

RABBI SHA'VL (PAUL):

AN ORTHODOX, TORAH-OBEDIENT, MESSIANIC JEWISH RABBI

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PAUL WAS A FOLLOWER/IMITATOR OF YESHUA

- 1 Cor. 11:1 **Be ye followers [imitator] of me, even as I also am of Messiah.** If Paul walked in the footsteps of and imitated Yeshua, then he did and taught what Messiah taught.
- Regarding Torah (i.e., what Christians mistakenly referred to as *the law of Moses*, but what the Jews call *the Torah*, a Hebrew word which literally means *the teachings, precepts or instructions in righteousness of YHWH [God]* and refers to the first five books of the Bible), Yeshua taught:
 - This passage screams of Torah! Yeshua is the Living Torah—the word of YHWH Who was made flesh.
Jn. 1:1-5, 12, 14 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
2 The same was in the beginning with God.
3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.
4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.
5 ¶ And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.
12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:
14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.
- **Mt. 5:17-19 Think not that I am come to destroy the Torah** (Yeshua said to, “Think not!, yet this is what many believe and teach that he came to do!), **or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.** For verily I say unto you, **Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Torah, till all be fulfilled.** Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.
- **Mt. 7:21-24** Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: **depart from me, ye that work iniquity** [anomia = Torahlessness]. **Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock...** (the Rock of truth, which is Yeshua, the Torah/Word of Elohim (God) made flesh).
- The Great Commission: **Mt. 28:19-20 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.** Paul was simply following the instructions of Yeshua and doing the great commission when he says, Follow/imitate me as I follow/imitate Messiah. Yeshua upheld and confirmed the validity of the Torah, and so did Paul.

WHAT WAS PAUL TEACHING THE GENTILES?

The elders in Jerusalem testify to Paul that tens of thousands of Jews have come to believe in Yeshua and are zealous for the Torah.

Acts 21:20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the Torah...

This was what the elders in Jerusalem were teaching the new converts. But what was Paul teaching his converts? Was he teaching them to abandon Torah? Some thought so and to prove that he was not, the elders instructed Paul to take a Nazarite vow and to help several others fulfill their nazarite vow obligations:

- **Acts 21:21** And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest 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.

22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come.

23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them;

24 Them take, and purify thyself 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 thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.

26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.

In a Roman court of law Paul declared that the charges of which the Jews accused him—namely changing the laws and customs of Moses—were false and that he had not changed the laws, but was indeed Torah-obedient.

- **Acts 23:1** And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.

- **Acts 24:10** Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:

11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.

12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city:

13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Torah and in the prophets...

- **Acts 25:7-8** And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove. While he answered for himself, Neither against the Torah of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.

Upon arriving in Rome Paul testifies before the Jewish leaders there about his Torah obedience.

- **Acts 28:17** 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.

ONE FOURTH OF THE BOOK OF ACTS IS PROVING THE FALLACY OF DISPENSATIONALISM

Dispensationalism is the prevalent Christian belief that the Jews were “under the law of Moses,” called the “dispensation of law” but that the law has been “fulfilled by Yeshua,” “nailed to the cross” and is no longer incumbent upon Christians to do (except possibly certain “moral aspects” of it), for Christians are now “under grace” or are living in the “age” of “dispensation of grace.” Please note that Luke dedicates 7 of 28 chapters (part and full chapters: 6-7, 21-26, and 28) in the book of Acts (or one-fourth of the entire book;) is to defending the false charges made against the early believers and Paul that they were some subverting and undermining the validity of the Torah. This is how serious an issue this was for the first-century believers. In fact, Stephen lost his life over it and Paul spent many years in court and in prison over the same charge of promoting antinomianism and dispensationalism.

Let’s take a closer look at this issue: The very issue that got Stephen into hot water with the Jewish authorities and then stoned to death is the very issue that got Paul into trouble in Acts 21.

Acts 6:13-14 **13 And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law: For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.**

False witnesses brought these false accusations against Stephen...and Paul was directly responsible for Stephen’s death (7:58). What were these false accusations? That Stephen was teaching the doctrine of DISPENSATIONALISM; namely, that the Torah/law is done away and that Christians are under grace. Stephen lost his life defending himself against these false accusations!

The Jews accused Paul of the same thing:

Acts 21:28 **Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place.**

To prove to his false accusers that he was not changing the law of Moses Paul takes a Nazarite vow; a vow whereby one consecrates himself to a state of holiness and ritual purity in light of Torah. He also takes on himself the considerable expense of paying for four men under a Nazarite vow to offer the appropriate sacrifices in order to come out of their Nazarite vow to further prove that he wasn’t against the Torah (See Num. 6:2-6, 13-18 for details about the Nazarite vow).

Furthermore, as noted earlier, Paul defends himself against these charges: See Acts 22:1; 24:13-14; 25:8.

And yet, traditional Christian theology today has bought into the very same lies that the false accusers leveled against Stephen and Paul and against which they defended themselves and for which they eventually lost their lives. **THE TRADITIONAL CHRISTIAN CHURCH HOLDS TO AN ANTINOMIAN (antiTorah) AND DISPENSATIONAL VIEW OF SCRIPTURE AND BELIEVES ABOUT PAUL WHAT HIS ACCUSERS ACCUSED HIM OF AND WHAT HE VIGOROUSLY DEFENDED HIMSELF AGAINST—THAT HE WAS SOMEHOW ABROGATING, NULLIFYING, DOING AWAY WITH, OR CHANGING THE TORAH-LAW OF YHWH ELOHIM! THE CHURCH HAS MISSED THE WHOLE POINT OF THE BOOK OF ACTS!** The point of the Book of Acts is that the early Messianic Jewish Apostles and Evangelists were taking the good news (the Gospel) of the redemptive and salvific work of Yeshua the Messiah to both Jewish and non-Jewish populations—a message of salvation by grace through faith. Yet these servants of the Most High Elohim were in no way compromising or abrogating the Torah (instructions in righteousness) of YHWH. The message of salvation by grace complimentary and is not antithetical to the message of obedience to the commandments of YHWH as revealed by YHWH (the pre-incarnate Yeshua) at Mt. Sinai to Israel which Yeshua said that if we love him we will keep (Jn. 14:15).

PAUL WAS A LIFELONG TORAH OBEDIENT JEW

- He was born a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin. (2 Cor. 11:22; Rom. 11:1; Phil. 3:5)
- He was educated as a Jew. (Acts 22:3)

- He was a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee (Acts 23:6). What was a Pharisee?
- He lived as a Torah-obedient Jew till he died.
 - He kept the Sabbath. (Acts 17:1-2)
 - He attended the synagogue. (Acts 13:5; 13:14, 44; 14:1; 17:1-2, 1, 17; 18:4, 19; 19:8)
 - He kept YHWH's Holy Day festivals. (Acts 20:6—Unleavened Bread; Acts 20:16—Pentecost; 1 Cor. 5:7-8—Passover)
 - He spoke Hebrew. (Acts 21:40; 22:2; 26:14)
 - He taught from the Hebrew Scriptures. (Acts 13:22; 13:33, 34, 35, 41, 47; 28:26-27; Rom. 2:6, 24; 3:4)
 - His travelling companions, friends and hosts were Jews. (Acts 4:36; 15:22; 16:1; 18:2-3, 24; 19:34; 22:12)
 - He made tallits. (Acts 18:3 [*Strong's #4635, skenopios* = one that makes small portable tents])
 - He practiced circumcision. (Acts 16:1, 3)
 - He took a Nazarite vow. (Acts 18:18)
 - He went to Jerusalem to worship. (Acts 24:11)

Was Paul a hypocrite? A liar? Or perhaps the world's best con-man? Did he teach one thing and practice something else? Or was he truly an orthodox Jewish rabbi who followed Torah to the last yud and stroke as Yeshua commanded in Mt. 5:17 truly making him an imitator and follower of his Savior, Master and Messiah? Who is right? Christian tradition about who Paul supposedly was and what he supposedly taught or the truth of Scripture which clearly shows who Paul really was and what he did and taught?