

The Law, Pharisees, and Jesus

Matthew Vander Els · 2019-11-12 · foundedintruth.com

MAIN VERSES

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Do you ever find yourself searching for something bigger than you? For a community to be a part of? A place founded on truth and love. A place to worship the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, and the Son of God. Welcome to Founded in Truth, where we're more than just a fellowship. We're a family, so welcome home.

The Law, the Pharisees, and Jesus

So the past few weeks we've been exploring different areas and stories in the Torah. And it's been like a survey of some of the most unique treasures that exist in the Hebrew Bible. Things that we normally miss, from sea monsters appearing in the courts of Pharaoh to the literary patterns and the gross narrative shifts that occur that help us understand what the authors are doing with the story of the Israelites wandering around in the wilderness. And last week we spoke about the patterns of how commandments were given and when they appear in the story of Israel in the Torah. And if you ever notice, commandments don't just appear like one here or one there. They appear in blocks in the text. Different packages of commandments that we've come to call law codes. Imagine a law code like being a zip file. It's just one file, it's a block with a lot of different commandments inside of it. You have the priestly code that appears and is dropped in the text right after the incident with the golden calf, where Aaron, the priesthood, crafts the golden calf. And so you have all of these commandments about how the priests need to get their act together and stay focused and stay set apart. And this is how the priesthood works. And then later on in the text, in Leviticus, we have the holiness code, this package of commandments for Israel. Okay, now you went out and apparently you're worshipping some goats out in the wilderness. So here's a package of commandments to help you remain focused and stay set apart from doing that again. And these things were given to Israel.

The Torah was given to Israel to equip them for what purpose? So that they could be a kingdom of people that mediate God's kingdom on earth. Mediators of heaven and earth. That fosters them into becoming a kingdom of priests and a light to all nations. That's the purpose of the Torah. That's why it was given. The Torah was given as a blessing, but because of the hearts of man, it ended up enslaving Israel. This is what Paul says. Like having a gun so big and so perfect that it hurts you when you're not ready to fire it. Anybody? No, just me. Okay. You're not expecting it. This is what happened when the Torah was given to Israel. They couldn't handle it. Something was missing there. And it wasn't the Torah's fault. The Torah was an absolute blessing. Not the gun's fault. It hurts you. No. This blessing ended up damning Israel into exile where they lamented on the shores of the rivers of Babylon and this is where God met them in the form of prophecies of a coming king that would have a heart they needed—a new kingdom that would revitalize mankind, all of existence, to be the image bearers that they were supposed to be.

Wisdom and Knowledge

The Torah was given to give wisdom to navigate this world with God's direction. See, in [Genesis 3](#), we see the story of mankind and we see how mankind chose to have the knowledge of good and evil. And the knowledge of good and evil isn't a bad thing. Of course we should pursue that. But when we pursue the knowledge of good and evil apart from God's direction and God's wisdom, that's when things get messed up, as we see in the story of mankind after they took of that fruit. See, when we leave behind God's wisdom and take of the knowledge of good and evil, then it's far too easy for us to manipulate what we call good and manipulate what we call evil. This is exactly the world that was created that Amos speaks about. The prophet Amos, when he describes the world that Israel lived in, it's a world where we view ourselves as righteous people. And the most cherished people of God, when in reality we've become the most unrecognizable people of God.

Misunderstanding the Torah

And the thing that's so sad about the Torah is how misunderstood it is among believers as a whole. We'll meet other believers who don't want anything to do with the text of the Torah. They open it up, turn to Leviticus, take a glance. Nah, there's nothing in here for me. And it's unfortunate because even though today's Christian scholarship really would never say the law is done away with, many Christians, many people, many believers still carry that with them. That's not something that has been taught in seminaries for a while now because Christian

scholarship understands the Torah is a blessing. It's obvious it's a blessing. You can't not have these commandments of do not steal and do not commit adultery and love your neighbor as yourself and say that the Torah is done away with. No, obviously we're missing something here. The Torah is a blessing. The Torah is perfect. It's the hearts of man that have issues.

Keeping the Torah

And the fact is, as believers... Whether some of them think that the law is done away with or not, the fact of the matter is most Christians still keep almost or as much Torah as Messianics do, if not more. And that's a realization that we need to understand. Because when you look at the commandments that can actually be kept today, and then the ones that we try to keep today, there's really only about three or four things that separate those in the Messianic circles from the majority of the rest of the believers today in the world. I mean, that's really it. There's really only like three things. There's Sabbath, kosher, and maybe Zetio. Maybe Zetio. I mean, you could probably pick out and maybe find one or two. But those are the top three things that really separate those in messianic circles from the rest of the believing world that may not see those things in the same light that we do. And it's interesting because the more people that you meet, the more opinions that you get about the Torah.

Like on one side you have these people that turn to Numbers and Leviticus and are like, nope, this is not for me. This is not applicable to me. Don't want anything to do with it. But then you meet people that crack open Leviticus and are like at the opposite end. They're like, bam, this is the divine checklist that's going to get me into heaven. Anybody? Anybody? Has anyone ever been that person? Maybe you still are. We open up the Torah and we see commandments and we're like, yes, if I just check off this daily list of things, then I am a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. And the thing about viewing Torah just like a list of commandments, just a checklist of this checklist that's either only for the Jews or this list of things that you must do every single day, exactly just check them off to get yourself into heaven or the kingdom or however you want to classify it. The thing is, the commandment is not some magic spell. When you turn to the commandments in Torah, this is not some magical, mystical spell. No, the commandment is only as powerful as the result that it gives. The commandment is only as powerful as the result that it gives.

The Power of Obedience

In other words, if obeying a commandment does not further the overall goal of God giving it to mankind, then you're kidding yourself. You're kidding yourself. Let's say you're a believer and

you open up your Bible and you're blown away at the beauty and the grace and the poetic romance that you find in the Torah of God. So you grab hold of the commandments and you're completely loyal to them. Yes, every day you wake up and you say the Shema in the morning. I'm going to bed. Say the Shema again. You go to the restaurant. Okay. Hold the baked beans. I know what you put in them. Hold that pork, right? Oh, got my zeet-zeet stuck in the leaf blower again. Yep. It's a rite of passage. Anyone else? Just me? Okay. It's a rite of passage, right? If you keep the commandments of Torah and the result is not a growing heart filled with love and joy and peace and forbearance and kindness and goodness and faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control, then you're kidding yourself. You're kidding yourself.

In the Torah, we learn that the Torah was not enough. It was not enough. Moses acknowledges this with his famous speech to Israel at the end of Deuteronomy. The Torah itself is not enough to evolve Israel into the kingdom of God's presence on earth. You guys, you're not going to succeed in this, even though you have the Torah. This is the pep talk he gives Israel before they go over it. Nah, you're going to fail. There's something missing. We learn that we need something else, something better to actually equip the Torah to do what it's supposed to do within us. That thing is a heart that is freed from the shackles of this world and a heart that only pursues God's kingdom. And that's actually how Paul explains it. Did you know that? This is what Paul says in [Romans 8](#), 3. In order that the righteous requirement of the Torah might be fulfilled in us. See, Paul's point here is whether the Torah brings life or death is dependent on whether it's written on your heart or not. It's dependent on the Spirit, on whether or not your heart has been transformed by the Spirit of God, just like Ezekiel says will happen. [Ezekiel 36](#), 26. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit will I put inside of you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and carefully obey my rules. This is a prophecy of Ezekiel. Ezekiel got it. It was like, we're missing something. We're missing the heart. We're missing the spirit that is going to equip us to do more than what our stony, rock-hard hearts are capable of. I love that. God sends Yeshua. He sent Yeshua so that the thing that had dominion over us, sin, would be condemned in the flesh of Yeshua. So God's wrath wasn't necessarily poured out on Yeshua. It was poured out onto sin in the flesh of Yeshua. Breaking the chains of bondage, giving birth to a new greater exodus from slavery. Not like the first exodus that Jeremiah speaks about. No, this one will be grander. Grander—it overshadows the first exodus in magnitude because it won't be an exodus from Egypt. It'll be an exodus from sin and death. Giving us a new heart, as Ezekiel puts it. This new heart will become a vessel of God's own spirit. [Jeremiah 31](#). This will enable the Torah to be engraved, not

on tablets, but on the flesh of our hearts. So that with every beat, we would walk out the purpose of the Torah. We would be the people of God that engulfs the world with his presence, his peace, his justice, his love. His kingdom would come. And when you walk a new life in Christ, a new life in the Mashiach, equipped with that life-giving spirit, you begin walking out the Torah. Yeshua died so that the righteous requirement of the Torah would be fulfilled in us, in you. This is exactly what Paul is speaking about. He's speaking about the constant failures of Israel when they received the Torah, what the issue was, and how God has rectified it. So that Torah can be lived out, can be seen, can be felt. And the purpose of Torah, ushering God's kingdom on earth, can be overwhelmingly poured out of you.

The Law Is Not Done Away

No, the law is not done away with. The Torah was given to produce wisdom to equip and raise up a people of God. But that wisdom can bring folly if not embraced through the grace of God in the person of Yeshua. Now, to say Jesus did away with the law—which to be honest, that's like our go-to argument in messianic circles. Like everybody, all the other Christians believe that Jesus did away with the law. And I really have to tell you, that's not a thing anymore. It was a very common teaching 50 years ago in scholarship. Nowadays, Christian scholarship doesn't teach that. In seminaries, they're not teaching that. Leading New Testament scholars like Tom Wright or Scott McKnight or Christopher Wright or Walter Brueggemann or Tim Mackey or, goodness, who else? The leading edge scholars pushing the limits of scholarship and the new information of studying the scriptures for students—no one is saying that because it can't be true. It doesn't make sense. It doesn't. And so for some reason in the messianic world, we love that rhetoric of throwing that out there, and it's not necessarily true. There may be some churches here and there that teach that, but that's not a thing anymore. In Christian communities now, it's about how we embrace the Torah. And as we see, the light is being shed on Torah in new ways. How do we embrace it? I've seen three different churches that I follow online. One was in Nashville—a Christian church with a five-part series on Sabbath two months ago. I was like, what? And they're quoting Jewish scholars and Christian scholars talking about the Sabbath. I'm like, this is incredible because there's an interest there. Maybe we should take another look. And I love that. Sorry, that's my rant. I just hate it when people say everyone believes the law is done away with. No, they don't. It's just in what light they're seeing the Torah now. We love it that we know that Yeshua preached Torah. It encourages us because we love to embrace the Torah.

Controversial Teaching

But look at the story of Yeshua—what he taught was still controversial when he taught Torah. It was still controversial and it still made the religious upset. You ever notice that? It made the religious upset. The people who embraced the Torah, who were confident in the Torah, who fulfilled the commandments—they were the ones who got upset when they heard Yeshua preach on what someone is truly supposed to look like when they embrace the Torah. Because when you fabricate the pursuit of your religion, then the lifestyle that you live in the name of your faith is justified. When you say that you believe but within your own little world you deconstruct the reality of your belief to be something that only achieves your personal goals, it becomes upsetting when you're faced with a reality check—when someone else comes along and actually lives out a life of faith seriously. It's fun, it's fun, it's fun to play a good Christian, a good believer, a good Torah keeper. It really is. It's all fun and games until that decision of oath and loyalty leads to a crossroads where you actually have to make a change, you actually have to show your cards. You actually have to do something besides post on social media about how much you love God and how great the Torah is. You actually have to walk the walk, and you have to be what you claim to be.

The Cost of Comfort

And it's tough. It's tough because we like the world the way it is. We do. We honestly do. We like our routines. We like being comfortable. We like to know what to expect. And I'm standing with you guys on this. This is a conversation with myself. As a people in general, we like to turn on television stations such as Fox News or CNN with the intent of getting angry and frustrated at the world. You know it's true. Nobody turns on Fox News to see, oh, I wonder what edifying things are on today. Nobody does that. You turn on because you know what to expect and you want to see something that you get upset about. You want to yell at the TV. Turn on CNN. Yeah, I'm going to get a good reaction. Yeah, let's do this. It's what we do. You don't have to feel too guilty about it. I understand. It's what we expect to do. And the fact of the matter is, we love to turn on that and we love to say, "Oh, look at those people over there, and this is us over here." But if the world actually tipped in your favor, you would probably be quite depressed that you didn't have your routine anymore of getting angry at people because they weren't like you. You would probably be depressed. What am I going to do now? My whole identity is...

Maybe it isn't politics that you enjoy finding your identity in. The newest trends that I've seen over the past 10 years or so are sensational social media groups and conspiracy YouTube channels that thrive on fear. Ooh, time to be a watchman on the wall when they misquote.

Watch out for the Illuminati that's around the corner. Look at all these things that are going on in the world. Keep a lookout. Be a diligent Christian and be on guard. As if watching a YouTube video about some secret, unknown, vague power that rules the world has anything to do with your actual practical mission as a Christian. Are you going to do anything about it? Does it prompt you and motivate you to actually go outside and do something about it? No, it causes you to sit at your house and be scared. But we like that because it's part of the routine. It's part of our identity. It makes us feel like we're actually on a journey that's religious.

Resisting Rome With Radical Love

In Paul's day, he didn't have secret societies and Illuminati. He had Rome. Rome. And you know what? He didn't sit at his house and say, "One day God's going to take Rome." No, let's go outside and resist. We will resist Rome by showing radical love. We will show this world a new reality that has never been shown before. This is how we will break Rome. Is Rome still around, or did it fall? It fell. The Roman Empire fell. Are followers of Christ still standing up for a radical kingdom that is making itself known on earth through the hearts of those who are faithful? Yes. One kingdom toppled another and has toppled so many after it. It's where we find our religious identity sometimes, and that's the problem. We like the idea of being associated with God's kingdom, but when it actually comes to being a citizen of God's kingdom, that's when we... Do you ever get mad or resentful or frustrated sometimes because other people are doing what you know you should be doing? No one's going to raise their hand. It's probably a wise move. It's probably wise. Do you ever see other believers that are just so bold in their faith and you're just kind of like, whatever? Anybody? No one's ever done that. Just a couple.

Francis Chan's Radical Faith

Perfect example, Francis Chan. You guys have heard of this guy, right? Nice, shiny, bald. Okay, so Francis Chan used to be a pastor in California. He quit the church to do missions work. He's written quite a few books. His last book, *Letters to the Church*, was pretty good. I enjoyed it. I liked it. But here, he just made an announcement. He's back in the States. He's been pushing his books, been doing conferences and everything. He's pretty well known in a lot of Christian circles. At 52 years old, he just made an announcement that himself and his wife and his family are moving to Asia to be international missionaries. They're not going to remain in the States. They're not going to continue selling his book, trying to get TV shows, interviews. No, we're going to Asia. He says, "I'm scared of being labeled a coward when I am judged." And he's not talking about you judging him.

The Danger of Comparing Ourselves

Right? And I read some critics that were so overwhelmed at his radical, bold proclamation of what he's going to do that they were like, man, here he goes again, just trying to show off his righteousness. And what's really frustrating is when I read the article, I had these weird feelings inside of me where I was like, gosh, Francis, fine, show us all up, whatever. And I had to catch myself. I'll be honest—why would I ever harbor any type of feelings like that towards someone who is doing something they're called to do? And I had to look deep down to try to figure this out, and why are others judging him for doing it? And the only thing I could come up with is maybe I'm just ashamed of the fact that I'm not bold enough to do the things that God's called me to do. Maybe his critics are too. We get jealous and ashamed when other believers are bold enough to do what God has called us to do and we're not. Are you bold enough to live out the calling in the Bible? Because that's what you're called to do. The calling of the Torah. The calling of the words of Yeshua.

The Hard Things We're Called to Do

Man, we hate it when we actually have to forgive someone. And we do this thing where we're like, I forgive you. Until that night when we go to bed and we close our eyes and hope they have a car accident. No one's ever done that? Okay, thank you. Amen for the two little ones here. Y'all forget that I'm human too. I know what you think. We hate it when we actually have to forgive someone. When we actually have to refrain from gossiping. Gosh, isn't that hard? Isn't it hard to just refrain? Oh, but they need prayer, so I'm going to talk about it. Do you know that they need prayer for this? I know. We hate that urge to just resist. We hate it when we have to be the stopping force of a hate that has been continuously perpetuated in someone else's life. When we have to stand and absorb it from someone else without retaliation. Stuff that people have been dealing with their whole life through tragedy or abuse and now it's turned into anger and rage and you are the target today and you're called to absorb it and not retaliate like Yeshua. When we actually have to do this because God's love is pumping through us. And it's all a great idea until we actually have to make the decision to do something, when we actually have to be bold enough to be the person we claim to be.

And when these choices occur, there are three things that usually happen. We either do it, we walk away, or we make an addendum to our faith where we can stand and believe the same things about God, Torah, and Yeshua without actually needing to submit and humble ourselves and allow God's will to be manifest in our life.

Yeshua and the Religious Communities

See, when Yeshua engages the religious communities, many times he was confronting people that claimed to worship God and live by his Torah. Was he not? Many times. But in reality, he made them angry. And a few times they picked up rocks to stone him. Remember that? Hey, this guy's got to go. Can you imagine? Can you imagine being so angry at someone that you would want to see them dead? Can you imagine? Now imagine that person being Jesus. Why did they get so angry at Yeshua? Because he was teaching people how to live out the Torah in a way that had never been done. In a way so bold that it was quite simply radical.

Matthew depicts the famous Sermon on the Mount scene with Yeshua going up, in the Greek it's going up the mountain. It's supposed to recall images from Mount Sinai, the mountain that Moses went up and delivered the Torah of God on. And so he has this image of this pseudo-Mount Sinai and this new Moses giving this reconstitution of Torah. And it's radical. Here, Yeshua is demonstrating what the Torah looks like when it's actually beating within a human heart. Not just stamped on a stone or a Torah scroll, but what does Torah look like when it actually beats in your heart? Not in a superficial level, not in an I'll pull it out when I want to look religious way, not in an I believe God when it suits me kind of way. No, this is what it looks like to be authentically Torah observant and a people of God's kingdom.

The Teaching of the Sermon on the Mount

And he goes on for his Torah teaching here. When people insult you, don't hold a grudge. Rejoice that you have God's love in your life and no insult can ever penetrate the love of God. In fact, forgive them. Do good things for other people, but do it in a way that they know it's God working through you. Be that light. Don't kill anybody with your hands or your heart. Unchecked hatred inside doesn't need to come out in order for it to rot your devotion to God's kingdom. Don't look at other people as objects. They are images of God just like you. Love others, even your enemies, so much so that you would shoulder the burden for them. Practice in your daily life self-sacrificial love. This is how the love of God is made manifest on earth. Make sure that you give to the needy. Don't hold back. Don't be greedy with your time, your energy, or your money. Pray every day that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven, that he would equip you to be the vessel through which that is made manifest.

Stop making yourself look so righteous. Stop posting on Facebook about how hungry you are on Yom Kippur. Stop it. Quit complaining about the acts of devotion of God in order to call attention to yourself. Make sure that you realize that the treasure that you have in this world

was meant to make a difference in this world. Make sure you know where your heart is concerning your money. If your heart is focused on you and your wants and your desires, that's where your money's gonna be. But if your heart is about your community and those around you and the needs of others, that's where your treasure will be. Don't let anxiety rule your life. God is in control. It's pretty radical stuff, right? Like that almost sounds like some kind of hippie stuff, but no, this was the words of Yeshua when he taught Torah.

According to Yeshua, those are the things that stick out of someone who says that they follow Yeshua and keep his commandments. According to Yeshua, this is how you keep Torah and resemble a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. Man, Yeshua here at the Sermon on the Mount, he uses his opportunity here to highlight the foundational principles, the most important, the most weighty aspects of how the Torah is supposed to be seen in the life of someone who claims to be a believer.

What the Pharisees Really Focused On

Now, but notice Sabbath, Kosher, and Tzitzit aren't even listed in the greatest sermon ever told about Torah. Did you notice that? Not even mentioned. Not even mentioned. See, to make the contrast, what did the Pharisees get accused of showing off and being known for the most? In [Matthew 23](#), we see the passion of Yeshua come out in criticism towards the most religious people in Jerusalem here. He's speaking of the scribes and the Pharisees, and he says, They do all of their deeds to be seen by others, for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes they make long, so everybody can see them when they go to Walmart and stuff like that. They love the place of honor at the feast, and they love to be seen at the best seats and Shabbat at the synagogues. They love to be greeted in the marketplace and being called rabbi by others. They like to be noticed, and they like to be noticed because of how smart they are about the Bible.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites, for you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces, for you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, For you travel across the sea and the land to make a single convert, proselyte. And when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves. You recruit someone who spreads hell on earth instead of heaven. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done without neglecting the others. You blind guides, you strain out a net. Make sure you don't want to eat a net, it's unclear. You strain out a net, end up swallowing a whole camel. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites, for you clean the outside of the cup

and the plate, but inside you are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside may also be clean. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites!

So put in perspective, the scribes are the guys who write the Torah scrolls. Just marinate on that. Here, Yeshua calls them out for not being the people of God's kingdom. Yeshua calls them out for not being a people that keeps Torah. They look like it. They look like it. They wore the clothes. They didn't roll on Shabbos. They didn't eat the pig. Good job. These things that everyone can see. What about inside? What about inside? What do you really like? What are you really unwilling to give up?

Notice that the three things that he references that they're most known for are the length of their tzitzit, eating kosher, and being lofty in appearances on Shabbat in the synagogues. There is the Torah, the way that the Pharisees kept it. And then there's the law of Yeshua, the Torah of the Messiah. What needs to be seen at the top of the list? More than strings, more than resting on Shabbat, more than your kosher practices on your food.

What Must Be Seen

What needs to be seen is the love of God that wants to make this world resemble his kingdom. That's what actually needs to be seen first and foremost. That's what you should be known for. Everything else is great. That's awesome. Decorations really beautify how they make a home feel like home. It's great, but they're worthless without walls and a foundation. They're worthless.

What Good Is It Without the Heart?

What good is Shabbat? What good is Sabbath if your actions don't reflect the eternal rest of God the rest of the week? What good is it? What good is tzitzit to look at and remember the commandments if the only commandment you even remember is to wear tzitzit? What good is it? It's not a magic spell. It's not a trinket put on and now I'm righteous. No, it's not. It's only as good as the result that it gives. And that result is determined here. What good is refraining from eating pork if it's only to make you feel proud to separate yourself from the world that you're supposed to reach? What good is it?

Straining Out Gnats

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites, for you tithe mint, dill, cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy, faithfulness. These you ought to have done without neglecting the others, you blind guides. You strain out a gnat. I love the imagery here because we've all had that moment where we look down in our cup and a stupid gnat flew in it. And we have a choice to make. We can either dig out the gnat and hope no one sees us. We can just ignore it. Or we can dump it out and get a new cup and everything. Right? We've been there. These are the guys. You strain out a gnat. You make sure that no part of this itty-bitty little gnat is going to be ingested by you. You end up swallowing a camel. The imagery there—it's just funny. It's funny. Like, itty-bitty gnat, and you swallow a camel.

Mint, Dill, and Cumin

What I love most about this verse, and my regret today, is that I did not swing by the grocery store yesterday and get three little pots filled with mint and dill and cumin. They're herbs. Does anyone have an herb garden at their house? Maybe you got a small one or a big one, I don't know. So if you have a pumpkin garden, it's pretty easy to tithe the pumpkin garden. You just go to the best one—one of ten. This is my tithe. Dill. So you get your scissors out and you get your monocle and you go like this. Can you put it in the scale? One-tenth. I have fulfilled the commandment to give to God what is God's. Right? You tithe mint, dill, and cumin. They do all of that to make sure that they're checking off their daily checklist. And everyone will see them with a little bag of lavender. Here you go. But they've neglected justice, mercy, and faithfulness. What good is it? What good is it without the other?

Newsflash: Jesus Preached Torah

Jesus preached Torah. Yeshua preached a Torah that was foreign to the Pharisees. And the question is, is it also foreign to you? You guys know November 11th—take this opportunity to highlight that November is National Adoption Month, if you haven't noticed. It's a very special time of the year because it's a time of the year where adoption and foster care are really emphasized in the U.S. I never noticed it until we became an adoptive family, and now it's like in my face all the time, and I'm like, this is so amazing. Like, look at all the opportunities and adoption awareness and information is going out to people who are unfamiliar with adoption and foster care to let them know that, hey, it shouldn't be this foreign thing to you. It's quite simple, and it's pretty easy, and we can help, and here's education. And if you're ever interested in adopting a child, there are resources, and there are people available that can guide you through it. And if you're ever interested in helping out the foster care system in your area, there

are people and resources available to help you decide if that's something that you're able to do. I love that.

What Does Torah Observance Look Like?

What does Torah observance look like in the face of almost 200 kids that need to know what love feels like just in our county alone? What a family feels like? What the kingdom of heaven feels like? We have roughly a little bit less than 200. I think we have about 170 kids in York County that are in the foster care system. And they call us all the time because they can't find any open homes. They can't find someone that just has an extra spot at the kitchen table, an extra place in their house for a bed. They can't find anyone to place these kids. And it's heartbreaking for us because our house is kind of at capacity right now because Ben's old. Just dynamics. It's awful, and it's sad. And it's not just our county. It's every county. We need more families to step up and be available just to take one, one foster child. It might be a week. It might be a month. It might be a couple months. Just one.

Families Willing and Anxious

You know, here we have three families that have kind of gone through the fostering licensing system. Two of them are foster parents, and one of them is adopting two children through the foster care system soon. And that's amazing. Like, just that we have that much awareness here is absolutely incredible. And a year ago, we had a foster care event, which I think we're going to do one here soon, where we had, I think, over 20 people sign up and volunteer to be a support system to make a difference for foster parents in our area as well as the foster kids. Guys, I am beyond proud of the community that I find myself in. Like, it's amazing, and it's awesome, and it's something I'm so proud of. But the thing is, we're not done yet. We're not done yet as believers. If God has formed this community, then he's plugged families in here that are willing and anxious to show the world what the Torah of our God actually looks like when it's lived out. And while I'm here, I want to ask a question.

An Orientation Class

I was talking to one of the ladies who does orientation and information about foster care. If we were to host an event here, who would be willing to sit in a class about foster care information? In other words, it would be an orientation class that would be an honest and raw look at the foster care system and what it means to be a foster parent. Is there anyone in here that would be willing to just sit through that? There's no commitment. You're not going to be judged. It's

really educational. It's about a two-hour event. We'll take care of the kids, if you have kids. And I'd love to host one here, but I'm curious, is there anyone that would actually be willing to just sit through that, just to see? Okay, we've got one. Raise your hands up. Raise your hands up high. Okay, fantastic. One. This is great. Thank you, guys. We need 10, so I think that was like 10. That's awesome. That makes my heart so happy because I wasn't sure if only one was going to go up, but that's fine. That's great. That's awesome. That makes me happy. And what this event is, it's a two-hour event with just a presentation, and you get to ask honest questions, and they give you—the lady who does it is a friend of ours. She does honest answers. It was the one that we went to. And when we left, I looked at Jenny, and I was like, there was no righteous, like we're going to help the kids. It was like, I think we can do it. It doesn't seem. So we did it, and it's been a year. It's been great. Thank you, guys.

The Weightier Matters

Yeah, we all know this verse. We all know this verse right here, [James 1.27](#). And this verse furthers the point. It also helps the point I just made about foster care and adoption. But [James 1.27](#), we love to use this verse because it's a great verse. Thank you, James. Again, is keeping yourself from being polluted from the world important? Yes, everybody. Christian 101, yes, we should not be polluted. It's very important to remain set apart from the pollution that this world wants to suck us into. But what this verse in James actually tells us is there is a weightier matter that sticks out, which he says first. Before the priority of being set apart in the world, you need to be focusing on showing love and mercy and justice and grace to vulnerable families and children.

The Heart of Torah

Hmm. And where does James get this idea? You ever curious? Where does James get, like it seems like a really Jesus thing to do, but where does James actually get this idea from? Taking care of broken families, vulnerable children, making sure they're not neglected. Where is this a priority elsewhere in the Bible? It's in the Torah. It's Torah. James is talking about the Torah. So in the Torah, right after Israel comes out of Egypt, they go to the mountain and the Ten Commandments are given and God doesn't stop talking. You ever notice that? Like he didn't just say ten—no, he keeps yakking for quite a while. And he begins to speak his will for his image bearers in a collection of commandments called a law code. And this section has come to be known as the covenant code. Or these are the commandments that have to do with the people of the covenant zip file. And it drops for a couple chapters right after the Ten

Commandments. And it has to do with how to treat your neighbor, social justice laws, things like that. And here in [Exodus 22](#), this is what it says in classic Iron Age language. He seems really serious about making sure the vulnerable people don't get neglected, right? Man, he seems really serious about making sure that the orphan and broken families are on the right side of justice and grace.

Holy Is the Fear of the Lord

Why? Because he fathers the fatherless. He's the protector of widows. This is God in his holy habitation. This is how God expresses his holiness through showing justice and love and grace to broken families. Wow. Wow. Holy are you, Lord. Holy are all the angels. Holy, holy, holy. Because he's untouchable, because of the fire, the shekinah, we can't get close, because he's unlike any other gods, because of just how much he cares about broken people. Our God cares about children and those that society ignores. Our God cares. And the fact that our God cares should be something that both encourages us and intimidates us. Our God cares about whether or not we are actually impacting the world around us, or if we're just playing the role, looking pretty with our tzitzit and our Sabbath and our kosher diet. Our God cares.

Not Being Selfish With What God Gave You

Guys, there's something to say about going into the world. And it is National Adoption Month, and I spoke about that. But maybe that's not something like that. Maybe that's not an area that you're called into, because we're all called in different directions. Maybe it's just not being selfish with the talent or skill that God gives you, that he needs you to let loose. Maybe it's where you can invest your energy to be the fuel for God's kingdom. Maybe it's arts or dance. Maybe it's being able to volunteer to help teach a child about our Savior in children's class once every few weeks. Maybe it's not identifying your money and resources with yourself, but with God. Maybe it's a decision to actually give to something that you feel glorifies God.

No matter what it is, guys, we all have room to grow. And I think the words of Yeshua should be a constant reminder on our hearts, and a constant question: are we keeping Torah the way that Yeshua taught it, where the heart that loves gives mercy and forgives, is outpouring with divine joy so that the world actually sees and feels God? Or are we keeping Torah like the Pharisees, who constantly became frustrated with Yeshua and the things that he expected from them?

If the Torah is wisdom literature, like Christian scholarship claims today, and I agree, then the beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord. It's the fear of the Lord in every aspect of our life — your relationships, your work ethic, how you handle conflict, how you handle your money, how you bear his name for the world to see. That's where the fear of the Lord should always be, to provide wisdom from that.

Closing Prayer

So worship team, you guys can come up. Please stand as we exit services the same way that we came in, with song and praises. And I don't know where you're at today, but I know that every time I open the pages of Yeshua and I see him speak the words of Torah, it's either encouraging or intimidating.

Avinu Malkeinu, our father, our king. Father, we thank you for this time together. We thank you for your Shabbat, Father, this day that you have given to us as a day that represents your eternal reign over creation. And you invite us to participate in that rest that lasts through eternity in the person and through the person of Yeshua. Father, I ask that you would equip our hearts with the spirit, Father, that you've already given to us, that you would allow us to unleash it into the world, that you would give us the boldness and the wisdom and the endurance, Father, the courage to take one step forward in saying, you know what? It's not about me anymore. It's about God. We thank you, Father. In the name of Yeshua we pray. Amen.

Guys, if you need prayer today, we have a prayer team on either side of the room. Take advantage of that. It's an amazing thing that we have a group of people that are waiting to pray for you and stand alongside you for wherever you're at, or wherever you're going through. Shalom.

Closing

I'm Matthew Vander Els, and I hope you enjoyed this message. Founded in Truth exists to build a community that bears the image of God and lives the redeemed life only Yeshua gives. If this message impacted you, or if this ministry has been a blessing to you, we would love to hear from you. Send us a message through our contact form on our website and let us know how God has used this ministry to edify your faith and relationship with him. Don't forget to subscribe by clicking here. And if you'd like to donate to this ministry and be a part of what God is doing through it, you can donate through our website at www.foundedintruth.com or by

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