

Book Review

Brad H. Young. *Paul the Jewish Theologian: A Pharisee among Christians, Jews, and Gentiles*, E-book edition created 2012. Published by Baker Academic a division of Baker Publishing Group Pp.234. Price \$24. ISBN 9781441232892

Author

Brad H. Young (Ph.D., Hebrew University), president and founder of the Foundation for Evangelical Studies, is dedicated to researching the Jewish roots of the Christian faith, and this book, written for his parents, was proofread and indexed by a large group of people. The book encourages readers to approach the study of the canon with a fresh perspective on its message and a spiritual sense of its significance. The author mentions that Paul's teachings have been the subject of intense controversy. Paul will continue to stir up controversy. Nevertheless, placing Paul firmly in the stream of Pharisaic thought, and interacting with Christians, Jews, and Gentiles, must provide much-needed new perspectives.

Foreword

This book, *Paul the Jewish Theologian*, is an attempt to convince and construct a twist on the false impressions about Paul. Starting from the point of departure of Jewish theology rather than from the theological realm of Christianity, the book's preface refers to New Testament accounts of Christian origins that reveal several strata of development, one being the Jewish stratum in Palestine, the "primitive church of Jerusalem," and the other being the Hellenistic stratum. In the minds of many, Paul remains the "founder" of Christianity and is almost, if not quite, isolated from his Jewish roots.

In the first chapter, in the introduction, Young describes how the New Testament describes Paul as a Pharisee who attained faith. Paul is a Pharisee who has been rejected by the synagogue and misunderstood by the church. The synagogue could not accept the profile of Paul's style of Pharisaic (20), who later left the Jewish tradition and became a Christian. But Paul said he was "a Pharisee in the law" (Phil. 3:5; cf. Gal. 1:13-14) He practiced the Pharisee life according to his family background and his training in the land of Israel. By rejecting the Judaism of the Apostle Paul, the Church unknowingly adopted a kind of anti-Judaism, and here also mentions the second-century heretic Marcion, whose doctrines echoed each other. The author also mentions the antithesis between Judaism and Christianity,

Book Review

which was thought to be the religion of the law, but Paul, as a Pharisee living among Christians, Jews, and pagan Gentiles, was a bridge-builder. The author also encourages us to know and understand more about Paul's Jewish background, which may open new horizons for interpreting the Bible and the message of this most controversial figure in nascent Christianity. The most controversial figure in nascent Christianity.

Chapter 2, "Paul the Jewish Theologian" breaks down several more details to discuss Paul. For example, Paul's background, Paul, and the Torah "Paul did not want non-Jews who believed in Jesus to be circumcised and to assume the ritual observance of all the Torah's laws. (41), Paul and Jerusalem, also for some issues (legal or biblical?) Through these small passages, the reader can understand each passage more clearly. Young mentions that people often misunderstand Paul because we do not know the problems he was trying to solve, and secondly, and perhaps more importantly, because we do not know much about his Jewish faith and culture. Paul's Judaism must be the starting point for any serious analysis of his writings. We can get answers to some of the questions in this chapter, and we can also get a sense of Paul's background. For example, "Paul's background in the Acts of the Apostles is very informative for a careful reading of his letters. Unlike modern popular descriptions of the apostles, Paul has a rather clear description of himself in his letters. "He does not describe himself as a Hellenistic Jew or a Gnostic believer. "(38) Young argues that the author suggests that people do not understand Paul, and indirectly fail to understand his message. Trying to identify the questions Paul answers is the first step. But the person who reads Paul's letters seriously must contend with the thinking of a Pharisee who studied in Jerusalem. Like other Pharisees, Paul believed in rewards and punishments from God. Everyone will experience God's abundant grace or divine wrath on the day of retribution. Because he believed in God's mercy, as a Pharisee, the focal point of Paul's thought was Torah. (50) Paul, like other Pharisees, had sought a future redeemer who, like Moses, would bring help to those in need. Paul's attitude toward the Bible has parallels with similar interpretations by ancient Israelite saints and the precious manuscripts of the Dead Sea Scrolls. We find a major difference between Jesus and Paul. Jesus spoke to the people who lived in the land of Israel. He taught them primarily in Hebrew (and/or Aramaic). Jesus was a foreigner. Paul was international. This apostle worked outside of Israel, teaching and preaching in Greek. Jesus spoke to the Jews. Paul, on the other hand, spoke primarily to the Gentiles. (68)

In the next chapter, Pentecost, the nations of the world, and the Apostle Paul, first explains the major feasts, Pentecost, Tabernacles, Passover, and Paul as a "diplomat" who went from Jerusalem to the world, but Pentecost brought the world to Jerusalem. (69). This event marked a decisive change for Christians, as the Jews celebrated Pentecost in Jerusalem in the first century to commemorate the Holy

Book Review

Spirit's empowerment of Jesus' early followers to serve God with renewed vigor and dedication to his teachings. The Temple was the meeting place of God's people on the Day of Pentecost. In Acts 2:46, they gathered daily with one accord in the temple for prayer, study, and learning. Archaeology reveals another connection between the Church's Pentecostal experience and the Temple. Pentecost was the context for Paul's mission to the world. The words of Jesus were not intended only for His people. A Pharisee educated in Jerusalem must bring the message of the one God of Israel and His Messiah to the Gentiles. (79)

Judaism and Christianity: Diverse Perspectives on Torah This chapter deals with the aforementioned heresy of Marcion, and neither Jesus nor Paul opposed the Torah. They were not anti-Torah people. Sadly, however, traditional Christian interpretation has been tainted by Marcian-like doctrines that separate Jesus' message from his rich Jewish heritage. Young says that "Marcion's teaching most powerfully expresses the spiritual alienation from Israel by affirming the contrast and sudden discontinuity between the God of the Hebrew Bible and the God Jesus came to reveal." (80) Despite his claim to be a disciple of Paul, he disagreed with Paul, who believed that he placed the Bible on firmer ground, while Marcion, who believed that the Old Testament had been fulfilled in the divine revelation of Jesus and had therefore become irrelevant, sought to change the meaning of Jesus' teachings by transforming Paul's message into an anti-Jewish gospel. During the Reformation, many Protestant reformers attacked the papacy. They wrongly used the Torah and Judaism as a whip to scourge what they considered to be inaccurate teachings. But the three keywords in Matthew 5:17, Torah, abolition, and fulfillment, have a completely different meaning in their modern English translation than they did in ancient Jewish thought. The Hebrew word Torah comes from the root word Sarah, which means "to shoot" or "to teach. The task of learning the Torah is a sacred undertaking. Learning leads to reverence. Reverence leads to obedience. (86)

The next chapter is also divided into different subsections, with the first few paragraphs focusing on different laws and graces, referring to the Old and New Testaments in the Bible. Just as the Old Testament is not entirely a book of retribution and judgment, the New Testament is not entirely a book of mercy and grace. Many people see the Old Testament as being entirely about law, which distorts the idea of Jewish doctrine. The epistles in the Dead Sea Scrolls call their readers to accept the teachings of the Judaizers in the Jewish wilderness. When they accept the right way of life by accepting the contents

Book Review

of the epistles, then God's righteousness will be given to them. The terminology of the sect is striking and very similar to Paul's discussion in Romans and Galatians. (97) The author believes that the great challenge we face is to read Paul's epistles without being influenced by the multiple views of knowledgeable men of the past, seeing him through the eyes of later interpreters who knew little about early Jewish thought. Paul's thesis was "salvation by faith without works", while James' answer was "faith without works is dead". In reality, Paul believed that the fruits of faith would produce a holy way of life. He was very aware of the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of an individual. On the other hand, although James never denied the value of faith, he honored it in the life of the believer. (100)

For Paul, the Torah speaks of the mission of Jesus. Paul's entire worldview, with the Torah at its center, absorbed a new awakening about God's redemptive purpose. The teachings of Jesus, his life, death and resurrection, and the giving of the Holy Spirit compelled Paul to incorporate his revolutionary insights into his work. (110) This is what is described in the next two chapters. As a Jewish theologian, the influence of the Torah permeated his thinking. Paul believed that believers were free to observe the Torah in the new life of the Holy Spirit. However, the human condition drives everyone into the bondage of sin. Paul's approach emphasizes the need for Christians to have a proper view of Judaism and its teachings, without which Christians lose the ability to understand Paul's message. The background imagery comes from ancient Judaism. For Paul, the Law is not a dead text, but a living text strengthened by the power of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit dwells in the body of the believer and strengthens it. In Paul's teachings, the Torah possesses a transcendence beyond systematic theology or rigid dogma. Both Jesus and Paul had a similar view of the Torah. They both valued their heritage as Jews, which reflected the first-century view of Jewish values. Ancient rabbis also spoke of acts of kindness in helping others. These acts of kindness stemmed from obedience to the teachings of the Torah. One example of this is when the rabbis compared Moses to alight. The Torah is light, and the light of the Torah can be seen in the good deeds of Jesus' disciples. It can also be seen in the letters of Paul. Both Jesus and Paul hold the Torah in high esteem as a revelation of divine grace. The Torah possesses a transcendence that moves from human limitations into the realm of God. The Torah is infinite. (122)

The author of the following chapter on Paul's so-called love in 1 Corinthians is known for its graceful style, all-encompassing themes, and sublime imagery, to re-examine Paul's theology by looking at the

Book Review

context of 1 Cor 13:12. A close analysis of this text in light of its Jewish roots reveals how closely the love chapter is linked to the manifestation of the Holy Spirit (123) When Paul writes, "For now we see dimly in a mirror [glass lens], but then we will meet face to face," he is alluding to the Hebrew Scriptures. He is alluding to the Hebrew scriptures, which point to the need for love to guide the direction of ministry in the local church and the direction of ministry in the local congregation in an excellent way. These references to the manifestation of the Holy Spirit echo Paul's writing in 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. Moses was viewing [the vision of prophecy] through a mirror [lens] of light, and in this passage in rabbinic literature, the mirror or lens refers to the words of prophecy and the giving of the Holy Spirit. (128) A mirror or lens refers to an instrument or means by which a divine sign or message is manifested.

In *The Essence of Paul's Jewish Faith*, the author writes that Christians often viewed the Judaism of Jesus' day as a utilitarian religion. He believes that the roots of the Jewish faith are everywhere. The phrase "Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one" is taught throughout the New Testament. The New Testament itself teaches this. (131) The apostle Paul reminded the Romans that they were Israelites, that the sonship, the glory, the covenant, the given law, the worship, and the promises belonged to them; and that their ancestors, according to the flesh, were of their race. Although Paul warned against arrogance, he taught the Romans to stand before God in reverence and respect. Paul's faith in the future resurrection became a powerful motivation for his ministry. The resurrection of Jesus unleashed the sovereign power of God in the present. However, the power of the resurrection will be truly realized when Satan's rule is removed. Every experience in life. As a Jewish theologian, a Pharisee among Jews, Christians, and pagans. The Apostle Paul called people to seriously pursue the reign of God and His justice. To pursue God's rule and His justice in the power of the Holy Spirit. (151)

The last chapter, the seven pillars of Paul's Jewish theology, is divided into seven points to illustrate the core of Paul's theology, including Paul's background, his mission, his teachings, the requirements for believers, a view of the law, and a sort of summary of what Paul did.

I believe that after reading this book, every reader will have a better understanding of Paul and the other teachings of the Bible. This book's organization and narrative style are very clear and easy to understand, and there are many questions that the reader should consider as they read. I particularly like the passage, "Paul was a Pharisee who lived in a community of Christians, Jews, and pagan Gentiles. He

Book Review

was a bridge constructor." I agree with what the author has taught the reader through the writing of this book, that as Christians we should support and connect as members of the same body. I encourage the reader to keep an open mind and think deeper while reading this book.