

Setting Jesus Free:

A Response to “The Relevance of Jewish Roots for Our Times”

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1. THE PREMISE OF DR. MARVIN WILSON’S ARTICLE “THE RELEVANCE OF Jewish Roots for Our Times”¹ is that understanding Judaism and Jews will bring one closer to Jesus, thereby supporting the conclusion that separation of the Jewish Bible from the Christian canon (Marcionism) must be avoided. I suggest that the premise is misplaced and was not proved by the author. The article actually justifies the opposite idea: that understanding Judaism will cause doubt about the Messianic claims of Jesus, thus highlighting the need for Marcionism. His article is summed up nicely in section I.3. where he says: “Judaism and Christianity are two different religions.” In essence, the way the article is written is testimony to the need to divorce the Christian and Jewish Scriptures.

Proof of my premise is hidden in Dr. Wilson’s anecdote about his engagement with the “Hasidic Jewish scholar.” The article specifically quotes the Jewish scholar as stating that the Messiah’s righteous reign will be “through one from the Davidic line.”² The “one” is not identified in the article; however, he is identified in the Jewish Bible as Solomon, the son of King David. He is the son chosen by God through whom the Messianic line of David is transmitted. If doubt is raised by the Jewish Bible as to Jesus’ fulfillment of this prophecy, then the Jewish Bible, and this prophecy, should be excised from the Christian Bible. Once excised, no doubt remains.

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² Section II.5.

The focus by the Wilson article, and most Christian writings, on the Messiah's "Davidic origin" rather than the "Solomon line" hides the Solomon requirement from the analysis. Attributing the Davidic focus to the Jewish "scholar" is to give that focus credibility. It also implicates the Jew in the questionable scholarship.

My contention, that the Christian Bible should separate from the Jewish, is supported when a full analysis is applied to Dr. Wilson's biblical references. In the example of the Hasidic scholar, the author's use of the word "one" hides a biblical challenge to the Messiahship of Jesus. If it can be shown that the Jewish Bible raises a legitimate debate about Jesus' lineage, which suggests that Jesus did not fulfill the Messianic prophecies regarding the royal line from king David, then that proof should be sufficient to justify separation of the Jewish Bible from the Christian.

Jewish and Christian theology agree that Solomon is to generate the royal/Messianic line.³ This royal/Messianic line must be generated by a "seed" relationship from King David through Solomon, to the Messiah.⁴ The treatment of these specific Messianic prophecies by the Christian Bible underscores the need to sever the Jewish Bible from the analysis. Jesus' line (through Mary) goes back to David through David's other son, Nathan, not through the required Solomon.⁵ Therefore, Jesus is disqualified as Messiah through the Luke/Mary line. Since Joseph was not the father, he contributes none of his required seed, and Jesus inherits nothing from Joseph. Jesus' genealogy through Joseph, found in the Gospel of Matthew, is therefore irrelevant. The conclusion is unmistakable: the Jewish Bible presents the Messianic requirement, but the Christian Bible leaves doubt as to its fulfillment.

The above biblical example, along with other examples too numerous for this analysis, readily supports the contention that the Jewish Bible should be detached from the Christian canon. Retaining the Jewish Bible raises questions and doubts about the Messianic claims of Jesus.

This doubt is recognized by the Christian Bible with a stern warning to Christians not to look to the Jewish Bible for knowledge about Jesus' lineage. Titus says, "avoid foolish questions, and genealogies"⁶ and the book of Timothy says, "Neither give heed to fables and endless

³ 1 Chron. 17:11-14; 28:4-7; 1 Kings 9:1-5.

⁴ Ps. 89:29, 35-37; 1 Chron. 17:11-14.

⁵ Lk. 3:31.

⁶ Tit. 3:9.

genealogies, which minister questions.”⁷ What would cause these early Christian fathers to label Jewish-based challenges to Jesus’ Messiahship as “foolish” and “fables”? Why keep a book which is nothing more than foolish fables? The admonition that genealogic analysis must be ignored by Christians, especially regarding proof texts, supports the divorce of Christianity from Judaism. Thus, if the retention of the Jewish Bible casts doubt on Jesus’ qualifications as Messiah, eliminating it would eliminate the challenge. As knowledge of the law creates knowledge of sin, so retention of the Jewish Bible creates knowledge of doubt.

Severance of the Jewish Scripture from the Christian eliminates the need to “hide” important biblical scholarship. If the Jewish Bible was eliminated, the “David/Messiah” nexus would be irrelevant, or relevant only as history. Semantics would not be crucial. Then the second coming of Jesus could be defined by Christianity, not Judaism.

Christianity should support itself on its own theology, which is so far removed from Judaism as to be related only by history. Sufficient theological support for Christianity to function on its own is found, for example, in the Gospel of John. This Gospel immediately makes Jesus divine, not Messianic. Certainly the Christian Jesus is more like John’s Jesus than Matthew’s. Therefore, the Jewish Bible is baggage holding back the Jesus theology from fully developing.

Another reason for dropping the Jewish Bible is that, within it, God specifically states that “what I have commanded observe and do it: you shall not add thereto nor diminish from it.”⁸ Elsewhere in the Jewish Bible God says: “You shall not add to the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish anything from it.”⁹ Certainly the argument can be made that attachment of the Christian Bible to the Jewish is an unauthorized addition.

Jesus diminished from the law by abrogating God’s commandments, for example, the kosher laws¹⁰ and the Sabbath,¹¹ etc. Jesus did this despite the fact that God, in the Jewish Bible, established the Mosaic law, including the Sabbath, as an eternal covenant.¹² The Christian Bible expressly recognizes that “it is impossible for God to lie”;¹³ thus, it is

⁷ 1 Tim. 1:4.

⁸ Dt. 12:32.

⁹ Dt. 4:2.

¹⁰ Mt. 15:11; Mk. 7:15.

¹¹ Jn. 7:22, 23.

¹² Lev. 24:8; Dt. 5:29.

¹³ Heb. 6:18.

arguable that the Sabbath, and all the other laws of the Jewish Bible, continue to govern. For these reasons, and many others, the Jewish Bible is presenting an inconsistent theology to Christians. On the one hand, they read in the Jewish Bible that God's law is eternal. On the other hand, they learn in Bible class that this "eternal" law no longer applies. The argument goes like this:

Q: Why does the law no longer apply?

A: It was done away with at the coming of Jesus.

Q: How can Jesus change the law of God?

A: Because Jesus was God in the flesh.

Q: Does that mean that God lied to the Jewish people?

Q: Did God make a mistake?

Obviously Christian theology cannot answer these questions in the affirmative or the security of the Christian covenant would be questioned.

Christianity needs to give Jesus the opportunity to fully blossom as a theology. This cannot be done as long as the Jewish Bible shackles this development. Elimination of the Jewish Bible from the Christian one will give the Christian Bible credibility: it will no longer be clinging to a book which specifically has no place for the graft.

Naturally the historic link will always exist. Belief by Christians in Jesus as a deity is permitted by the God of Israel on the condition that Christians live their lives as righteous gentiles by following the seven Noahide laws.

2. THE REMAINING ANALYSIS WILL FOCUS ON THE OTHER REASONS RELIED UPON by Dr. Wilson to justify his premise that a Christian should explore Judaism as a way of further understanding Jesus.

In section I.4., the author states that calling the Jewish Bible the "Old" Testament implies an inferiority of that portion of the canon. The context is in support of Dr. Wilson's point that if the Jewish Bible is equal to the Christian, then it is worthy of study. He rejects the implication that the Old Testament is inferior, insisting that Christians "are 'whole Bible' believers."¹⁴ The author's statement is in complete contradiction to the specific statements in the Christian Bible which say clearly that the Jewish Bible is inferior and no longer of significance. I list just some of them: "also he

¹⁴ Section I.4.

is the mediator of a better covenant”;¹⁵ “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law”;¹⁶ “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowlege of sin.”¹⁷ The Christian Bible unambiguously teaches that the Mosaic law is inferior to the New Testament.¹⁸ The full analysis contradicts the author’s point.

The author condemns the commonly held belief in the Christian community that “God is done with the Jewish people.”¹⁹ Yet, his condemnation is not supported biblically. The commonly held belief is also right out of the Christian Bible: “Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you [the Jewish people]: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.”²⁰ If the Jewish Bible were removed from the Christian, the author would not have to deny his Bible in order to harmonize justifying the study of Judaism with believing that Judaism makes its adherents unworthy of salvation.

In section I.1., the author, after presenting his ideas in support of understanding Judaism, then limits the intellectual endeavor. He states that those Christians who are crusaders for Judaism are “overzealous.” Yet, in the same paragraph, the author admonishes the seeker of Judaic knowlege to allow the pursuit of this knowlege to be “born in a person’s heart by the spirit of God.” What is it that leads the author to conclude that the direction in which the spirit leads some Christians is “overzealous”? It appears that the article is conveying that the spirit is “leading” only if the student is responding in some preplanned way: that realizing the truth of Judaism could not be of the spirit. This subliminal message goes to the root of Christian anti-Semitism.

In section I.4., in support of the elimination of Marcionism, the author denies Paul’s many unambiguous biblical statements which hold that belief in Jesus meant being baptized into the Messianic age unburdened by the law of Moses. He states that Marcion’s hero was the Apostle “Paul because in several passages Paul *seemed* to say that the law has come to an end.”²¹ Paul’s biblical passages are clear; Paul didn’t “seem” to

¹⁵ Heb. 8:6-7.

¹⁶ Gal. 3:13.

¹⁷ Rom. 3:20.

¹⁸ Heb. 8:7-8.

¹⁹ Section I.4.

²⁰ Acts 13:46.

²¹ Emphasis added.

abrogate the law, he actually did it. The fact that the author needs to downplay Paul's theology on the Mosaic law underscores the need to eliminate the Jewish Bible from the Christian canon. The position taken by the author is not supported by Paul's overall theology or his specific biblical statements. See, for example, Ephesians 2:15: "Having *abolished* in his flesh . . . the law of commandments." There is no doubt that Paul taught that the Messianic age would be without the Mosaic law. The fact that the author states that "God has not abrogated that (Mosaic) covenant"²² is directly contradicted by Paul. This conflict actually supports elimination of the Jewish Bible. In fact, Marcion advocated a Christian canon made up of Paul's writings, eliminating even the Gospels and other books which he considered "too Jewish."

The obvious analysis of Paul's theology, that the law is abolished, supports Marcionism: eliminate that which has been abolished. This stands in conflict to the author's premise. The fact that he risks credibility by forcing an interpretation strongly suggests that dropping the Jewish Bible is necessary. Elimination of the Jewish Bible eliminates the need for apologetics.

Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:17 that he "came not to destroy the law or the prophets" appears to support the author's premise, but it does not. Overlooking the fact that this statement by Jesus stands in contradiction to Paul's theology, if Jesus' statement is true, then salvation still exists for the Jew through the law, without faith in Jesus. Salvation for the Jew, without Jesus, undermines the claim that Jesus brought Old Testament theology "to its richest and fullest maturity."²³ This again justifies divorce of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures.

The whole reason for missionizing "to the Jew first" is eliminated if the law is justified.

²² Section I.4.

²³ Section I.4.