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MINISTRIES

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The Book of the Covenant vs. The Book of the Law?

If you’ve been following our ministry for long, you know that a major focus of ours is the validity of God’s Law—that is, the Torah. We believe that God’s commandments like the Sabbath, feast days, dietary laws, and even tzitzit are still meant for God’s people today. And many of our teachings are devoted to defending this position.

While our teachings address common questions and arguments from “mainstream Christianity,” which objects to the validity of some parts of God’s Law, recently the validity of God’s Law is being attacked from a different angle. A fringe segment of the Messianic and Hebrew Roots community teaches that we must accept their new revelation concerning God’s Law.

What is this new revelation?

Basically, according to some, God’s original plan was that His people were only to follow the commands that are found in what they call “the Book of the Covenant.” What do they mean by the Book of the Covenant?

Well, when Israel received God’s Law, the Torah, at Mount Sinai, it is taught that they were originally only to receive the commands contained in the Book of the Covenant. It is said that this Book of the Covenant begins with the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20 and ends when the Covenant is ratified at Exodus 24:8.

Exodus 24:7-8

“Then he [Moses] took [the Book of the Covenant](#) and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.” And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

It should be noted that some proponents of this theory, for no exegetical or logical reason, suggest that this Book of the Covenant actually begins in Genesis 1:1 and goes to Exodus 24:7-8. But in either case, the natural question upon hearing this theory is, “What about all the rest of the commandments in

Exodus through Deuteronomy?” According to those who hold to this particular doctrine, the rest of those commandments are part of separate law code called the “the Book of the Law.” It is then taught that the Book of the Law was added to the Book of the Covenant as a punishment for Israel making the golden calf in Exodus 32. One of the proof-texts used to support this comes from Galatians 3:19.

Galatians 3:1

“Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.

It is asserted that Paul was referring to a specific “transgression” in this verse, namely the building of the golden calf in Exodus 32. Thus, it is argued that the “Book of the Law” was not part of God’s original plan; it was added as a punishment for the golden calf, and was taken away when Yeshua died on the cross.

For more information on what Paul actually meant in Galatians 3:19, see [Pauline Paradox Part 5: Galatians](#) focusing on Galatians.

Moving forward, proponents of this theory also suggest that the entire Levitical Priestly system was established as a result of the golden calf incident in Exodus 32 and therefore not part of God’s original plan.

It is said that Yeshua abolished the Levitical Priesthood and restored the Melchizedek priesthood. It is taught that all followers of Yeshua are now Melchizedek priests, and we are to keep only the commands contained in the Book of the Covenant. Why? Because that was the “original” covenant to which we were called before we forfeited this calling by making the golden calf.

In summary, it is taught that God’s commandments contained in what’s called “the Book of the Law,” in addition to the entire Levitical Priestly system, were added as a punishment. They were temporary until Messiah would come. And now that Yeshua came, those extra commandments are abolished and the Melchizedek priesthood has replaced the Levitical Priesthood.

So what’s the logic of this “new revelation”? Why do some people seem to buy into this?

It seems to be an attempt at reconciling the difficult passages in the New Testament that seem to speak against God’s Law. Anytime the New Testament *seems* to say that the law is done away with or burdensome or temporary, proponents of this theory can merely assert that those verses are talking about the “Book of the Law,” which they say is distinct from the Book of the Covenant. And that is exactly what they do.

According to those who hold to this theory, all of the verses in the New Testament that speak positively about the Law are referring to the Book of the Covenant and the few verses that seem to speak negatively about the Law are referring to the “Book of the Law.”

The implications of believing in this theory are quite serious. If someone believes that the commands contained in the “Book of the Law” are done away with, they might think they have religious justification for sinning against God by rejecting some of His commandments. For example, according to how God’s commandments are divided by those who hold to this theory, wearing tzitzit and observing Yom Kippur are in the “Book of the Law” but not in the “Book of the Covenant.” Therefore, the commands to observe wearing tzitzit and observing Yom Kippur have been abolished, according to

those who hold to this theory.

Now that we've given a summary of this particular theory, here are some reasons we can safely conclude that the Bible simply doesn't support it.

1) The Bible never makes a clear distinction between the Book of the Covenant and the Book of the Law.

In fact, the opposite is true. The entire basis for this theory is that there is apparently a distinction between the "Book of the Covenant" and the "Book of the Law." Again, according to the proponents of this theory, the Book of the Covenant ends at Exodus 24:8 and so the Book of the Law would be all of God's commandments found from Exodus 24:9 to the end of Deuteronomy.

The problem, however, is that the Scriptures themselves never make this distinction. The distinction is already assumed by the proponents of this theory and then read back into the Scripture.

This can be proven when we see that the Scripture, in fact, uses the two titles synonymously. Consider this passage from 2 Chronicles 34:

2 Chronicles 34:14-19

"While they were bringing out the money that had been brought into the house of the LORD (YHWH), Hilkiyah the priest found **the Book of the Law** of the LORD (YHWH) given through Moses. Then Hilkiyah answered and said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found **the Book of the Law** in the house of the LORD (YHWH)." And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan. Shaphan brought the book to the king, and further reported to the king, "All that was committed to your servants they are doing. They have emptied out the money that was found in the house of the LORD (YHWH) and have given it into the hand of the overseers and the workmen." Then Shaphan the secretary told the king, "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read from it before the king. And when the king heard the words of the Law, he tore his clothes. And the king commanded Hilkiyah, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Abdon the son of Micah, Shaphan the secretary, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying, "Go, inquire of the LORD (YHWH) for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the LORD (YHWH) that is poured out on us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD (YHWH), to do according to all that is written in this book."

In this passage we see that, during the time of King Josiah, the priest Hilkiyah had found the "Book of the Law" in the house of YHWH. When the book was given to King Josiah, he tore his clothes because he realized that Israel had not been keeping God's commandments. So King Josiah assembles the elders of Judah and Jerusalem to read the book to them. In verses 29-30 we see something interesting:

2 Chronicles 34:29-30

"Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. And the king went up to the house of the LORD (YHWH), with all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the Levites, all the people both great and small. And he read in their hearing all the words of **the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD (YHWH).**"

Here we see that the same "Book of the Law" that was found in the house of the Lord by Hilkiyah the priest is later referred to as the "Book of the Covenant."

In response to this point, proponents of this theory have typically said that the passage is referring to two different books. But there is nothing in the text that would indicate that two books were found. It's clear from the passage that only one book is being referred to.

Furthermore, why would Josiah read one book, tear his clothes because Israel had not been keeping God's commandments as recorded in the book that he read, and then assemble the elders of Judah and Jerusalem to read them a completely different book? It just doesn't make sense. But that is what this theory would have you believe.

This point alone is sufficient to demonstrate that this theory is utterly unbiblical, but this is just the beginning.

2) The Priesthood was given to Aaron and his sons *before* the sin of the golden calf.

Since the crux of this theory rests on the idea that the "Book of the Law," including the Levitical Priesthood, was added as a punishment for the sin of the golden calf, if we can prove that these commandments were given before the golden calf incident, then the entire theory falls apart.

What do we see in the Scriptures? According to Exodus 28, we see that it was God's intention to give the Priesthood to Aaron and his sons even before the sin of the golden calf in Exodus 32.

Exodus 28:1

["Then bring near to you Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the people of Israel, to serve me as priests—Aaron and Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar."](#)

This verse alone proves that the establishment of the Levitical Priesthood was not added as a punishment for the golden calf incident, but was in fact part of God's original plan.

Before we go further, it might be helpful to determine the origin of this idea that the Levitical Priesthood was added as a result of the golden calf incident. Proponents of this theory will often point to Exodus 32:25-29 as proof of their claims. This passage is right after Moses comes back down from the mountain and confronts Aaron about the golden calf:

Exodus 32:25-29

["And when Moses saw that the people had broken loose \(for Aaron had let them break loose, to the derision of their enemies\), then Moses stood in the gate of the camp and said, "Who is on the LORD's \(YHWH's\) side? Come to me." And all the sons of Levi gathered around him. And he said to them, "Thus says the LORD \(YHWH\) God of Israel, 'Put your sword on your side each of you, and go to and fro from gate to gate throughout the camp, and each of you kill his brother and his companion and his neighbor.'" And the sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses. And that day about three thousand men of the people fell. And Moses said, "**Today you have been ordained for the service of the LORD \(YHWH\)**, each one at the cost of his son and of his brother, so that he might bestow a blessing upon you this day."](#)

This passage is used as a proof-text to support the claim that God established the Levitical Priesthood after the sin of the golden calf, because it says that the sons of Levi were ordained that day. But to clear up some confusion, it's helpful to keep this in mind: All Priests are Levites—that is, from the tribe of Levi—but not all Levites are Priests.

Priests are only the sons of Aaron. The Levites served as helpers to the priests, but they were not priests themselves.

It could perhaps be said that the Levites were ordained for this service after the sin of the golden calf, but that wouldn't have been the official establishment of the Levitical Priesthood. If anything, it would only be the establishment of the priestly helpers to the sons of Aaron. And again, Aaron and his sons were established as priests before the sin of the golden calf.

Proponents of this theory often respond to this point by simply asserting that some parts of the Torah weren't written in chronological order. In other words, it is taught that Exodus 28 happened after Exodus 32, and so God's calling of Aaron and his sons as priests took place after the golden calf incident.

The problem is that this assertion is never backed up. And when we read the transition between the end of Exodus 31:18—which is right after God gives Moses many commandments concerning the tabernacle and priesthood—and the beginning of Exodus 32, it's clear that the entire section is chronological.

First, let's look at Exodus 31:18, right before we get into the story of the golden calf.

Exodus 31:18

“And he gave to Moses, when he had finished speaking with him on Mount Sinai, the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God.”

This verse tells us that Moses is still on top of the mountain as God gives him commandments concerning the Tabernacle and priesthood, which included Exodus 28, the calling of Aaron and his sons as Levitical priests. And we also see that Moses is given the two stone tablets.

The very next verse tells us that Moses is still on the mountain as the golden calf incident occurs:

Exodus 32:1

“When the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron and said to him, ‘Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’”

When we skip down to verse 15 of Exodus 32, we see Moses coming down from the Mountain with the stone tablets:

Exodus 32:15

“Then Moses turned and went down from the mountain with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand, tablets that were written on both sides; on the front and on the back they were written.”

As we can see, the entire section here is chronological. Since this entire theory rests on these commandments being given as a result of the sin of the golden calf, this must be addressed.

The only possible argument that could be made is that the commands given throughout Exodus 25-31 are not what Moses received when he was on the Mountain. But this argument is flawed because the narrative picks up in Exodus 32 with Moses coming down from the mountain. What was he doing on the mountain if not receiving the commandment given in Exodus 25-31? Why would the Torah be written in

such a confusing way? Every indication from the text is that the entire section is chronological.

There is much more that we can say on this topic, but these two points are the pillars holding this entire theory together, and as we've seen, those pillars have crumbled when tested against Scripture and simple logic.

In conclusion, if proponents of this theory want to convince us that their claims are valid, they must first be able to clearly demonstrate a biblical distinction between what they call the Book of the Covenant and the Book of the Law, not just in theory, but through actual biblical exegesis. Secondly, they must be able to biblically demonstrate a causal relationship between the sin of the golden calf and God's commandments given throughout the rest of Exodus to the end of Deuteronomy. Until they make an actual biblical case for these claims, there is no reason to take this theory seriously.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching.

Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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