

THE JEWISH FOUNDATIONS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT



Class VII – Judaism through Jewish Eyes

February 25, 2017

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An Introductory Reading

Manual of Discipline 9.21-26 (1st c. BCE) –

“And these are **the regulations of conduct** for every man that would **seek the inner vision in these times**, touching what he is to **love** and what he is to **hate**.

He is to bear **unremitting hatred** towards all men of ill repute, and to be minded to **keep seclusion** from them. He is to leave it to them to **pursue wealth and mercenary gain**, like servants at the mercy of their masters or wretches truckling to a despot.

He is to be **zealous** to carry out **every ordinance** punctiliously, against the Day of Requital.

In all his enterprises and in all things over which he has control he is to act in **a manner acceptable to God**, **in accordance** with what God has commanded.

He is to accept willingly whatever befalls him and to **take pleasure in nothing but the will of God**.

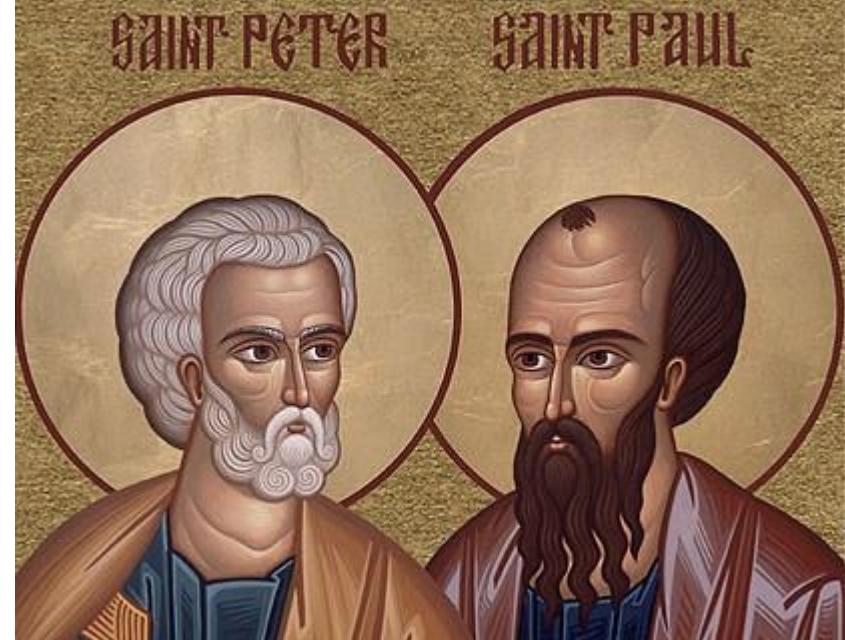
He is to **make [all] the words of his mouth** acceptable, and **not to lust** after anything that God has not commanded.

He is to **watch ever for the judgment of God**, and [in every vicissitude of his existence] he is to bless his Maker. Whatever befalls, he is to [recount God's glory] and to **bless him** [with 'the oblation of] the lips.”

Last Week's Homework

Galatians 2:11 – 21

- What does Paul admonish Peter for in front of the church in Antioch?
- What is the effect of following the law according to Paul?



Which Judaism?



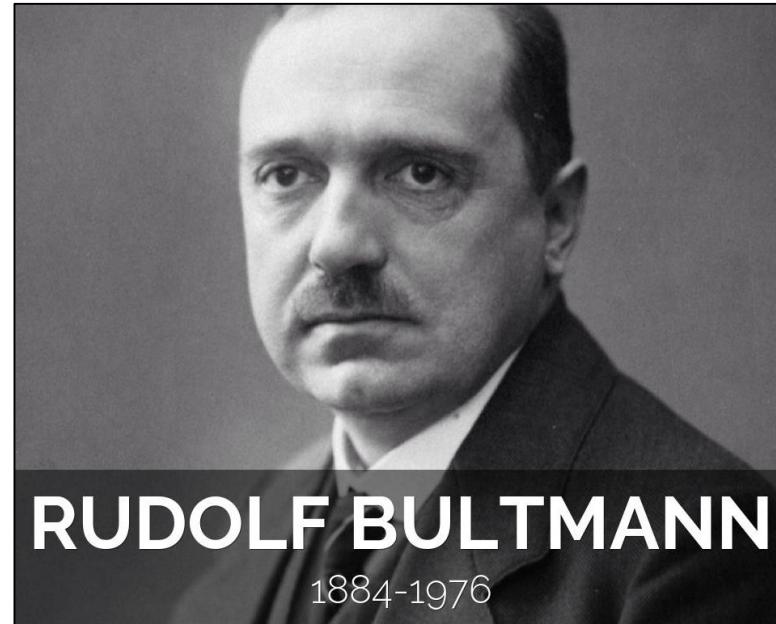
Roman Catholic Salvation of Works (Law) vs.
Lutheran Salvation of Faith (Grace)

Influences:

*Anti-Semitism
Intellectual Laziness
"Superiority" of Christianity*



Jesus/Paul = Grace (Faith)
Luther's Opponents = Works (Law)
Judaism = Opponents
Judaism = Salvation of Works (Law/legalism)



RUDOLF BULTMANN

1884-1976

Of ethics and ritual, ritual is the “more important of the two”
“The obedience” to the Law was “formal” not “radical”
“The accumulation of merits” might atone for breaking Torah
“We find the ‘righteous’ proud and self-conscious”
“Repentance itself became a good work which secured merit and grace in the sight of God”
“In the end the whole range of man’s relation with God came to be thought of in terms of merit...”

From *Primitive Christianity*

A Few Definitions

- “Hellenistic Judaism” – general name for Judaism in the period, many different emphases, influenced by Hellenism
- “Palestinian Judaism” – specific name for Judaism in Palestine itself
- “Torah” – various meanings:
 - First 5 books of OT (Pentateuch)
 - Can also include rabbinic commentaries (Perushim) on Pentateuch
 - “Law” – Written and/both/either/or Oral Law
 - “Customs of the Fathers”
 - Which is Paul talking about in Romans?

Inscription of Erastus, city treasurer of Corinth, mentioned in Romans 16:23



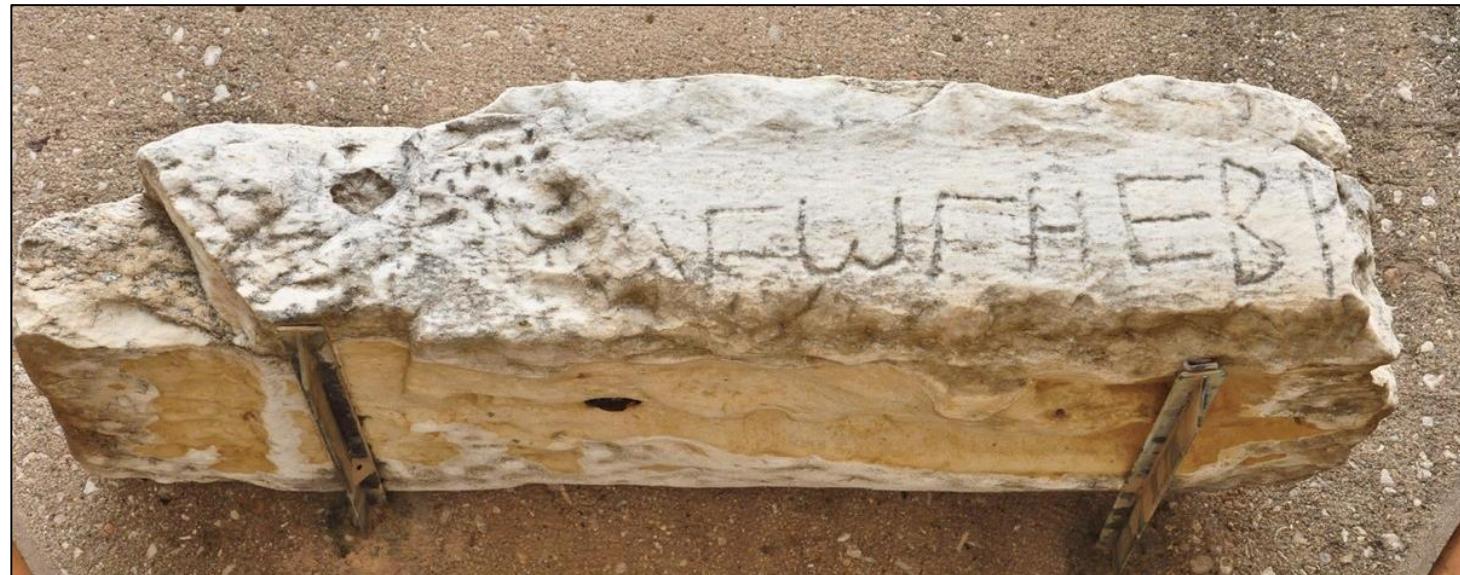
Types of Jewish Literature

- “Halakhah” – “the way of walking”; Jewish writings focused on interpreting Torah
- “Haggadah” – Jewish writings expounding on non-legal texts incorporating various stories, moral guidance, and other items
- “Mishnah” – the legal opinions of the rabbis, complied about 200 CE
- “Tosefta” – supplementary legal opinions, compiled about 200 CE
- “Gemara” – rabbinic commentary on the Mishnah
- “Talmud” – compendium of Jewish literature of all kinds in 63 tractates
- “Tanakh” – The OT in Hebrew: **T**orah, **N**evi'im (Prophets), **K**etuvim (Writings)
- “Midrash” – a form of Jewish interpretation used to draw out meaning for application and draw parallels to other passages
- “Septuagint” – the Greek-language version of the OT, abbreviated as “LXX”

Which Judaism?

- The assessment of Judaism has changed radically in the last 40 years
 - Actually read the Jewish literature of the period
 - Separated 1st c. CE Judaism from post-200 CE Rabbinic Judaism
 - Better archaeological evidence
 - Discovered Hellenistic Judaism covers more than just what happened in 1st c. Palestine
 - Babylon
 - Rome
 - Asia Minor
 - Greece
 - Syria
 - Egypt

Lintel over
Corinth's
Synagogue



Which Judaism?

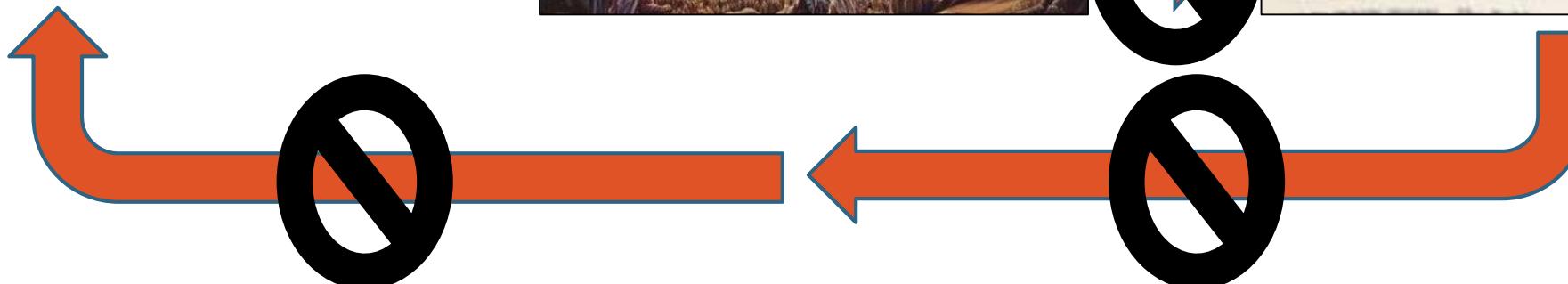
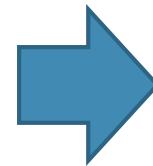
- More focus on Judaism's influence on the NT than ever
- Renewed Quest for the Historical Jesus (post-1980s)
- More emphasis on LXX studies (the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT)
- Debates around Paul (2nd only to Jesus!)
 - Understand Paul as works vs. faith? (Traditional Lutheran/Protestant understanding)
 - Read Paul as in continuity with Judaism of the 1st c. CE? ("New Perspective on Paul")
 - Is Paul doing something completely new, a synthesis? ("Apocalyptic Paul")
- Reassessment continuing – especially see this in Romans commentaries

What is Hellenistic Judaism?

- Dominant form of Judaism that developed after the Babylonian Exile and ran until the codification of the rabbinic sages in 200 CE, with radical changes after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE
- Saw themselves as the inheritors of Abraham's covenant and the people of God
- Expressed this truth by living out their personal faith through specific cultural and religious activities that marked them as Jewish believers, not Gentiles, reflecting their desire to fulfill Torah
- These markers were widely known in the ancient world and commented on by both Jewish and Gentiles
- “Covenantal nomism”:
 - Covenant = Abrahamic covenant, Nomism = following the Law
- 1st c. CE Jews circumcised, sacrificed at the Temple, followed food laws, and worshipped on the Sabbath, **NOT** because they believed it would bring them salvation or give them a special relationship with God, but because it **reflected their identity** as YHWH's people.

What is Hellenistic Judaism?

Covenantal Nomism:



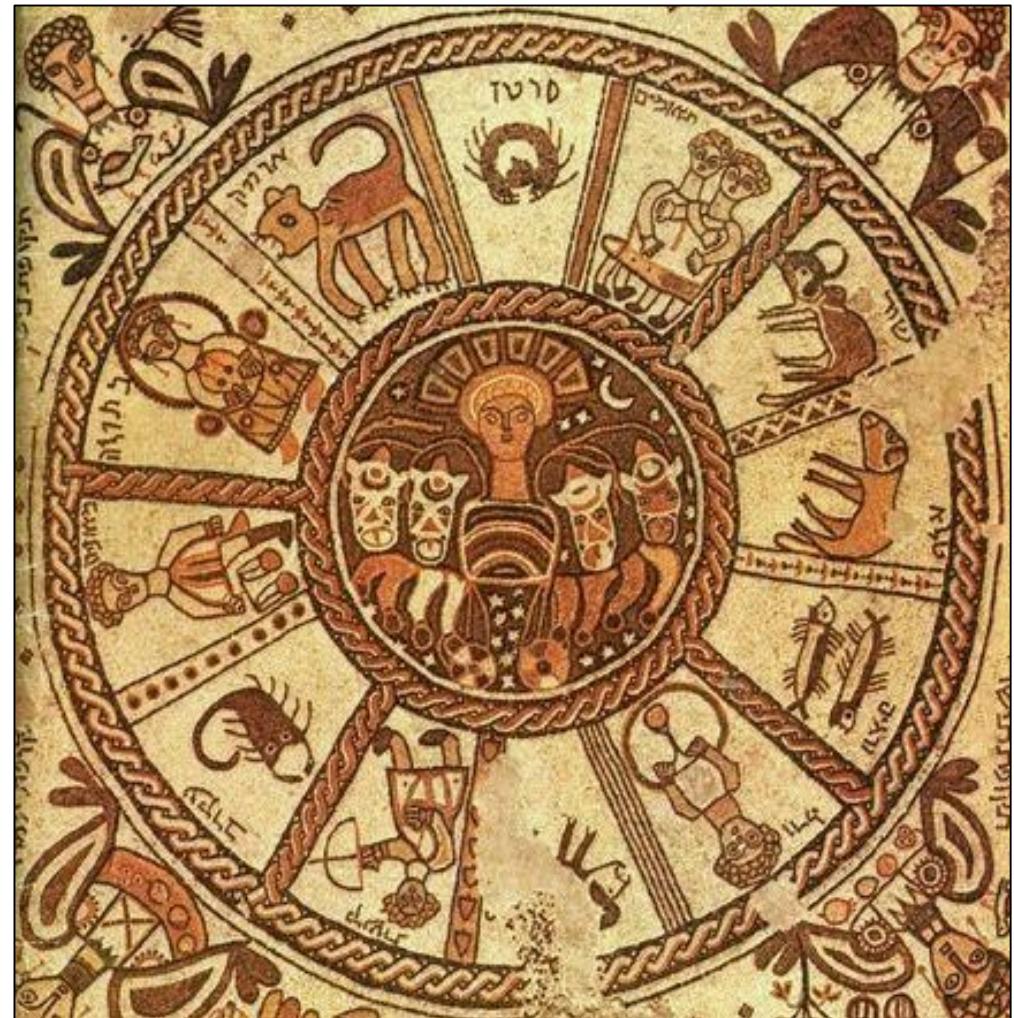
Judaism as legalism

MISHNA From when, that is, from what time does one recite Shema in the evening?¹⁰ From the time when the priests enter to partake in the service in the temple.¹¹ Until when does the time for the recitation of the evening Shema extend? Until the end of the first time used in the Torah (Deuteronomy 6:7) to indicate the time for the recitation of the evening Shema is behind when you lie down, which refers to the time in which individuals go to sleep. Therefore, the time for the recitation of the evening Shema is the first portion of the night, when individuals prepare for sleep. That is the statement of the Mishnah.

What is Hellenistic Judaism?

- Monotheism
- Election and Covenant
- Praxis
- Future Concerns

Bet Alfa Synagogue (5th c. CE)
Mosaic featuring Zodiac



Monotheism

Wisdom of Solomon 13:1 – 3 (1st c. BCE) –

“For all people who were ignorant of God were foolish by nature;
And they were **unable from the good things** that are seen **to know the one who exists**,
nor did they recognize **the artisan** while paying heed to his works;

But they supposed that either **fire or wind or swift air**,
or the **circle of the stars**,
or **turbulent water**,
or the **luminaries of heaven** were **the gods that rule the world**.

If through delight in the beauty of these things people assumed them to be gods,
let them know how much better than these is the Lord,
For the **author of beauty** created them.”

Monotheism

- Religion in the ancient world
 - Ritual versus ethical systems
 - Unique nature of Judaism and Christianity
- Reactions to monotheism



Temple of Artemis in Ephesus

Small Group Discussion

- Read 1 Corinthians 5:9 - 13
- Why does Paul write them these things in this passage?
- Who does he not want them to associate with? People outside the church or inside the church?
- Why would someone believe that their religious worship doesn't have an effect on whether they have sex with a temple prostitute?
- What is our attitude today?

Election and Covenant

- The Rabbis believed that the election of Abraham (and thereby the entire Jewish ethnic nation) was the foundation of their religion
- The existence of the relationship between Israel and *YHWH* is presupposed by all

“Beloved is Israel, for even though they are unclean **the Shekinah is among them**. And it also says: ‘Which **dwells (ha-shoken) with them** in the midst of their uncleanness (Lev. 16.16). And it says: ‘By making unclean my tabernacle which is in their midst’ (Lev. 15.31). And it says: ‘That they may not make unclean their camps in which **I dwell in the midst of you**’ (Num. 5.3). And it says: ‘You shall not make unclean the land in which you live, **in the midst of which I dwell** (*shoken*)’ (Num. 35.34).” - *Sifre Numbers*

“I am God for all those who come into the world, nevertheless **I have conferred My name particularly** on My people Israel.” - *Mekilta Mishpatim*

Election and Covenant

- The existence (and acceptance) of this fact of election meant Jews were called to a special type of relationship:

“And these words which I command you this day **shall be upon your heart** (Deut. 6.6).’ Rabbi says: Why is it said? Because it says (Deut. 6.5) ‘And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart.’ **I do not know how one should love God** (*ha-Maqom*), and so Scripture says, ‘And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart.’ Place these words upon your heart so that **through them you will come to know the one who spoke and the world came into being**, and **cleave to his ways**.” - *Sifre Deuteronomy*

All Israelites have a share **in the world to come**, for it is written, ‘Thy people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land forever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands that I may be glorified” (Isa. 60:21). – *Sanhedrin 10.1*

Election and Covenant

- God's gracious acts preceded the obligations to follow Torah:

"I Am the Lord Thy God (Ex. 20:2). Why were the Ten Commandments not said at the beginning of the Torah? They give a parable. To what may this be compared? To the following: A king who entered a province said to the people: **May I be your king?** But the people said to him: **Have you done anything good for us that you should rule over us?** What did he do then? He built the city wall for them, he brought in the water supply for them, and he fought their battles. Then when he said to them: May I be your king? They said to him: Yes, yes. **Likewise, God.** He brought the Israelites out of Egypt, divided the sea for them, sent down the manna for them, brought up the well for them, brought the quails for them. He fought for them the battle with Amalek. Then He said to them: **I am to be your king. And they said to Him: Yes, yes.**"

"Likewise God said to Israel: 'I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt not have other gods – I am He whose reign you have taken upon yourselves in Egypt.' And when they said to Him: 'Yes, yes.' He continued: 'Now, **just as you accepted My reign, you must also accept My decrees:** "Thou shalt not have other gods before Me."'" - *Mekilta Bahodesh 5-6*

Election and Covenant

- The presence of these commandments/obligations was positive, not a burden:

“The Holy One, blessed is he, was minded to grant favor to Israel; therefore has he **multiplied** for them the Law and commandments, as it is written, ‘It pleased the Lord for his righteousness sake to **magnify the Law and make it honorable**’ (Isa. 42.21)” – *Makkoth 3.16*

- The intent was for Israel to act of worship with sincere devotion, not just obey to fulfill:

“If a man was reading in the Law and the time came to recite the *Shema*, **if he directed his heart** he has fulfilled his obligation; otherwise he has not fulfilled his obligation.” – *Berakoth 2.1*

“To love the Lord thy God.’ – Lest you should say, ‘I shall study Torah so that **I may be rich** and so that **I may be called Rabbi** and so that I may **receive a reward** in the world to come,’ Scripture says: ‘To love the Lord thy God.’ All that you do, **do only from love**.’” – *Sifre Deuteronomy 48*

Next Week's Homework

- Read Matthew 23
- Who are the “woes” directed to?
- What are the criticisms Jesus directs at them?
- Based on our reading today, would the rabbis have agreed with Jesus?
- So how do we interpret the meaning here? Are Jesus’ indictments selective in its accusations? Are they reflective of the church’s experience at the time of Matthew’s writing? Are they true for both Judaism *and* Christianity, ethically speaking?

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