

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Did Jesus teach From the Torah?

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The people in first century, including Jesus, divided the Old Testament Scriptures into three divisions: *the law of Moses, the prophets and the psalms* (Luke 24:14). The first five books: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy comprised the section known as the law of Moses. The Hebrew word for “law” is “Torah”.

The word Torah literally means to “throw out” or “point out.” It is as a hand pointing to something or giving direction. God is giving direction or instruction to His people. Jesus honored the written Old Testament Scriptures including this section: the “Law” or “Torah” of Moses.

Jesus quoted from Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 when pointing out the foundation for marriage (*Matthew 19:4-5*). He quotes from Exodus 20: 13, 14 when pointing to the Ten Commandments (*Matthew 5:21, 27*). Jesus quoted Leviticus 19:18, when teaching about our relationship with our enemies (*Matthew 5:43*). He refers to Numbers 28:9-10 when directing his hearers to the action of priests

on the Sabbath day (*Matthew 12:5*). Finally, Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy 8:3, 6:16, and 6:13 when resisting the temptations of the Devil (*Matthew 4:4, 7, 10*). So, one could say Jesus honored and taught from the written Scriptures of the “Law” or “Torah” of Moses.

But what modern Judaism accepts as the Torah is not just the written Scripture of the first five books of the Old Testament, but they include the “*Oral Torah*”. Jewish tradition teaches God orally revealed instructions and amplifications of the written law to Moses from Sinai. He in turn spoke these added explanations of the written law to Joshua and Jewish leaders. Then, it was passed on from generation to generation orally. They were later written down in A.D. 200, comprising 63 volumes, and known as the Mishnah. Rabbis in Jerusalem (A.D. 350-400) and the Jewish teachers in Babylonia (A.D. 500) wrote down their various discussions and commentary of the Mishnah in a series of volumes known as the Gemara. The Mishnah and

Gemara comprise today the body of work known as the Talmud.

Obviously, Jesus did not teach from the Mishnah which was comprised in A.D.200. But, He did address the various traditions of the Jews. For example, when he did not wash his hands before eating, He was violating the tradition of the Fathers (*Matthew 15:2*;) not the written law of Moses. Jesus did not teach from oral teachings handed down from the fathers, but opposed those which made void the word of God. For example, Jesus condemns the tradition of dedicating funds to God instead of honoring one’s parents (*Matthew 15:6*).

Jesus, when teaching in the synagogue, read and applied the written Scriptures of the law and the prophets, not oral traditions (*Luke 4:16*). Jesus did teach from the written “law of Moses”. But, Jesus did not teach from the “Oral Torah” which became the Mishnah. Jesus certainly did not teach from what today is known as the Torah (the written and oral Torah), or the Jewish Talmud.