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Torah Observance (Part 1)



Torah Observance - Steve Gregg

Learn about the Torah Observance movement and its influence within the Christian community as Steve Gregg provides insights into the significance of Torah observance and its spiritual dimensions. While some individuals promote Torah observance online, it is crucial to critically examine their teachings against Biblical understanding. Gregg highlights that sincere belief should not overshadow accurate scriptural exegesis. He emphasizes that the Torah remains relevant today, and discusses its connection with the Ten Commandments and the concept of a new covenant introduced by Jesus.

Transcript

We're talking today about the Torah Observance movement. This is an aspect of the phenomenon that is sweeping the evangelical churches in America and in other lands, which is called the Hebrew Roots movement or the Jewish Roots movement. There are many aspects of this movement.

They do not all have the same things that they insist upon. Hebrew Roots movement basically is a tendency for many people who love the Lord to want to reconnect with Hebrew customs, Hebrew culture, the kinds of things that they figured Jesus was familiar with since he was a Jew. He came from a Jewish culture, a Jewish background, and they feel like, you know, I could get to know Jesus better, appreciate him more if I understand more of the Jewishness of Jesus.

And anybody who has that general feeling might be called Hebrew Roots in the broadest sense of the word. But there are narrower groups within the Hebrew Roots movement, including some that are so radical that they only accept the words of Jesus and they don't accept the words of Paul because they think he moved too far from the Hebrew Roots of Christ. So there's some pretty radical and I would say heretical aspects to this movement, but not all are equally so.

The Jews for Jesus, for example, have always emphasized their Jewishness, but they're not a Hebrew Roots group per se. They sometimes talk about the Passover Seder and how it pictures Christ and so forth, but they as a movement, and you may be familiar

with the Jews for Jesus movement. I'm quite friendly with the movement.

They have not really embraced what we're calling the Jewish Roots or the Hebrew Roots movement. The Hebrew Roots movement is going to be a large umbrella for a number of different sets of beliefs that to one degree or another emphasize the benefit to Christians, maybe the necessity for Christians, perhaps the mandate for Christians, to in some respects copy the ways of Judaism. They usually mean Second Temple Judaism since that's the kind of Judaism Jesus lived under, but of course there was the more primitive Judaism that's from the Torah that was given to Moses at Mount Sinai.

And the particular aspect of the larger movement that I want to talk about in particular are those, and there are many, who say that Christians are not supposed to abandon Torah observance. Torah, if you're not familiar, it's a Hebrew word for the law. When the Jews talk about the law in their own language, they use the word Torah.

The word originally meant instruction, well actually originally the word meant to shoot. It used to be an archery term in the most ancient forms, but it came to mean instruction and then law. And so the Torah is the Hebrew laws given by Moses.

And of course we need to know there's a lot of things that became part of law in the Jewish religion, especially after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. There were a lot of rabbinic traditions added which have become part of Orthodox Judaism today. Now it's interesting that sometimes the people who say we should keep Torah, they go so far as to imitate rabbinic Judaism in areas that the Torah didn't have anything to do with.

Where the Yarmulke, for example, wearing a prayer shawl, carrying Torah scrolls through the synagogue, sounding the shofar. I mean these are culturally Jewish things that are common in many synagogues and many Christian synagogues, Messianic synagogues have adopted these things, although they have nothing to do with the Torah at all, nothing to do with biblical Judaism. They are rabbinic Judaism.

But I'm interested in particular with those who say that the New Testament urges us to follow the Jewish law. Now throughout history, that is church history, it has generally been the understanding that the law was for Judaism in the time prior to Christ. And that Jesus came and what he introduced replaced Torah observance, was something different than Judaism.

Now those who observe Torah today who are Christians, they believe Jesus did not come to replace Torah observance, but to give it deeper meaning, to give it spiritual dimensions and so forth. But still the laws are supposed to be kept by those who are God's people. They point out that we are as Christians the true Israel, the new Israel, and these laws were given to Israel.

And we are now Israel, we've been grafted in to that tree and therefore we should keep

those laws too. This is in general what Torah observance refers to in the way that I'm using it and in many people's minds. Now you may or may not be familiar with this movement.

It's not very likely that you're in a church anywhere that observes Torah, although you might be. I mean you might go to a messianic synagogue that's Torah observant. There are many of them around.

But it's largely an internet promoted phenomenon. You'll find many people who have YouTube channels and websites and so forth that are pushing the Torah observance and they are having a tremendous influence as the internet tends to do with every kind of movement. And because of the international nature of the internet and the influence that these websites have, Christians all over the world are moving in the direction of saying, you know, we really should practice circumcision.

We really should follow the dietary restrictions that God put on Israel. It's in the Torah. We really should even keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

Now in many cases they would not advocate that we have to keep the Feast of Passover necessarily or Pentecost because those were clearly fulfilled in the New Testament. But they would say the Feast of Tabernacles has not been fulfilled yet and we should be observing that too. Now there are scriptures that they use.

I want to talk about the scriptures they use. I want to begin in this session talking about the case they make for their position. And then I want to take some time to cross-examine that and teach what I believe the Bible has always been understood to be taught.

Although I haven't agreed with everything the church throughout history has taught, I do believe the church has not been wrong throughout the past 2,000 years in saying that the Torah is not really defining of Christian discipleship. Christians are not called upon to follow the Torah as their guide but to follow something else. So that's where we're going to be going.

Now I don't know all the leaders in the movement. They are a multitude. I've heard that if you put Hebrew roots in the search bar on Google or something you'll get something like 35,000 different websites.

And I'm not familiar with all of them. There are some names that I know have been fairly influential and have been mentioned to me many times by people who are in the movement. One of them, not so much maybe now as much as a short time ago, was a man named Jim Staley.

He was a pastor but he was sentenced to prison, federal prison. In order to pay \$3.3 million to elderly investors he defrauded in an investment scam. He's 40 years old.

He pleaded guilty in April to four counts of wire fraud and admitted that he cheated others while making \$570,000 for himself. Now some people might say, well that's just ad hominem. Of course the fact that a guy is a crook and happened to teach something doesn't mean it's wrong.

And I agree. There have been crooks who've taught good doctrine too. But I just want you to know that sometimes these people argue that they are taking the higher road.

Keeping the Torah is a step beyond what most Christians are willing to do. And those who are keeping the Torah sometimes feel like they're more pleasing to God. In fact this man's particular case reminds me very much of course of the Pharisees.

They had a very high standard of Torah observance and yet they robbed widows' houses, Jesus said. He called them hypocrites because they kept outward laws but they didn't, they weren't righteous people. Jesus said in Matthew 23, 23, Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you'd pay your tithes, amen, and anus and cumen, but you neglect the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faithfulness.

So you know you can keep these external laws of Judaism but that doesn't mean you're a good person. And Jim Staley was one person who had a large following in the Torah observant movement. I don't know if his following is still as large now that he's in prison but I just thought that's one of the names, one of the first names I was ever made known of.

Another one that I've seen and he's rather controversial is a guy named Michael Rood, R-O-O-D. Michael Rood claims to be an ordained non-denominational Christian minister and a Jewish messianic rabbi. However he's not been trained as a rabbi, not been recognized as a rabbi by anybody, and he's not really ordained except with a cult called the Way International, which is kind of like if you know what the Jehovah's Witnesses believe, rubber stamp that and then add charismatic to it.

Charismatic Jehovah's Witnesses is what the Way International is and he apparently was ordained with them at one time. He demands that all Christians keep the Torah. He's obsessed with dates and claims and current Hebrew calendar.

He says the Hebrew calendar is wrong today so he recalculates dates a lot and makes sure you have to be doing everything right on the right calendar date just to be Torah observant. He teaches that it's essential for Christians to keep the Sabbath and to observe the Old Testament festivals following his particular calendar that he's developed. He says the use of purification rites are important and he says that Christians who do not do so are an abomination to God.

So he takes a pretty strong stand on the mandatory observance of all the laws of the Old Testament. Says you're an abomination to God if you're not following it. Now one of

these leaders that I know personally because I debated him in Denver, Colorado once is a man named Doug Hamp, Douglas Hamp.

And he actually seems to have some credentials a little better than perhaps these others. He earned his M.A. in the Bible and its world from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and he earned his Ph.D. in Biblical Studies from Louisiana Baptist University. He served as an assistant pastor at Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa for six years and his website says that he's been endorsed by Chuck Smith, Ken Ham and other respected evangelical leaders.

However, he doesn't say how recently they endorsed him. On his website the closest I could see of any affiliation he had with Calvary Chapel was back in 2011 and I'm pretty sure that Chuck Smith did not endorse him after he began to teach Torah observance because Chuck Smith and the Calvary Chapel movement would find that to be an abomination. So I think it's a little disingenuous of him to put on his website, I'm endorsed by Chuck Smith, I'm endorsed by Ken Ham.

Those people, Answers in Genesis, would not agree with his main thrust of ministry now. I was ordained by Calvary Chapel myself back in the 80s but I don't tell people that because Calvary Chapel wouldn't own me today. My theology is not such as they would promote and therefore I think out of integrity I should not make any use or any claims about being ordained by Calvary Chapel.

In fact, back in 1971 I received a letter of commendation from Chuck Smith when I traveled to Europe. So I traveled with his, I could put I am endorsed by Chuck Smith. It wouldn't exactly be honest because I'm sure that for the past 30 years Chuck Smith has not agreed with some of the things I teach and I think this is no doubt very disingenuous of Douglas Hamp to put these endorsements on his website when I know for sure that he teaches things that Chuck Smith would find abominable and he would not get such an endorsement today from him.

He basically claims that Paul and all the early Christians were Torah observant and I was asked to go to Denver and debate him. I did and to my, in my experience he didn't know how to exegete anything. Now exegete means when you look at a scripture you look at it in its context, you take the language of the original text, you compare it with what the author says in the context and other contexts on the same subject and you draw from the passage the actual meaning.

His use of scripture was completely disingenuous. He would quote a scripture and say this means that and nothing in the scripture says so and nothing in the context would support the notion and so and yet he's quite an influential Torah observance teacher and I had lunch with him and so forth and we talked in a friendly way. I really felt like we're not in the same, almost, I hate to say it, I almost felt like we're not in the same family, you know.

I mean if we are, if he loves the Lord then we are but it's like a different religion that doesn't really honor scripture. You see they feel that the church has not honored the Torah, has not honored the scripture through the ages because we have not advocated Torah observance for Christians but really as we shall see they are the ones who are failing to execute scripture and that's why they're coming up with understandings of it that no one has ever seen. The best Bible scholars whether liberal, conservative, you know, Catholic, Protestant, doesn't matter what branch, Bible scholars have never understood the scriptures the way that these teachers understand them and there's a good reason for that.

I don't mind disagreeing with the historic consensus of Bible teachers if they've been wrong about everything but and if it can be shown that they're wrong but these people are not Bible scholars. They may be trained but they're not scholarly. They're not, they don't really handle the scriptures honestly or in my mind intelligently.

There's another very important ministry to mention it's 119 Ministries named after Psalm 119. 119 Ministries was founded in 2010. It's a website.

Their slogan is test everything which is a wonderful slogan. I'd like to have that on my website. Test everything.

The website as I've observed on the website does not show that they have very much of a standard to test by because if they tested by scripture their conclusions would be quite wrong. This was a ministry started by two guys who had been, I think they were both in Pentecostal background and one's name is John Sherman and the other is Steve Moutrea and they provide free online resources to their credit. They're not making money off people.

They don't believe they should make money. They're not trying to be famous. They're almost anonymous at their website.

You hardly ever, you have to look to several different places in their website to find out even who's behind it. They seem to be, I've watched their videos. They seem to be humble men.

I'm drawn to their humility. I'm drawn to their sincerity but they are not impressive in their exegesis of scripture and this is where maybe everyone isn't so interested in exegesis of scripture as I'm. That's an interest of mine.

I would like to believe what the authors of scripture were intending to communicate not what I can shoehorn their scriptures into agreeing with. If I happen to have a favorite subject I want them to agree with I can find scriptures maybe to fit it in. That's not the way I want to handle scripture.

I have nothing to gain. I don't have a following or anything that I don't have a movement

so I don't have anything to gain by holding on to the views I was raised with. I could change almost anything.

In fact I've lost fellowship with several former groups I had been associated with because I did change my mind following my search of scriptures but I think these people are shallow in their approach to scripture and often they don't even read it, the words that are in the passage, they pretend something else is there. For example, Doug Hampton, many times he said that Paul claimed to follow Torah in Acts chapter 24 where Paul said, but this I confess to you that according to the way which they call a sect so I worship the God of my fathers believing all things that are written in the law and the prophets. Now Paul when he's on trial said I follow, I serve God according to the sect that's called the way and I believe everything that's in the law and the prophets.

Well I could say the same thing. I believe everything that's in the law and the prophets too but Doug Hampton misquotes it saying that Paul said I worship God according to all that is written in the Torah and the prophets. In other words he's saying I follow the Torah and the prophets.

Paul didn't say that and you'll find other places where Paul makes it very clear that that's not his commitment. He's not committed to keeping the Torah and the prophets as his way of life. He's following Christ.

When he's with Jews he keeps Torah. He says so in 1 Corinthians 9 but when he's not with Jews he doesn't bother because it's not incumbent on him to do so. He does not consider himself to be under obligation before God to follow the Torah only to do so as an evangelistic strategy when he's with people to whom that matters.

And I would suggest maybe we should do something similar if you're having lunch with a Jewish group of people. Don't have a ham sandwich. You know that's that's not sensitive unless they're not observant but they might be having ham sandwiches themselves as a matter of fact.

But the truth is you should be careful not to do things that other people will find abominable if you're trying to reach them for Christ. That was Paul's strategy. Now let me give you the case for their position.

The biblical case. I'm going to show you the scriptures that they use and let's start with the teaching of the Old Testament and then we're going to talk about what they find in the New Testament to support their view in Genesis 17 verses 12 and 13. Of course God made his demand of Abraham that he be circumcised and that all of his offspring be circumcised.

Now earlier five chapters earlier God had made a special covenant with Abraham and with his seed which is called the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12 verses 1 through 3.

But at this point five chapters later he introduces the idea that this covenant will be marked in Abraham's male offspring by the mark of circumcision. And in those verses it says God says he who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male child in your generations he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

Now it's the covenant that is marked in the flesh by circumcision and it's an everlasting covenant. This is a very important word in the Torah observant movement. Many many Torah commands are said to be everlasting requirements including circumcision.

I'm going to answer these after we go through the arguments for them. So I'm going to make their case for them first. Then I'm going to answer it later.

So I'm not going to refuse that right now. The Sabbath similarly is said to be an eternal obligation in Exodus 31 verses 15 and 16. God said work shall be done for six days but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest holy to the Lord.

Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day he shall surely be put to death. Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. Perpetual again has the idea of ongoing seemingly endlessly.

So circumcision and Sabbath both are said to be permanent perpetual everlasting covenantal indicators. By the way on the Sabbath thing there is a passage in Isaiah 56 that is sometimes quoted because it basically indicates that Gentiles should keep the Sabbath in Isaiah 56 verses 6 and 7. God says also the sons of the foreigner that be a Gentile who join themselves to the Lord to serve him and to love the name of the Lord to be his servants. Everyone who keeps from defiling the Sabbath and holds fast my covenant even them I will bring to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer.

Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar for my house should be called a house of prayer for all nations. Now Jesus actually quoted that last line of course about the temple and when he drove the money changers out of the temple but this reference to Gentiles if they refrain from defiling the Sabbath and if they do these other things then they'll be have a place in his house as children as sons and daughters of the Gentiles. So this seems to impose Sabbath on Gentiles in this passage.

We'll talk about that again later. The Passover again is a festival that is supposed to be kept forever in Numbers 9 14. It says if a stranger dwells among you that be a Gentile who would like to keep the Lord's Passover he must do so according to the right of the Passover and according to its You shall have one ordinance both for the stranger and the

native of the land.

So in other words the Gentiles aren't out of this obligation Gentiles and Jews and it says in Exodus 12 48 when a stranger dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover to the Lord let all his males be circumcised and then let him come and eat and keep it and he shall be as a native of the land for no uncircumcised person shall eat it. So the Passover and circumcision for Gentiles seems to be advocated in these passages. There's also the Feast of Tabernacles which I mentioned earlier.

It says in Zechariah 14 which many people take to be a reference to a future millennial reign when Jesus has returned and set up the Jewish temple again in Jerusalem and reestablish the Torah. So some say they say at that time all the nations will come and keep the Feast of Tabernacles. Zechariah 14 16 16 through 19 says it should come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations Gentiles which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the king the Messiah the Lord of hosts and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up and keep the Feast of Tabernacles there'll be no rain in their land he says and so forth. So again we have something that is sometimes said to apply to a future millennial reign of Christ. That's not how I understand it but that's how it is very commonly presented and they say see we'll be keeping the Feast of Tabernacles at least during the millennium and that would mean it's not really passed away.

And there are of course many Hebrew roots people who make trips to Jerusalem in the fall to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. Christians and anyone who's lived in Jerusalem through the fall season has probably run into some of these these Christian messianic tabernacles Sukkoth Sukkoth is the feast name people. Now how about laws of unclean foods? It says I didn't put down the reference here.

That doesn't happen very often. Well the scripture says in the Old Testament those who sanctify themselves and purify themselves to go to the gardens after an idol in the midst eating swine flesh this I know is an Isaiah. I forget the passage maybe 65.

I'm not sure 62 eating swine's flesh and the abomination and the mouse shall be consumed together says the Lord. Now the problem here is it talks about people eating unclean food swine's flesh and abominable food like the mouse people eating that and they argue that this is actually talking this passage and Isaiah is talking about the messianic era or the or the church age the New Testament era and therefore people are being condemned for not keeping the dietary laws. So this is one of the cases they make.

So they've got circumcision Sabbath keeping Passover tabernacles the dietary restrictions of clean and unclean foods all of these things in the Old Testament are either

said to be permanent everlasting laws. Sometimes it's specifically said the Gentiles will have to be circumcised to take part of these and there's some of them that are found in passages that people think belong to the messianic age either now or in the millennium. So the point here is that these Old Testament laws do not give an indication of an era that would come when these laws would not be relevant which of course is what Christian and Christian churches taught for 2000 years.

They are not relevant in the new covenant order. But this is saying maybe not maybe they are relevant. Now in the New Testament, of course, we have the teaching of Christ and probably the most important thing Jesus said though.

It's not the only thing he said that is that is grasped upon seized upon and promoted by those who believe in Torah observance is what he said in the sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5 verses 17 through 20. All right, we could just go 17 through 19. Jesus said do not think that I came to destroy the law of the prophets now some Torah observance just quote that much and no more.

Finishing the sentence is less less helpful to them. But that part of the sentence seems very helpful to the Torah observance of Jesus did not come to destroy the law and the prophets end of story. Why do Christians say he did when he said he didn't You see Jesus was Torah observant.

Well, he didn't only say that the sentence continues. He said I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. So this raises questions destroying and fulfilling are not the same thing.

But what exactly does happen when the law is fulfilled. He came to fulfill it. What impact does that have when the law is fulfilled and what ramifications are there in terms of the mandate of obedience to it.

That's something that will need to be examined, but The Hebrew roots people would say fulfilling God just means that he came to live it out. He came to fulfill the requirements of law in his own life in his own conduct. And of course he did that because he was Torah observant and he didn't come to destroy the law.

I didn't come to bring in a system of no laws or no Torah. That's how This versus commonly presented Jesus goes on to say, I say to you till heaven and earth pass away. Not one jot or Yoda.

Or one title will by any means pass from the law until all is fulfilled. Now again, that's an important thing till heaven and earth pass away. Not one little bit of the law is going to pass away.

I've in the debate with Doug Hampton and in listening to other Hebrew teachers, they emphasize this very strongly. The heaven earth hasn't passed away. Last time I look, therefore, the law has not passed away.

Not one jot what not one title. Of course, they're a little poor on explaining why then are the sacrifices done away. Why is the Levitical priesthood done away.

Why is the whole tabernacle cult is done. That's all. That's more than a jot or till that's like half of the Torah.

If now, Jesus said until heaven or pass away. Not one little detail of the Torah will change until all is fulfilled. That's an important Comment we have to say more about later on.

And he goes on to say, whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches men. So shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does not does and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

So this is Jesus comments With reference to the Torah and it sounds like he's saying you better keep it And I'm not coming to destroy it now when Jesus was asked by certain inquires About what they had to do be saved. He seemed to call upon the Torah as the answer in Matthew 19 17 He said to the rich young ruler. Why do you call me good? No one is no one is good.

But one that is God, but if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments The commandments which ones the man said On your father and mother do not kill do not steal He's talking about the old testament commandments Now some people say he's talking about the ten commandments because some of the things he quoted Are in the ten commandments, but in one of the gospels he adds and love your neighbors You love yourself, which is not in the ten commandments, but certainly in the Torah. It's in the law So Jesus tells this man That if you want to have life Keep the Torah I mean, that's the teaching of Jesus observe Torah In another place it says in Luke 10 25 through 28 a certain lawyer Stood up and tested Jesus saying teacher What shall I do to inherit eternal life? And he said to him what is written in your law? What is your reading of it? So he answered and said you shall love the lord your god with all your heart with all your soul with all your strength With all your mind and your neighbors yourself And Jesus said to him you've answered rightly do this and you'll live Okay, he said look in the law You want to know what to do to live? Look into the Torah And if you do that You will live So Jesus seemed to advocate Torah observance to these people And there's more um There's of course paul now usually paul is the Stick in the mud for this kind of a teaching because paul is so famous for having taught against Torah observance But not so they say We have misread paul We've misunderstood what paul was talking about in colossians what he was talking about in galatians what he's talking about in romans Uh, we totally misunderstood him and they go to many times the book of acts and paul's own story of his own life from from luke's account And point out that there's many evidences that paul did keep the torah and therefore we must be Misunderstanding paul's letters if we think that he's writing that we should not keep the torah Let me just read you What i'm

going to give you right here is actually Quoting from a hebrew observance website Uh, it's a hebrew roots website And whoever wrote the piece wrote the following. It's a little lengthy, but I want to give you their whole teaching about paul Paul was an observant jew And that never changed He kept the feasts Participated in offerings and made vows according to the jewish law paul's testimony of himself proves that In the book of acts we see many accounts that paul gave of himself as a torah observant believer Toward the end of his paul's life and ministry when paul was supposed to have been liberated Excuse me have liberated the first century believers from the shackles of bondage of the torah observance.

We read the following in acts 22 3 I am indeed a jew paul says born in tarsus of sicilia cilicia, excuse me but Brought up in this city at the feet of gamaliel taught according to the strictness of our father of our father's law And was zealous toward the god toward god as you are today. I persecuted this way to the death I hear a lot of past tenses in there as I read that but He's pointing out that this proves that paul was torah observance because he was brought up according to the strictest observance of the law under the feet of gamaliel Another scripture acts 24 14, but this I confess to thee that according to the way which they consider a sect of judaism So worship I the god of my fathers believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets again What doug hemp missed misquoted and said that paul said I worship god according to all things written in the law of prophets Paul said I believe all things in the law of prophets. I hope you do too.

By the way, I do too I believe everything that's in the law of the prophets. I don't think any of it was false All right That's a different question than whether I think we're supposed to observe it in acts 25 8 he writes While he answered for himself Neither against the law of the jews neither against the temple nor yet against caesar. Have I offended in anything at all? So paul said he hadn't done anything against the law of the jews.

He must be torah observant in acts 28 17 paul says Or about paul says it came to pass that after three days paul called the chief of the jews together And when they came together, he said the men and brethren though I have committed nothing against the people or customs of our fathers Yet I was delivered prisoner from jerusalem into the hands of the romans So he said I didn't do anything against the customs of our father In acts 20 verses 20 through 24 Paul said or this is actually, uh, let's see here. This is about paul says and when they heard it They glorified the lord and said to him you see brother How many thousands of jews there are which believe this is james speaking to paul when paul comes to jerusalem? And they are all zealous for the law And they are informed of you paul that you teach all the jews which are among the gentiles to forsake moises Saying that they ought not to circumcise their children neither walk after the customs What is it therefore the multitude must needs come together for they will hear that you are here Do therefore this that we say to you We have four men Which have a vow on them Take them And purify yourselves with yourself with them Uh and be at

charges with them that they may shave their heads and all may know that those things Whereof we are informed concerning you are nothing But that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law Now this is james speaking to paul, but paul agreed to it Now james said we want our jewish brethren here. He's in jerusalem they've heard bad things about you at least things they consider to be bad things and we want to You know disabuse them of this disinformation They have heard paul that you've been telling jewish people to abandon moises And to stop circumcising their children now.

Did paul ever do that? I don't record I don't read recall anything recorded of paul That he went to jews and told them to abandon moises or to stop circumcising their children He certainly told gentiles not to be circumcised, but he never told jews to stop doing it Paul did not consider the jews to be his primary domain We read in galatians 2 that he and the other apostles had an agreement that he would go to the gentiles and they would go To the circumcision and he considered when he was in jerusalem. He was in their territory And and we don't find anywhere that paul went to gentile lands and looked up jews and said stop circumcising stop following moises Paul wasn't giving instructions to jews. He was preaching the gospel to jews and gentiles when people became gentiles He did give them instructions, but he was not guilty of what was being charged against him here He did not Go into the world and teach jews to stop keeping the law as far as we know at least paul agreed to pay The fees and purify himself with these nazirites And the temple in order to communicate publicly that he was not guilty of the things charged.

So Again, this is presented as if it's proof that paul is in fact torah observant in acts 9 1 and 2 it says when when going to search, uh, when going in search of believers in yeshua Oh, this is the the writer i'm sorry, this is not the quote when going in search of uh believers in yeshua He went looking for them in the synagogues in damascus in acts 9 1 and 2 well That's a lot of more jewish christians and a lot of them were in the synagogues And he has a quote here from galatians not a Not a friendly book to the particular movement This person belongs to but they do quote from galatians and some of these other books of paul in galatians 1 13 through 14 paul said For you have heard of my conduct in time past in judaism how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of god and ravaged it and excelled in judaism above many of my peers Within my own kindred being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of the elders Okay, that's his testimony. I'm, not really sure how that makes the point that's supposedly being made in philippians chapter 3 verses 5 through 9 Paul describes his background prior to conversion He says I was circumcised the eighth day of the stock of israel of the tribe of benjamin a hebrew of the hebrews concerning the law a pharisee concerning zeal persecuting the congregation of the church Touching to righteousness which is in the law blameless But what things were gained to me Those I counted loss for the messiah Yea, doubtless and I count all things but loss for the supremacy of the knowledge of messiah. Yeshua my lord For whom I have suffered the loss of all things And do count them but

dung by the way, what was he calling dung? The things he just said that he had before he was a christian His righteousness according to torah all the things that made him prestigious among the jews his circumcision his heritage Into the tribe of benjamin his perfect observance of torah.

He says when I came to christ. I all that stuff. I count that as dung rubbish And he goes on that I may gain messiah And be found in him not having my own righteousness, which is by the law But the righteousness which is from god by faith which is through faith in messiah I have to say that that would be a scripture.

I might want to use to refute their position But that's again what these scriptures have in common They point out that paul before he was a christian was a jew He was still a jew after he was a christian, but he was a very strictly observant Torah observant jew before he was a christian And most of the things we just read are him saying so Well, I don't think the church throughout history has ever denied that about paul's background The question is what did paul experience? What did he live by and what did he teach after he was converted and that of course would be another story? um let's look at what the uh I'm going to skip over to a point in my notes called confusion over covenants and this is basically where I think the The torah observant people have missed the boat We have two parts of the bible. We call them the old testament Uh, the jews called the old testament the tanakh And we have the new testament now the word testament is based on the word covenant in greek the word covenant and testament are that would be the same in the greek not so in hebrew, but It it works in english covenant and testament are kind of used interchangeably In the new testament at least which was written in greek. And so the older testament as it's called is a reference to The system set up and followed in what we call the old testament The new covenant the new testament is the covenant that is related to christ And so i'd like to give you some uh sort of a survey Of how we're to understand the covenant because that is what those who observe torah today are missing They don't understand The new covenant or the old covenant for that matter.

It appears to me I'd like to start by saying that the torah Summarized by the ten commandments engraved in stone are often referred to as the covenant in the old testament Because they were the stipulations imposed upon israel as part of the covenant struck in mount sinai now at mount sinai God gave them the torah the law and that was Not totally found in the ten commandments to be sure they traditionally there's supposedly 613 Commandments in the torah, but the ten commandments are pretty good summary of the major duties Morally at least and also the sabbath which kind of summarizes all the law in a way and so The old testament refers to these tablets sometimes as the tablets of the covenant The law is the covenant And it says for example in exodus 34 28 Moses was there for 40 days and 40 nights He neither ate bread nor drank water and he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant The ten commandments the ten commandments are the words of the covenant that god made at

mount sinai exodus 34 28 says Also in deuteronomy 9 9 Moses says when I went up into the mountain to receive the tablets of stone the tablets of the covenant Which the lord made with you? Then I stayed on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights neither ate I bread nor drank water now the same information Once told about moses once told by moses in deuteronomy But the point is both times he speaks of the stone tablets as the tables or the tablets of the covenant But that and he even calls the covenant is the ten commandments So we can see the torah of which the ten commands simply are a kind of a summary An extract of the whole of the torah That is the covenant. That's the old covenant The the old testament doesn't call it the old covenant, but the new testament actually does use that term This covenant is called the the old testament Uh and the old and the first covenant in the new testament in second corinthians 3 14 Paul said but their minds were blinded for until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the old testament or the old covenant because of the veil Because the veil is taken away in christ Now what he's saying is when jews read the old testament what we christians call the old testament, but they call it tonight We they can't see what we can see there. He says there's a veil over their minds That veil is taken away in christ.

He later says but when they turn to christ the veil is removed now The main reason I gave that verse is because he calls it the old covenant It's it's an old covenant in contrast with one that is new And in hebrews 8 7 It said if that first covenant meaning the one given at sinai Had been faultless Then no place would have been found for a second. The second one is what we call the new covenants We shall see there's two covenants of importance one I mean, there's more than that. God made a covenant with noah.

God made a covenant with abraham and so and with david But in terms of this controversy, there's two covenants Uh significant to know about one is called the first covenant made at mount sinai with israel The second is called the new covenant. And so the writer of hebrews talks about You know if that first covenant had been faultless there would have been not anyone's God would have not looked for a place for a second covenant Hebrews 9 1 says for indeed even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary Also hebrews 9 18 therefore not even the first covenant Was dedicated without blood hebrews 9 15 and for this reason He is the mediator. Jesus is the mediator of a new covenant By means of which for the redemption of transgressions under the first covenant That those who are called may receive the promise of eternal life or eternal inheritance.

So he talks about a first covenant From which we needed to be redeemed and jesus became the mediator of the new covenant Which is the means by which we are redeemed from the transgressions committed under the first covenant So there's a distinction made in the new testament between the covenant god made at mount sinai, which is the law the torah and the covenant that jesus struck when he Came and met with his disciples in the upper room and said that he made the new covenant Jeremiah

had predicted this and of course jeremiah is an old testament voice An old testament prophet at a time when the sinaitic covenant was the covenant in force Jeremiah by revelation from the holy spirit knew a time would come where a different Covenant and a different kind of covenant would come. So said jeremiah 31 31 behold the days are coming says the lord When I will make a new covenant with the house of israel with the house of judah He went on to say it's not going to be like the covenant I made with their fathers when I brought them out of egypt It's going to be a different kind of covenant one difference. Of course.

He mentions is it'll be his law be written on the heart in fact uh Torah observant people say that's really the only difference the only change that the new covenant brings Is that god writes the laws the torah of the old covenant on the hearts of the believers so that now We have his law on our hearts But that's not new david in psalm 40 said his god's law was written on his heart Deuteronomy Moses said to you know circumcise your hearts and not your foreskins. I mean this idea of the heart Being brought into conformity with god's will Is not absent from the old testament. It's rare Because most of the jews did not experience apparently this writing of the law in their hearts But it was not unknown.

The new covenant is something entirely new apparently. It's not like the old covenant It's not just a repeat of the old covenant or a rewriting of it in the hearts That was already something that was a known phenomenon in the old testament times. There's something new in jesus That wasn't there before we'll find out what that is in luke 22 20 Jesus in the upper room with his disciples the remnant of israel Said likewise it says likewise.

He also took the cup after supper saying This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for you So the ten commandments the law the torah that was the first covenant The blood that jesus shed commemorated in the drinking of the cup is the new covenant Now, how is that different than the old? Well, that'll be worth exploring but we're not left in the dark the new testament does answer that also in first corinthians 11 25 In the same manner. He took the cup After supper saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood This do as often as you drink it in remembrance of me There are some of the different theological persuasion than myself who actually feel The new covenant of which jeremiah spoke has not come into reality yet. They believe that after the rapture of the church, uh, god will restore the jews to faith And then he will make this new covenant with him that jeremiah spoke of however, jesus said that he was doing that in the upper room So these people are a couple thousand years too late at least Because jesus handed this to some of the covers of this is the new covenant It's my blood and so the new covenant is Now not sometime in the future and it is Uh contrast as we shall see from the old covenant Now hebrews 8 13 tells us this in that he says a new covenant He has made the first covenant obsolete That's what hebrews 8 13 says It quotes Jeremiah 31 about the new covenant And as soon as he stops talking about as soon as he stops quoting he makes this commentary, you know He said there's a new covenant here And

where there's a new covenant.

He said the old one. The first one is Obsolete he went on to say that which is old and growing obsolete is about ready to vanish away He means of course that before long after he wrote that All the trappings of the old covenant system the temple and so forth were going to be destroyed As they were in 70 a.d. It was already obsolete But it was still going on as an obsolete system until the romans came and destroyed the temple the point though is That he makes it very clear two covenants are not in force at the same time Any more than two marriages can be? Enforced at the same time to my great grief. I have had more than one marriage And I understand many people Based on certain understandings the way jesus spoke about that think that that's not all right and I respect their opinion about that uh, most would agree that if If my first wife had simply died Then having a second wife would be no problem.

That's not controversial. I don't know that that's ever really been controversial in church history The bible makes it very clear if a if a woman dies, she can remarry if a man's wife dies He can remarry but the problem is with divorce and there are many people who believe that uh understanding the way jesus taught about divorce That there is no circumstance in which a divorce can be followed by a second marriage without it being sin I understand that differently. I understand the passages differently, but I I fully respect those who are so committed to scripture that they will follow their conscience on that But I just want to say this Although i've had more than one marriage i've never had more than one at a time When I got married the first time I entered into a covenant You know mount sinai was god entering into a covenant Which is likened to marriage God likened it to marriage with israel.

He married israel. She was his wife. He was the husband and as such he expected Submission and obedience to his ways and he gave them laws to be obeyed and especially the law to not Cheat with other gods not to cheat with other men as we would say And she violated that and so the bible says he gave her a bill of divorce He told her in deuteronomy If you make me jealous by going after other gods, i'll make you jealous i'll go with another people That's like a man's interest.

If you sleep with another guy i'm gonna get another wife And eventually we do read of this divorce and we do read of A new people they're taken from the old people initially the remnant of the old group become the core of the new group But it's a new covenant made a new marriage covenant and that being so That god can't be married to two different people by two different covenants at the same time any more than a man can be When my wife left me and divorced me And I was single for some time. I remarried eventually and Made another covenant but By making a new covenant i'm acknowledging the old one to be totally obsolete No one would feel at liberty to remarry If they felt like their first covenant was still in force, you can't have two covenants same time That's god's the same way. He made a marriage covenant with israel And he and

when he talked about making the new covenant he alluded to it as a marriage because he said uh At least in the hebrew the Septuagint reads a little differently, but in jeremiah 31 god said the new covenant will not be like the old covenant Which I made with their fathers when I brought them out of egypt which covenant they broke although I was a husband to them In other words he's saying I was a faithful husband I kept the covenant They didn't So a time will come we'll make a new covenant and jesus finds the remnant the faithful remnant of the old group And he brings them together for a Meal to establish the new covenant and he says this cup is the new covenant in my blood and now there's a new marriage now The jews were still around They were divorced From god, they kept tried to keep the old covenant, but they never did that very well anyway anyway, but and eventually Their entire ability to pretend was taken from them when the temple was destroyed now that didn't keep them from continuing to pretend because They you know had a council at jadu after that where they figured out.

How can we continue to be? Jewish and keep the torah without a temple It seems to me that question should answer itself, but they didn't come up with the right answer that well We'll just come up with a bunch of regulations, which are the rabbinic Regulations they continue as rabbinic judaism today or what we call orthodox judaism, but they don't have a temple They don't have sacrifice. They don't have at least 50 of the torah is totally Not followed by them why because god made it not possible for them to continue it because he did something else He went a different direction And what they were involved was about ready to vanish away when the writer of hebrews wrote He said he's talked already about a new covenant that makes the the first one It's obsolete now if the old covenant is obsolete isn't the old covenant the law? Now I think that most people would have less trouble with that suggestion If they understood The new covenant better because the law is written on the heart And uh torah observing people say that means god's gonna write the torah on the hearts Of the believers. Well, he didn't say that specifically.

He said my law. He didn't say the law He said my laws i'm going to put my laws my words in their inward parts So he didn't say it's gonna be the same ones that he gave to moises He gave a better law And in hebrews it says the new covenant is based on better words better promises and so forth um, and it says specifically in hebrews 7 12 where the writer is talking about the fact that the Aaronic priesthood is No longer because christ now is the high priest forever after the order of melchizedek A permanent priesthood that will never be revoked And there will never be a place for an Aaronic priest again in god's system In saying that the priest has been changed. He makes this application Hebrews 7 12 for the priesthood being changed Which is what he's argued as a given He reaches this conclusion of necessity.

There's also a change of the law Oh what kind of change do we have in mind here? If the priesthood has been changed which is central to the law Then the law of which it was central must not be the same as it was before There must necessarily be a change in the

law. Now the writer of hebrews at this point doesn't go into Expounding on what all those changes are but that's what the new testament talks about with a new covenant. The old is obsolete The old law the old priesthood.

It's all changed now There's something new and we need to understand what's new so we don't get too bound up in the old I was talking about how you can't have two marriage covenants with the same person at the same with two different people in one person Paul goes into that very illustration in romans chapter 7 verse 1 through 4 Romans 7 verses 1 through 4 Paul said or do you not know brethren for I speak to those who know the law? So he's writing to the jewish element And those who are informed of jewish things who are in the congregation in rome He said i'm going to give you an example from the law to make the point. I want to make I speak to you who know the law that the law has dominion over a man as long as he lives now this statement in my opinion means No longer only as long as he lives because the point he's going to make is if A person is dead. They're no longer under it.

So when he says the law has A power over a person as long as he lives he means And no longer than that For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law To her husband as long as he lives again. He means no longer than his lifetime He's not addressing the questions that the law itself allows Divorce at some in some cases In fact, the woman has very little to say about it in the law. The man just dumps his wife if he wants to It's a very bad system for divorce But paul's writing people who know the law so they would know about deuteronomy 24 They know what the law says and what does they they would know that the law does not say that a man and woman are bound necessarily forever for a lifetime there are Cases where they're not in the law, but that no one is bound any longer than their lifetime.

That's the point He's saying there's a restriction on how long A person is bound in marriage and that restriction Is after one of the spouses is dead. There's no more marriage and he goes on he says So then if while her husband lives she marries another man she'll be called an adulteress If she has a living husband By the way, uh, the woman at the well had had five husbands But jesus said she was now with men who was not her husband. He recognized five legitimate husbands But one relationship that wasn't legitimate husband.

So jesus seemed to recognize five serial marriages As actual husbands, but now she was with somebody who who was not a husband The point here is though If her husband dies, this is the point paul's getting at Then she's free To be remarried and she'll not be called an adulteress Though she has married another man Now here's his point He's not really giving teachings about divorce remarriage at all. He's not even talking about real marriage He's using it as an analogy with reference to covenants The law and such his whole point in romans 7 is that we're not under the law And so he's using this marriage analogy and he says therefore my brethren You also have become dead to the law

through the body of christ That you may be married to another who To him who is raised from the dead that we should bear fruit for god Now who was raised from the dead jesus, so we're married to jesus now There's a new covenant a new marriage. We're the bride of christ.

Now. He's the bridegroom. That's the new covenant But that only works if we're no longer married to the old one If we're still married to the law Then we can't be married to christ the law and christ would be rivals for our loyalty and affection Two men can't be rivals for the same woman for very long And they shouldn't ever be and so We were married to the law as it were so to speak.

There was this covenant bond But death has ended that marriage actually it was the death of christ us in christ We have become dead to the law through the body of christ that is through christ death and we in him We are dead with him and risen with him and that means that we're dead to the old marriage And we're now free to be married to another And that other is the one who rose from the dead paul says there's not really any way to get around this. I know of Than to say paul is telling us That god's people related to god under one covenant in a certain era But now there's a new husband a new covenant and we relate a different era in a different way The covenant that god had with israel when she was his wife was the sinaitic covenant There were rules and regulations associated with it to be sure but It was okay. It was doable.

Actually people could keep the law I know some preachers say oh, no one could keep the law The law was just given to show us that we couldn't keep it I don't think so. It sounds to me when god gave it He said he expected them to keep it and was going to push them pretty severely if they didn't I don't really know that There's anything god said in the law that couldn't be done John, the baptist's parents didn't have any trouble keeping it. They were blameless according to paul himself and Philippians said that he was blameless according to the law before he was a christian.

That means he kept it The law was not impossible to keep But it's not proper to keep when you're not married to it anymore You're married to christ now And we're supposed to be obedient to him now and this is what replaces the obedience to christ. It's a relationship with jesus. That's marked by our obedience and loyalty to him now I'm gonna take a break here because we're coming up to the point where I do but I want to make sure I Get to a better stopping point.

I will in just a moment here in jeremiah 31 it says that the new covenant will not be like the old Jeremiah 31 31 through 32 says I will make a new covenant with the house of israel with the house of judah Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day that I took them out by the hand to lead them Out of the land of egypt my covenant which they broke though. I was a husband to them so they broke that covenant He's free He didn't divorce them as soon as they as they broke it Nor should

any man Or woman pursue a divorce simply because their spouse has strayed But they became perennially Unfaithful They became addicted to idolatry They came to the point where Staying in that covenant with them was impossible because they didn't they simply showed they'll have no part of it And so god says if you don't want it, I don't want it And he gave him a writing of divorce And he sought another people to make them jealous since they made him jealous by going after other gods But he said I was a husband to them, but they broke the covenant hebrews 8 6 through 7 says but now jesus has obtained a more excellent ministry In as much as he is also the mediator of a better covenant Which was established on better promises? For if that first covenant had been faultless then no place would have been sought for a second Jeremiah would not have been inspired by the holy spirit to speak of the second covenant if everything about the first covenant was exactly ideal There's something wrong with it. It couldn't do certain things that the new covenant can Now I I do want to honor my word and give you a break here so i'm going to do that what we're going to come back to immediately is the fact that Some of these things in the old covenant are said to be everlasting eternal And that sounds like a strong argument in favor of them being binding at all times And so we want to talk about that it's not difficult to show what the bible teaches about this But it does require that we actually look at the scriptures and that's something that some people don't do Enough I think You