

What Did Jesus Nail to the Cross?

By Steven Rees

Centuries of misunderstanding within the Church at large can be traced back to a key verse in the New Testament. This one text has led the vast majority of the Church to come to believe that the Law of God, delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai, has somehow changed or been made void by the work Jesus did on the Cross. This one verse has most people believing that if a person were to somehow want to return to living as the Torah describes, they would be “coming under the law again” and would be making the work of Jesus on the Cross null and void in their lives. They would be living in legalism, and the blood of Jesus would not cover them.

Before we look at this scripture, I must say that when I read scripture, I allow scripture to interpret scripture. I do not rely on previous theological arguments to find the meaning of a passage. I look for the context and find other places in scripture that talk about the same topic and then put the balance together to understand what is being said. I also rely on word studies from the original language, as much meaning gets lost in translation and by translator’s versions. Like the Bereans, we must search the scripture daily, to see whether those things are so.

So now, let’s look at this particular verse:

“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;”

Col 2:14 (KJV)

Revised Standard Version states it as;

“having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross.”

Col 2:14 (RSV)

The Greek word for “handwriting” is cheirographon (Strong #5498) meaning;

- 1) a handwriting, what one has written by his own hand
- 2) a note of hand or writing in which one acknowledges that money has either been deposited with him or lent to him by another, to be returned at the appointed time

It is clear by the meaning of the word that this is not talking about the Law or Torah. This is talking actually about the legal document that is written by an officer of the court that delineates the infraction of the law, the sentence handed down by the judge for that infraction, and the time and circumstances under which that sentence is to be meted out. In each of our own cases, the document is written up by ha s.a.tan, the” accuser of the brethren” and verifies that we are to be handed over to receive the punishment of death because we have repeatedly broken YHWH’s Law. Sin is the transgression of YHWH’s Law (1John 3:4) and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).

For a little context, let's go to Matthew 5 and see what Jesus/Yeshua taught about the law. If He taught that he was going to destroy or change the law, then we might be right in thinking this text in Colossians is telling us the Law is done away with. So let's read:

¹⁷ Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.

¹⁸ For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

¹⁹ 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.

Matt 5:17-19 (KJV)

This sounds pretty clear to me. In fact it sounds like Jesus/Yeshua knew that there was going to be a challenge in this area, so He set out to make it clear ahead of time so there would be no doubt. For another witness, more context, let's go to Matthew 7:

²¹ 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.

²² 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?

²³ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Matt 7:21-23 (KJV)

The Greek word for "work iniquity" is anomia (Strong's # 458) which means:

- 1) the condition of without law
 - 1a) because ignorant of it
 - 1b) because of violating it
- 2) contempt and violation of law, iniquity, wickedness

Once again, as we look at the context and the word studies, we see that it is absolutely clear that Jesus/Yeshua taught that the Law/Torah was not going to be changed or made void in any way. In fact, He taught that it was to remain in effect to the smallest degree, and that those who tried to live without it, would be in serious trouble. So now, let's go back to the original text and understand what it is really saying, now that we understand the context, and the meaning of the words being used.

¹⁴ having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

Col 2:14-15 (NIV)

Now the next text makes more sense. Since Jesus/Yeshua nailed the death warrant against us onto the cross when He died for us or fulfilled the demands of that death warrant, He

made a public spectacle of ha s.a.tan who now only has an empty threat to wave around. The legal document that demands our death for our sins has been legally satisfied and the accuser has no grounds for bringing charges against us.

Does this mean that we ignore Torah since we don't have to die for breaking it anymore? Paul has an answer for us in Romans:

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

For those who believe that the New Testament replaces the law by grace, Paul, one of the main authors of the New Testament, states time and time again that the Torah is to be the guide for the Church to live by. John also echoes the same council when he states:

² By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments.

³ For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

1 John 5:2-3 (KJV)

Once again, the contexts of these scriptures certainly uphold the living of the Torah, which is the same as the commandments of God. Yeshua told us not to think He came to take away Torah. Paul states that we do not make the Torah void through grace. John says that we can only demonstrate our love for God/YHWH if we live by His Torah. With these impeccable witnesses testifying so clearly to the need for Torah to be our guide, how is it that the Church has gotten so far off track? How can they now look on someone who does live by Torah with disdain as "living back under the law" instead of living by grace?

Let's read a little further down in the Colossians text:

¹⁶ Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath *days*:

¹⁷ Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body *is* of Christ.

Col 2:16-17 (KJV)

This text is usually used to justify setting aside the Sabbath (7th day) or 4th commandment in favor of the currently popular Sunday as a day of worship. Notice that the text states that no man is to judge you, it doesn't say you are not to follow Torah teaching in regards to these subjects. Yeshua said we are not to judge about anything. It is also talking about the holy days of the various feasts that come throughout the year that scripture calls God's feasts (Leviticus 23:2-4), not the Jew's feasts, although Jews and Israelites certainly celebrated them. Once again it is not telling us to disregard these feasts, it is simply stating not to judge one another on how we keep these feasts.

Paul is talking to people who are living far away from Jerusalem. Because of their distance, they could not keep the feasts in the same way they were kept in Jerusalem.

However, travelers were coming from Israel, and telling them they were doing things wrong, and Paul is addressing this situation. He is telling them to keep these holy days as best as they can under the circumstances. Don't let anyone judge how you are doing it. This text is also used to justify the Churches position towards eating Kosher. It is said that we can now eat anything we want and not follow Torah, which has clear and specific instructions about clean and unclean food. Peter's vision in Acts is also used for this justification. Let's actually read those verses and see if the context supports this teaching.

Peter went up upon the housetop to pray about the sixth hour:¹⁰ And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance,

¹¹ And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth:

¹² Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air.

¹³ And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat.

¹⁴ But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.

¹⁵ And the voice *spake* unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common.

¹⁶ This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven.

¹⁷ Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made enquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate,

¹⁸ And called, and asked whether Simon, which was surnamed Peter, were lodged there.

¹⁹ While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee.

²⁰ Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them.

Acts 10:10-20 (KJV)

It is important to note the result of this vision. Did Peter go eat a ham as a result of seeing this vision? It is obvious why this vision was given. God was telling Peter that He was sending 3 men to him who were considered by an orthodox Jew (which Peter was) to be unclean. They were considered so unclean that an observant Jew would not be allowed to go into their house. Interestingly, this is not found in Torah, but only in the oral tradition of the Jews. Even this vision is not setting aside Torah. It was used to break Peter out of a man made tradition that had come to be accepted as doctrine. Jesus confronted this when He spoke to the Pharisees:

⁷ *Ye* hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,

⁸ This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with *their* lips; but their heart is far from me.

⁹ But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men.

Matt 15:7-9 (KJV)

It is also interesting to note that Peter states that he has never eaten unclean or non-kosher food, not even after Jesus/Yeshua has died and risen back to heaven; not even after Yeshua has stated, “A new commandment I give unto you.” In fact this incident occurs some 15-17 years after the death of Jesus/Yeshua and Peter, one of the Apostles, and writers of the New Testament, is still following the Torah explicitly. One would think that if anything was changed in relation to Torah by the death of Yeshua, that Peter would know about it and be ordering his life with that “new” understanding.

We find this to be true of Paul as well. In fact, one of the last acts he performs before he is captured and taken to Rome is to bring an animal sacrifice to the temple. This is now a good 30 years after Yeshua’s death and once again one of the main writers of the New Testament, and you would think that if there were any changes in Torah, he would know about it, especially since Paul was a Rabbi, trained under the leading Rabbi Gamaliel of that century. Let’s look at that text:

¹⁷ And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

¹⁸ And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present.

¹⁹ And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.

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 law:

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.

²⁵ As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written *and* concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.

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.

²⁷ And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,

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.

Acts 21:17-28 (KJV)

There are several things to see here. First, the elders of the new Jerusalem Christian Church do not dispute whether or not Paul upholds the Torah. They know he does uphold and teach it. They are counseling him about what to do to demonstrate that to the Jews in Jerusalem who have heard false reports stating that he teaches people not to keep Torah. They are not setting up an elaborate deception to get people to believe this, they are just asking Paul to do something that he is already accustomed to doing.

The second thing to note is that Paul is accosted and taken out of the holy temple court that is accessible only to purified Jewish men. He would not even have been allowed into that area if he had not done certain things prescribed by the Torah. He would have had to have taken a mikvah (ritual purification bath), and he would have been wearing certain prescribed clothing. Around the temple court of men, considered to be holy ground, there were signs posted that proclaimed death to anyone entering unauthorized. That is why we read that they are literally attempting to kill Paul when the guards arrive. The people thought (incorrectly) that Paul had brought uncircumcised Greeks into the holy court of men, beyond these signs, and they were reacting accordingly.

A third thing to note is exactly what offering Paul is making and paying for the other four men. We can read about it in Numbers 6:13 and on:

¹³ And this *is* the law of the Nazarite, when the days of his separation are fulfilled: he shall be brought unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation:

¹⁴ And he shall offer his offering unto the LORD, one he lamb of the first year without blemish for a burnt offering, and one ewe lamb of the first year without blemish for a sin offering, and one ram without blemish for peace offerings,

¹⁵ And a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mingled with oil, and wafers of unleavened bread anointed with oil, and their meat offering, and their drink offerings.

¹⁶ And the priest shall bring *them* before the LORD, and shall offer his sin offering, and his burnt offering:

¹⁷ And he shall offer the ram *for* a sacrifice of peace offerings unto the LORD, with the basket of unleavened bread: the priest shall offer also his meat offering, and his drink offering.

¹⁸ And the Nazarite shall shave the head of his separation *at* the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall take the hair of the head of his separation, and put *it* in the fire which *is* under the sacrifice of the peace offerings.

¹⁹ And the priest shall take the sodden shoulder of the ram, and one unleavened cake out of the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and shall put *them* upon the hands of the Nazarite, after *the hair of* his separation is shaven:

²⁰ And the priest shall wave them *for* a wave offering before the LORD: this *is* holy for the priest, with the wave breast and heave shoulder: and after that the Nazarite may drink wine.

²¹ This *is* the law of the Nazarite who hath vowed, *and of* his offering unto the LORD for his separation, beside *that* that his hand shall get: according to the vow which he vowed, so he must do after the law of his separation.

Num 6:13-21 (KJV)

As we read the text of this specific law in Torah and the text of Acts, we see that Paul is carrying out the specifics of this Nazarite vow as provided in Torah. Paul is clearly Torah observant and the only reason why he is taken captive is because of false reports being circulated by the small number of Jewish leaders that fought against the teaching that Yeshua was truly the Messiah. It had turned into a power struggle, and Paul got caught on the wrong side of the fight. Ha s.a.tan will always fight against those who teach the truth. But Paul could never be convicted of not upholding Torah, only for teaching Yeshua haMeshiach.

The other New Testament writer that I would like to take a look at is John. Since he is the other main author of the New Testament/Brit Hadisha, it would be good to add some of his text into this discussion for context. Does he support Torah in what he writes after the death and ascension of Jesus/Yeshua? A look at 2John 1:5 and on reads:

⁵ And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

⁶ And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, that, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it.

2 John 1:5-6 (KJV)

John is clearly referring to Torah. He is summarizing it as "love one another" in the same way that Yeshua did when he said:

³⁷ ...Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

³⁸ This is the first and great commandment.

³⁹ And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Matt 22:37-40 (KJV)

He was quoting from Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. John spent 3 plus year with Yeshua and never got the impression from His teaching that He in any way put aside the Torah, but rather taught from it. To look further at John's writing, we find that He uses the most interesting word to describe Yeshua haMeshiach:

¹ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

² He was with God in the beginning.

³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

⁵ The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

John 1:1-5 (NIV)

Yeshua is the "Word" made flesh and dwelling among us. I submit to you that this is not any old word, but that it is Torah. If the Torah was put on the cross, it was put there in the manifest presence of the body of Yeshua haMeshiach. We must then take note that

Yeshua did not remain in the grave, done away with. He rose again, and so did Torah. Yeshua is alive and so is Torah, because Yeshua is Torah. They are one in the same.

In another study, I can demonstrate through the words of scripture that Jesus/Yeshua is not only the creator of this world, as John here proclaims, but that He is the YHWH that appears on Mt. Sinai to write the Torah on the stones for Moses. He is writing a description of His character in the words of Torah, and He does not change, therefore Torah does not change. He gives us Torah because He wants us to be holy (separated from the world's system) the way He is holy. Torah was never given as a way to earn salvation, it was given as a way to walk in the presence of YHWH; to have fellowship with Him; to demonstrate our love for Him

One other misunderstanding from today's "New Covenant Church" that I would like to address is their assertion that the Torah was given only to the Israelites in the wilderness and that it is not for the post-cross church today. I believe that this is an issue Paul addresses in Romans 11:

¹⁷ If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root,

¹⁸ do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you.

¹⁹ You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in."

²⁰ Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid.

²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

²² Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off.

²³ And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

²⁴ After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!

Romans 11:17-24 (NIV)

Another place this is addressed is in the Torah itself, Deuteronomy 29:9-15

⁹ Therefore be careful to do the words of this covenant, that you may prosper in all that you do.

¹⁰ You stand this day all of you before the LORD your God; the heads of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, all the men of Israel,

¹¹ your little ones, your wives, and the sojourner who is in your camp, both he who hews your wood and he who draws your water,

¹² that you may enter into the sworn covenant of the LORD your God, which the LORD your God makes with you this day;

13 that he may establish you this day as his people, and that he may be your God, as he promised you, and as he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.
14 Nor is it with you only that I make this sworn covenant,
15 but with him who is not here with us this day as well as with him who stands here with us this day before the LORD our God.

Who would the "who is not here with us this day" person be? I believe that YHVH is letting all who would read His Torah know that His Covenant and the Torah that describes the terms of that Covenant are for everyone. The key to remember here is that this is not a burdensome thing, it is a blessing. We will have blessing and life if we walk in this Torah or instruction and follow this path or "halacha" (in Hebrew).

We are saved by the blood of Yeshua. That is finished and forever settled. Nothing can be added to that. There is no more work we can do. But the question is, "How then shall we live?" Paul is telling us that we live as Israelites, grafted into the Olive Tree of Israel. We become heirs according to the promise—Abraham's seed. Torah is for us. It is how we know how to live and walk as heirs of the Kingdom of YHWH as taught by our Savior, Yeshua. Torah is not just for the Jews, it is for every son and daughter of Israel. It is part of the nourishment that we gather from the roots of the tree into which we are grafted.

I would like to close this study by referring to a story that Jesus/Yeshua told, found in Matthew 21:

28 "What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.'

29 "'I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.

30 "Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go.

31 "Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered. Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.

32 For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.

Matt 21:28-32 (NIV)

Which one did the will of his father? The one that first said "no", but later repented (or returned to his father's presence) and did what he was asked to do as a demonstration of his love for his father.

We have all said "no" to our Father. We have all gone after our own way. We all do what seems right in our own eyes. Torah, The Word, The Way, The Truth, The Life, is asking us to do what He asks; to walk the path that he set out in His Torah. He is not asking us to do it to earn salvation; salvation is a finished work accomplished at the cross of Yeshua. We can not add to that or take away from it. He is asking us to do it because we love Him and can demonstrate that love by doing what He asks (note He doesn't make us do it

whether we want to or not). “If you love me, keep my Torah.” This is His call to us. This is what He asks us, His sons and daughters, to do for Him. What is your answer?