

Torah Observance Seminar

Seminar notes by Steve Gregg

I. Teachings of the movement

Essentially, a feature of the Hebrew Roots (or Jewish Roots) Movement.

The Laws (the Levitical Code) given to Israel at Sinai are still to be observed (not necessarily for salvation, but for obedience) by Christians. This includes circumcision, the festivals of the Jewish calendar, the dietary restrictions, the laws of cleanness—but not the priestly or sacrificial codes.

II. 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

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

Douglas Hamp earned his M.A. in the Bible and its World from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and his PhD in Biblical Studies from Louisiana Baptist University. He served as an assistant pastor at Calvary Chapel Costa Mesa for six years, and his website says he has been endorsed by Chuck Smith, Ken Hamm and other respected leaders—however, he does not say how long ago this was. I can find on his website evidence of his involvement in Calvary Chapel functions no later than 2011. He is senior pastor of the Way Congregation in Wheat Ridge, CO. He teaches that observance of Torah is mandatory for the Christian, and claims that Paul taught and practiced Torah observance. In support of this claim, he misquotes Acts 24: “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 which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.” Misquoted by Hamp: “I worship God *according to* all that is written in the Torah and the prophets.”

D. 119 Ministries “Test Everything”

Established in 2010 by teachers Jon Sherman and Steve Moutria, providing free online resources. In advocating circumcision and Torah observance for Christians, they can be very fastidious about certain minutiae (like the exact proper time to keep festivals), but reject certain other demands of the law, like the forbidding of mixed fabrics, and the shaving of the head and beard (Lev.19:27).

III. The case for Torah observance:

A. The teaching of The Torah and the Prophets

1. Circumcision

"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." (Genesis 17:12-13)

2. Sabbath

"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." (Exodus 31:15-16)

"Also the sons of the foreigner
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 shall be called a house of prayer for all nations."
(Isaiah 56:6-7)

3. Passover

"And if a stranger dwells among you, and would keep the Lord's Passover, he must do so according to the rite of the Passover and according to its ceremony; you shall have one ordinance, both for the stranger and the native of the land." (Numbers 9:14)

And 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 near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it." (Exodus 12:48)

4. Tabernacles

"And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, 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 to keep the Feast of Tabernacles." (Zechariah 14:16-19)

5. Laws of clean and unclean foods

"Those who sanctify themselves and purify themselves,
To go to the gardens
After an idol in the midst,
Eating swine's flesh and the abomination and the mouse,
Shall be consumed together," says the Lord."

B. The teaching of Christ

1. The Sermon on the Mount

"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. 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 and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:17-19)

2. Speaking to Jewish inquirers

So He said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments." (Matthew 19:17)

And behold, a certain-lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" He said to him, "What is written in the 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, and with all your mind,' and 'your neighbor as yourself.'" And He said to him, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." (Luke 10:25-28)

C. The teaching of Paul

(cited from https://en.m.wikibooks.org/wiki/Hebrew_Roots/Restoration/Grace_%26_Law/Paul)

1. Paul's life and testimony

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 gives of himself as a Torah-observant believer. Toward the end of Paul's life and ministry when Paul was supposed to have liberated the first-century believers from the "shackles and bondage" of the Torah-observance, we read the following:

"I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our father's law, and was zealous toward God as you are today. I persecuted this Way to the death ... " (Acts 22:3)

"But this I confess unto 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 in the prophets." (Act 24:14)

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

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

"And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: And they are informed of you, that you teach all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs. What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that you are come. Do therefore this that we say to you: We have four men which have a vow on them; Them take, and purify yourself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning you, are nothing; but that you yourself also walk orderly, and keep the law." (Acts 20:20-24)

When going in search of the believers in Yeshua, he went looking for them in the synagogues in Damascus (Acts 9:1-2).

"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 my peers within mine own kindred, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my elders". (Galatians 1:13-14).

"Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews. Concerning the Law, a Pharisee. Concerning zeal, persecuting the congregation the church. Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain 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, that I may gain Messiah, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law but the righteousness which is from God by faith which is through the faith in Messiah." (Philippians 3:5-9)

2. Paul's teaching

"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." (Romans 3: 31)

"But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully" (1 Timothy 1:8)

"Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good." (Romans 7:12)

"For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin." (Romans 7:14)

"For I delight in the law of God after the inward man..." (Romans 7:22)

3. Was Paul one of the false apostles mentioned in Revelation?

- a) Paul sought to abolish Torah observance
- b) Paul deified Jesus, equating him with the God of Israel
- c) Paul was abandoned by his supporters in Asia (2 Tim.1:15), about the same time that Jesus commended the Ephesian church for having tested and rejected false apostles (Rev.2:2).

IV. Confusion over Covenants

- A. *The Torah (summarized in 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 a part of the covenant struck at Mount Sinai.*

Exodus 34:28

So he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread nor drank water. And He wrote on the tablets **the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments.**

Deuteronomy 9:9

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 forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water.

- B. *This covenant is called, "the Old Testament," or "the first covenant," and is contrasted with the "new covenant."*

2 Corinthians 3:14

But their minds were blinded. For until this day the same veil remains unlifted in the reading of the **Old Testament,** because the *veil* is taken away in Christ.

Hebrews 8:7

...if that **first covenant** had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.

Hebrews 9:1

Then indeed, even the **first covenant** had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary.

Hebrews 9:18

Therefore not even the **first covenant** was dedicated without blood.

Hebrews 9:15

And for this reason He is the Mediator of the **new covenant,** by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the **first covenant,** that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

- C. *Jeremiah predicted that there would be a “new covenant” and this was instituted by Jesus at the Last Supper.*

Jeremiah 31:31

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—

Luke 22:20

Likewise He also *took* the cup after supper, saying, “This cup *is* the **new covenant** in My blood, which is shed for you.

I Corinthians 11:25

In the same manner *He* also *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.”

- D. *The new covenant made the first covenant “obsolete,” thus the Torah, which was the old covenant, has been “changed” with the coming of the new covenant.*

Hebrews 8:13

In that He says, “**A new covenant,**” He has **made the first obsolete.**

Hebrews 7:12

For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.

- E. *The change in covenants is comparable to two (serial) marriages*

Romans 7:1-4

Or do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the law), that the law ^[a]has dominion over a man as long as he lives? ²For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the law of her husband. ³So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man. ⁴Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God.

- F. *The new covenant would not belike the old one made at Sinai, which was likened to a marriage covenant between God and His people. The new covenant is a “better covenant.”*

Jeremiah 31:31-32

“I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord.”

Hebrews 8:6-7

But now [Jesus] has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also 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.

- G. *Was the covenant “everlasting”?*

“The church cannot abolish the everlasting covenants of God...God cannot renege on everlasting covenant.”
—Doug Hamp in online debate with Pentecostal minister

1. It is not the old covenant, made at Sinai, but the new covenant, established by Christ’s blood, that is said to be “everlasting”

Isaiah 55:3

And I will make an **everlasting covenant** with you— The sure mercies of David. (cf., Acts 13:34)

Jeremiah 32:40

“And I will make an **everlasting covenant** with them”

Hebrews 13:20

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the **everlasting covenant...**

2. Many institutions in the old covenant are said to be “everlasting” or “eternal”, in our English translations. There are two senses in which these statements can be understood.

a) *Olam* [Hebrew] used over 300 times in OT of future, and at least 20 times of past—means: “hidden; beyond the vanishing point, or horizon”—“The basic meaning of *olam* is ‘most distant times,’ whether past or future...therefore [the possible meanings of] *olam* is a broad range between the remotest time and perpetuity” “Most of the occurrences of *olam* indicate an indefinite continuance into the very near future” (Zodhiates)

This definition agrees with all Hebrew authorities (e.g., Brown-Driver-Briggs; Gesenius; Unger-White; Harris-Archer-Waltke; W.E. Vine)

(as we might paraphrase: “for the foreseeable future,” i.e., the indefinite future; for the duration; uninterrupted over a long period of time). For example:

Isa.42:14—“for a long time”

Jer.2:20 — “long ago”

Ex.21:6 / Lev.25:46—slave forever

Deut.23:3— forever = till the tenth generation

Josh.4:7—Stones in Jordan a memorial forever

1 Sam.1:22—The child Samuel to live in tabernacle forever

1 Sam.27:12— David to be Achish’s servant forever

2 Kings 5:27—Leprosy clings to Gehazi forever

Jonah 2:6—Sheol’s bars around Jonah forever

1 Kings 9:3—The Lord puts his name on Solomon’s temple forever

Ex.40:15—Aaron’s priesthood (see 1 Sam.2:30)

b) *The ceremonies of the levitical laws foreshadow spiritual realities fulfilled in Christ, so that, while the rituals do not continue, the spiritual realities they foreshadowed does.*

3. The Law, though *olam*, was temporary:

- a) “The Torah and the prophets were until John...” (Luke 16:16)
- b) “Christ is the end of the Torah for righteousness for all who believe.” (Rom. 10:4)
- c) The law was “until the Seed should come” (Gal.3:19)
- d) The law was a tutor for childhood, until faith in Jesus should replace it (Gal. 3:23-25)

4. “Till heaven and earth pass away...”

Matthew 5:17-18

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. ¹⁸For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”

Impossible meanings:

- That some parts of the Torah will never be fulfilled and never pass
- That some parts of the Torah will pass, leaving other parts still in force
- That the Torah had already been fulfilled at the time of Jesus speaking
- That the Torah would remain unfulfilled after His mission had been accomplished

Possible meanings to be considered:

- The end of the universe occurs at the same time as the ultimate fulfillment and passing of the law
- “Till heaven and earth pass away” means “till the old covenant passes away”
- The law and prophets will never pass away without being fulfilled, even if the universe does: cf., Luke 16:17: “It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the Law to fail.”
- “till heaven and earth pass away” could connote “unless” — “Unless heaven and earth pass away” (as “till hell freezes over” means “Unless hell freezes over” or “I will love you until the stars fall from the sky and the rivers run dry”)

See, on this point:

Jeremiah 31:35-36

Thus says the Lord, Who gives the sun for a light by day, The ordinances of the moon and the stars for a light by night, Who disturbs the sea, And its waves roar (The Lord of hosts is His name): “If those ordinances depart From before Me, says the Lord, Then the seed of Israel shall also cease From being a nation before Me forever.”

Jeremiah 33:25-26

“Thus says the Lord: ‘If My covenant is not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth,²⁶ then I will cast away the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, so that I will not take any of his descendants to be rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

One thing is clear from the statement:

Not one aspect of the law will pass away until the whole thing is fulfilled. If any detail of the law (e.g., sacrifices, the Aaronic priesthood, circumcision, dietary restrictions, holy days) has passed away, then all of it was fulfilled in Christ. Since a great many of these things are stated to have come to an end, that fulfillment of which Jesus spoke must necessarily have previously occurred.

H. *Missing the message of the Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36)*

1. Christ’s authority eclipses that of Law and Prophets

Mark 9:4-8

And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid. And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves.

Heb.1:1-3

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds...being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person...

2. Christ is the ultimate Head over all things to the church

Eph.1:22

And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church...

2 Cor.10:4-5

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ

3. Christians must obey His commands

John 8:31

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed."

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you"

1 Corinthians 9:21 (NASB)

To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law.

1 Tim.6:3-4

If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness, he is conceited and understands nothing...

4. Imposition of Torah observance is a denial of the Lordship of Christ

Matthew 12:8

"For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

Cf., Paul's discussion of the covenants in 2 Corinthians 3:7-13

But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech— unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.

V. The example and teaching of Jesus

A. *Taught that Law and Prophets were temporary and were to be fulfilled by Christ*

Matthew 5:17-18

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one ^[a]jot or one ^[b]tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”

1. Said that the law and prophets were until John—then the Kingdom was preached

Luke 16:16

“The law and the prophets *were* until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.”

2. Said that temple worship was to be replaced with spiritual worship

John 4:21, 23-24

Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father...But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

B. *Ignored 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

For this reason the Jews persecuted Jesus, ^[a]and sought to kill Him, because He had done these things on the Sabbath. But Jesus answered them, “My Father has been working until now, and I have been working. Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. Then Jesus answered and said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner.”

4. Defended disciples when they broke Sabbath

Matt.12:1-7

At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. And His disciples were hungry, and began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said to Him, “Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!” But He said to them, “Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, he and those who were with him: how he entered the house of God and ate the showbread which was not lawful for him to eat, nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests? Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is *One* greater than the temple. But if you had known what *this* means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless.”

5. Said that the priests “profane” the Sabbath but are “blameless”

Matthew 12:5-6

“Or have you not read in the law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless? Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple.”

6. Said that He is the “Lord of the Sabbath”

Matthew 12:8

“For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

7. Said that it is lawful to “do good” on the Sabbath

Matthew 12:12

“Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”

8. Said that circumcision preempts Sabbath

John 7:22

Moses therefore gave you circumcision (not that it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath.

C. *Ignored distinctions between clean and unclean*

1. Touched lepers

Matthew 8:3

Then Jesus put out *His* hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

5. Touched by a woman with an issue of blood

Mark 5:25-34

Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came behind *Him* in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, “If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well.” Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in *her* body that she was healed of the affliction. And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, “Who touched My clothes?” But His disciples said to Him, “You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’ ” And He looked around to see her who had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. And He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.”

6. Touched the dead

Mark 5:41

Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, “*Talitha, cumi*,” which is translated, “Little girl, I say to you, arise.”

Luke 7:14

Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried *him* stood still. And He said, “Young man, I say to you, arise.”

7. Declared all foods clean

Mark 7:18-19 (NASB)

And He said to them, “Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and ^[a]is eliminated?” (Thus He declared all foods clean.)

Luke 11:41 (ESV)

“But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you.”

VI. The teaching and example of Peter

A. *While in Antioch, Peter lived “in the manner of Gentiles, and not as the Jews”*

Galatians 2:14

But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before *them* all, “If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?”

B. *On clean and unclean*

Acts 10:14-15

But Peter said, “Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean. And a voice *spoke* to him again the second time, “What God has cleansed you must not call common.”

C. *On circumcision*

Acts 15:7-9

“Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

D. *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

Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

Cf. Matthew 11:28-30

“Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light.”

VII. James, the Jerusalem Council, and the Holy Spirit

A. *What James believed should be required of the Gentile Christians*

Acts 15:19-21

“Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

- Placing Gentiles under the Torah is described as “troubling” them (v.19)
- The four things restricted do not correspond with Torah observance (e.g., no circumcision, no kosher diet, no festival observances, etc.)
- The reason given for these restrictions is that there are many Jews in Gentile cities who have generationally ingrained sensitivities, and whom Christians should avoid offending. (cf. 1 Cor.8:13; 10:23-33; Rom.14:14-15)

B. *James’ letter to the Gentile Christians*

Acts 15:23-29

“Greetings, Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, “You must be circumcised and keep the law”—to whom we gave no such commandment — it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you

with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well.”

- 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)

VIII. The teaching and practice of Paul

A. Paul’s general view of Torah observance

1. Paul viewed his former Torah observance as “dung” and worthless

Philippians 3:4-8

...though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 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 church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ...

2. Paul said that such observance is of no value in subduing the flesh

Romans 7:7-11

What shall we say then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, “You shall not covet.” But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire. For apart from the law sin was dead. I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died. And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.

3. Paul referred to the Torah as the “*stoicheia*” (ABC’s), pertaining to immaturity and childhood

Galatians 4:1-5, 9-11

Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements [*stoicheia*] of the world. But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons... But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements [*stoicheia*], to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.

4. Paul said that Torah played the role of the “tutor” of children

Galatians 3:23-25

But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed. Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

5. Paul compared the law, written on stone tablets, with the supernatural glow on Moses' face, in that both were "passing away"

2 Corinthians 3:6-8, 11

But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?... For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious.

6. Christ is the END OF THE LAW for righteousness...

Romans 10:4

"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes."

7. The Gospel presents the righteousness of God "apart from the Law"

Romans 3:21

But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets

B. Torah-observance (cultural sensitivity) as an evangelistic strategy

1 Corinthians 9:19-21 (NASB)

For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law.

1. Circumcised Timothy

Acts 16:3

Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took *him* and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.

2. Accommodated James (Acts 21:18-26)

C. The Gospel would be compromised by allowing the circumcision of Gentile Titus

Galatians 2:3-5

Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.

D. On circumcision

1. Counts for nothing to God

Romans 2:28-29

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.

1 Corinthians 7:19

Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.

Galatians 5:6; 6:15

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love... For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

Philippians 3:3

For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh

2. Obligates one to keep the whole law, which would include animal sacrifices, pilgrimages, killing rebellious children, idolatrous wives or husbands, etc.

Galatians 5:3

And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.

E. On clean, unclean and holy days

1. They were a shadow

Colossians 2:16-17

So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

2. There is liberty, not obligation

Romans 14:1-5

Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.

3. No food is intrinsically unclean

Romans 14:14

I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.

4. All foods are sanctified by God's word and prayer

1 Timothy 4:4-5

For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

F. Denounced the Judaizers, who preached Torah observance among Gentile Christians

1. Said that they were teachers who did not know what they were talking about

1 Timothy 1:7-9

...desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

2. Called them "false brethren"

Galatians 2:4

And *this occurred* because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage)

3. Said they were teaching “demonic doctrines”

1 Timothy 4:1-3

Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth.

4. Said that those who followed them were estranged from Christ, & from grace

Galatians 5:2-4

Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

5. Said that Paul feared his labor was “in vain” among those who turned to Torah

Galatians 4:10-11

You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.

6. Said they preached “another gospel” and a “perversion” of Christ’s gospel

Galatians 1:6-7

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

7. Declared them “anathema”

Galatians 1:8-9

But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.

IX. Why aren’t Christians required to observe Torah?

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

1. Circumcision was a sign of the covenant with Abraham

Genesis 17:10-11

This *is* My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; ¹¹ and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.

2. Sabbath was a sign of the covenant made at Sinai with Israel

Exodus 31:13, 16-17

“Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: ‘Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it *is* a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that *you* may know that I *am* the Lord who sanctifies you... Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations *as* a perpetual covenant. It *is* a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever...”

3. Laws of clean and unclean were marks of Israel’s “holiness” (i.e., “unique relation with God).

Leviticus 11:44-45

For I *am* the Lord your God. You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I *am* holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves with any creeping thing that creeps on the earth. ⁴⁵ For I *am* the Lord who brings you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God. You shall therefore be holy, for I *am* holy.

4. Torah was never imposed upon Gentiles, unless they wished to become Old Covenant Jews.

Exodus 12:48

And 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 near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it.

5. Even the Torah-observant Jerusalem Church did not believe Gentiles must be Torah observant

Acts 21:25

But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality.”

B. The difference between ritual and moral commandments

1. Properly described by *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)

2. Distinction between ceremonial & moral duties noted in both testaments

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

Shall I come before [God] with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, ten thousand rivers of oil?... 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?

Matthew 9:13; 12:7

“But go and learn what *this* means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice’ ... But if you had known what *this* means, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless.”

Matthew 23:23

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

1 Corinthians 6:13

Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord...

3. Moral laws, reflecting God's character, are binding on all men, and are acknowledged by many Gentile legal and cultural norms—showing that these standards are known by nature.

Romans 1:20

For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

Romans 2:14

...for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves,

1 Corinthians 5:1

It is actually reported *that there is* sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father's wife!

4. "Ritual" or "ceremonial" laws were those given to Israel alone, marking their distinctness as a covenant people. These pertained to the tabernacle/temple system of worship—e.g., circumcision, holy days, festivals, priests, sacrifices, ritual cleanness. These would never be deduced by nature.

5. Ceremonial laws were types and shadows, anticipating spiritual realities fulfilled in Christ

Colossians 2:16-17

So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

Hebrews 8:4-5; 9:8-11; 10:1

...there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things...the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation... For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.

6. "Clean" and "unclean" animals and ritual conditions were symbolic of spiritual cleanness and uncleanness—comp.

Deuteronomy 22:10

"You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together."

2 Corinthians 6:14

Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

Acts 10:11-15, 28

and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat. But Peter said, "Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean. And a voice spoke to him again the second time, "What God has cleansed you must not call common" ... Then he said to them, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

1 Corinthians 5:7-8

Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.

7. What has been “abolished” is the “law of commandments contained in ordinances,” which Paul viewed as a “wall of division” between Jews and Gentiles

Ephesians 2:14-15

For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace...

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).

C. *Christians are not “lawless”*

1. The Law of Christ is contrasted with Torah observance

1 Corinthians 9:20-21

To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under [□]the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law.

John 13:34-35

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

1 John 3:23

And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.

James 2:8

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

Galatians 6:2

“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

2. All necessary commands (i.e., the moral laws) are summed up in the command to love

Matthew 7:12

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

Matthew 22:37-40

Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is *the* first and great commandment. And *the* second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Galatians 5:14

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

Romans 13:8-10

...he who loves another has fulfilled the law. 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.” Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.