

PAUL AND ACTS

by Avram Yehoshua

[The Seed of Abraham](#)

The Apostle Paul is seen by the Church as the person most responsible for ‘freeing us from the slavery to the Law of Moses.’ This understanding is based upon some Scriptures in some of Paul’s letters where he deals with the issue of salvation (justification) and the Law (sometimes symbolized in circumcision). The Church, and far too many so-called Messianic Jews, firmly believe that Paul ‘did away with the Law,’ but as I’ve pointed out in numerous articles, papers, and my book, *The Lifting of the Veil: Acts 15:20-21*, neither Paul, nor any other writer of the New Testament, ‘does away with Mosaic Law.’¹

The Book of Acts, unlike the letters of Paul, is an historical account of approximately the first 34 years of the Holy Spirit working through the Body of Messiah,² both in Judah, and what is now modern day Turkey, Greece and Rome, etc. In Acts there is nothing that can even remotely be construed to suggest that Paul ever stopped observing the Law of Moses or taught others to do so. That’s why liberal Christian scholarship has denigrated Luke’s Book of Acts, but conservative scholarship doesn’t agree, upholding Luke and his book. The following is a survey of Paul in Acts, who remained faithful to the Law of Moses all his life, as his Christian lifestyle, just like all the other Apostles of the Lord.³

First though, Luke begins his book by saying that the risen Lord met with the Apostles over a period of 40 days and taught them *the things pertaining to His Kingdom* (Acts 1:1-3). If the Law had been done away with by His death and resurrection, as most in the Church teach, how is it that the Apostles never taught that in Acts? How is it the the Holy Spirit, all during the book of Acts, never brings that to their attention?

WAS PAUL A JEW?

1. After his conversion and belief and the Jewish Messiah, Paul always claimed to be a Jew and was always seen as a Jew.⁴ Paul didn’t stop being Jewish because he had found the Jewish Messiah.

¹ For a biblical understanding of why Gentiles are to keep the Law of Moses, see [The Lifting of the Veil](#) and [Law 102, A Snapshot of Church History and Mosaic Law](#), [Seven Reasons Why The Church is Wrong](#), [The Feasts of Israel and the Church](#), [The Two Triangles of the NT](#), [Why Sunday?](#) and also, [No Longer Under the Law?](#)

² I. Howard Marshall, M.A., B.D., Ph.D., Author; Professor R.V.G. Tasker, M.A., B.D., General Editor, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Acts* (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), pp. 46-48. Marshall argues against dating the composition of Acts later than 62 AD when the death of James, the half-brother of Yeshua is said to have occurred. As Luke makes no mention of this it seems that Acts may have been written before it.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, p. 692 dates Acts between 68–70 AD, while *The New Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, p. 233 suggests 58–65 AD

³ The Apostles kept the Law all their lives. This is clearly seen in Acts 10:14, 28, 34-35; 11:18; 21:20; Rom. 3:31; 7:7, 12, 14, 16; 1st Cor. 7:17-19; James 4:11; 1st John 3:3-4; 5:2-3; Rev. 12:17; 14:12, and also Mt. 5:17-19; 19:17; 22:37-40; John 15:10-15. See [Apostolic Christianity’s Lifestyle](#), [Illicit SEX and the Church](#), [Paul and Mosaic Law at Caesarea](#).

⁴ It’s not that Paul wouldn’t recognize himself as a *Christian* among Greek speakers, but this refers to his belief in Yeshua as the Messiah or the Christ, not as something separate from the Jewish people or the Law of Moses. He always referred to himself as a Jewish man (note also Rom. 11:1; Gal. 2:15; Phil. 3:5).

- A. Acts 16:11: When Paul and Silas were in Philippi of Macedonia, the people there didn't call Paul and Silas Gentiles or even Christians, though both Silas and Paul were Roman citizens (16:37) and first century Christians. The Gentile Philippians called them Jews (16:20). Quite possibly it was their tassels (tzitzit) on their clothes (Num. 15:37-41) and their full, untrimmed beards (Lev. 19:27) that presented them as Jews. Obviously, there was something about these Christians that showed the Gentiles that these two men were (still) Jews. Conversion hadn't changed their race or ethnicity.
- B. Acts 18:2: When Emperor Claudius issued his edict that all Jews should leave Rome, Aquila and Priscilla, Jews who believed in Yeshua (Jesus), also had to leave. This indicates that at the time (49 AD) 19 years after the Resurrection, Jews who believed in Jesus were still considered Jews and not Christians in the sense of a separate and totally distinct entity, as unfortunately has been the case for about 1,900 years.⁵
- C. Acts 18:24: Apollo is presented as a Jew although he's a believer, a Jewish Christian or a Christian Jew.
- D. Acts 19:33-34: When the Gentile mob at Ephesus realized⁶ that Alexander was a Jew they would not let him speak. Alexander believed in Jesus, but was still seen as a Jew. There must have been something about him that showed them he was a Jew, and not a Gentile, even though the man lived in a Gentile country. It could have been his tassels (Num. 15:37-41) and his full beard (Lev. 19:27; 2nd Sam. 10:1-5),⁷ or even the way he spoke.
- E. Acts 21:39: Paul says to the commander of the Fortress of Antonia in Jerusalem: 'I am a Jew.' Yet, Paul's been a Christian for more than 20 years at this point.
- F. Acts 22:3: Jerusalem—Paul says, 'I am a Jewish man' to the Jewish mob at the Temple⁸ that wanted to murder him, wrongly thinking that he had brought a Gentile man into a section of the Temple area forbidden to non-Jews at the time.
- G. Acts 22:25: Jerusalem—The Temple Mount, the Fortress of Antonia, the dungeon: Paul says that he is a Roman citizen, having been born into it (v. 27-28) while Lysias, the Roman commander of the troops stationed on the Temple Mount, says that he bought his Roman citizenship for a large sum of money. Yet, being a Roman citizen did not negate Paul from being a Jew and a believer in Jesus. The two are not incompatible.
- H. Acts 23:6: Jerusalem—Paul shouts in the midst of the Sanhedrin, 'I am a Pharisee!' Does it get 'any more Jewish' than that?⁹

⁵ F. F. Bruce, Author; Gordon D. Fee, General Editor, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of the Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), p. 58.

⁶ Walter Bauer, augmented by William F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and Frederick Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 369: 'ἐπιγνώσκω, to have knowledge of someth. or someone, know...notice, perceive'

The Greek verb means, 'to know, look upon, recognize.'

⁷ In the story of King David sending some servants to comfort the new King of Ammon upon the death of his father, David's servants are humiliated. Part of the humiliation is that their beards are shaved off from half their face (2nd Sam. 10:1-5). Interestingly enough, David doesn't tell them to shave the rest off and let it all grow back together. No, he tells them to remain in Jericho until the other half returns. Franz Delitzsch says that shaving off the beard 'was regarded as the most shameful of all' things that could be done to a man: C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary On The Old Testament, vol. 7: Isaiah* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001; originally published by T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, Scotland, 1866-91), pp. 145-146.

⁸ I've capitalized Temple, as it should be. It's a proper noun and relates to the only temple of its kind in the world where the living God dwelt (Mt. 23:33; Lk. 2:49; Jn. 2:16).