning the prohibitions about Sabbath, He did not just suspend Sabbath and its traditions. The *Gospel of Thomas* 27.2 presents Jesus affirming Sabbath keeping as including the blessing of seeing the Father in Kingdom. In Matthew, Jesus implied the continuance of Sabbath Laws when He urged the disciples to “pray that your flight is not in winter or on the Sabbath” (Mt. 24:20). A legitimate Sabbath days journey was limited in distance (Ex. 16:29; Isa. 58:13).<sup>135</sup> Furthermore, if He had broken Sabbath, then evidence of this would have been used against Him at His trial, but there is no trace of that.

Matthew goes beyond these common Jewish appeals in having Jesus claim that something<sup>136</sup> is present, namely the Kingdom of love, that is greater than the Temple (Mt. 12:6). In this context, where something transcends legal features like the Temple, the Son of Man transcends the Sabbath in any way He wills (Mt. 12:8; Mk. 2:28; Lk. 6:5). However, the way in which He transcends Sabbath is consistent with the Law and Prophets. Jesus does not annul the Sabbath, but He limits its legal strictures by transcending it by means of higher legal restrictions, namely those of: design, Kingdom, and especially compassion.

### Touched by the Unclean

That which is clean is a measure of what is appropriate for Israel in light of their relationship with Yahweh.<sup>137</sup> Uncleaness is then a measure of what is inappropriate within this relationship. Cleanness and uncleaness are metaphysical concepts and not merely ethical ones. Therefore, a leper, or a person who has a hemorrhage, or the dead are all unclean (Lev. 12–14; 15:4–27; Num. 19:11–12). Such uncleaness is transferred by touch as a communicable disease (Lev. 5:2–3; 7:19–21; 11:4–47; 12:2; 15:2–33; 17:15; 18:19; 20:25; 22:4–8; Num. 19:11–22; Deut. 23:10; Ezek. 22:10; Hag. 2:12–13).<sup>138</sup> This derived uncleaness is usually not as potently unclean as the source, in that the remedy for derived uncleaness is usually washing and a days time, and sometimes a sacrifice (e.g., Lev. 15:4–27). This recovery process or atonement is costly with time and sometimes monetarily because of the cost of a sacrifice. However, there are forms of uncleaness that are more virulent and lasting. For these, Priestly inspections and more elaborate sacrifices may need to be provided for atonement to recover one into a clean condition. Ultimately the atonement process included the Israelite’s compliance with the Mosaic Covenant. The famous first century rabbi, Yohanan ben Zakkai stated, “In life it is not the dead who make you unclean; nor is it the water, but the ordinances of the king of kings that purifies.”<sup>139</sup> That is, faithfulness to the Mosaic Covenant relationship

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<sup>134</sup> *11QT* Temple 13.17; *Y’lomm’denu*, *Yalkut* 2, par. 130; *T. Šabb.* 15b.

<sup>135</sup> For example, Qumran prohibited walking more than 1000 cubits on the Sabbath (*CD* 10.21).

<sup>136</sup> “Something” is neuter, therefore not just a person but a quality like Kingdom of love.

<sup>137</sup> For a more complete discussion of this issue cf. Doug Kennard, “Frameworks of Life, Clean and Holy: An Old Testament Biblical Theological Study” A paper presented at ETS Nov. 1992.

<sup>138</sup> *m. ’Ohalot* 18.7 even considers Gentiles and their dwellings unclean.

<sup>139</sup> John Fisher, “Jesus Through Jewish Eyes: A Rabbi Examines the Life and Teachings of Jesus” A paper presented at ETS, Nov. 2003.

identifies one for cleansing and unfaithfulness identifies the unclean. Yohanan ben Zakkai was once asked does a corpse become purified by the water from red heifer, to which he responded publicly, that to take it as such was no different than paganism. However, privately to His disciples he responded “Neither was uncleanness caused by the corpse nor cleanness by the ‘water of separation,’ but the statute of the red heifer was one of those which had to be accepted as the will of God though no rational basis for it could be discerned.”<sup>140</sup>

From within this framework it is amazing that Jesus actively touches the unclean in healing and allows Himself to be touched by them for healing to occur.<sup>141</sup> It is as though the presence of the King did not become unclean by their communicable uncleanness. Rather, the presence of the King rendered the unclean to be clean in the Jubilee healing process that is occurring in the surrounding Kingdom expression of Jesus’ healings. Jesus takes on Himself the infirmities in such an atonement manner as to render the infirmed clean and healed (Isa. 53:4; Mt. 8:17). For example, a leper is touched by Jesus and the leper is healed (Mt. 8:3; Mk. 1:41; Lk. 5:13). Jesus then instructs the healed leper that he needs to present himself to the priest and make the appropriate offering that Moses had commanded (Mt. 8:4; Mk. 1:44; Lk. 5:14). Likewise, a woman with a hemorrhage was both cleansed and healed by her touch of one of Jesus’ tassels (Mt. 9:20–22; Mk. 5:27–31; Lk. 8:44–47). Likewise, Jesus takes a dead girl by the hand to bring her back to life (Mt. 9:25; Mk. 5:41; Lk. 8:54).

The Pharisees criticize Jesus in that He allows the unclean to touch Him (Lk. 7:39). The particular criticism was in the house of a Pharisee, when a sinful woman broke an alabaster vial and began to anoint Jesus feet with the perfume and wipe it with her hair (Lk. 7:37–38). The Pharisee who had invited Jesus said to himself, “If this man were a prophet He would know what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner.” The Pharisees were overly restrictive to not be touched by sinners, so that they would not defile themselves. For example, the *Assumption of Moses* 7.9–10 describes these Jews as “their hands and hearts are all corrupt, and their mouths are full of boasting-and yet they complain: Do not touch me lest you make me unclean.” Jesus responded to this Pharisee with a parable about a certain moneylender who forgave a debtor who owed five hundred denarii, and another who owed fifty denarii (Lk. 7:41–42). Simon, the Pharisee recognized that the one forgiven more would love more (Lk. 7:43). Jesus applied the parable by reminding the Pharisee of the lack of his hospitality (no foot washing, no kiss, no anointing) were all made up by the woman who had washed Jesus’ feet with her tears and hair, and provided the rest as well. “For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little” (Lk. 7:47).<sup>142</sup>

<sup>140</sup> David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: University of London Press, 1956), pp. 141–142.

<sup>141</sup> Jesus actively touches the unclean in healing (Mt. 8:3, 15; 9:25, 29; 20:34; Mk. 1:41; 5:41; 7:33; 8:22; Lk. 5:13; 7:14; 8:54; 22:51). Jesus also allows Himself to be touched by the unclean for healing (Mt. 9:20–21; 14:36; Mk. 3:10; 5:27–31; 6:56; Lk. 6:19; 8:44–47).

<sup>142</sup> For comments on Luke 7:48–50 see discussions of forgiveness and faith in the chapter on Jesus miracles.

### Matthew 21–23;<sup>143</sup> Jesus as the Superior Jewish Scribe

In this section we shift from Jesus' message content to Jesus' *authority* to teach this content. Here we explore the authority of Jesus as Messiah, who judges the leadership of Israel and their Temple (the symbol of their authority). Much of this discussion occurs later in the chapter "Jesus as Judge." However, as Jesus challenges their authority through His teaching on the Law, the religious leaders respond back with a challenge of their own: namely, what authority does Jesus have to make these challenges? This operates on two levels. One level of challenge is what sort of scribal authority Jesus has to present Himself as an authoritative scribe. The professional scribes would usually grant unusually able scribes a level of authority on the basis of tests and demonstrated competency. This level of challenge we will investigate here. The other level of challenge goes further into the content of Jesus' challenge to that of His Messianic authority to judge them. This material has been examined already under Jesus teaching of the Law but will be applied in the chapter, "Jesus as Judge." However, if Jesus is stumped, shamed and ridiculed as an inferior scribe it would indicate that He could not be a suitable candidate for Messiah. So the issue of scribal authority is quite significant to this topic. The authority of Jesus as a superior scribe fits in this chapter since it is another expression of Jesus teaching of the Law.

Jesus bests the best that the establishment has to offer. This presentation is heavily dependant upon Jewish rhetorical criticism, for the understanding the kind of questions being asked in what turns out to be a very public discourse. This discourse especially presents Jesus as a superior scribe, and who bests the best that the establishment has to offer. For example, the Talmud describes standard forensic interrogation of a rabbi's acumen by means of rhetorical questions in four distinct styles: 1) halachic or scientific questions about the application of Torah to specific situations, 2) nonsense question designed to rattle and ridicule a scholar and his interpretations of Scripture, 3) conduct questions larger than any one text, and 4) haggadic or contrary question.<sup>144</sup> The Jewish leadership broadly wished to use these rabbinical techniques to trap Jesus and show His deficiency and overreaching claims (Mt. 22:15–46; Mk. 12:13–37; Lk. 20:19–44). Instead, the approach backfired on them, showing Jesus superior ability as a scribe and the religious leadership's further deficiency. This issue of superior scribe is explored here.

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<sup>143</sup> Most Matthew specialists see chapter 21 beginning a new section (e.g. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:111–112) leaving the Galilean ministry for the rejection of Jewish temple and leadership, which sets the tone for: 1) Jesus' rejection and death, 2) the destruction of the temple and Israel, and 3) eschatological Kingdom. The unit also begins with a phrase that returns at the end as an *inclusio*, namely, "Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the Lord" (Mt. 21:9; 23:39). Much of the unit explores Jesus as Messianic judge.

<sup>144</sup> David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (New York: Arno Press, 1973), pp. 158-69 and "Rabbinic Methods of Interpretation and Hellenistic Rhetoric," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 22(1949):239–264; Bruce Molina and J. Neyrey, *Calling Jesus Names: The Social Value of Labels in Matthew* (Sonoma: Polebridge Press, 1988), pp. 73–74.

The Jewish authority structure during second Temple Judaism meant that the Herodians held the highest posts and authority, surrounded by the Sadducees and the Pharisees. The Herodians were those religious leaders or chief priests and their scribes that accepted Roman dominance and tried to please Herod, so that they could maintain themselves in their political power as religious leaders (compare Lk. 20:19 with Mt. 22:16 and Mk. 12:13). The Sadducees were the conservative Jews closely associated with power block of religious leaders in the Temple, who only tended to treat the Pentateuch as Scripture and thus did not embrace a clear encouraging afterlife and resurrection view. The Pharisees were progressive Jews, tending to accept the prophets and writings, and thus embraced a hopeful resurrection view for the afterlife. The Pharisees' power block was especially in the village synagogues but they had considerable adherents at the Temple as well. In general these Pharisees were hoping for a Messiah to free them from the Romans and to bring in the Kingdom.

The first challenge comes from the Herodians (especially the chief priests and their scribes) and Pharisees in the form of a halachic or scientific question, identified by "Is it lawful to...?" (Mt. 22:15–22; Mk. 12:13–17; Lk. 20:19–26). Notice that the Herodians (who had accepted Roman dominance) and the Pharisees (who usually opposed Roman domination), cooperated to try to trap Jesus between their concerns. Flattery begins the trap, "Teacher, we know that You are truthful and teach the way of God in truth." Then the critical issue of Jesus' authority is raised, since He defers to no one and is not partial. Now the halachic question tried to tighten the noose around Jesus neck; "is it lawful to give poll-tax to Caesar, or not?" The poll-tax was the most obvious sign in Jewish life of submission to Rome. For example, in A.D. 6 Judas of Galilee led a revolt against the procurator because he took a census for the purpose of collecting the poll-tax.<sup>145</sup> If Jesus said that the poll-tax was unlawful, or as against the Jewish Law, then the Herodians would have Him trapped in advocating seditious activity, a capital offense under Rome. If Jesus said that the tax was lawful, then the Pharisees and Herodians would have Jesus buckling to the Roman dominance in a manner that would alienate the Jewish populous and deflate their hopes for a removal of the Roman oppressors. Many Jews resented the poll-tax, repeatedly finding that the poll-tax was an oppressive burden and had petitioned for its reduction but to little avail.<sup>146</sup>

Jesus perceived their malice in this dilemma and called them down for their hypocrisy. His response was to see a denarius, the coin used to pay the poll-tax each year.<sup>147</sup> Jesus lays His trap by asking His accusers whose face and inscription is on the coin. The coin identified Tiberius Caesar by head and with its inscription.<sup>148</sup> So, they responded that it was Caesar's. Jesus sliced through the issue with his succinct statement, "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's." The religious leaders and the people<sup>149</sup> were amazed at His answer. Jesus had removed

<sup>145</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 17. 204; 18.3.i.1; *Bell.* 2.118.

<sup>146</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* 2.42 referring especially to A.D. 17.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Palmyra inscription in Dittenberger, *OGIS* 629.153–6; This is a superior presentation than the account transpiring in *Gos. of Thom.* 100 and Justin Martyr, *1 Apol.* 17.2, because it used audiovisuals that were accurate to the context (e.g. a denarius was a silver coin, not a gold one like Thomas claims) and verbally sliced through the issue instead of a blunt response. Additionally Matthew has increased the parallelism over Mark and Luke.

<sup>148</sup> Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:216, 218.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Lk. 20:26; *Gos. Thom.* 100.

Himself from the trap and reaffirmed the obligation they had to their authorities, while neither aligning Himself with Caesar or being seditious. The people as well as the religious leaders were amazed at the skill at which He had answered them.

The second challenge comes from the Sadducees in the form of a nonsense question (Mt. 22:23–33; Mk. 12:18–27; Lk. 20:27–40). They begin by flattery of calling Him teacher, even though they do not seek to be instructed. The Sadducees instead built a theological riddle on the law for Levirate marriage, which identified that to provide for keeping an inheritance within the family that if a husband died without a child that his brother was to sire a child in his brother's name so that his brother would have an heir (Deut. 25:5).<sup>150</sup> The Sadducees (who do not believe in a resurrection)<sup>151</sup> weave a nonsensical question about marriage continuing in the afterlife, and wonder if a wife had seven husbands whose wife would she be in the resurrection.<sup>152</sup> The absurdity is made particularly acute by: 1) their conjectures of marriage in resurrection, which is foreign to the Law<sup>153</sup> and 2) polyandry, which is foreign to Judaism.

Jesus response first deals with the Sadducees ignorance about the resurrection, which He takes is evident from the Scriptures, more broadly, as in a Pharisaic orientation, and that the power of God is very able to accomplish these promises. So Jesus' charge back to them is that they are playing with only a half deck of Scriptures and too small a God concept. Jesus then returns to the resurrection and instructs them. The resurrection is an arena that the initiating of marriages to have kids does not apply, because those in the resurrection are like angels in heaven, living forever, so that there is no need to procreate to raise up an inheritor.<sup>154</sup> Perhaps, also the whole framework of Levirate marriage does not apply to the resurrection, since there will be no need to raise up a descendent to inherit in the resurrection, since the living will continue to live. So these Sadducees through their misapplication further show that they are out of touch with the

<sup>150</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 4.8.23; *m. Yebamot*.

<sup>151</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 18.1.4; *War* 2.8.14.

<sup>152</sup> "The resurrection" is a Jewish way of referring to the afterlife, especially from a Pharisaic point of view (*Wisd.* 2.1–5; *1 En.* 102.6–11; *m. Sanh.* 10.1; *b. Sanh.* 90b).

<sup>153</sup> There is no clear development of resurrection in the Pentateuch. Furthermore, there is only a brief mention of procreation and fertility within marriage in the Kingdom (*Isa.* 54:1–2; *1 En.* 10.17–19; *B. Šabb.* 30b; *Pirqe Mashiah, BhM* 3.77–78.), but it does not raise the issue of how this works out in the resurrection. However, fertility of the barren in these contexts fits within the broader theme of the fruitfulness of the Kingdom (*Isa.* 54:1–3; 55:1–13; 56:9–12; *1 En.* 10.17–19; 2 *Bar.* 29; *M. Middot* 2.6; *T. Suk.* 3.3, 10; *B. Yoma* 77b–78a; *Y. Sheqalim* 50a mid.; *B. Šabb.* 30b; *B. Ket.* 111b; *Pirqe Mashiah, BhM* 3.74, 77–78).

<sup>154</sup> Jesus does not develop the similarity to angels for those in resurrection beyond the lack of marrying, so to extend this text to similarities like being spirit beings without bodies (*T. Abr.* A 4.9; Philo, *QG* 1.92; maybe LXX of Ps 103:4) or undergoing angelification, would be conjecture, though Jewish tradition does comment upon such a process (*Wisd.* 5.5; *4QSB* 4.25; *4Q511* fr. 35; *4QM*; *1 En.* 70–71; 104.1–6; 2 *En.* 22.4–112 *Bar.* 51.5, 10; *T. Isaac* 4.43–48; Philo, *Sacr CA* 1.5; Acts 12:15 may also apply). Jewish afterlife developed to include an astral immortality (*Dan.* 12:2–3; *1 En.* 15.6–7; 104.2–7; 4 *Macc.* 17.5; 2 *Bar.* 51.10; *LAB* 33.5; *As. Mos.* 10.9; *CU* 2.43–44, no. 788). For example, Jesus does not develop the Jewish view that as Adam became heavenly he became genderless (Philo, *Opf.* 151–2; *Mek.* on Ex. 12:40; *b. Ber.* 61a; *b. Meg.* 9a; *b. 'Erub.* 18a; *Gen. Rab.* on Gen. 1:26). Remember that the Jewish tradition understood Genesis 6:2 to mean that at least some angels engaged in sexual intercourse with human women (*1 En.* 6–7; 19.1; 86.1–6; 106.13–17; *Jub.* 4.15, 22; 5.1–11; *1QapGen.* 2.1, 16; 2 *Bar.* 56.12; *T. Reub.* 5.6; *T. Naph.* 3.4–5; 2 *Pet.* 2:4; Jude 6–7; Justin, 2 *Apol.* 5; Tertullian, *De virg. vel.* 7; *Tg. Ps.-Jn.* on Gen. 6:1–4. Unfortunately, Christianity accelerated toward asceticism because of this text, as Christians tried to become like angels in Neo-Platonic ways.

purposes of the Law. Then Jesus passes from the *manner* of the resurrection to its *fact* of continuing existence, populated by at least some of the patriarchs of the faith, like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.<sup>155</sup> To demonstrate this, Jesus cites Pentateuch texts which the Sadducees would recognize as Scripture, what God said to Moses in Exodus 3:6, “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,” and then affirmed that God is not the God of the dead but of the living. Jesus claims that the resurrection is already occurring for the dead (cf. Lk. 16:19–31) and that in this resurrection, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are already alive and not merely historical figures of the past.<sup>156</sup> Mark’s account has Jesus returning to emphasize that the Sadducees are greatly mistaken (Mk. 12:27). Luke’s account has some of the scribes affirming that Jesus as a teacher had spoken very well (Lk. 20:39). Matthew indicated that the multitude was astonished at His teaching and the Sadducees were silenced (Mt. 22:33–34).

The third challenge comes from a Pharisee legal expert in the form of a conduct question (Mt. 22:34–40). The lawyer asked Jesus about prioritizing the Law into the greatest commandment. In response, Jesus provides the correct answer of the *shema* as the greatest commandment, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” He quickly followed this with a second command of “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” These two commands are alike in that the whole Law and prophets depend or hang upon these two for their unifying framework. This is not a novel perspective, for it is the very answer given to Jesus by a lawyer earlier in his ministry and elsewhere in Jewish tradition (Lk. 10:25–28).<sup>157</sup> At that earlier time Jesus had said that such a Law oriented way of living was salvific. However, in this inquisition, none were seeking such a salvation; they were frustrated at not being able to trap Jesus.

Each of these three questions demonstrated a superiority of Jesus’ scribal ability. So Jesus turned the tables on the Pharisees gathered there and asked a haggadic<sup>158</sup> or contrary question (Mt. 22:41–46; Mk. 12:35–37; Lk. 20:41–44). He did not wait for them to approve Him as in an ordination exam; He had demonstrated His authority, so that He used their own tools to further question their authority and show His scribal proficiency by asking them the final kind of rabbinic question. His question raised the real issue, the authority of the Messiah. “Whose son is the Christ?” The religious leaders answered “The son of David.”<sup>159</sup> While not denying their answer, Jesus then asked the contrary question, “Then how does David in the Spirit call him ‘Lord,’ saying, ‘The Lord

<sup>155</sup> Geza Vermes argues that Pharisaic rabbis of the third century supplied similar arguments (*The Religion of Jesus the Jew*, p. 69). For example, Rabbi Simai argues for historical past resurrection of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob for God to be in covenant relationship with them, likewise, Rabbi Yohanan argues for the continued life of Aaron for tithes to be paid to him (*b. Sanh* 90b).

<sup>156</sup> Jesus view (cf. Lk. 16:19–31) is consistent with Jewish tradition (*Abr.* 50–55; *4 Macc.* 7:18–19; 13.17; 16:25; Philo, *Sacr. CA* 1.5; *T. Abr.* 20.8–14; *Qoh. Rab.* 9.5.1; *b. Sanh* 90b; *Ex. Rab.* 1.8; *Deut. Rab.* 3.15; *LAB* 4.11; *T. Isaac* 2.1–5; *T. Benj.* 10.6; *Apoc. Sed.* 14.3; *3 En.* 44.7). The sages could also read “living God” as “God of the living” (*Pesiq. R.* 1.2).

<sup>157</sup> Akiba, *Sipre* on Lev. 19:18; *T. Iss.* 5.2; 7.6; *T. Dan.* 5.3; Aristeas, *Ep.* 229; Philo, *De virt.* 51; 95; *Spec. leg.* 2.63; *De Abr.* 208; *T. Naph.* 8.9–10; *Jub.* 7.20; 20.2; 36.7–8; Josephus, *Bell.* 2.139. The early church was quite committed to following the same perspective (1 Jn. 4:21; *Did.* 1.2; Polycarp, *Ep.* 3.3; Justin, *Dial.* 93; Sextus, *Sent.* 106a–b; Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 5.8).

<sup>158</sup> David Owen–Ball, “Rabbinic Rhetoric and the Tribute Passage (Mt. 22:15–22; Mk. 12:13–17; Lk. 20:20–26),” *Nov. Test.* 35(1993): 4; Keener, *Matthew*, p. 532.

<sup>159</sup> *Ps. Sol.* 17.21–25; *4QFlor.* 1.11–13; Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 45.



said to my Lord, Sit at My right hand, until I put Your enemies beneath Your feet?’ If David calls Him ‘Lord,’ how is He his son?” This contrary question pressed the authority of Christ consistent with rabbinical reasoning<sup>160</sup> beyond the Davidic king idea to a One, Who was more. No one was able to answer Him. Furthermore, Jesus had demonstrated His superior scribal ability, so from that day on no one asked any more entrapment questions.

#### No Literary echo: Is this too Jewish?

This perspective is not reflected in literature because the Anglo-American tendency is to make Jesus rather Anglo-American in our Sunday school literature, pictures and film. The rest of the world is also following suite by presenting images of Christ to which their ethnicity can also existentially relate. However, the facts of the historical Jesus are quite clear that Jesus was a Jew. This of course means that one would expect Jesus to show His Judaism among Jews in His commitment to the Law. Very little artistic expression echoes this Law commitment, but a little does. For example, in the Vatican there is a fourth century sarcophagus of Junius Bassus which develops Christ on the throne, seated above a personification of the cosmos, actively handing out the Law to Peter and Paul.



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<sup>160</sup> None of the following sources is pre-Christian but they show Jesus to probably be unoriginal about the application of Psalm 110 to Messiah (Akiba, *b. Sanh.* 38b; *Gen. Rab.* 85.9; *Num. Rab.* 18.23; *Tg. on Ps.* 110 cf. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:253–4).

Jesus adherence to the Mosaic Law places Him in the context of second Temple Judaism. Part of the rise of the new perspective on Jesus, Paul and Judaism is a greater awareness of the corporate allegiance that Israel had to the Mosaic covenant during the second century B.C. on to the second century A.D.<sup>161</sup> This Jewish commitment to covenantal nomism was sampled at the start of the chapter, however those Jews who followed Jesus continue this story.

This commitment to the Law as a corporate commitment continued among many Jewish sects which embraced Jesus as Messiah. The Jewish-Christian group, especially known as the Nazarenes was the audience of Matthew's gospel, and thus the direct inheritors of this teaching. This perspective is evident in the Biblical text in how Matthew,<sup>162</sup> James<sup>163</sup> and some in the book of Acts practice their Jewish-Christianity.<sup>164</sup> This passion for the Mosaic Covenant among Jewish sects which embrace Jesus as their Messiah continued for centuries.<sup>165</sup> Ireneus, Epiphanius and other heresiologists and historians named several groups of Jewish-Christians, but their reports are inaccurate and biased against the group's commitment to the Law.<sup>166</sup> For example, the Ebionites and the Elchasaïtes (Epiphanius names them as followers of Elchasaï and his *Book of Elchasaï*, a Mesopotamian Jewish apocalypse) both were Jewish Messianic movements which had a deficient view of Jesus deity, which Hebrews 1:4–13 could be addressing. Additionally, the Christian community addressed by *Didascalia* (in the third century) sought to establish and protect its

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<sup>161</sup> This New Paul and Israel studies has followed the wake of E.P. Sanders including *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London: SCM/ Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977). *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1983), *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* (London: SCM Press, 1990), and *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63B.C.E.-66 C.E.* (London: SCM Press, 1992), and James Dunn *Jesus, Paul and the Law: Studies in Mark and Galatians* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990), *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways, A.D. 70 to 135* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), and *Paul and the Mosaic Law* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996); Judith Lieu, “‘The Parting of the Ways’: Theological Construct or Historical Reality?” *JSNT* 56(1994): 101–19; *Image and Reality: The Jews in the World of the Christians in the Second Century* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996); Adam Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed, *The Ways that Never Parted. Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism* 95 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003); Sakari Häkkinen, “Ebionites” and Petri Luomanen, “Nazarenes” in *A Companion to Second-Century Christian “Heretics”* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 247–78, 279–315.

<sup>162</sup> Especially at focus is Matt. 5:17-48 and 19:16-22; cf. Anthony Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994) and Doug Kennard, “The Way to Kingdom Salvation: Synoptics and the Law” a paper presented at ETS Mid-West regional meeting in March, 1992.

<sup>163</sup> Especially at focus is James 1:25 and 2:8-26; cf. Doug Kennard, “The Law in James” a paper presented at ETS Mid-West regional meeting in March, 1993; Notice the similarities between Matthew and James in Joseph Mayor, *The Epistle of St. James* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978 from 1897 edition), pp. lxxxiv–lxxxvi.

<sup>164</sup> Especially at focus is Acts 10:14-16, 28; 11:2-3; 15:1-29; 18:18 and 21:20-26; cf. Doug Kennard, “Paul and the Law” a paper presented at ETS Mid-West regional meeting in March, 1996 and “The Law in James.”

<sup>165</sup> A. F. J. Klijn, “The Study of Jewish Christianity,” *NTS* 20 (1973-74): 419-31; J. E. Taylor, “The Phenomenon of Early Jewish Christianity: Reality or Scholarly Invention,” *Vigilae Christianae* 44 (1990): 313-34 and Jesus Maria Velasco and Leopold Sabourin, “Jewish Christianity of the First Centuries,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 6 (1976): 5–26.

<sup>166</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30.7.1–7; 30.9.4; Irenaeus, *adv. haer.* 1.26.2; Hippolytus, *Refut.*; Clement of Alex., *Strom.* 2.9.45.5; Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 4.8; Origen, *de principis* 4.3.8; *Pseudo-Clementines Recognitions* 1.28.1–2; 1.32.4; 1.37.1–4; cf. A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink, *Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects* (Leiden: Brill, 1973).

orthodoxy among a majority Jewish-Christian community which practiced the Law.<sup>167</sup> In the second century, Justin Martyr, in *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, addressed the possibility of authentic salvation of Jews, who practice their Judaism and believe in Christ and obey Christ's teaching.<sup>168</sup> Consistent with this, the communities behind the *Kerygmata Petrou* (c.a. 200 A.D.) and the *Ascents of James* were Jewish-Christians with a high Christology.<sup>169</sup> These sects with a high regard for the Law were often villainized as Judaisers, a different kind of Christianity.<sup>170</sup> This situation was normal throughout the East. For example, Christians in Adiabene during the fourth century engaged in vigorous debate with the Jewish community as the writings of Aphrahat show.<sup>171</sup> Similarly, the Nazarenes survived until the fourth century as an independent Jewish-Christian sect that believed in: the virgin birth, a high Christology, also accepted Paul's writings, and continued to practice the Jewish Law.<sup>172</sup> For example, Jerome writes to Augustine about 404 A.D. that the Nazarenes "believe in Christ, the Son of God, born of Mary the Virgin, and say about Him that He suffered under Pontius Pilate and rose again."<sup>173</sup> Additionally, before A.D. 428, Epiphanius describes these Nazarenes in *Panarion* 29<sup>174</sup> especially chapters 6 and 7, as a band of Jewish-Christians primarily in Syria, who are Christians who believe in God as Creator, Christ as Lord and the resurrection of the dead, using the N.T. as do other Christians. However, the Nazarenes, according to Epiphanius, also use the Hebrew O.T. like Jews and practice circumcision, Sabbath, and the Law as do Jews. In fact, as late as the eighth century in Syria the works of Sergius the Stylite suggest that ordinary Syrian Christians could not distinguish between Judaism and Christianity in their practice and so the leadership of the Gentile expression of the church attempted to create an image of the Jews which would frighten the lay people from having any contact with them.<sup>175</sup> This expression of Jewish-Christianity

<sup>167</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30.7.1–7; Irenaeus, *adv. haer.* 1.26.2; *Pseudo-Clementines Recognitions* 1.37.1–4; Georg Strecker, "Appendix 1: On the Problem of Jewish Christianity," in Bauer, *Orthodoxy*, p. 257.

<sup>168</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialogue of Trypho the Jew* 46.1.

<sup>169</sup> Georg Strecker, "The Kerygmata Petrou," in Edward Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, eds. *The New Testament Apocrypha*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), 2:102–27, esp. 210–22 and 270–71; Georg Strecker, *Das Judenchristentum in den Pseudoklementinen*, TU 70, no. 2 (Berlin: Akademie, 1958, revised ed. 1981); Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* (Tubingen: Mohr, 1949) and his later abbreviated synthesis *Jewish Christianity: Factual Disputes in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969); Robert E. van Voorst, *The Ascents of James: History and Theology of a Jewish-Christian Community*, SBLDS 112 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989)..

<sup>170</sup> E.g., Wilken, *John Chrysostom*, p. 94.

<sup>171</sup> Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 8; Jacob Neusner, *Aphrahat and Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1971).

<sup>172</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion* 29.3.5–6; 30.7.1–7; Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 4.8; Ray Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity: From the End of the New Testament Period until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* (Jerusalem: Magnes and Leiden: Brill, 1988), pp. 108–9; Bellarmino Bagatti, *The Church from the Circumcision* (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1971). For example, *Clementine Homilies* 42, 355–6 describes the Nazarenes as bishops of the circumcision, who resisted the change of worship day from Sabbath to Sunday at the council of Caesarea (196 C.E.).

<sup>173</sup> Jerome, *Ep.* 112.13 contained in Ray Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, pp. 53–54.

<sup>174</sup> Epiphanius, *Panarion* 29 is contained in its entirety in Ray Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, pp. 30–35, but the more helpful parts are in chapters 1, 6 and especially 7 on pp. 33–34.

<sup>175</sup> A. P. Hayman, "The Image of the Jew in the Syriac Anti-Jewish Polemical Literature," in Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs eds. *"To See Ourselves as Others See Us": Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1985), p. 440.

disintegrated in the region, being caught between the pincers of rising Islam and Christian anti-semitism. Today, less than a tenth of the Jewish-Christian synagogues continue in this Nazarene spirituality, which celebrates a high Christology and continue to practice the Mosaic Law as Jews.

Other Christian traditions (such as: Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Episcopalian, and Wesleyan) retain the possibility of gaining Kingdom by following Christ through such a faithful love relationship with God as is expressed in the Decalogue. From a Gentile perspective they diminish the Mosaic Law to be essentially the Decalogue. These are the same traditions that embrace a two ways soteriology (as was described in the last chapter), and consider that in this two ways salvation, the Law matters. For example, N. T. Wright addresses this perspective from the account of the rich young ruler, “The Torah was the boundary marker of the covenant people: those who kept it would share the life of the coming age.”<sup>176</sup> N. T. Wright explains how the Law matters for a future salvation view within a two ways soteriology from Romans 2:12–16:

It is vital to note that the justification and the judgment spoken of in this paragraph are inalienably *future*. This is not *present* justification; Paul will come to that in chapter 3. Nor can the two be played off against one another. They belong together: present justification, as Romans makes clear, is the true anticipation of future justification. And in Romans as elsewhere in Paul, it is present justification, not future, that is closely correlated with faith. Future justification, acquittal at the last great Assize, always takes place on the basis of the totality of the life lived.<sup>177</sup>

After establishing this two ways soteriology, N. T. Wright continues to place the Law as mattering within it.

First, we may consider the peculiar situation of those described here. [Romans] 2.13 and 2.14, taken together, indicate quite clearly that those described in the latter as ‘doing the law’ will, according to the former, be justified (remember, again that we are here dealing with *future*, not present, justification).<sup>178</sup>

However, before long others than Jews also followed Jesus. On this issue of Law and Jewish tradition, the gospels that go to the Gentiles also have a contribution for their Gentile readership. The next chapter, “The Gospel of Mark and the Controversy of Jewish Traditions” brings some balancing tension for the Gentile follower of Jesus. The chapter after that, “Luke and John: Spirit Extended Salvation to the Gentiles” resolves this tension with a unified body of Christ which includes Jewish Law compliance and Gentile eschewing of the Law, while both head toward Kingdom.

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<sup>176</sup> N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), p. 301.

<sup>177</sup> N. T. Wright, “The Law in Romans 2” in *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, edited by James Dunn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), pp. 143–144.

<sup>178</sup> N. T. Wright, “The Law in Romans 2” in *Paul and the Mosaic Law*, edited by James Dunn (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), p. 146.