

Bible 101

[A guide to understanding the Truth of the gospel of Yehovah, written by a woman who was raised in a perverted rendition of it]

In the beginning...

- Setting aside the issue of one's salvation (i.e. the status of their personal relationship with Yeshua the Messiah), society very easily **DISMISSES** the very beginning.

What is sin? It is broad and it is complex.

Scripture gives multiple passages which describe what qualifies as sin. In a broad sense, Romans 3:9 + 23 give us a picture of how all are sinful. Ever since the fall, it is a part of our DNA, meaning that there is no distinction between the saved and the lost. All are fallen and therefore sinful. But there is also complexity to sin, and we see this in the various kinds of **transgressions against the Law** that are made.

The following list of transgressions is not exhaustive, but does span both the old and new testaments. Sin is a hardening of our hearts despite seeing and knowing of the acts of God (Exodus 9:34), it is something that Yahweh faithfully forgives (Exodus 34:7), it is making a vow/promise that cannot be kept (Deuteronomy 23:21), it is breaking any of the commandments (Deuteronomy 5:1-22), it is turning either to the right or to the left, essentially failing to keep the Torah as instructed (Deuteronomy 5:32-33), and it is a betraying of innocent blood (Matthew 27:4). ^① (from Exam 2 Essay, Compilation written by Columbo, Grace L. for Christian Theology)

- transgressions against the Law? What does that even mean? See 1 John 3:4-10.

- a "transgression against the Law" is long-winded for SIN
- SIN here is described as lawlessness.
- Yeshua's earthly ministry showed us how to keep his Law (the Torah), and thereby how to be free of sin.
- If we abide in Him, we are to FORSAKE lawlessness BUT he has not stripped us of our free will. Many in + outside the Church today choose to live in lawlessness.

***OKAY - BIG NOTE HERE:** See Matthew 5:17-20
The Beatitudes (which are found at the beginning of Matthew 5) are often talked about in motivational sermons, but you'd be hard pressed to find a Christian who has heard a sermon on verses 17-20 where Yeshua HIMSELF tells us that as long as we are here on earth, the Law (Torah) STILL APPLIES!

The NOT-SO-GLAMOROUS
Consequences of Sin

WHY does it get dismissed? For two main reasons:

- 1) Many have heard the story of Creation + the Fall of Man MANY, MANY times throughout their lives. So, if you've heard it, you've remembered it as it happened... OR so they think.
- 2) The Church as a whole dismisses things that don't make sense in their paradigm — things like how sin even came to be + what it is — because why focus on that when you can shove your Jesus in others' faces to "save" as many souls as possible?

WHY does the beginning matter? For two reasons:

- 1) **CONTEXT** — Understanding the Genesis account in its entirety allows^{us} to understand the context from which the Law was deemed necessary. There's a reason it needed to come about.
- 2) **JUST BECAUSE** — While not an argument that holds much water, in this case it is a necessary one. The Christian often all too eagerly assumes that the one they are in conversation with has as much knowledge as they do. This is simply not true, especially in cross-cultural settings. We must go back to the very beginning so others can have the context too.

What are the ramifications of sin?

While Scripture tells us what sin is, it also gives what the consequences of breaking the Law are. Consequences of sin in our world mean that humanity, born into sin, is in need of salvation (Matthew 9:13, Luke 5:32). We must seek out reconciliation (Matthew 18:15). We must pray against temptation (Luke 11:4). We will die in our sins unless we confess Christ (John 8:24). God does not listen to sinners (John 9:31). Of course, we can't forget the blanket consequence of our meriting death due to the wages of our sin (Romans 6:23).

The results of the fall of man into sin

We've discussed what sin is, and what its consequences are, but we must also consider the immediate consequences of sin that are shared in the account of the fall of man. All found in Genesis 3, these are the not often remembered consequences of our decision to abdicate our throne in favor of our own demented will.

Humanity became ashamed of its nakedness and has to cover it because of the now present temptation to pervert it (Genesis 3:7). Sin causes us to feel shame and guilt, therefore we try to hide from God what is already known to him, fearful that he might find out (Genesis 3:8+10). Satan is cursed by God for his part in planting doubt and deceit in Eve (Genesis 3:14). Humanity is thrust into a state of war with Satan but Yeshua is to be his end (Genesis 3:15). Woman is cursed to have pain in childbirth, is told she will desire her husband (which many take for an implication of a higher sex-drive), and is then told it is her husband's actions that will determine how much or little her desire will be satisfied (Genesis 3:16). Man, as the provider of the home, has his role made more difficult by sin, being told making a living will be painful, and that he will need to work until his death (Genesis 3:17-19). Mankind now sees good and evil as God does, and as a consequence, are cast out of the garden of Eden (Genesis 3:22-24).

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The Law OR the law? Distinguishing manmade laws/customs from the Law of Christ.

- Many current translations of Scripture completely fail to distinguish between the THREE KINDS of law that are included in Scripture.

- THREE KINDS OF LAW(S):

1) The Commandments — these are expressly given to any of us who profess Christ + they can be found in Scripture described as instructions, the law, the commands, or Biblical law. See Deuteronomy 5: 6-21. This is the most often used reference to shake what the Commands (or Torah) are + you will note how observing the Sabbath actually comes BEFORE honoring our parents... and yet hardly any Christians actually keep Sabbath? So odd. However, you should also note that Torah is reiterated in several places all throughout both Old AND New Testaments. See Leviticus 11 + Mark 7. These passages are part of Torah which explain what can + cannot be eaten.

Why does it appear controversial to many?

The reason (this passage) appears controversial to many is because it is used by non-Torah

observant Christians as an excuse to eat what is not food (i.e. pork products, shellfish, etc.)

because "Jesus said everything is clean!" But the passage doesn't actually go that way!

The pharisees question Yeshua about why his followers were eating with unwashed hands (verse 5) and Yeshua goes on to explain that the sin inside the man is how he is defiled,

not because of how or what they ate (verses 21-23). "Thus He declared all foods clean" was added to Scripture in later translations and it did not actually come from Yeshua's mouth. We

know this because it is not quoted, it is simply commentary added in parentheses and as such is not authoritative.

[blurb about excuses non-Torah observant Christians make]

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(see Numbers 15: 37-41) This passage of Torah is where it tells us to where tassels on our garments to remind us to follow Torah.

* Okay - BIG NOTE here: The book of Daniel is actually FILLED with moments where Daniel refuses to do as his Babylonian captors were doing - BECAUSE HE KNEW he was supposed to keep Torah. The book makes so much more sense knowing that + this is precisely why the Church won't teach from it. I say this because Daniel's reservations mainly stemmed from desiring to continue to only consume what was clean + therefore food.

Leviticus 11 is where Yeshua states what is clean (food) and what is not to be eaten (not food and therefore unclean). The passage leaves very detailed instructions and descriptions of this. So the argument made with "Thus He declared all foods clean" actually goes against the very point that non-Torah observant Christians are trying to make. Yeshua did declare all foods clean, but the things like pork and shellfish are not food and therefore are still unclean.

a huge hole in the average Christian's logic that often goes UNADRESSED!

See Leviticus 15. This chapter explains how menstruation + semen emissions make a person unclean, the duration of their uncleanness, and how they can be made clean again. Chapter 12 also contains similar menstruation guidelines for women after they've given birth. I've yet to meet enough believers to fill my dorm room who realize this part of Torah still needs to be kept. The modern Christian willingly makes a thousand excuses to avoid obeying it.

See Leviticus 23. This portion of Torah explains the set-apart times / holy convocations which are Feast Days + therefore to be observed as SABBATHS or days of solemn rest. The Feast Days include the weekly Sabbath (Friday sunset to Saturday sunset), Passover, Feast of Unleavened Bread, Feast of Firstfruits, Feast of Trumpets, Day of Atonement, and the Feast of Boats. [1 Corinthians 16] + some Acts passages share about Pentecost, which is only considered a Feast Day / Sabbath after the Holy Spirit was poured out on mankind. I've yet to meet a non-Torah observant Christian who realizes these days are to be kept.

* Okay - BIG NOTE HERE: Paul is the average Christian's FAVORITE guy because they've completely twisted his words so far out of context so as to prove he said you could "do away with the Law". See Romans 6: 1-2 and following here Paul ACTUALLY SAYS "by no means!" — noting that if we've died to sin which is lawlessness, WHY then do we still try to live lawlessly? He urges the believer to come under the Law of Christ (Torah). 1 Corinthians 5 + 16 are even written by Paul during / near the start of a couple of the Feast Days, namely Passover (ch 5) and Pentecost (ch 16). SO if their FAVORITE GUY was keeping the Feast Days himself... why don't they find it important again?

*OKAY - BIG NOTE HERE: You'll notice how in all of the passages that talk about which Feast Days are to be kept, NOWHERE are holidays like Christmas, Good Friday, Easter etc. mentioned. If anything, anyone who truly professes Christ should BE WARY of observances like these because God considers them lusting after the ways of nations, which is veering to the right or left, which is SIN. See Deuteronomy 16:21-22. Here is just one place in the Torah where we see God CLEARLY having a problem with having trees near his altar (which is a place where His presence could be found in times before his death + resurrection). And yet Christians today are fine with putting Christmas trees in Church Sanctuaries? Trees were used by many cultures in Scripture as a place where they would practice fertility rituals + some would even sacrifice their children to idols under trees. And yet Christians bring Christmas trees into their churches, homes, and places of work? See Deuteronomy 17:3. Here in this portion of Torah, the LORD has FORBIDDEN the worship of stars + planets. "Worship of stars + planets" is defined by most dictionaries as Astrology — so Astrology practices are SINFUL and yet Christians have hundreds of songs about "the star" (the one from the account of the Birth of Messiah in Luke 2) that they sing IN CHURCH around Christmas time + they're completely oblivious to how contradict

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Questioning the Holidays: The Experiences of a Messianic Christian Investigating Religious Traditions

Semiotics

"The goal of semiotics is interpreting both verbal and non-verbal signs" (A First Look at Communication Theory, page 327). Semiotics, according to the man who authored it, Roland Barthes, is "the discipline studying everything which can be used in order to lie, because if something cannot be used to tell a lie, conversely it cannot be used to tell the truth; it cannot, in fact, be used to tell at all" (page 327). Barthes also equates his theory to "an explanation of myth" (page 328) which Christmas and Easter are largely based on.

There are three terms this theory lends which help us in understanding these holidays for what they are versus how people have convinced themselves they are. The first is a sign; a sign is "The inseparable combination of the signifier and the signified" (page 328). The second is the signifier; the signifier is "The physical form of the sign as we perceive it through our senses; an image" (page 328). Then third, the signified, is "The meaning we associate with the sign" (page 328). In other words, the holidays like Christmas and Easter are the signs. The tree, mistletoe, eggs, and bunny are the signifiers, reminders that it is that holiday's time of year. The signified, quite unfortunately in many Christian circles, is often considered to be Yeshua's birth and resurrection.

Signs are not always what they seem. The seemingly straightforward ones — like the tree, mistletoe, santa, the presents, the eggs, the bunny — still have "ideological [and] connotative meaning [which] perpetuate the dominant values of society. As such, they are deceptive" (page 327). Society has practically succeeded in entirely adopting the lie that Christmas and Easter are innocent Christian holidays, forgetting that, in fact, much of the traditions done to celebrate these

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celebration of idols that society has draped in a thin veil of Christian excuses. As believers, we are called to abstain from things like this and yet many do not.

1 Corinthians 8 talks about how as believers, we know that idols are not God, are not worth serving, and therefore food sacrificed to them will not affect us if we consume it. It goes on to say that not everyone knows this though, especially not new believers who come from a background of thinking those idols are real, and that these people are the ones whose consciences will be plagued. — In this vein, a believer partaking in holidays serves as a perpetual stumbling block for tender hearts seeking Truth that witness that believer. We are not better Christians for partaking in holidays that God has not commanded us to, but conversely are in direct violation to the living God.

Deuteronomy 4:1-2 "So now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgements which I am teaching you to do, so that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which Yahweh, the God of your fathers, is giving you. "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of Yahweh your God which I am commanding you." — Here, believers are explicitly told not to add to the Word and yet the holiday observances are, in fact, additions and they should be cast off!

Deuteronomy 6:14-15 "You shall not walk after other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, for Yahweh your God in the midst of you is a jealous God — lest the anger of Yahweh your God be kindled against you, and He destroy you from the face of the earth." — As mentioned previously, we know that "gods" are often equated with idols which is anything elevated above God. Society today has adopted the holiday idols and we need to let them go. We must, with all urgency, turn back to the Almighty God.

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days are rooted deeply in Pagan fertility beliefs and rituals as well as Roman fertility practices. The Pagans had fertility rituals that were performed under mistletoe and around trees, the Romans too. Romans celebrated two different December holidays — 1) Saturnalia which was a two-week festival honoring Saturn, their god of agriculture, and 2) the birth of Mithra, their god of sun, on December 25th (Learn Religions).

Uses and Gratifications

Elihu Katz, from Hebrew University of Jerusalem, is most known for taking the question "what do media do to people?" into "what do people do with media?" (A First Look at Communication Theory, page 354). It doesn't take much to see how businesses and corporations across the globe have used media to turn the holidays in commercialized money-making opportunities. Even some churches do this!

At best, churches could be viewed as the blind leading the blind, well intentioned but misguided Christians hoping to evangelize the lost. At worst, a power move, seeking to distract tender hearts with magical stories with the intentions to keep Truth hidden from them for as long as possible.

"People seek to gratify needs" (page 355). This most certainly is true for the believer, as much as it is for the lost. Many Christian circles will use their search for fellowship and communion with believers as an excuse to accept holidays, disguising them with the passages found in Luke 2 and other places in the four Gospels.

Agenda-Setting Theory

The problem with society today is found at the heart of the Agenda-Setting theory. "We judge as important what the media judge as important" (A First Look at Communication Theory,

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Deuteronomy 12:2-4 "You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations whom you shall dispossess serve their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and on under every green tree. And you shall tear down their altars and shatter their sacred pillars and burn their Asherim with fire, and you shall cut the graven images of their gods in pieces and their name from that place. You shall not do thus toward Yahweh your God." — While this may sound quite harsh to the Christian with veiled eyes, it is what we are called to do. We have to destroy all evil, we can't just destroy most in order to keep the parts we like. Both holidays are riddled with evil through and through. Verse 2 talks about how some people worshipped their idols under green trees. Why would you try to bring that into your home? Verse 3 tells us to wipe out the names of those idols from that place, which is arguably anywhere the Father has called us to dwell, and yet we have not wiped the names out. The holidays are still held in many Christian circles. Do we not see how wrong that is?

Leviticus 23:1-2 "And Yahweh spoke again to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, "The appointed times of Yahweh which you shall proclaim as holy convocations — My appointed times are these [...] — The chapter goes on to list what the Feast Days are. Included in the list are the weekly Sabbath, Passover, First Fruits, Shavuot (Pentecost), Yom Teruah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot. Let the reader note that holidays like Christmas and Easter are not in this list and are not to be kept. If the Lord want the day of his birth to be kept, he would have told us when it was and given us rules on how to keep it. As he has not, we would do well to stick with what we know he has commanded.

In Conclusion

These theories reveal that differences in standpoints will lead to differences in faith practices. At the denominational level, these differences may cause some tension and this is

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page 375). Satan has made his playground of us and enjoys the fact that media have trickled in and slowly begun to drown out the voice of the Almighty God.

There is something called the "index of curiosity" which is a term coined to give rationale to the human hunt for orientation and how this need leaves them weakened, allowing media to "shape their views" (page 378). Arguably, aside from the fall of man back in the Garden of Eden, this index of curiosity gives rationale to the continued blind acceptance of media that are pro-holidays. Society refuses to notice the flipside of the coin, that mixing these holidays with the Christian faith makes space for that which is not of God.

Standpoint Theory

"[A] standpoint [is] a place from which to critically view the world around us" (A First Look at Communication Theory, page 444). Scripture has a similar idea to this that is shared in Acts 17. Paul and Silas are out ministering to the believers in Berea who "[...] received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so." (Acts 17:11) As believers today, we should behave no differently. We have a great duty to test everything against the Word of God and yet the holidays are hardly ever challenged and tested. Why is this so?

Examining Scripture

The Bible offers much about what we are to keep and what we are not to keep. Here are just a few of many passages aside from Acts 17 that might be particularly helpful to the one seeking Truth.

1 Thessalonians 5:19-22 "Do not quench the Spirit; do not despise prophecies, but examine all things; hold fast to that which is good; abstain from every form of evil." — Something the Bible repeatedly calls out as evil is idol worship. The holidays are just that, a

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mitigatable by doing all we can to live at peace with one another like Romans 12:18 calls us to. Through mitigation, relationships though scarred may perhaps be preserved. However, as believers we must be set apart from the world. The world loves all things that are not of God, and it finds its joy in the perversion of Truth. Holidays, at the conclusion of this paper, have clearly been revealed as not of God and as a result, something the believer must abandon, and conversely, if we don't, then we have a damaged relationship with our Heavenly Father.

"[...] We beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." (2 Corinthians 5:20)

② (from Questioning the Holidays written by Columbo, Erace L. for Perspectives on Communication)

Back to THE THREE KINDS OF LAW(S):

2) The instructions for the Levitical priesthood — these instructions were written specifically to the Levites, one of 12 tribes of Israel, that was tasked with helping to purify Israel from sin by making sacrifices in the Temple until the first coming of Messiah (his birth). Many call these instructions "the Book of Law" and these are no longer deserved! AND they don't need to be either. Yeshua the Messiah is our high priest now, and he is of the Melchizedek order NOT the order of Lev. See Hebrews 7:12. Here, we see that a change in Law was necessary, but not the change that many Christians assume! The change is not that we are to stop keeping the commandments (Torah), but that because of Yeshua we no longer need to follow the instructions delivered to the Levites.

3) The Talmudic Jewish laws — these are the teachings of Jewish leaders (scribes, Sadducees, Pharisees, Rabbin's) in Scripture that Messiah actually speaks out against. Jews didn't allow healing OR ministry on the Sabbath, but Yeshua cautions us to care for even the sojourner amongst us. Jews had a ritual handwashing before meals (see Mark 7 commentary), but Yeshua pointed out that the believer doesn't get bonus points for doing all these extra man-made rules.

You'll note how there's a lot more things that can be said + more observations that can be made, but these are the bare basics, ironed out for you. My hope is this guide can be a blessing to you!