

PAUL AND MOSAIC LAW AT CAESAREA

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While reading the Book of Acts, chapters 24 through 26, I was struck by the apparent lack of a specific accusation against the Apostle Paul by the Jewish authorities about Mosaic Law. No one accused him of negating it. This is astounding because the Church can only point to Paul as having freed them from the Law. No other Apostle nor Luke, Paul's Gentile friend and traveling companion, writes anything about Mosaic Law being "done away with at the death of Jesus," or "nailed to the Cross."¹ Can it be that the Church has misunderstood Paul concerning the Law as God's New Testament lifestyle for Christians? For lifestyle—not salvation.

Paul, before Felix at Caesarea, declares that he believes "*all things in the Law and the Prophets*" (Acts 24:14). In v. 17 he speaks of bringing "alms" or "offerings." The Greek word, *προσφορά* (*prosfora*), means animal sacrifice.² This is 25 years *after* the Resurrection, something that stymies Christian theologians because they can't understand how Paul could do this. The same Greek word is also used of Paul in Acts 21:26, when he took the Nazarite Vow and offered to pay for the animal sacrifices of four other Christians who had taken it. Paul had no problem offering animal sacrifices for the others and himself, after their days of purification were over (21:26), so they could enter into the Vow, purified. At the end of the Vow it speaks of at least three animals being sacrificed for each of them (Num. 6:14). More on this in a moment.

In his defense, Paul says that he's done nothing wrong, but that he's on trial for preaching the Resurrection, and in private, before Felix, Paul speaks of "righteousness, self-control and judgment." Nowhere does he say Felix doesn't have to keep the Law (Acts 24:14-25). In the next chapter the Apostle expressly says he's done nothing "against the Law of the Jews" (Acts 25:8), and before King Agrippa, who was an expert in the Law and knew Apostolic Christianity, Paul speaks of being judged for his hope in the Resurrection. For *this* reason, the Jews tried to kill him, he says. Paul then says that he spoke of no other thing than what was written in the Law and the Prophets (about the Messiah). There's nothing in the Old Testament that speaks of the Law being invalidated when Christ came and died for Man's sins (Acts 26:13-31).

Scripture declares that Paul kept Mosaic Law *all his life*. Luke writes of Paul taking the Nazarite Vow (one of the most "Law" things any Jew could do), to prove to everyone that he still kept Mosaic Law. Acts 21 took place about 55 AD or 25 years *after* the Resurrection. Paul is confronted by the accusation that he told all the Jews not to circumcise their baby boys. Luke writes that Paul took the Vow, so that all would know the accusation was false and that Paul still kept the Law (Acts 21:24).

Nowhere in Acts, the only divinely inspired history of the early Apostolic Church, does Paul or Peter say that the Law is not for Christians. Luke writes that Jesus taught the Apostles "all about the Kingdom" (Acts 1:3). It's unconceivable that Jesus taught them that He had done away with Mosaic Law at the Cross, but that no one in the entire Book of Acts declares that or anything like that. Instead, Mosaic Law, as God's Christian lifestyle, is upheld throughout the Book (cf. Acts 15:21; 28:17-23). The following is taken from my book, [The Lifting of the Veil—Acts 15:20-21](#), p. 174f., and speaks of the Law as God's Christian lifestyle:

"The Book of Acts tells us "what happened." It's very hard to argue with what it states about Paul, and all the Jewish Christians keeping the Law of Moses 25 years *after* the Resurrection (Acts 21:20, 24). Some scholars realize the futility of trying to explain those two verses and honestly state they don't understand it. How could Paul take the Nazarite Vow if the Law had been done away with? And that, by him? Others teach that Paul was only being "a Jew to the Jews."³ He was just observing the Nazarite Vow so as not to offend the

¹ See my article, [Nailed to the Cross—Colossians 2:13-17](#) to find out just what was nailed to the Cross.

² *προσφορά* (*prosfora*) 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* (third edition, 2001; Accordance Bible Software), p. 887. *προσφορά* Joseph Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Accordance Bible Software, 2017), paragraph 8,167.

Jewish Christians like Peter and John, etc. If this was the case, Paul would have been a chameleon, not an Apostle. Still others have the *hutzpah* (Jewish for audacity), to say that Paul was “afraid for his life!” from James and the Jewish Apostles, etc. *This*, they say, was the reason why the Apostle Paul did something he never would have done, had he not been coerced into it, but this makes Paul out to be a very weak and unprincipled man, something that Scripture does not bear out.⁴ It also makes James and the Jewish Apostles more like ‘the James Gang’⁵ than living examples of Yeshua; His love and His *Way of Life* (cf. John 14:6).”

“Other scholars simply say it didn’t happen! It was just *fanciful writing* on Luke’s part! He made it up! (Talk about *hutzpah!*) These scholars say the Paul they know would never have allowed it, and that’s true. *Their* Paul would never have allowed it to happen. *Their* Paul set them “free from the Law,” but the biblical Paul declares freedom from sin, not God’s holy Law (Acts 25:8; Rom. 3:20, 31; 7:7, 12, 14).”

“With *a few* of the words of Paul about the Law, scholars are able “to theologize the Law away.” They mistake Paul’s coming against the Law in relation to salvation and circumcision for the Gentile for his entire view on the Law. They’re not convincing though, when they try to explain why Paul praises the Law (Rom. 3:31; 7:7, 12, 14; 1st Cor. 5:6-8; 7:19). Here in Acts, their only recourse they have is to declare Luke a liar! These scholars seem to think that Luke, *the Gentile* (Col. 4:10-14),⁶ had nothing better to do than to *fabricate* an Apostle Paul who kept the Law! Whatever possessed the good doctor to do such a monstrous thing?!”

“If the Law had been done away with, the *biblical* Paul would have voiced his opposition to James. In that he doesn’t, we know that it wasn’t. Paul still kept the Law and exhorted his Gentiles to do the same, as he himself writes in his letters, of imitating or following him as he followed Messiah Yeshua.”⁷ Theologian David Williams writes that *Paul kept the Law all his life*. Williams states that Paul “believed that his own teaching upheld the law (Rom. 3:31),” and “his epistles are full of exhortations to live by the letter no less than by the spirit of the law (cf., e.g. Rom. 13:8-10; Eph. 5:1, 3ff., 31; 6:2f.).”⁸ “Of course he knew now that obedience to the law could no longer be regarded as the basis of salvation (cf. Gal. 2:15), but for Paul **the law remained the authoritative guide to Christian living.**”⁹ Contact me, AvramYeh@Gmail.com to further discuss this.

³ F. F. Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, pp. 406-408. Bruce writes that *the Elders and James were lacking understanding as to why Paul followed their counsel and took the Vow*: “Therefore, in their *naïveté*, they put a proposal to him” (p. 406). Bruce thinks that Paul was only going along with them as part of his stated policy (to be “a Jew to the Jews;” 1st Cor. 9:20). Bruce also writes that Paul “cannot be fairly charged with compromising his own gospel principles.” On the contrary, Paul most certainly would be charged with unethical behavior if his reasons are as Bruce states. Paul *expressly* took the Nazarite Vow *to show everyone that he kept the Law* (Acts 21:24). Keeping the Law doesn’t mean to keep it only when in Jewish society (“He himself was happy to conform to Jewish customs *when he found himself in Jewish society*,” p. 406). Bruce says that among the Gentiles, Paul would “conform to Gentile ways.” What does that mean? Did Paul sacrifice to idols in Corinth? Did he eat pigs in Ephesus? Did he keep Sunday, Easter and Christmas in Rome? Being “among the Gentiles” also presupposes there were *no* Jews among them, but wherever there were Gentile converts to Yeshua there were also Jews who believed in Him (Acts 13:42; 14:1; 17:17; 18:4; 19:10, etc.). Would Bruce’s Paul keep Mosaic Law then? (See Rom. 3:8, 20, 31; 6:1-3)

Bruce’s Paul is a deceiver of the highest order because the taking of the Nazarite Vow means that Paul highly esteemed and walked in Mosaic Law *all the time*. Paul wouldn’t say to God that he would keep the Sabbath day holy among the Jews, but not among the Gentiles. Paul would have been extremely unscrupulous if he had taken the Vow *only to appease James* and the other Jewish Apostles. He took it to show them, and us today, that he always kept the Law (Acts 21:24). What being “a Gentile to the Gentiles” meant that Paul would *associate with them* and speak to them about the Gospel *in words they could understand* (Acts 10:15, 28, 34-35). This is something he *never* would have done as an unbelieving Pharisee (Acts 26:5). Paul told his Gentile Christians in Corinth to *imitate him as he imitated Messiah* (1st Cor. 4:16-17; 11:1). Scripture states that Jesus is “the **same**; yesterday, **today** and forever” (Heb. 13:8), and that means that what was sin for Jesus is sin for us today (cf. 1st John 2:6; 3:4).

⁴ See Acts 9:20-29; 14:19-22; 2nd Cor. 11:23-12:21; 2nd Peter 3:14-18.

⁵ The James Gang were notorious outlaws in the Old West, who lived in the 1870s and were led by Jesse *James*.

⁶ See [Luke the Jew?](#) for why Luke was a Gentile Christian. Some try to make him a Jewish Christian.

⁷ Romans 3:20, 31; 7:7, 12, 14; 1st Cor. 5:6-8; 7:19; 9:8; 11:1; 14:34.

⁸ David Williams, *Acts*, p. 261.

⁹ *Ibid.*