

PAUL'S OT

DEUTERONOMY 6:4 | WEEK 1: SEPT 13, 2015

WHO IS PAUL?

How you perceive the apostle Paul leads to inevitable assumptions regarding his life and theology. Some people presume that Paul left his Jewishness completely behind after his conversion on the Road to Damascus (Acts 9:1-31). But the reality of the Early Church during Paul's life was that it functioned as more of a sect of Judaism and less as its own religion.

HOW DOES PAUL USE THE OT?

Therefore, Paul's teaching in his NT Epistles reflects not a *former* Pharisaic Jew. Instead, Paul's teaching may be better understood as a Pharisee's Messianic *expectation* replaced with *FULFILLMENT* (Acts 23:6). Thus, Paul did not abandon his Jewish heritage. No, Paul's theology deals with the implications of Jesus "the Messiah" as the fulfillment of Jewish expectations.

SHEMA (DEUTERONOMY 6:4)

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one."

The *Shema* was central for Second Temple Jewish Monotheists. It is a prayer of loyalty to the one God when surrounded by pagan temptations.

Deuteronomy is a Sermon given by Moses just before the Israelites enter their inheritance. But this inheritance is inhabited by a pagan people. Thus, Deut 6:4 finds itself on the context of a monotheistic people living among a pagan polytheistic one.

This is the natural place for a first-century Jew to begin when thinking of how one should behave within a surrounding pagan culture.

1 CORINTHIANS 8-10

1 Corinthians 8-10 addresses the question of how to live as a loyal follower of Jesus within the world of pagan culture. Notice the correlation with the original context of Deuteronomy preparing the Israelites for living among a pagan people.

In the ancient world the temples normally *were* restaurants. Each town or city had plenty of shrines to local gods and goddesses...and, in Paul's day, more and more to the Roman emperor and members of his family. And what most people did there was to come with animals for sacrifice. When the animal was killed, it would be cooked and the family...might have a meal with the meat as the centerpiece. But there was usually more meat than the worshippers could eat, and so other people would come to the temple and share in the food



Corinthian Meat Market

which had been offered to the god.

Even that would often fail to use up the sacrificed meat. So the temple officials would take what was left to the market, where it would be sold in the normal way. In fact, most of the meat available in the city of Corinth would have been offered in sacrifice.

For that reason, some Jews in the ancient world, in places where they couldn't or didn't have a butcher of their own, refused to eat meat at all.

N. T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: 1 Corinthians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 98.

1 Corinthians 8:6

“...yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.”

This passage must have been dear to Saul of Tarsus. But Paul the apostle has taken this central, decisive, sharply focused prayer of loyalty to the one God and restated it to include Jesus at its very heart. Paul is teaching the community to live as the kingdom-people in the midst of the pagan world. The underlying point should be clear, once we recognize the exodus-context of the original prayer and the new-exodus context of Paul's argument in 1 Cor 8-10.

ONE GOD ONE LORD

What Paul has done is to separate out *theos* and *kyrios*, 'God' and 'lord', in the original prayer, adding brief explanations: 'God' is glossed with 'the father', with the further phrase about God as source and goal of everything, ourselves included, and 'lord' is glossed with 'Jesus Messiah', with the further phrase about Jesus as the means of everything, the one through whom all was made, ourselves included. 'One God (the father), one lord (Jesus Messiah).' A small step for the language, a giant leap for the theology.

Jesus is not a 'second God': that would abrogate monotheism entirely. He is not a semi-divine intermediate figure. He is the one in whom the identity of Israel's God is revealed, so that one cannot now speak of this God without thinking of Jesus, or of Jesus without thinking of the one God, the creator, Israel's God.

References:

N.T Wright. "One God, one Lord." *Christian Century* (November 27, 2013): 22-27.

N. T Wright. *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013) 661-670.

N. T. Wright. *Paul for Everyone: 1 Corinthians* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).