

Introduction

Part 6

Final Thoughts on the Gospel

Opening the book of Mark from the Apostolic Writings, in the first chapter we read the following:

Mark 1:9-28

1:9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 1:10 Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him; 1:11 and a voice came out of the heavens: 'You are My beloved Son, in You I am well-pleased.' 1:12 Immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness. 1:13 And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan; and He was with the wild beasts, and the angels were ministering to Him. 1:14 Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, 1:15 and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.' 1:16

As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. 1:17 And Jesus said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.' 1:18 Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. 1:19 Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. 1:20 Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him. 1:21 They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach. 1:22 They were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. 1:23 Just then there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, 1:24 saying, 'What business do we have with each other, Jesus of Nazareth? Have You come to destroy us? I know who You are the Holy One of God!' 1:25 And Jesus rebuked him, saying, 'Be quiet, and come out of him!' 1:26 Throwing him into convulsions, the unclean spirit cried out with a loud voice and came out of him. 1:27 They were all amazed, so that they debated among themselves, saying, 'What is this? A new teaching with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him.' 1:28 Immediately the news about Him spread everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee. (NASB)

What we find here is Yeshua beginning his ministry. He called his disciples and taught repentance (*Mark 1:15*). The book of Mark states, *1:14 Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, 1:15 and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.'* (NASB) We are not told exactly what the gospel message is but we are told that Yeshua entered into Galilee preaching “*the*” gospel of God and that we are to believe in it. The implication here is his going into

Galilee, he preached *“the gospel”* presupposes the people understood what the gospel message was. What exactly is the gospel message that Yeshua is teaching here? According to *Mark 1:15*, the gospel is connected to the kingdom of God and *“repentance,”* and we are to *“believe in”* the gospel. The key to understanding this question is in *Mark 1:15* where Yeshua speaks of these things, the kingdom of God and repentance, and then suggests that this is the gospel.

The concept of the kingship of God appears in the Torah. This notion of God’s kingdom goes back to the Hebrew Bible which speaks of *“His kingdom”* in reference to God’s kingdom. The *“Kingdom of God”* and its equivalent the *“Kingdom of Heaven”* are key concepts in the book of Matthew. As we read in Mark that this Kingdom of God is connected to the gospel message which is to be believed in. Drawing upon the Tanach (Torah, Neviim, Ketuvim) the relationship between God and humanity involves the idea of the kingship of God. For example, *“Yours is the kingdom, O Lord”* in *1 Chronicles 29:10-12* and *“His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom”* in *Daniel 3:33*. The Hebrew word malkhut (מלכות) refers to reign, dominion, or rule. When this word is used of the Lord God, it refers to His authority to rule as in the heavenly King. The reign of God is not just in this world (thy kingdom come), He is to reign in our lives as well. This reign of God is illustrated in the psalms. (*Tehillim / Psalms 45, 93, 96, 97-99*) with the statements that *“The Lord is King.”* Other Scriptures such as in *1 Kings 22:19, Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1 and Daniel 7:9* all speak of the Throne of God, although some Jewish commentators such as Maimonides interpreted such mention of a *“throne”* as allegory. In the Apostolic Writings, the Gospel of Luke records Yeshua’s description of the Kingdom of God as *Luke 17:20 Now having been questioned by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom of God was coming, He answered them and said, ‘The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; 17:21 nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is! or, ‘There it is! For behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst.’ NASB (Luke 17:20-21)* Some translations say *“the kingdom of God is within you.”* Yeshua is drawing upon a Torah centric understanding here with the Tabernacle and the presence of God dwelling in the midst of His people. Yeshua was saying the kingdom of God is within you meaning that our Father in heaven is to be reigning in our lives as Lord and king. The Apostle Paul defined the Kingdom

of God in his letter to the Romans saying, *“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”* (Romans 14:17) Having a Torah-based context is what causes us to understand what the kingdom of God looks like in our lives. The Lord God Almighty is living in our midst and empowering us as His people to live for him. Whenever He moves, we move, just as the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night had done so for the people of Israel. The Torah of God functioned as a way for us to understand how we are to live our lives, and warns us what will come upon us when we choose to not following in the Messiah’s footsteps.

When Yeshua was beginning his ministry, he went out and he healed people and cast out demons. The evil spirits recognized him for who he was. What was it about Yeshua that caused the evil spirits to recognize who he was? Was it just the fact that he was the son of God? Was there something more that we are not being told that is implied? The Torah has many things to say concerning the topic of evil spirits found within the warnings not to do as the nations do. Many people believe it is only the involvement in pagan, satanic, or occult practices that one can be influenced by evil spirits (demons). The fact of the matter is the dangers and the influences of the spiritual realm are broader than we realize. For example, if a person suffered from physical or sexual abuse the dangers are even greater. In Parashah Nitzavim, God gives His people a warning about the ways of the nations and the dangers of tapping into the spiritual realm that leads to a curse and death. (see *Devarim / Deuteronomy 29:14-21*) It is absolutely imperative that we as God’s children guard our hearts, our minds, our thought life, and our ways against the ways of the nations and sin. The Jewish commentary *“Sefer Halkkarim”* provides us with some insight into this question in regards to the spiritual realm.

Sefer Halkkarim, Maamar 3 8:2-5

Part 2

And inasmuch as men are eager to know all the things that are going to happen to them from day to day, the ancients used to follow the diviners and pursued the study of astrology. Some nations practiced magic and served evil spirits, depending upon their intellectu-

al status. Some served the demons of fire and caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, others served the demons of the air. (R. Hai writes in a responsum that there are demons composed of the element fire, and demons of the element air.) They did all these things in order that an unclean spirit of the demons should rest upon them and enable them to foretell their future. Others again smoked and burned incense, so as to have communion with the dead, and slept in cemeteries, in order that an unclean spirit of the dead should rest upon them. They went so far as to bury their dead in their idolatrous temples, where men and women gathered together and prayed over the graves. As a result the unclean spirit of the dead rested upon them or upon their priests, and told them what was about to happen to them. Nahmanides, in one of his discourses, on the authority of those who are familiar with sorcery, describes the process ... King Saul inquired of the woman who had a familiar spirit. He says, too, that those who inquired of the demons relied much upon this method of inquiry. He says also that this is the origin of the Christian custom of burying their dead in their churches, where the men and women pray together and sound a bell while burying their dead, remarking that when the pagans adopted Christianity they retained their ancestral customs. They also retained a custom of the fire worshipers, which consists in lighting fires on a given night in every year when the sun enters the sign of Cancer of the true zodiacal signs, and dancing and skipping around the fire.

Part 3

All these practices are forbidden in the Torah because they are unclean and done in the service of evil spirits: "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, one that useth divination, a soothsayer, or an enchanter, or

a sorcerer, or a charmer, or one that consulteth a ghost or a familiar spirit, or a necromancer.” And the reason given is, “For whosoever doeth these things is an abomination unto the Lord ...” The meaning is that God is holy and His ministers are holy and pure, therefore you must keep away from all these things which are impure. This is the reason, also, why the Torah legislates concerning uncleanness, and provides the penalty of being ‘cut off’ for one who enters the temple while unclean. The reason is that the spirit of uncleanness may cause the holy spirit to depart from the temple.

Part 4

Then the Torah makes it clear that the other nations indulged in those practices in order to obtain a knowledge of the future, thinking that it can not be obtained in any other way, and that the holy spirit of God never rests upon a human being: “For these nations, that thou art to dispossess, hearken unto soothsayers, and unto diviners ...,” because they think that there is no one else that one can hearken to, “But as for thee, the Lord thy God hath not suffered thee so to do;” i. e. it is not as they think, but, “A prophet will the Lord thy God raise up unto thee, from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me.” One upon whom the holy spirit of God will rest, and from him you will learn the future. You must not grieve in thinking that you have no way of knowing the future, as the other nations have, and that you are without this privilege. It is not so, for you will be complete and perfect with the Lord your God. The meaning is that you will not merely have the ordinary human privileges, but also this one. This is the reason for doubling the letter mem (tamim), as if to say, you will want for nothing in association with Him, for He will reveal to you the future also through His prophets, and you need not follow the diviners or the service of evil spirits or inquire of ghosts and familiar spirits in order to obtain

knowledge of the future. For though these agencies do impart knowledge of the future, nevertheless as they are connected with the spirit of uncleanness, they keep man away from his perfection, and man cannot on their account have human perfection and soundness, because it is impossible to know from them what things are acceptable to God and what things are not. This is the meaning of the expression, "Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God," indicating that the idolatrous nations are not possessed of human perfection, but thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God, having both perfections through the prophet who prophesies by the holy spirit and by the will of God, for through him you will know what things are acceptable to God. The expression, "with the Lord thy God," denotes that the prophetic spirit is given to the prophets for the sole purpose of admonishing mankind to observe the Torah, to worship God and to do the things which are acceptable to Him in order that man may be whole-hearted with God, and not for the purpose of foretelling the future, as will be explained in the twelfth chapter of this Book.

Part 5

The prophets had indeed also this power of foretelling the future as a secondary consideration, as a testimony to the truth of their prophetic teaching, in order that men may believe them. Accordingly we find that all the prophets admonish us constantly to observe the Torah and carry out the commandments. The main purpose of God in inspiring the prophets was that through them man may attain to his perfection by doing those things which are acceptable to God and not in order to give mankind a knowledge of the future, as is the case with the diviners. These foretell the future by certain practices which strengthen the power of imagination in a natural way, and not through the spirit of God, as the prophets do; unless, indeed, we say that prophecy is

also a function of the imagination, as is the opinion of some of our wise men who follow the Philosopher. They hold that prophecy is a natural phenomenon, pertaining solely to the power of imagination, like dreams. They go so far as to say that it is an unusual thing if a man does not prophesy being wise and prepared thereto, i. e. if his imagination is prepared for prophecy.

Sefer HaIkkarim, Maamar 3 speaks of men desiring to know all things, and then goes into a discussion on how the nations served evil spirits through astrology and magic. The Torah describes how some would serve demons of fire causing their children to pass through the fire, others demons of the air, some would burn incense in order to have communion with the dead, or slept in cemeteries, or bury the dead in their temples and pray over them assuming this gives one power to know the future where the underlying source of power is that of an evil spirit. They did all of these things so a demon would rest upon them and they would have the power to foretell the future. In many cases, the person who was practicing this form of fortune-telling did not know they were doing so by the power of a unclean spirit (evil spirit). It is said that some of these practices were adopted by Christianity because of one's ancestral customs referring to burying the dead.

Concerning the customs of burying the dead and Christianity. The graves of particularly beloved Christians became popular sites for partaking of the Eucharist. This was done for those who were secretly taking communion because of persecution. Once Christians were able to openly practice their religion, they began burying their dead in and around their churches and embedding the bodies of especially beloved Christians in the altars themselves. As Christianity rapidly grew, demand for particular saints also grew as new churches were founded. Soon churches began to share bones or items of clothing from the burial with other churches, and new altars increasingly had just a few bones from a saint instead of a whole body. This practice continues to

this day in the Roman Catholic Church. New altars have a small secret compartment to hold a holy relic, usually a bone fragment of a saint. During the consecration of the altar, the relic is placed inside and sealed forever. This is a direct link back to those days in the Roman catacombs.

Note how this practice goes explicitly against the commands in the Torah. The Jewish commentary (*Sefer HaIkkarim, Maamar 3*) states that all of these things are forbidden in the Torah because they are unclean and done in the service of evil spirits. *Sefer HaIkkarim, Maamar 3* goes on saying, “*The meaning is that God is holy and His ministers are holy and pure, therefore you must keep away from all these things which are impure. This is the reason, also, why the Torah legislates concerning uncleanness, and provides the penalty of being ‘cut off’ for one who enters the temple while unclean. The reason is that the spirit of uncleanness may cause the holy spirit to depart from the temple.*” There is the concept here of sin causing the spirit of God to depart. In the Scriptures, the dead are always connected to that which is impure and sinful. This is why the Torah makes it clear to not do as the nations do indulging in these practices that involve evil spirits. For the people of God, the commentary states, “*The expression, ‘with the Lord thy God,’ denotes that the prophetic spirit is given to the prophets for the sole purpose of admonishing mankind to observe the Torah, to worship God and to do the things which are acceptable to Him in order that man may be whole-hearted with God, and not for the purpose of foretelling the future...*” We seek the Lord God of Israel to know what we should do, and we trust in God to bless us and keep us, therefore we do not fear the future. Men would do these unclean things in order to gain knowledge of the future outside of seeking the God of Israel. The Catholic Church continues to use relics as a way to draw power from these objects saying that the dead bones of the saints somehow consecrate the altar upon which one preaches from.

According to *Mark 1*, Yeshua found many people in the synagogue who were possessed by evil spirits. He commanded them to leave and the demons came out immediately. The people asked what is this new Torah (teaching)? (מַה־הִיא הַתּוֹרָה הַחֲדָשָׁה אֲשֶׁר אֵף־לְרוּחוֹת הַטְּמָאָה)

(מַצִּיגָה הוּא בְּגִבּוּרָה) The response according to Mark was concerning this new teaching, that he commanded and the evil spirits were compelled to leave at his word. This new teaching was not “*something new*” as the church teaches Jesus came to change the Law. Yeshua was the son of God and walked according to God’s Torah, blameless and pure. The evil spirits had no reason not to listen and obey. It is important to note how often Yeshua entered into the synagogue or the Beit Midrash and cast out demons from the people. The idea of walking in the ways of the nations as opposed to the ways of God has the spiritual component of serving evil spirits. There is a great danger and a warning here for us to steer clear of sin and unfaithfulness. There is something that God is establishing here in His Messiah. Yeshua the Messiah lived by example, and we are called to walk in His foot steps and it is by the power of God (His kingdom being in our midst) that these things were accomplished. The Lord God Almighty has established His Messiah, who comes in the authority and power of God, that in his name (Yeshua) all men would be saved ([Acts 4:12](#)) and that we would enter into a covenant relationship with God which carries with it all the responsibilities that we see listed in the Torah that was given to God’s covenant people.

This concept of “*men desiring to know all things*” ties into the “*nature of reality*” as we had discussed earlier, where one relies upon “*ancestral customs,*” that are coupled to one’s presuppositions, philosophical judgments, and assumptions, where these things interact with our thinking, our actions, and the application of God’s Word to our lives. This draws in the context of establishing God’s Word as the authority over our lives. Take for example the doctrine that Christianity teaches the church was created at Pentacost (the festival of Shavuot, feast of weeks). The Bible does not teach us that the church was created at Pentacost. What happened at Pentacost (Shavuot) was God giving His people His Holy Spirit empowering our lives to walk in His ways and to overcome sin. This understanding comes out when studying both Hebrew (Masoretic Text) and the Greek (Septuagint and NT) looking at the words Kahal (קהל) and Ekklesia. Comparison of the Hebrew and Greek in the Tanach reveals the words Kahal and Ekklesia were the Hebrew and Greek translations referring to the same thing, the assembly or congregation of Israel. In the Apostolic Writings, Ekklesia is used

to describe both Israel in the wilderness, and those who were joining with Israel (the gentiles). The English translations however impose the presupposition the church was created at Pentacost, and then translate all references to Ekklesia as Israel to *“Congregation of Israel”* and all of the references to the Gentiles as *“the Church.”* The major difficulty here is that regardless of this textual evidence in the comparison to the Hebrew, Greek, and English, because of the presuppositions and doctrines we have been taught, preachers today disregard this truth, and continue to tow the bottom line and teach the standard doctrines that have been developed within the sphere of anti-Torah and Replacement theological mind-set. Today, if one teaches something that runs against the grain of tradition, one will lose both denominational and parishioner support. What is a pastor to do? Either teach the truth, or continue teaching a doctrine that supersedes Scripture.

This draws in the context of establishing God’s Word as the authority over our lives. This reminded us of the theological doctrine known as Sola Scriptura (Latin for *“by scripture alone”*) held by some Christian denominations who state that the scriptures are the sole infallible rule of faith and practice. This was the foundational doctrinal principle of the Protestant Reformation held by many of the Reformers, who taught that authentication of scripture is governed by the discernible excellence of the text as well as the personal witness of the Holy Spirit to the heart of each man. The belief is that *“scripture is self-authenticating, clear (perspicuous) to the rational reader, its own interpreter (“Scripture interprets Scripture”), and sufficient of itself to be the final authority of Christian doctrine.”* The difficulty with the doctrine of Sola Scriptura is in regards to the average persons understanding on this topic. As we had been discussing earlier, the things that has happened to a person in their childhood, how he/she was raised, what one has been taught, one’s presuppositions, philosophical judgments, and assumptions, all of these things interact with our thinking, our actions, the application of God’s Word to our lives, and the interpretation of Scripture. Take for example, we can lay the Bible on the table, or on a book shelf, or even carry it around all day long, and the Bible itself is not going to do anything. It is only when we open up the Bible, and begin to read the Scriptures that the Bible becomes effectual in our lives. When we read the Bible, it is then that we gain understanding where we

look at a particular scripture and after reading we say *“oh that is what this scripture means!”* What happens is as we read the Scriptures, we automatically begin to interpret the scripture as soon as we begin reading the Bible. Now because of our different experiences, how we were raised, and what we have been taught, these things influence our understanding and interpretation of the scripture. This was the difficulty the people had in *Mark 1* when seeing Yeshua cast out demons by the authority of his command, the demons were compelled to leave. The people did not understand the power of God in their lives. In the case of Sola Scriptura, the final authority is not the Bible, but the Interpretation of the Bible that leads to what we believe and how we apply God’s word to our lives. When someone says *“I believe in Sola Scriptura,”* or *“I believe in what the Scriptures say,”* they are essentially saying they *“themselves”* are the final authority. The reason this is so, and why this is such a significant observation is because when we use Sola Scriptura it isn’t the Bible or the Word of God that becomes the final authority. It is the one who is reading and interpreting the Scriptures who becomes the final authority. This is what Pope Leo X stated in June 1520 AD in his response (*“Exsurge Domaine”*) to Martin Luther’s 95 theses. The Pope’s response was that there needs to be certain traditions put into place that are coupled to the authority on interpretation in order for truth to be revealed from the Scriptures. What this means is that we need a standard of interpretation upon which we all can agree upon or the result will be total confusion and a disaster. And, as time did tell, the protestant movement began with the reformation which has led to hundreds of denominations today with each one doing their own thing, having their own interpretations and their own doctrines, etc. When the interpretation of Scripture is left to the individual person that is outside of an established authority, one can come up with any interpretation-conclusion. When the church left the foundation of Torah, this is exactly what has happened. Note that this occurred hundreds of years before the Catholic church came on the scene.

In Judaism, we have the wisdom of the sages, but due to the anti-church, anti-Yeshua, anti-Messianic rhetoric, we have to be careful how we handle the testament of Yeshua’s life (the gospels) and the teaching of the disciples (the epistles, the remainder of the NT) about Yeshua the Messiah and the life of a believer, as we compare these things to

what the rabbis teach. An important point to keep in mind is that there is no systematic theology being taught in the Talmud, the Mishnah, the Midrashim, or the rabbinic commentaries. What we find are the rabbis trying to understand how to apply God's word to life, how to live a holy and Righteous life, and how to bring glory to God's name. Judaism also teaches the grace and mercy of God to forgive sins and is not a works based religion, though some people try to interpret the rabbinic texts to say so. Occasionally we find the rabbis teaching on select scripture giving an interpretation that makes it difficult to interpret as referring to the Messiah. Such examples may be found as in the case of [Isaiah 53](#), where Judaism claims these Scriptures refer to the nation of Israel and not to just one man. However, we know the Hebrew language is unique in the sense that הוּא (singular pronoun "he") can refer to an entire nation. As a result of this, it might be argued, what may be applied to an entire nation may also be allied to one man. This is the context how one sacrifice and one priest could make atonement for an entire nation taking the example from Yom Kippur. This is what the Messiah did for us. This is why the gospel message always brings us full circle back to the Torah. As Yeshua taught תשובה (Teshuvah, Repentance) calling the people to turn back to God's ways, according to the Torah, he led the way for us, and taught us what a life lived for the Lord God our Father in heaven looks like. When this happens, it won't just be the evil spirits that see, but all the world will know who we are as God's people, filled with love, peace, joy, and endowed with power in the God's Messiah.

The point is when we study the Scriptures from a Torah based perspective, and believing that the Torah was given to God's People, both past, present, and future, all of Scripture and the Gospel Message becomes clear. The History and theologies we are taught shape our presuppositions and philosophical beliefs and these things shape our perception of reality and most importantly, our interpretation of Scripture. This leads to the questions we ask about life and spiritual matters, and the questions we ask are shaped by the assumptions, the expectations of the hypothesis and theories we embrace and ultimately the theologies and doctrines we hold onto. The idea of coming to the truth is a universal principle and the reason there is so much variation in biblical interpretation. The difficulty however is to find a set of as-

sumptions that we can all agree upon that leads to correct conclusions. In this Torah series, the common ground we will take is to establish our faith and trust in the Word of God, taking the foundation of the Torah as a way of Life. It is also important for us to understand the rabbinic and Jewish context of the Scriptures, both the Tanach and the Apostolic Writings (NT). If we are taught a half truth, we may never come to the understanding of What God wants for us in our lives according to His Holy Word. Based upon our assessment from a biblical and historical perspective, the Torah is a fundamental part of the gospel message! Therefore it is important to hold onto a Torah centric hermeneutic when exercising biblical interpretation.