

The Beginning of the End of the Jesus Movement

Part 1

Exploring requires stopping and reviewing things that we have discovered. Today I will review two parables of Jesus, a message from Paul, and the ruling of The Jerusalem Council of Apostles and Elders. The time period in which those things happened is 27 to 50 CE. Understanding each of those accounts provides important insights about what brought an end to the Movement founded by Jesus.

The Parable of The Great Day of Judgment

(Matthew 25)

This is a parable about all of the nations of the earth being judged by the Son Man. All of the nations of the earth are placed in one of the two groups below.

1. *These nations fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, took homeless strangers in, clothed the naked, visited the sick, and went to those in prison.*
2. *These nations did not feed the hungry, did not give drink to the thirsty, did not take homeless strangers in, did not clothe the naked, did not visit the sick, and did not go to those in prison.*

The standard the Son of Man used to judge the nations is the same standard the Creator used to judge His actions in Genesis 1. It is called the **TOV Standard**. *Actions that measure TOV protect lives, preserve lives, make lives more functional, and increase the quality of life.*

- The actions of the nations in group #1 **measured TOV**. *They entered into eternal life.*
- The actions of the nations in group #2 did not protect lives, did not preserve lives, did not make lives more functional, and did not increase the quality of life. In other words, their actions **did not measure TOV**. *They were sent into everlasting punishment.*

The Parable of Eliezer (Lazarus) and the Rich Man

(Luke 16)

This is a parable about one rich man who is judged by God.

1. *A poor, hungry, crippled man, who was covered with sores, was laid at the gate of the house of a very rich man who held feasts at his house every day. The rich man did not do acts that measured TOV for the poor hungry man.*
2. *The poor man died. Later the rich man died.*

The **TOV Standard** was also used in this parable to judge the actions of the rich man.

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- *The poor man was taken to Abraham's bosom, where he will experience Abraham's hospitality for eternity.*
- *The rich man was buried and went to sheol, but he will be able to watch the poor man in Abraham's bosom for eternity.*

When the Lord Comes in the Clouds

(1 Thessalonians 4)

This is a message Paul wrote to people who believed what he preached when he visited them: *"Jesus will soon come back and take all of them to heaven to be with him forever – and he will come back before any of them die!"* But some of them had died and Jesus hadn't returned. They wanted to know what was going on!

- *Everyone who believes "Jesus died and rose again" will be caught up together and meet the Lord in the air – dead and living believers. They will all spend eternity together with the Lord.*
- *Those who did not believe that "Jesus died and rose again" will be left behind.*

This marks a change in what Paul had been preaching. It also reveals that Paul uses a different standard than the one Jesus used in the parables. This is **Paul's standard** -- *"those who believe Jesus died and was resurrected will go to heaven and live forever."* Things they did or did not do were not measured. The standard that determined who would go to heaven was Paul's standard of right beliefs.

*Jesus valued actions.
Paul valued beliefs.*

So, what difference does valuing actions or beliefs make in people's lives, in religions, in nations or in the human brain? The ruling of *The Jerusalem Council of Apostles and Elders* will help us answer that question.

Part 2

The **Jesus Movement** (aka, *Kingdom of Heaven Movement*) is the movement that Jesus founded, and in which he personally chose and taught twelve apostles. He led the movement until the Romans crucified him. The **Jerusalem Council of Apostles and Elders**, which we read about in Acts 15, was held about 20 years after the crucifixion. In Acts the Jesus Movement is led by **Jacob** (James) the brother of Jesus. The home and center of the Jesus Movement is **Jerusalem**.

In the culture of Jesus, there were two kinds of people in the world – **Jews and Gentiles**. Jesus led a **Jewish sect** and talked about **Jewish things** that were important to his **Jewish audiences**. People who belonged to other Jewish sects – **Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes**, and **other Jewish sects** – were also speaking to the same people that heard Jesus speak. *Leaders of those sects were also listening to Jesus.*

20 years later (Acts 15), Paul, a man who was not an apostle chosen by Jesus, began preaching a new gospel to Gentiles. **The Christ** is the central figure of Paul's gospel -- "Jesus died and rose again as the Christ." Anyone that believed Paul's gospel could be a member of Paul's movement – Jews and Gentiles – and they could also enter into eternal life! *This was Paul's exclusive gospel, none of the apostles Jesus had chosen had ever heard it before!*

Gentile followers of Paul were coming to the synagogue in Antioch to hear Paul. Some members of the Jesus Movement from Jerusalem happened to hear Paul and see his Gentile followers at the synagogue. They publicly disagreed with Paul's gospel and said, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." In other words, **Unless Gentiles convert to Judaism they cannot enter into eternal life.**

Needless to say, this raised a lot of questions for Gentiles and Jews who were meeting together in the Antioch synagogue. The leaders of the synagogue told representatives of both sides of the disagreement to go to Jerusalem and let the *Apostles and Elders* give us a ruling.

The Ruling of the Jerusalem Council of Apostles and Elders (Acts 15)

The Council's ruling was given by Jacob (James) the brother of Jesus (15:19-21). Before he gave the written copy to the representatives from Antioch, which included Paul, Jacob said this:

"Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from fornication, from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Shabbat."

Members of the Jerusalem Jesus Movement, based their position that "Gentiles must be circumcised" on the authority of "according to the custom of Moses." What is the "custom of Moses"? The "**custom of Moses**" and the "**Laws of Moses**" are references to the "**Torah**." The **Torah** is the first five books of the Christian Bible – *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy*. The first thing Gentiles who are turning to God must do is comply with one of the most important commandments in the Torah (Exodus 20:3):

You shall have no other gods before Me.

For these Gentiles, that meant they had to abstain from things polluted by idols, from fornication, from things strangled, and from blood – *things that were part of worshipping other gods*. After making that clear, Jacob said this:

"For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Shabbat."

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Because these Gentiles were “*former worshippers of other gods*,” the next part of their “*turning to Yahweh the God of Israel*” is to learn how to worship Him. Hearing the Torah read and discussed every Shabbat will teach them how to worship “**Yahweh the God of Israel.**” All they need to do is find a synagogue and go there every Shabbat. [CLICK HERE to see Ancient Weekly Torah Reading Schedule.](#)

Learning the Torah is a prerequisite for learning about their new God and understanding the teachings of Jesus -- *a teacher and interpreter of the Torah and the Prophets.*

*“Do not think that I came to add or remove
words of the Torah or the Prophets.
I did not come to add or remove words.
I came to interpret them correctly!
Amen!”
(Matthew 5:17)*

One example of Jesus interpreting the Torah is found in Matthew 5:21-22.

*“You have heard that it was said to those of old,
‘You shall not murder’”*

Jesus was quoting words from the Torah. His interpretation begins with these words:

“But I say to you whoever is angry with his brother”

He is also quoting other words from the Torah in his interpretation. Without hearing the Torah regularly, they will not be able understand his teachings. Therefore, Jacob included the requirement of “*hearing Moses read*” in the ruling of the Council. When early Christian groups dropped that requirement from their teachings – *that was the beginning of the end of the Jesus Movement!*

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