

# ***Hebrew Roots and Torah Observance***

Lecture notes by Steve Gregg

## **Teachings of the movement**

Permanence of Torah: Sabbath and other festivals, Kosher diet, Circumcision  
Sacrifices?

Use of sacred names for God and Christ

Use of Jewish names

Jesus and Paul were Torah Observant

The original church of the first century was Torah Observant

## **Some well-known teachers:**

### A. Jim Staley

A controversial St. Charles pastor was sentenced Wednesday to seven years in federal prison and ordered to repay \$3.3 million to elderly investors he defrauded in an investment scam. **Jim Staley**, 40, pleaded guilty in April to four counts of wire fraud, admitting that he cheated others while making \$570,000 for himself. [www.stltoday.com/.../article\\_9db523fc-f686-532d-86dc-2240e65d9003.html](http://www.stltoday.com/.../article_9db523fc-f686-532d-86dc-2240e65d9003.html)

### B. Michael Rood

Claims to be “an ordained nondenominational Christian minister and a Jewish Messianic rabbi.” He is not trained, certified or recognized as a rabbi, and his “ordination” was in a cult called “The Way International.” Rood demands that all Christians “keep the Torah.” Rood is obsessed with dates, and claims the current Hebrew calendar is wrong. He teaches that it is essential that Christians keep the Sabbath and observe O.T. Festivals (following his calendar), the use of purification rites, and that Christians who do not do so are an abomination to God.

### C. Doug Hamp

## **Are Christians to keep the law or not?**

### A. The Torah was given distinctively to Israel, not the Gentiles.

1. Circumcision was a sign of the covenant with Abraham (Gen.17:10-11)
2. Sabbath was a sign of the covenant made at Sinai with Israel (Ex.31:13, 16-17)
3. Laws of clean and unclean were marks of Israel’s “holiness” (i.e., “unique relation with God). (Lev.11:44-45)
4. Torah was never imposed upon Gentiles, unless they wished to become Old Covenant Jews.
5. Even the Torah-observant Jerusalem Church did not believe Gentiles must be Torah observant (Acts 21:25).

### B. The difference between ritual and moral commandments

1. Moral laws, reflecting God’s character, are binding on all men, and are acknowledged by many Gentile legal and cultural norms (Rom.2:14; 1 Cor.5:1).

2. “Ritual” or “ceremonial” laws were those given to Israel alone, which pertained to the tabernacle/temple system of worship—e.g., circumcision, holy days, festivals, priests, sacrifices, ritual cleanness.
3. Ceremonial laws were types and shadows, anticipating spiritual realities fulfilled in Christ (Heb.8:4-5; 9:6-11; 10:1; Col.2:16-17)
6. “Clean” and “unclean” animals and ritual conditions were symbolic of moral cleanness and uncleanness—comp. Deut.22:10 with 2 Cor.6:14 (cf. Acts 10:11-15, 28; 1 Cor.5:7-8)
7. Distinction between ceremonial and moral duties noted in both testaments (Hos.6:6; Matt.9:13; 12:3-7; 23:23; 1 Cor.6:12-13)

This distinction in the Torah is acknowledged by the *Hebrew Roots* scholar, Dr. Ron Moseley:

When one considers the subject of Law, there must be a differentiation between various kinds of laws. The moral or ethical laws that are necessary for human beings to live together in harmony are known as *mashpatim*, which is generally translated ‘judgments.’ The second group, the rituals and festivals which are intended to reawaken man to important religious truths such as the Sabbath, various feast days...are known as *edot*, which is translated ‘witnesses.’ The third group, known as *chukim* or ‘decrees,’ refers to the moral, civil, and judicial laws.” (*Yeshua: A Guide to the Real Jesus and the Original Church*, p.58)

#### C. “New” vs. “Old” Covenants

1. Christ inaugurated the New Covenant (Luke 22:20)
2. The New is “not like” the Old (Jer.31:31-34)
3. The New renders the Old “obsolete” (Heb.8:13)
4. Like the remarriage of a widow (Rom.7:1-4; Eph. 5:24)
5. There has been a “change of the law” (Heb.7:12)
6. What has been “abolished” is the “law of commandments contained in ordinances,” which Paul viewed as a “wall of division” between Jews and Gentiles (Eph.2:14-15).

*What does “abolish” mean, in Eph.2:15? Jesus did not “destroy” the law (kataluo), but he did “abolish” (katargeo) the law (Eph.2:15), the same word used for “putting away” childish things (1 Cor.13:11), to “make void” (Gal.3:17 YLT), or to “nullify” (Gal.3:17 NASB) and to “abolish” death (2 Tim.1:10 NASB, YLT).*

#### D. The message of the transfiguration:

1. Christ’s authority eclipses that of Law and Prophets (Mark 9:4-8; Heb.1:1-3)
2. Christ is the ultimate Head over all things to the church (Eph.1:22; 2 Cor.10:4-5)
3. Christians must obey His commands (John 8:31; Matt.28:18-20; 1 Cor.9:21; 1 Tim.6:3-4)
4. Imposition of Torah observance is a denial of the Lordship of Christ (Matt.12:8)

#### E. All necessary commands are summed up in “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matt.22:37-40; John13:34-35; Gal.5:14; James 2:8; Rom.13:8-10; 1 John 3:23)

1. The “law of Christ” is contrasted with the Torah observance (1 Cor.9:21)
2. The “law of Christ” is fulfilled when we bear one another’s burdens (Gal.6:2)
3. Summarized in doing to others what one wishes to have done to oneself (Matt.7:12)

## II. Old Testament revelation

### A. Noah

1. Prior to the flood, apparently, no animal flesh was eaten by man (Gen.1:29)

2. “Clean” and “unclean” only referred to animals suitable for sacrifice (Gen.7:2; 8:20)
2. After the flood, man could eat “anything that moves”—no animals were forbidden (Gen.9:3)

#### B. Abraham

1. Imputed righteous without the Law (Gen.15:6; Rom.4:9-10)
2. Circumcision was added as a testimony to his faith (Rom.4:11)
3. Circumcision was a type of circumcision of the heart (Rom.2:28-29; Phil.3:3)

#### C. David

1. Was justified from his adultery and murder—without, and contrary to, the law (Ps.32:1-5)
2. As a man after God’s heart, understood better than many Christians, God’s heart about the ceremonial laws (Psalm 40:6-8; Psalm 51:16-17)
3. Violated, without guilt, the ceremonial law of the showbread (Matthew 12:3-4)

#### D. The Prophets

##### 1 Samuel 15:22

*Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.*

##### Isaiah 1:11, 15-17

*“To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to Me?” Says the Lord. “I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of fed cattle. I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs or goats...*

*“Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.”*

##### Hosea 6:6

*For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.*

##### Jeremiah 22:15-16

*Did not your father...do justice and righteousness? Then it was well with him. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Was not this knowing Me?” says the Lord.*

##### Micah 6:6-8

*With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the High God?*

*Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?*

*<sup>7</sup> Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil?...*

*<sup>8</sup> He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?*

### **III. The example and teaching of Jesus**

- A. Taught that Law and Prophets were temporary and were to be fulfilled by Christ (Mat.5:17-18)
  1. Said that the law and prophets were until John—then the Kingdom was preached (Luke 16:16ff)
  2. Said that temple worship was to be replaced with spiritual worship (John 4:21, 23-24)

#### B. Ignoring Sabbath

1. Never preached or encouraged Sabbath-keeping

2. No record of Him resting on the Sabbath
3. Broke the Sabbath because His Father does so (John 5:16-19)
4. Defended disciples for breaking Sabbath (Matt.12:1-7)
5. Said that the priests blamelessly profane the Sabbath (Matt.12:5-6)
6. Said that He is the "Lord of the Sabbath" (Matt.12:8)
7. Said that it is lawful to "do good" on the Sabbath (Matt.12:12)
8. Said that circumcision preempts Sabbath (John 7:22), but circumcision is "nothing" (1 Cor.7:19; Gal.5:6; 6:15)

C. Ignoring clean and unclean

1. Touching lepers (Matt.8:3)
2. Touched by a woman with an issue of blood (Mark 5:25-34)
3. Touching the dead (Mark 5:41; Luke 7:14)
4. Declared all foods clean (Mark 7:19)

**IV. The teaching and example of Peter**

- A. On clean and unclean — Acts 10:14-15 (this story had to have been related by Peter)
- B. On circumcision — Acts 15:7-9
- C. Said it was "testing God" to impose Torah observance as a "yoke" on the Gentiles, which even the Jews could not bear — Acts 15:10 (cf., Matt.11:28-30)
- D. While in Antioch, lived "in the manner of Gentiles, and not as the Jews" — Gal.2:14

**V. James, the Jerusalem Council, and the Holy Spirit**

- A. Acts 15:23-29
  - Those who teach circumcision and keeping Torah "were not sent by us" (v.24)
  - The council's endorsement of Barnabas and Paul (v.25)
  - Decision verified by Judas and Silas (prophets—v.32) of the Jerusalem church (v.27)
  - This "seemed good to the Holy Spirit" (v.28)
  - Asked restraint from 4 practices (only 2 were in the Torah—blood and ritual prostitution)—and said that nothing more was required, with reference to ceremonial issues (v.29)
- B. Four restrictions (Acts 15:19-21) to avoid offending Jews living in Gentile lands (1 Cor.8:13; 10:23-33; Rom.14:14-15)

**VI. The teaching and practice of Paul**

- A. *Paul's general view of Torah observance*
  1. Viewed his former Torah observance as "dung" and worthless (Phil.3:4-8)
  2. Said that such observance is of no value in subduing the flesh (Col.2:20-23; Rom.7:7-11)
  3. Referred to the Torah as the "*stoicheia*" (ABC's), pertaining to immaturity and childhood (Gal.4:1-4, 9-11; Col.2:20-21)
  4. Said that the coming of faith ends the role of the "schoolmaster" (Gal.3:23-25)

5. Paul compared the law, written on stone tablets, with the supernatural glow on Moses' face, in that both were "passing away" (2 Cor.3:6-8, 11)
6. Christ is the END OF THE LAW for righteousness... (Rom.10:4)
7. The Gospel presents the righteousness of God "apart from the Law" (Rom.3:21)

*B. Torah-observance (cultural sensitivity) as an evangelistic strategy (1 Cor.9:19-21)*

1. Circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:3)
2. Accommodated James (Acts 21:18-26)

*C. The Gospel would be compromised by allowing the circumcision of Gentile Titus (Gal.2:3-5)*

*D. On circumcision*

1. Counts for nothing to God (Rom.2:28-29; 1 Cor.7:19; Gal.5:6; 6:15; Phil.3:3)
2. Obligates one to keep the whole law (Gal.5:3), which would include animal sacrifices, pilgrimages, killing rebellious children, idolatrous wives or husbands, etc.

*E. On clean, unclean and holy days*

1. They were a shadow—Col.2:16
2. There is liberty, not obligation—Rom.14:1-5
3. No food is intrinsically unclean—Rom.14:14
4. All foods are sanctified by God's word and prayer—1 Tim.4:4-5

*F. Denounced those who preached Torah observance among Gentile Christians*

1. Said that they were teachers who did not know what they were talking about (1 Tim.1:7-9)
2. Called them "false brethren" (Gal.2:4)
3. Said they preached "another gospel" and a "perversion" of Christ's gospel (Gal.1:6-7)
4. Declared them "anathema" (Gal.1:8-9)
4. Said they were teaching "demonic doctrines" (1 Tim.4:1-3)
5. Said that those who followed them were estranged from Christ, & from grace (Gal.5:2,4)
6. Said that Paul feared his labor was "in vain" among those who turned to Torah (Gal.4:10-11)

**VII. Objections:**

**A. What about Matthew 5:17-20? (see verses 23-24 and 23:23)**

"It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the Law to fail." (Luke 16:17). Thus, "till heaven and earth pass away" could mean, "Unless heaven and earth pass away" (as "till hell freezes over" means "Unless hell freezes over")

"Till all [the Law and the Prophets] is fulfilled" (Matt.5:17-18)

1. "to fulfill" (v.17) Gr. *Pleroo* "filled-up" "completed" (cf., 2 Cor.10:6)  
"All things" fulfilled [*pleroo*]—Acts 3:18 / Luke 24:44-47 / John 19:36  
See Luke 21:22 ("that all that is written may be fulfilled" [*pleroo*])
2. "be fulfilled" (v.18) Gr. *ginomai* "become" "be created" "occur, come to pass"
3. Words used similarly: Gr. *Teleoo* and *teleo* "reach the end, or the goal"  
Comp. Acts 3:18 *pleroo* w/ 13:29 *teleo*; ALSO  
Rom.13:10 *pleroma* w/ Rom.2:27 & James 2:8 *teleo*;  
cf. Luke 18:31; 22:37  
"It is finished" *teleo* (John 19:30)

## **All the Law and the Prophets fulfilled in “love your neighbor”**

Gal.5:14 *pleroo* (also Rom.8:4)

For all the law is **fulfilled** in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Rom.13:9-10 *pleroma*

For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,” “You shall not murder,” “You shall not steal,” “You shall not bear false witness,” “You shall not covet,” and if *there is* any other commandment, are *all* summed up in this saying, namely, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” **10** Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love *is* the **fulfillment** of the law.

James 2:8 *teleo*

If you really **fulfill** the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you do well.

## **Love is the whole Law and the Prophets**

Matt.7:12

Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

### **B. What about Matt.24:20?**

Jesus told His disciples to pray that their flight from the invasion of Jerusalem might occur neither in winter, nor on a Sabbath day. Some have assumed from this statement, that Jesus was forbidding them to flee on the Sabbath—as if their obligation to keep Sabbath would trump their need to save their lives from invaders!

First, there is no command in the Sabbath law that would forbid such flight, even to those under Sabbath obligations. The rabbi’s had developed traditional teachings about the maximum distance that one might legitimately travel on the Sabbath day, but Jesus never placed His disciples under the rabbinic traditions. The limits of a so-called “Sabbath-day’s journey” are never mentioned or alluded to in the Torah.

But, more importantly, Jesus is saying nothing about the legitimacy of flight on the Sabbath. He acknowledges that they might be obliged to flee on a Sabbath day, but exhorts them to pray that this inconvenience would not be necessary. The inability of buying provisions on the Sabbath, and the possibility that the city gates would be closed on the Sabbath, rendered such a situation very inconvenient for one beginning a journey in haste.

Winter, similarly, might be a bad time for such travel, but, like the Sabbath, not because there is any law forbidding flight in the winter, but because inclement weather and cold would make this an uncomfortable time to be out on the road. The prayer to avoid travel on Sabbath or in winter tells us nothing about the obligations of Torah observance—only that there are some very inconvenient times to travel, and that the disciples should pray that the incurring of such hardships may not be required.

### **C. What about Isaiah 56:1-7 and 66:17, 23?**

The Old Testament imagery, used in the prophets when writing of the Messianic Age (the present age), is simply a temporal accommodation to the original readers, whose only frame of reference was the Old Covenant forms of worship. That is, the New Testament *spiritualizes* many physical and ritual things in from Old

Testament. Worship of God, which was always ritualized in the Old Covenant, is now "in spirit" and "in truth" (John 4:24; Phil.3:3).

For example, the Passover, the animal sacrifices, the Levitical Priesthood, the temple, Jerusalem and Israel itself, are all spoken of in the prophets as having relevance to the Messianic Kingdom—but are all given a spiritual interpretation by the New Testament writers:

1. The "Sabbath" and the "burnt offerings", spoken of in Isaiah 56:3-4, 6-7, refer to the spiritual "rest" discussed in Hebrews 4:9-11, and in the "spiritual sacrifices" offered by the church (1 Pet.2:5; Heb.13:15-16).
2. The Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread (prescribed in Ezekiel 45:21) are fulfilled in Jesus' death and our holy living (1 Corinthians 5:7-8).
3. Similarly, the Feast of Succoth, predicted in Zechariah 14:16-19, to be kept (accompanied by the offering of temple sacrifices—v.21) in the Messianic Age (cf. Ezek.45:25), seems to have its spiritual fulfillment in our present "wandering" (1 Cor.10:1-11) and our present dwelling in "tabernacles" (2 Cor.5:1ff). The water-pouring ceremony, on the last day of that feast, in particular, seems to be fulfilled in Christ's giving us the Holy Spirit (John 7:37-39).
4. "Circumcision" (an Old Testament requirement, said to be perpetual "to all generations") is now understood to be fulfilled in "circumcision of the heart" and is defined as "worship[ing] God in the Spirit, rejoice[ing] in Christ Jesus, and hav[ing] no confidence in the flesh" (Phil.3:3).
5. The future "exodus," referred to in Isaiah 11:15-16; 51:10-11 (cf., Jer.31:31-32) is referred to as something Jesus accomplished in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31 [Greek]).
6. "Jerusalem" and "Mount Zion" into whom all nations flow, in Isaiah 2:1-4, appears to be spiritualized in Hebrews 12:22-24.
7. The gathering of Gentiles "for an offering to the Lord" (Isaiah 66:20) is interpreted as Gentiles being brought to Christ and presented by Paul as an offering to God. (Rom.15:16).
8. The following verse, Isaiah 66:21, speaks of God taking some of these saved Gentiles to replace the "priests and Levites," a fact to which the New Testament also testifies—though spiritualized (1 Peter 2:5; Rev.1:6; 5:10).
9. The spiritual worship offered to God by Gentiles in this present age is predicted under the form of offering incense (Mal.1:11).

In agreement with Carmine, I think unclean animals are often treated in the New Testament as unclean people (e.g., when Paul applies Deuteronomy 22:10 in 2 Corinthians 6:14; or in Peter's rooftop vision [here under discussion]; or in Jesus' words in Matthew 7:6).

However, I suspect that the pigs and the rats mentioned in Isaiah 66:17 are simply an Old Testament image representing behaviors which the New Testament identifies as spiritually "unclean"—usually listed along with various sexual sins (2 Cor.12:21; Gal.5:19; Eph.4:19; 5:3, 5; 1 Thess.4:7; 2 Peter 2:10). It is no doubt this matter of which Paul speaks when he writes:

Therefore "Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you...Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." (2 Corinthians 6:17; 7:1)

Because of the frequent use of such imagery in the prophetic passages, and because Jesus declared all foods "clean," I believe that the pigs and rats on Isaiah 66:17 are to be spiritualized.

### C. What about Ezekiel 40-47 and Zech.14?

These two prophecies speak of temple worship being conducted with all the Jewish rituals applying—in particular, animal sacrifices. While it is popular among premillennialists to apply these passages to a future millennium, there is nothing in either passage that justifies such an identification.

Numerous theories have been offered as to the meaning of Ezekiel's temple vision, but it is enough to say that nothing in the passage would apply it to the New Testament Era, nor to a future millennium after the return of Christ. When these ideas are imported (inevitably, from outside the passages themselves), this creates theological tension between the clear teaching of Paul and Hebrews that those rituals were temporary "shadows" which have found their substance and fulfillment in Christ. Hebrews is clear that Jesus' sacrifice was "one sacrifice for sins forever" (10:12) and that "there is no longer an offering for sin" [i.e., other than His self-offering] (10:18). The sacrifices in Ezekiel's temple are specifically said to be "for a sin offering" (Ezek.45:22, 23), and "to make atonement" (45:15, 17). Therefore, the passage cannot be rightly applied to any time after the death of Christ.

Zechariah 14, on the other hand, is applied to the present age by New testament writers. However, all the sacrifices of the present era are spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet.2:5), so those mentioned in Zechariah must be understood spiritually.

### D. The festivals are "festivals of the Lord" and the Sabbath is "the Sabbath of the Lord"?

The argument is made that the Sabbath and festivals commanded under the Old Covenant are not "of the Jews" but "of the Lord." This, they say, does not limit their use to the Jewish people, but to all people. However, if we refer to these things as "of the Jews," we are simply saying, "given to be practiced by the Jews." The phrase "of the Lord" does not contradict this, since it means, "given by, or pertaining to, the Lord." They are never said to be the festivals "of the nations," or "of the Gentiles."

That these laws came from God is not disputed here. It is a question of to whom He gave them as required observances. The Torah describes many other things as being "of the Lord"—things which are undisputedly temporary, and not in the least applicable today. For example:

- The **commandment of the Lord**—referring to the command to flee Egypt (Ex.17:1)
- The **word of the Lord**—God's warning about the plague of hail (Ex.9:20-21)
- The **word of the Lord**—the specific command to take a census of Israel (Num.3:16)
- The **priests of the Lord** (1 Sam.1:3; 2 Chron.26:17)
- The **anointing oil of the Lord** on the priests (Lev.10:7)
- The **house of the Lord** (Ex.23:19; 34:26)



- The ***tabernacle of the Lord*** (Lev.17:4; Num.16:9)
- The ***cloud of the Lord*** above the tabernacle (Ex.40:38; Num.10:34)
- The ***ark of the covenant of the Lord*** (Num.14:44)
- The ***altar of the Lord*** (Lev.17:6)
- The ***offerings of the Lord*** (Lev.21:6; 24:9; Num.9:7, 13)
- The ***work of the Lord***—referring to the Levites' temple duties (Num.8:11)

The common use of the phrase “of the Lord” merely means “ordained by” or “pertaining to the worship of” Yahweh. It in no sense indicates permanence. In scripture, the phrase is widely applied to many temporary items, commands and institutions. Therefore, the terms “the Sabbath of the Lord” and “the Festivals of the Lord” tell us nothing of the enduring relevance of these hoy days beyond the Old Covenant Era.