

HEAD SCRATCHERS

let's talk

Torah, Temple, and Tradition



- How should new covenant Christians relate to the old covenant Law or promises?
- For example, are Christians required to keep the seventh day Sabbath?



History: Second Temple Judaism

- Destruction of Jerusalem and the first temple (of Solomon) in 586 BC.
- Babylonian exile and synagogues.
- Return and restoration under Ezra/Nehemiah.
- Commitment to Torah observance: 39 rules.
- The Maccabees would rather die than break the Shabbat!
- Variety in Judaism: Sadducees, Essense, Pharisees, Tax Collectors, Zealots.
- What united them? Torah, Temple, Tradition.



Matthew 12.1-14

¹At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry, and they began to pluck heads of grain and to eat. ²But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, "Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath." ³He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he was hungry, and those who were with him: ⁴how he entered the house of God and ate the bread of the Presence, which it was not lawful for him to eat nor for those who were with him, but only for the priests?"



Matthew 12.1-14

⁵Or have you not read in the Law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are guiltless? ⁶I tell you, something greater than the temple is here. ⁷And if you had known what this means, 'I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the guiltless. ⁸For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath." ⁹He went on from there and entered their synagogue. ¹⁰And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"-so that they might accuse him.



Matthew 12.1-14

¹¹He said to them, "Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? ¹²Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath." ¹³Then he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other. ¹⁴But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.

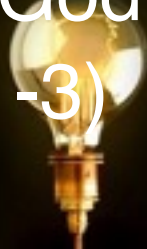
—Note Torah, Temple, and Tradition in these verses.



Traditions

- In an attempt to ‘stay clear of the line’ they invented traditions (e.g. 39 prohibitions)
- But these nullified the Law!

¹Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, ²"Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat." ³He answered them, "And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? (Matt 15.1-3)



Torah

- This conflict was about what was lawful (Matt 12.2) and how they ‘read the Law’ (12.5)

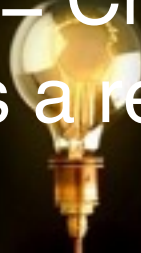
Some problems with Pharisaic interpretation:

1. Externalism: The external appearance of righteousness without the internal reality (Matt 23.27; 5.17-22, 27-28)
2. Literalism (Matt 23.5; Rom 2.25-29)
3. Separatism (Matt 9.10-11)
4. Nationalism (Acts 15.1-5)



Temple

- Jesus is the ‘one greater than the temple’ (Matt 12.5-6)
 - Temple represents the place of sacrifice and Presence.
 - Only two types of Judaism survived the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD:
 1. Rabbinic = Pharisaic Judaism, which lacks sacrifice and Presence
 2. Messianic Judaism = Christianity
- Hebrew Roots, etc., is a return to Pharisaism.



Shadow vs Substance

- In context Jesus is the one who gives rest (Matt 11.28-30)
- Those who focus too hard on the shadow are in danger of missing the substance (Col 2.16-17)
- ‘So then, there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God...’ (Hebrews 4.9)
- Everything outside of Christ is mere shadow!

