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Book Review

Brad H. Young, *Paul the Jewish Theologian: A Pharisee among Christians, Jews, and Gentiles* (Baker Academic 1995) 164 pp. US \$17.99. ISBN 9780801048210

“Paul the Jewish theologian: A Pharisee among Christians, Jews, and Gentiles” by Brad H. Young. Brad Youngs Professor and mentor David Flusser assisted Young with the understanding of Paul and theology due to his in-depth knowledge along with many other people who assisted Young with this book. Young earned his degree at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and pursued studies in Christianity and ancient Judaism. He served as a research assistant to Dr. David Flusser and earned his M.A. and Ph.D. from the Hebrew University. Young is one of the founding scholars of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Studies. This book consists of 10 chapters. A Bibliography and Study Aids along with one Index of Ancient Sources and an Index of Names and Subjects. This book outlines Paul and his teaching and theology.

A brief comparison to this book is “The New Perspective on Paul” by James D.G. Dunn. Dunn speaks to the theology of Paul and his understanding to preaching the gospel to non-Jewish people. Just as Young speaks to the theology of Paul’s and the understanding of “by the works of the law.”

This book was captivating and gave me an insight to what Paul was about, Young captures his perspectives in a way I had not thought about before. I have already been telling a friend about this book and he is going to borrow it after I am finished with this report. I would recommend this book to anyone who would like to know more about Paul and why he was misunderstood by so many. Young explains Paul in a light that is easy to grasp and very informative.

Chapter 1, “Paul the Jewish theologian: A Pharisee among Christians, Jews, and Gentiles” by Brad Young was written to unlock the mysteries of Paul and his teaching. In chapter one Young explains Paul and his background as a pharisee. Paul was/ is he most disputed character in the bible. Paul was turned down and misjudged for his teaching in the synagogues and by the church. He is often questioned for his teaching due to being a pharisee at one point. However, he is the person that altered the provincial Palestinian Jewish movement. Nowhere in the New Testament is it mentioned when Paul fell away from being a Pharisee. Paul practiced being a Pharisee all throughout his life falling in line with his family lineage. After his encounter with the Rising of Christ, Paul reached a higher level in his faith. Because of Paul’s long time misunderstanding people till this day long to apprehend Paul. As we continue reading, we will dive deeper into the understanding of Paul and his message.

Chapter 2, In Chapter two Young dives in the fact that Paul was a Jewish Theologian. We take a deeper look into the similarities and the distinction between Jesus and Paul. Paul and Jesus lived very different lives all together. Jesus’s focus was everyone however the Jewish people seemed

to seek after him. Whereas Paul sought after the Gentiles teaching outside of Israel. Jesus was concerned about the land of Israel. Of course, Jesus' knowledge surpassed that of the apostle. Both held a very high prospect of the Torah. Concluding that both Jesus' and Paul's objective remained the same, they were trying to bring the Jews and Gentiles together.

Chapter 3

In Chapter 3, Youngs main theme was the Pentecost and what it meant to Christians and Jews. Pentecost for the Christian was the definition of the mainstreaming for service. For the Jewish people, Pentecost was the time when God had given the Torah to the Israelites. Although the Pentecost was a sacred time for both the Jewish and Christian people alike because it signified the time that God gave his people the living word. Another significance of the Pentecost was that the Holy Spirit came upon them through the Pentecost. What I find fascinating is that the Old Testament makes no mention of the relation between the Pentecost and the Torah. The description and breakdown of the Passover, Tabernacles, and Pentecost Young breaks down the meaning of each and what they meant to the Jews and Christians alike. In the book of Acts Pentecost was the very definition of "empowerment to serve others in the need and bear witness to God's favor." The Pentecost held a great significance to Paul's teaching and holy order. It is safe to say that the Pentecost was the framework for his outreach.

In Chapter 4, Judaism and Christianity: Diverse Perspectives on Torah, Youngs explains the Torah and how Judaism and Christianity are affected by it. We also look at the teachings of Jesus, Paul, and Marcion. Paul and Jesus held a grand respect for the Torah. Their teaching stemmed from its knowledge. "Jesus came to accurately interpret Torah so that God, who gave it, will be revered, and obeyed through proper action." Paul preaches the words of Jesus he was a true disciple of Jesus. Paul remained close to the teaching of Jesus and the Torah. Christianity's perspective is established in the notion of God defined in the Torah. However, the beliefs of Christianity have been unfortunately tinged from the original teachings of Jesus because of Marcions teaching. "Marcion had departed from the proper understanding of God." He did not want to associate himself with the Torah therefore he departed from God. Jesus and Paul never drifted away from the teaching of the Torah. "In reality we as Christians, though grafted into the majestic olive tree, too often disconnect ourselves from its trunk and its life-giving roots."

Chapter 5, The Torah: Roots of Grace in Paul's Message, Christianity tends to believe in the old covenant as not pertinent because of God's grace in the NT. In this chapter we will have a deeper understand of the Roots of Grace and Faith. The Old Testament brings people to faith through faith. Young speaks about the image of God being changed from the OT to the NT. Emphasizing that God did not change, He was the same in both testaments being described as fully of mercy, grace and as the Lord of creation. We are to obey Him for He is the creator of everything. The message of the Torah has been warped through the preaching of the Jewish faith. But Paul and Jesus developed the notion of divine mercy in God. In the final development of this chapter Young defines faith being the road to righteousness. "But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the return you get is sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Chapter 6, The Dead Letter, or the Living Word? Paul is often questioned for his interpretation

of Romans 7:1-6. The analogy Paul uses is that of a woman being freed of her unpleasant husband. Paul is not proposing that we are not unbound to following Gods law rather uses that illustration to point out his faith in Jesus. He is extending his reach into his Jewish heritage using a Jewish metaphor to better speak to the impact that faith in Jesus has had in the comprehension of the Torah. Paul the Jewish theologian speaks to the impact that the Torah has had on his faith. The context of Paul speaking to the Jews and Gentiles is often not taken into consideration. Paul warns his readers in Romans 7:7 making the distinction between law and sin. Young exemplifies that the Torah is not the problem but rather sin is. Jesus is revealed in the Torah, time and time again therefore how could it be the Dead Letter? “So, for Paul, Torah is not a dead letter, but the living word strengthened through Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit living inside the believer.”

Chapter 7, The Transcendence of Torah in Paul’s Teaching, Young speaks about the Torah and the view that Maricon, Jesus and Paul had on the Torah. In the ancient Jewish teaching, the Torah was a very incredible source of power, goodness, and light. The essence of Gods nature was in the Torah meaning it is beyond human comprehension. Paul and Jesus had similar views on the Torah that brought the Jewish values in the first century to light. Because of the apostle Paul’s background as a Pharisee his interpretation of the bible was explained as a first century Pharisee. The actions of Jesus followers and the Torah are both compared to light.

Chapter 8, Love as the Foundation of Christina Ministry: The Model of 1 Corinthians 13, speaks to 1 Corinthians 13 being defined as the love chapter. The love chapter speaks to both the use and abuse of spiritual manifestation. In Corinthians 12 and 14 treat these issues. According to the Jewish people and tradition the greatest and first prophet was Moses. Moses was the only prophet to have spoken to God face to face (Deut. 34:10). The significance of Paul being the only one to have direct communication with God, Paul explains that we now are looking through a “mirror” or “glass lens dimly” in terms of speaking to God. The message Paul is conveying in 1 Corinthians 13 is essential. “Without love the most powerful spiritual manifestations are entirely meaningless.” Paul and Jesus speak closely on the topic of love recorded in John 13:35.

Chapter 9, The Essence of Paul’s Jewish Faith, “Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God, the Lord is one (Deut. 6:4) is echoed all throughout the NT. A misunderstanding of Judaism is the message of salvation be reached by good works. Paul remained loyal to the torah. Paul teaches us that we are to live a life of righteousness and how pleasing it is to God. Paul’s teachings show us that he cared about people knowing about the glory of God. He wanted people to know about the kingdom of God. We fall short of Gods glory, but the fruit of the Spirit brings us liberation in Christ. Paul tried to teach everyone about the kingdom of God because of his knowledge of Gods sovereignty.

Chapter 10 Seven Pillars of Paul’s Jewish Theology, Young touches on the Seven Pillars of Paul’s Jewish Theology. Although it was never clearly communicated that Paul had converted to another religion it is safe to say that Paul was a Pharisee. Paul always viewed the Torah in a positive light. It is the spiritual platform of the much bigger plan that God had for us a gift from him and his grace in that. Paul’s concern for human and their inability to live their lives for Christ because of our sin. Paul’s concern was not the Torah but rather our sinful nature. Paul and Jesus shared a lot in their mission and their view of the Torah. Jesus’ missionary efforts were

focused on the Jewish people and Paul worked among the pagan Gentiles. Both caused the development of early Christianity. The characteristic of healing love must be evident in a believer's life to minister to others. God's grace and love is revealed in the sacrifice of Christ. "The resurrection of Jesus is the first fruit." By surrendering to the flesh believers must walk in the power of Christ to live in the likeness of Christ.