

HaYesod: The Foundation First Fruits of Zion, 2023

**A ten-part rebuttal by
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Lesson One: The People of the Book

A Quick intro: What is *HaYesod*?

It is the primary introductory disciple training program for the First Fruits of Zion.

The ten lessons are designed to be a “spiritual journey” that will undo what Torah Club participants have learned from their Church.

Each lesson is accompanied with videos, why aren't you reviewing those?

(1) They aren't publicly available, I'm not going to give FFOZ money and/or a false name to view them, (2) I couldn't use clips from the videos without fear that FFOZ would try to deplatform my YouTube channel. (3) If the videos walk back the false teachings in the workbook, why are they there to begin with? If the videos go even further than the workbook into heresy, the warning is right here in print.

In a 2017 survey of self-identified members of the Hebrew Roots Movement, the #1 book listed as a significant influence among the 700 people who responded was *HaYesod*.

Whatever FFOZ may intend for it, this book has become a gateway into the wider HRM, even for those whose connection to FFOZ was transitory.

The Bible is the story of God's dealings with the Jewish people; they are the 'People of the Book.' – 1.1

The Bible definitely is that, but it isn't only that. It is also the story of God's dealings with humanity, from the nations neighboring Israel {For example: *Job, Jonah, Nahum*} to the vast throng of tribes pictured around the throne in *Revelation* {See: Paul's epistles}. This will be the primary danger of lesson #1: It seeks to reserve the Bible as a book written about, and to, only one people.

"To understand the Bible, we need to read it from a Jewish perspective." – 1.1

This is the raison d'être of FFOZ: They claim to be representing the "Jewish perspective," which they will portray as being in stark opposition to historic and orthodox Christianity and the Church.

An important reminder: There isn't one Jewish perspective. There are multiple Jewish perspectives. In fact, many scholars prefer to speak about the Judaisms (plural) of the 1st Century because of the diversity of views during Jesus' lifetime. The same diversity holds true with modern Judaism.

FFOZ will represent one preferred view: The Pharisaic as represented by the rabbinic commentaries that were codified, in part, as a response to the claims of Jesus to be the Messiah.

In addition to a rabbinic Orthodox Jewish view (with an emphasis on the Hasidic movement), FFOZ will also promote the mysticism of Kabbalah.

The point is, when they claim to represent the "Jewish perspective," that comes with an asterisk in both the 1st century and today.

{Similar to: If I claimed to represent the "Christian perspective" when doing so from an Evangelical Baptist viewpoint; it would agree with the Catholic and Orthodox views, as well as those of other Protestants, sometimes, but obviously not all the time.}

“The Torah’s instruction encompasses every aspect of life and is still in force today” – 1.1

More on the first part later, but the 2nd half of the sentence reveals another key FFOZ belief: Torah is, “perfect, eternal, and unchanging.”* It is their belief that the New Covenant only concerns the Messianic Age to come, the whole world is now living under the Mosaic Covenant.

**What about the Sacrifices?* Daniel Lancaster, p. 48

After quoting Romans 9:3b-5a...

“A short way of saying all of that is ‘the Bible’ belongs to the Jewish people because Paul’s list pretty much sums up the whole Bible.” 1.3

3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, 4 who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, 5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Christ according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen. – NASB (1995)

The Apostle Paul wasn’t “pretty much” saying that the Bible belongs exclusively to the Jewish people.

This lesson of HaYesod will not say so explicitly, but FFOZ teaches that only Jewish rabbis/sages have the right to interpret the scriptures, including the New Testament, even Gentile believers in Jesus have no right to do so.

{See: Jacob Fronczak’s *Rethinking the Five Solae*, and Aaron Eby’s *“What Replaces Replacement Theology?”*}

“He chose Israel to be a ‘nation of priests’ that transmits the revelation of God to the rest of the world.” – 1.3

There ought to be more to this story...In Christ, all who believe in him have

been designated by God as priests, neither the role of the Aaronic priesthood, nor that of Israel as a whole, remains as it was in the Torah because God has expanded his family. {Rom. 12:1-2, Heb. 13:15-16, 1 Peter 2:5-9, Rev. 1:6, 5:9-10}

One of the patterns that develops with FFOZ is diminishing the function, role, and purpose of gentile followers of Jesus in this present age. This runs contrary to not only Jesus' Gospel proclamation mandate, but Paul's metaphor of the many parts of the Body of Christ working together. FFOZ's "proleptic radial ecclesiology" proclaims that the Temple's tier system (priests, Levites, Jewish men, Jewish women, Gentiles) is eternal.

"If we want to understand the Bible, we need to read it from the perspective of the People of the Book. Understanding and appreciating the people of Israel is the first step to correctly understanding the Scriptures of Israel." – 1.3

Reminder: the NT also contains a new people called by God.

Given that I regularly teach the background of the text, and value it highly, this could almost be a true statement.

In reality, FFOZ's disdain for Gentile and Christian voices will make their teaching perspective entirely beholden to rabbinic sources almost all of which reject Jesus as the Messiah. Is this THE lens/rubric to understand all of scripture? Are these the only voices that can enlighten the Gospel?

"The Torah is like God's instruction manual for the Jewish people." – 1.6

To an extent, but more is needed. The Law of Moses was a treaty between God and Israel, it was written to a people who were a part of the Ancient Near Eastern cultural river, and it utilizes their worldview to do it. It was never designed to be God's last or final word, it was always a stepping stone to the Messiah who would bring the fullness of God's revelation to humanity. God had more to say, to Israel and to the world.

“In Christianity, the Hebrew Bible is referred to as the ‘Old Testament’ because it contains covenants that later Christianity deemed obsolete.” – 1.8

Just a brief note: “obsolete” is a pejorative term that doesn’t convey what most of the Church teaches, this will occur over and over in FFOZ material as loaded terms are used to describe either the Church itself, or the teachings of the Church. The hostility is at times muted, but never absent.

“The Torah contains teaching and instruction that covers every conceivable part of a Jewish person’s life” – 1.9

By Torah, in this sentence, does FFOZ mean the entirety of Jewish commentary on the Law of Moses? Even so, it never was fully comprehensive, even with massive volumes worth of commentary from many generations. The Law of Moses wasn’t designed to be.

*“As commonly happens, interpreters were inclined to read the biblical text through the filter of their own cultural river – their own cultural context. As a result of such a reading, people began thinking that the Torah dictated the law of the land to Israel. And since it was considered divine revelation, it was therefore construed as God’s ideal guide to society and morality. And if it is God’s guide to the ideal shape of society and morality, then all people everywhere are obliged to apply it... This chain of logic all begins with the false assumption that the Torah represents revelation of the prescriptive, codified legislation given by God.” – Dr. John Walton, *The Lost World of the Torah*, p. 22*

“First, as is true for the ANE legal collections, the Torah, even with all collections combined, is nowhere near being comprehensive.” (Walton, p. 37)

“Those who attempted to employ it prescriptively had to do considerable extrapolation in order to produce a code that could be used as normative... This impulse is richly worked out in the Mishnah.” (Walton, p. 38)

To sum up, it is an exaggeration to say that Torah (Law of Moses) was intended to be a comprehensive, codified, legal system. That concept is foreign to the A.N.E. and doesn't fit what God actually gave to Moses.

Why does this matter? It undercuts FFOZ's exalted claims that Torah is a universal culmination of God's plan.

"Some of the Torah's laws are limited in their scope. Many apply only in specific places, at specific times, or to specific people." – 1.10

This is a welcome admission from FFOZ, it stands in stark contrast to their prior public embrace of One Law Theology {Note: that thinking underlies FFOZ teaching still}.

Key questions that one should ask about what FFOZ is teaching about the Torah in Torah Clubs:

Why are they trying to apply the Torah to times, people, and places that were not envisioned when the Israelites swore to uphold their end of the covenant?

Review Question:

"3. What, specifically, are some of the things that belong to these 'chosen people'?" – 1.13

This is a reminder that FFOZ teaches that the Bible "belongs" to the Jewish people, they are its only true guardians and interpreters...The Bible itself never makes such a claim.

Summary:

While a casual reader may miss some of the false teachings in lesson #1, those familiar with FFOZ's publications will note the pattern of Torah supremacy (idolatry), and the hints of 2nd class status regarding Gentile followers of Jesus.

Lesson Two: Grace vs. Law

What this lesson reveals is that Torah Club leaders are being taught to embrace these teachings, not gloss over them. The “correct” answers provided are truly damning.

I originally reviewed lesson #2 on May 30th of 2025. For this one lesson I had access to the leaders’ “correct” answers; here that material is updated and incorporated into this series.

“Jewish scholars in New Testament times suggested that when godly people suffer and die, it’s not a punishment for their own sins but the sins of others. We can call this the ‘Law of Atonement’...An innocent person who suffers and dies accrues extra merit and favor with God. This merit can be credited to someone else’s account.” – 2.3

FFOZ has a fascination with, and an allegiance to, the 2nd Temple Judaism of the 1st century. As such, they work to integrate beliefs from that era of Judaism into the theology they’re attempting to bring into churches.

The question that this lesson will not ask, fatally so with respect to its conclusions: Were the Jewish rabbis of the 1st century correct to believe these things about sin, suffering, and merit?

Theodicy is the study of the “problem of evil.” It is a rich field that includes the wisdom of books like *Job*. However, to say that when godly people suffer it **must be** because of the sins of other people is a human-centered view that was rejected by Job’s insistence that his suffering was not the result of his sin (or any sin), and by the testimony of Jesus Christ.

John 9:1-3 (NIV)

9 As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

3 "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

Because suffering and sin are not directly correlated, the entire premise of the so-called "Law of Atonement" is false.

The rains falls and the just and the wicked alike, so too does suffering at times befall the righteous without any connection to the sin that is common to us all, that which affects all of humanity through the Fall.

Because the foundation is false, in fact a denial of biblical teaching, the edifice that FFOZ will erect to explain grace, works, and faith has a foundation that must cause it to crumble.

Even if the righteous suffered for the sins of others, there is zero biblical evidence that such suffering is connected to, let alone effective at, sin atonement. On what basis is this claim made??

The suffering and death of human beings never atones for sin. It cannot, at all, ever. We are not a spotless sacrifice.

"If when you do what is right and suffer...you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God." (quoted 2.6, 1 Peter 2:20b NASB)

Note: "for doing what is right" is cut out of the middle of the verse by FFOZ. Why? The limited scope of Peter's point would detract from applying his words to this over-arching supposed "Law of Atonement".

The use of 1 Peter 2:20 is an out-of-context abuse of Peter's original intent. He is not attempting to address the topic of "earned merit." There is zero reason to assert that Peter believed that the suffering of Jesus' followers could atone for their own sins, let alone those of anyone else. This whole concept is antithetical to the Gospel message: Only the Son of God is worthy.

"finds favor" is not a universal translation (14/60 on Gateway listing of English translations), it was chosen to connect to the story of Moses that is coming. Beware of theology built on cherry-picked preferred translations.

“An innocent person who suffers and dies accrues extra merit and favor with God. This merit can be credited to someone else’s account.”- 2.3

This is **blasphemous** and deeply heretical. No human being has ever had enough merit to earn God’s favor (Romans 3:10-19, which is comprised of 8 OT quotes), let alone extra. There is ZERO hint in God’s Word that a human being could apply merit, even if he/she had extra, to anyone else. Note that FFOZ simply makes this massive claim with zero attempt to support it from a single scriptural source, or even from their usual trope “the sages.” Where has **God** said this??

FFOZ’s hermeneutical methodology is deeply flawed. Word usage determines word meaning, claiming that two words in different languages simply mean the same thing in a third language is overly simplistic and misleading. Also, to claim that grace and favor are equal denies the semantic range of both words.

חֵן occurs 66 times in the OT, where in the NASB it is translated into English as: adornment (1), charm (1), charming (1), favor (51), grace (8), graceful (2), gracious (3), pleases (1).

χάρις (charis) occurs 157 times in the NT, where in the NASB it is translated into English as: blessing (1), concession (1), credit (3), favor (11), gift (1), grace (122), gracious (2), gracious work (3), gratitude (1), thank (3), thankfulness (2), thanks (6).

The usage of these two words, in Hebrew and Greek, show some overlap in their semantic range, but to simply say that both of these words mean favor (and only favor), and both are equal to each other, is foolishly simplistic at best, purposefully deceptive at worst.

FFOZ is using this technique to mislead. To what end?

To a disastrous redefinition of grace:

“The merit and favor a person acquires in the eyes of another.” – 2.5

The long-standing Christian interpretation of grace as “unmerited favor” is purposefully thrown out, earning God’s favor (that is, by an unfounded equal sign, also earning grace) is in.

Where could FFOZ possibly turn to find an example of a human being earning God’s grace? To Moses.

Note: This house of cards depends upon equating favor in the OT with grace in the NT. The example of Moses earning favor, even if the analysis of the passage was fully valid, would still lead to a false conclusion because Moses and the Apostle Paul do not mean the same thing when using *hen* and *charis*.

“After the sin of the golden calf, the LORD threatened to punish the nation by withdrawing His presence. He canceled His covenant relationship with them because they had broken it. The nation had completely fallen from God’s favor. Moses, on the other hand, still enjoyed God’s favor...The LORD agreed to extend His favor for Moses to the entire nation.” – 2.5

Is God saying in Exodus 33 that Moses’ obedience has earned God’s favor?

Yes. Is that favor equal to atonement? No

Is it equal to redemption? No

Is it equal to righteousness? No

Is it equal to salvation? No

None of these ideas that are part of our understanding of Jesus Christ’s sacrifice as the Lamb of God are in any way connected to Moses.*

* {In fact, these concepts as they are understood in the NT are not in the OT,}

“The LORD agreed to extend His favor for Moses to the entire nation:” – 2.5

Did God bless others because of the favor in which he held Abraham, Joseph, Moses, Ruth, David, etc? Yes.

Is that blessing in any way connected to the righteousness that is ours because of the atoning power of the Blood of Christ? 1,000 times No.

"The story also demonstrates that grace is not 'an unmerited gift.' Moses did merit God's favor when he interceded with God on behalf of a guilty nation." – 2.6

This so-called interpretation of scripture is an abomination.

Moses earned favor with God, he did not earn grace.

On the basis of a false equivalence of favor in the OT with grace in the NT, by which FFOZ declares that grace is not "unmerited favor" but instead acquired/earned favor, they have set up a false equivalence between Moses and Jesus, all to pave the way for the coming insistence that Paul's objection to the "works of the law" is not about legalism at all.

This is the goal to which this lesson is striving, to remove the stigma associated with keeping Torah as works-righteousness.

"Remember what happens when a godly and righteous person suffers and dies undeservedly...Through His righteous life and His undeserved suffering, Yeshua merited even more favor in God's eyes, so much favor that He has an abundance to share." – 2.6

Why is "only begotten son" in quotation marks? Why not simply say, "As the Son of God,"?

Jesus is the only person to ever **earn** the righteousness that atones for sin, full stop. No solely human being could earn atonement, it is impossible. When you put atonement, favor, and grace in a mixer as FFOZ has done here, the result is grotesque.

In this section, FFOZ argues that Paul's only issue is with full-on adoption of Jewish identity through the conversion process.

"It's not a question of working to earn eternal life by keeping the Law. It's a question of whether someone needs to become Jewish to be eligible for eternal life." – 2.8

They make this specious case by saying that when Paul writes about the, “works of the law” it always means only Jewish identity (i.e. circumcision, full conversion) never Torah keeping (Sabbath, kosher, festivals).

In order for this line of reasoning to hold water, every usage of “works” and “works of the law” by Paul would need to be about full-conversion only, never about legalistic attempts to keep Torah to earn righteousness (i.e. to merit grace).

That, of course, is not a tenable position, but when FFOZ interprets *Galatians*, for example, it does so assuming Paul only cares about full-conversion, they claim he was 100% in favor of Torah keeping for Jews and Gentiles, as long as it didn’t lead to conversion for Gentiles.

“It’s common to assume that ‘faith’ means ‘believing.’ That’s not the Jewish idea of faith.” – 2.9

Faith does not equal belief?

True, faith does not ONLY equal belief, it is more than just belief as *James* rightly clarifies, but given FFOZ’s stated hostility toward the Early Church credal statements...

Where is this going? To a butchered paraphrase of Ephesians 2:8-9...

“By God’s favor, you have been saved for eternal life though your allegiance to Yeshua as the Messiah, but that favor is not something you earned. It is the gift of God, not as a result of the works of conversion. So no one, neither Jews nor Gentiles, have anything to boast about.” – 2.9

“Paul sometimes used the term ‘works’ as shorthand to argue against Gentiles becoming Jewish.” – p. 2.8

Once again, we see the effort to drive a wedge between full conversion (including circumcision) and Torah keeping with respect to “works.” In FFOZ’s warped view, human beings can earn God’s favor (which they say

equals grace), so relying on works is ok provided that they are the Torah-proscribed ones. Do you see why they want to downplay Paul's concerns about legalism?

And what are the "good works" of Ephesians 2:10? What has God prepared in advance for the followers of Jesus?

"These 'good works' are the good deeds and acts of obedience described by the Torah's commandments." – p. 2.10

Once you divorce "works of the Law" from Torah keeping, the next goal is to transform it into a substitute for the Fruit of the Spirit. Once legalism has been downplayed, Torah keeping can become the new test of true discipleship.

"When a righteous person dies unjustly, they accrue favor with God." – 2.11

"This favor can be bestowed on someone else." – 2.11

So absurd that followers of Jesus ought to run screaming from this madness.

"Paul refers to the process of becoming Jewish as the 'works of the law.'" – 2.11

"'We are not saved by works' means that we are not saved by becoming Jewish." – 2.11

To reject Paul outright is too obvious, redefining him into a pro-Torah keeping champion is a much more dangerous approach.

"Is grace unmerited favor? If not, how does one acquire it?" – 2.12

"No; grace is earned. One acquires it by doing good and living a

difficult life or having it bestowed on them by someone else who earned it.” – 2.12

Is the utter rejection of the Gospel by FFOZ not fully evident yet? What further evidence is needed?

Conclusion:

FFOZ ought to be labeled a dangerous cult for their views of the Trinity alone...

The *HaYesod* discipleship manual proves once again that they teach equally dangerous and heretical falsehoods about grace, atonement, faith, works, and the Law of Moses.

Lesson Three: The Covenants

How they view the Covenants, particularly the Mosaic and New Covenants, is one of the key reasons why FFOZ stands against the legitimacy of both the Church and Christianity.

*“The foundational covenant in the Bible is God’s covenant with Abraham.”
– 3.1*

I actually couldn’t agree more, I only wish FFOZ based its understanding of the Gospel on the Abrahamic Covenant rather than pointing to Sinai. It becomes apparent in FFOZ materials, that not all parts of the Torah are held in the same regard, they claim we must live by “Sinai rules” when instead we should be leaning on Abrahamic promises.

“Unlike a contract, a brit is permanent.” – 3.2

Seeking to understand the Covenant at Sinai in the context of A.N.E. covenants is fitting and proper, but two things are amiss. (1) Not all covenants are designed to be permanent, and (2) an ongoing covenant can

be superseded if the parties agree to new stipulations. A.N.E. covenants are far from the, “perfect, eternal, unchanging” view of Torah espoused by FFOZ.

“try to understand what it was like to live in the ancient world...As we continue this lesson on covenants, keep in mind the vast differences between your way of life and how ancient peoples lived. Imposing our modern values, ideas, and terminology on the biblical text will keep us from understanding God’s Word.” – 3.4

Again, I would agree wholeheartedly with this IF there was a way to enter into the 1st century Greco-Roman and Jewish (NT) or Ancient Israelite (OT) mindsets without bias. We can try to check out preconceptions at the door, but we will more likely through confirmation bias simply find excuses to keep them.

Which brings us to FFOZ. They have decided that the rabbinic sources derived from the Pharisaic tradition are true representatives of what Jesus and the Apostles believed and taught. These views, not any others from 2nd Temple Judaism in the 1st century, are enshrined and used as the lens to interpret not just the OT authors centuries prior, but the NT too.

Thus, modern biases and preconceptions (that we all have, FFOZ’s leaders included) are replaced with a version (not always accurate) of ancient ones, and all this while discounting the Early Church Fathers as somehow an entirely illegitimate continuation of Jesus and the Apostles...In other words, a modern reconstruction of rabbinic sources that denied Jesus are elevated over the faithful men and women who lived in that era and learned directly from the Apostles...This is not a path that will lead to a better understanding of the NT.

“With God, a later covenant does not displace an earlier covenant. – 3.7

Here we see the use of pejorative terms {displace, replace, obsolete}, a common FFOZ tactic, when speaking about Christian beliefs regarding the Covenant at Sinai.

Question: Can God further reveal his will in later covenants?

“consider the danger in such a supposition. If God could replace the Jewish people, He could just as easily replace the followers of Jesus!” – 3.7

What about Romans 11 and Paul’s analogy of the broken off and grafted in branches?...FYI, most Christians don’t believe they have “replaced” the Jewish people as the beneficiaries of Covenant at Sinai, we were never a party to it. It is not Sinai to which we look, but God’s promise to Abraham.

“Non-Jewish followers of Yeshua can benefit from God’s covenants with Israel, but they do not replace the Jewish people as the primary beneficiaries of the covenants.” – 3.7

This is a fundamental denial of the Body of Christ analogy and a complete rejection of the One New Man (Ephesians 2:15). FFOZ still views approaching God in racial terms, even after Jesus. {See: Proleptic Radial Ecclesiology}

“Like the Abrahamic covenant, the Sinai covenant is ongoing. The covenants do not conflict with each other; they work together and build on top of one another.” – 3.8

“Ongoing” will be the key term here, what FFOZ means by it is, “perfect, eternal, and unchanging.”

Question: If Sinai can “build on top” of God’s previous covenants (which it did), why must the New Covenant be subservient to Sinai? God’s revelation is progressive, until Sinai, and then it can go no further??

When Israel broke the covenant at Sinai - for example, by making the golden calf – this did not end God’s relationship with Israel. Instead, they fell back on the covenant promises to Abraham. When the Sinai covenant is breached, God will still redeem His

people and keep His covenant with them on the basis of the covenant He made with Abraham.” – 3.9

Several things:

(1) On 2.5 FFOZ argued very differently when they were trying to proclaim that Moses’ merit means grace is earned, *“He canceled His covenant relationship with them because they had broken it. The nation had completely fallen from God’s favor.”* The same passage, warped two different ways, to suit the needs of multiple FFOZ positions.

(2) If Sinai was intended to be for all peoples, places, and times, how can Israel “fall back” on the promises to Abraham for redemption?

(3) If Sinai was able to be set aside because of the Golden Calf, why must it continue unchanged after the death and resurrection of Jesus?

(4) If Israel is to be redeemed because of the promises to Abraham, and not Sinai, why must the Gentiles come to God (through Jesus) via Sinai and not the promise to Abraham?

{Note: FFOZ insists that Gentiles are grafted into the “Commonwealth of Israel” as “sojourners in the land,” NOT as an equal party to the New Covenant in Christ.}

There is no consistency here, the sands shift over and over to elevate Sinai and downplay God’s relationship with Gentiles...

“The new covenant is a yet-future covenant that promises to effect a complete spiritual transformation of the people of God.”
– 3.9

Yet future? Wait, so the Advent of the Son of God, his perfect life, sacrificial death, victorious resurrection and glorious ascension, PLUS the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost all happened, but the New Covenant is “yet-future”? In Christ we have not had a complete spiritual transformation??

“You might assume that the scriptures for the new covenant would all be in the New Testament because ‘new covenant’ and ‘New Testament’ mean the same thing. However, this is incorrect. The New Testament is not the new covenant. It probably shouldn’t even be called the New Testament.” – 3.9

This is a key false teaching of FFOZ: There is NO covenant made by God with Gentiles, nothing that Jesus said or did changes “Sinai rules” one iota, they not only still apply to the Jewish people {with a theoretically reconstituted Sanhedrin retaining the right to impose the death penalty for violators}, but have been extended to the whole world.

Wait a minute, you might ask, what about the Last Supper? This isn’t instituting a New Covenant?

Matthew 26:28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Mark 14:24 “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them.

Luke 22:20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

The authors of the NT sure seem to think that they’re operating under a New Covenant, that it isn’t reserved for the future:

2 Corinthians 3:4-6 Such confidence we have through Christ before God. 5 Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves,

but our competence comes from God. 6 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Hebrews 8:6-7, 13 But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises.

7 For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another... 13 By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and outdated will soon disappear.

Ephesians 2:11-22

11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)— 12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Here's the thing, God is not limited by our expectations. God can promise to restore his relationship with Abraham's descendants (i.e Jeremiah 31), a prophecy that awaits final fulfillment, AND at the same time make a New Covenant with the whole world through Jesus. God's promises to Israel do not limit God's grace to the nations. It is not an either/or but a both/and.

"What are the terms of this new covenant?...He is going to personally guarantee our end of the covenant – our obedience – by changing our hearts, putting His Spirit within us, and cleansing us."

No mention of Jesus, of the need to have faith in Jesus...This is consistent with FFOZ's numerous hints that because of Sinai the Jewish people don't necessarily need to accept Jesus.

"The solution is to change our hearts so we don't keep on sinning, this is the work of the Holy Spirit: '[God] sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge.' (2 Corinthians 1:22) 'You were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance.' (Ephesians 1:13-14)" – 3.10

In neither passage is Paul talking about the ability to keep the Torah, in neither passage is Paul talking about a future promise. Paul is telling the primarily gentile churches to whom he writes that the Spirit has been given NOW because our adoption in the family of God has already occurred, God will finish his work in us. (Romans 8:28-30)

And yet, FFOZ insists these verses point to the future:

"Obviously, the new covenant has not yet been fulfilled. Not everyone yet knows the LORD. The Torah is not yet written in full on our hearts. But the new covenant began when Messiah instituted it with His death and resurrection when He took the cup at His seder and said: 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood.' (1 Corinthians 11:25)" – 3.11

The insistence that Jeremiah 31 is the only lens through which to view the events of the New Testament causes FFOZ to talk out of both sides of

their mouth. In the same lesson they claim that the New Testament is not about the New Covenant, yet because of Jesus' words at the Last Supper and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, they have to admit that this covenant has already begun. What then has God done? Begun the New Covenant and then waited 2,000 years while his people still live entirely under Sinai? Why start a covenant and then set it aside as if nothing has changed?

Like all false teachings, when you examine it closely, and weigh it against scripture, it falls apart.

Summary:

The terms of the new covenant are found in the Old Testament prophets.

This covenant has begun but has not yet been fulfilled. – 3.12

Review:

4. What covenant is the basis for God's ongoing relationship with His people? What terms must they abide by to remain faithful to this covenant?

9. Explain how the new covenant interacts with the Sinai covenant. Does the former override the latter?

- 3.13

Conclusions:

(1) The blessings of the New Covenant are God's great gift of grace to humanity through Jesus Christ, offering direct access to the Father and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Nobody, Jew or Gentile alike, needs to wait for a "yet-future" fulfillment of this Gospel, we are the Body of Christ here and now.

(2) What FFOZ is teaching points away from the New Covenant back to Sinai, away from Jesus back to Moses, and away from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit's empowerment to produce the Fruit of the Spirit, back to the legalism of Torah observance.

Lesson Four: The Jewish Yeshua

There is no more fundamental a question than this: Who is Jesus?

The answer one gives will echo in eternity.

Which is why it is so important to bring attention to the ways in which FFOZ diminishes the person, work, and mission of Jesus by making all of them subservient to the Torah.

{A denial is one thing, it is easier for people to spot, easier to defend against; diminishment is more subtle, in the end more dangerous.}

“His Jewish identity was obscured for most of church history.” – 4.1

This is, as your gut is telling you, absurd. This slander only makes sense if you view it through FFOZ’s Torah-supremacy lens, thus refusing to count everything the Church teaches about Jesus..

{I went to church, 3 times a week, as a little kid. I knew Jesus was Jewish when I was 7. I’m guessing you did too.}

For all of Church history it has been taught and believed that Torah points to Jesus (i.e. to God), not the other way around, it is only in this generation that FFOZ and others in the HRM have “discovered” something else.

The Jewishness of Jesus – the fact that He lived, taught, and promoted Judaism rather than sought to replace it- is an important historical fact and a cornerstone of biblical faith.” -4.2

The faults with this statement are many, among them:

(1) There are no historical facts being listed here. What Lancaster is doing is asserting a novel interpretation of scripture, in other words, he is making a theological claim based upon the same knowledge the Church has known from the beginning. Try as they might to give rabbinic sources authority, what we truly know about Jesus comes from God's Word.

(2) Jesus did not promote Judaism. That idea would make no sense to him as the Son of God. {Devotion flows to the Creator, not from him}

Jesus promoted faithful obedience to the commands of God. To the Jewish people before his death, that meant faithfulness to the covenant at Sinai because he had not yet fully established another. To his Jewish and Gentile followers after his death and resurrection, that meant faithfulness to himself, not Torah, in the New Covenant.

(3) A "cornerstone of biblical faith" would have to include what the NT says about faith, the full counsel of God. It would reckon with how our relationship to God has changed because of his victory over sin and death, not simply point backward to Sinai. In the end, there is only one Cornerstone, Jesus, our faith is in HIM, not in any religious system, not even one God had previously given to his Chosen People.

"Jesus did not come to start a new, non-Jewish religion." – 4.2

News flash, the Christians you continue to call "replacement theologians" don't believe that, at all. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not non-Jewish, but here's the key, it is also not non-Gentile. The Gospel is for all of humanity, equally. And yes, this is something new that cannot simply be confined within the Mosaic Covenant. The advent of the Son of God changes things, this shouldn't be hard to grasp.

"the image of the humble rabbi explaining the Torah to His disciples was eclipsed by theological dissertations...A life of discipleship is much more than just cognitive assent to Yeshua's divine identity, atoning death, and resurrection." – 4.3

What you believe about Jesus matters. Was he humble? Absolutely, Paul marvels at how humble Jesus was in Philippians 2:5-11. Was Jesus a

humble rabbi? Not at all. He is the Teacher, the Prophet, the fullness of God's revelation to humanity in bodily form. This level of subordinationism cannot go unchecked. Jesus didn't "explain" Torah, he spoke the very words of God with noteworthy personal authority. He is, in every way, superior to Moses and the message given at Sinai {As the writer of *Hebrews* proclaims}.

In addition, FFOZ has many times bashed the notion that faith is about belief {lesson 2, faith ≠ belief}, diminishing the importance of correctly believing who Jesus is and what he has done for us. From another source, this might simply be careless wording, from FFOZ it is a reminder that they neither believe in the Trinity nor in the full union of Jesus' divinity and humanity (hypostatic union). When such a group downplays the importance of theology about the person of Jesus, we should ask why.

It all comes from one huge misunderstanding: the idea that Yeshua's death and resurrection canceled the Law. Believe it or not, for almost two thousand years, most of the church has been teaching that Yeshua came to cancel the Torah and replace it with a new law. This idea is called 'replacement theology.'" – 4.3

If that's your definition of "replacement theology," sign me up because I do believe along with the Church, rightly, that Jesus intended to establish a new law, the Law of Love. Why? Because Jesus himself said so. Funny how that works. {John 13:34 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."}.

As a reminder, FFOZ chooses to use "cancel" instead of "fulfill" for the obvious reason that it resonates as a negative term about the Church.

The remarkable thing, to me, is how little the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus changes anything in FFOZ's warped view. The very Son of God comes, in the flesh, conquers sin and death, ascends to heaven, gives the Holy Spirit, and things go on just as before?? The Law of Moses not only continues as before, but extends to all of humanity. What did Jesus accomplish? Was his entire mission only about sin atonement, nothing more, everything think else points backwards?

Call me crazy, but I think the side that believes that Jesus is the hinge around which all of history turns is on the right track instead of the modern reimagining of Jesus as a champion of the past, unwilling or unable to enhance God's relationship with humanity.

I'll go with the belief that points first, foremost, and always, to Jesus.

"All the biblical writers assume that the Torah is God's true and unchanging revelation." – 4.4

Remember how this was supposed to be the lesson about Jesus? Odd how it revolves primarily around the supremacy of Torah, isn't it? Just an observation, thought it might be relevant.

Yeah, all the biblical writers assume no such thing.

Galatians 4:10-11 You are observing special days and months and seasons and years! 11 I fear for you, that somehow I have wasted my efforts on you.

Colossians 2:16-17 Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. 17 These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

Hebrews 8:6 But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises.

Hebrews 10:1 The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it can never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship.

"If Yeshua abolishes the Torah, the foundation of the Bible collapses, and along with it so does the integrity of the rest of the Bible. Without a foundation, the whole structure is destabilized." – 4.4

‘On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand...’

This argument would carry more weight if we didn’t have 2,000 years of Church history, which in FFOZ’s own telling has been replete with ‘replacement theology,’ and yet throughout those generations the Old Testament has been revered, studied, and utilized by Jesus’ followers, all without needing to pretend the Mosaic Covenant was given to us too. Where is the collapse that he ominously warns of, how long was it supposed to take if 2,000 years isn’t enough?

“If the Torah is abolished, so is Jewish identity. If the covenants are abolished, then Israel is no longer the people of God.” – 4.4

Remember how in lesson 3 FFOZ said that the covenant of Abraham was the foundation? I do, it seems like they don’t because this entire exercise in hysteria is aimed at protecting the Law of Moses, not God’s promises to Abraham.

The people of Israel are not God’s Chosen People because of Sinai. That’s not where the story starts. God called Abraham, God blessed him with Isaac’s miraculous birth after rejecting Ishmael as a substitute, God chose Jacob instead of Esau. God sent Jacob to Egypt while promising that his descendants would return to the land. All of this before Sinai, none of it affected, at all, by the New Covenant’s ability to welcome Jew and Gentile alike at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb.

“Yeshua clarifies His relationship to Torah and guides us away from replacement theology in a critical verse in the Gospel of Matthew.” – 4.5

To say that Matthew 5:17 is critical to the HRM view isn’t strong enough; it comes up as often as Jeremiah 31. When an organization or movement is dependent upon their particular, and unique, interpretation of a handful of passages of scripture, and reluctant to talk about any others, huge warning sirens should be going off.

{Parallel: the JW and John 1:1}

“His relationship to Torah”... What needs to be clarified? Jesus is Lord of the Torah, just as he is Lord of the Sabbath {Mt. 12:8}, because he is God. God gave this covenant to Moses at Sinai, God can give another. He has that right.

FFOZ makes a big deal about Jesus being subservient to the Torah, it reflects their subordinationism, but it is heretical. Jesus chooses to obey the Law for the sake of his mission to be a spotless sacrifice, but he taught as one with authority OVER the Law, not under it.

“Replacement theology teaches that Yeshua canceled the Torah. Abolishing the Torah means also abolishing the Land, the People, and the Scriptures of Israel. Replacement theology makes Jesus anti-Jewish.” – 4.5

Hyperbole much?

None of these conclusions are envisioned by the writers of the NT who were operating under the New Covenant.

None of these conclusions are orthodox Christian beliefs.

“This is probably as strong a statement about the enduring and unending authority of the Torah as any rabbi has ever made at any time.” – 4.7

If you ignore, “until all is accomplished.” FFOZ brushes this off as a reference to the World To Come (i.e. after the Messianic Era), but when Jesus cried out, “It is finished!” the curtain in the Temple tore in two from top to bottom {Mt. 27:51}. Funny how I’ve never seen FFOZ discuss that key verse...

Again, the Torah, all of it, not just the Law of Moses that FFOZ focuses on, retains its authority in the New Covenant {2 Timothy 3:16}. We uphold the value of everything that God has given by revelation. The promises to Abraham didn’t lose their authority when the Mosaic covenant was given, even though that further revelation superseded the former, the same holds true here.

“Most Christians believe the Torah’s commandments are too difficult – so why would Yeshua have made them even harder? However, Deuteronomy 30:11 says, ‘This commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you.’” - 4.7

It would take a separate video to delve into Paul’s argument in *Romans*, in a nutshell what FFOZ is missing here is that nobody has ever fully kept the Law except Jesus. Jesus’ teachings about heart obedience did indeed make the Law harder, but that simply makes an impossible task more difficult. The text in Dt. 30 is addressed to the nation as a whole; collectively they could keep the Law well enough to enjoy God’s blessings and avoid God’s curses, that is a different standard than fully keeping the Law as an individual.

At the very least, this statement from FFOZ about our ability to keep Torah is a red herring, at worst it is opening the door to prideful works-righteousness.

“As for the famous verse in which Yeshua ‘declared all foods clean,’ well, that’s not actually what it says in the Greek text behind Mark 7. That’s an unfortunate rendering by an English translator.” - 4.10

FFOZ is ignoring the most plausible understanding of the text with this attack on translators (one they commonly make).

Mark 7:17-19 After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. 18 “Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? 19 For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)

The NIV’s use of parenthesis accurately reflects Mark’s intent. These were not words spoken by Jesus, they are inspired authorial commentary reflecting back on that moment from the perspective of the now-established New Covenant explaining that Jesus’ words were prophetic as they pointed to what was coming. All foods were not clean at

the time (New Covenant not yet established), but they soon would be, as Peter's vision in *Acts* demonstrated.

"The old King James Version is a lot more accurate...In other words, he's talking about going to the bathroom, not about overturning the Torah's dietary laws." – 4.11

Time to shop for a translation that fits the FFOZ agenda...What the KJV is here is literal, it doesn't convey authorial meaning, that still needs to be interpreted.

One thing that FFOZ doesn't mention is that the original Greek text was all in caps with no spaces and no punctuation. There is no definitive way to tell at times in the Gospel if Jesus is still speaking or if the author is inserting commentary by way of explanation. Often this won't affect the meaning, so it garners little attention, but in this case...

Mark 7:19 King James Version

19 Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats?

Mark 7:19 New King James Version

because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, [a]thus purifying all foods?"

Footnotes

Mark 7:19 NU sets off the final phrase as Mark's comment that Jesus has declared all foods clean.

{ "NU" is an abbreviation for the Nestle-Aland and United Bible Societies Greek New Testament texts. }

"What about all those arguments with the Pharisees? Those arguments are the best evidence of all that Yeshua remained thoroughly Jewish and within Judaism. We argue over the details of religion and religious convictions only with those inside the same religion." – 4.11

On one level, this insanity is spit-take worthy. More on that with the next set of quotes. On another level, it is saying something nobody denies and is thus inconsequential. Of course, Jesus and the Pharisees were arguing within the same religious belief system, nobody at all is claiming that Jesus didn't fully keep the Law, it was key to his mission.

FFOZ wants us to believe that Jesus didn't change anything and thus he and the Pharisees continued to be working within the same system **after** his death and resurrection. In other words, that he wanted his followers to worship alongside his unrepentant murderers, respecting the authority of the Pharisees and Sanhedrin. {Hold that thought}

"Theologically, Yeshua and His disciples agreed with the Pharisees." – 4.11

"Yeshua's disputes with the Pharisees indicate their close theological proximity." – 4.14

"8. Why did Yeshua argue with the Pharisees so often?" – 4.15

On a very superficial level one could list the things that both the Pharisees and Jesus believed/taught, which is exactly what FFOZ does:

"the existence of the human soul, the existence of angels and demons, the existence of an afterlife, reward and punishment after death, and the future resurrection of the dead. This is also the fundamental theology of the New Testament." – 4.11

In a long list of sub-par hermeneutical and interpretive choices from FFOZ, this one stands out. The thing is, FFOZ has to believe that the Pharisees are on the right track, they have to be the good guys, just a bit off-track with that whole wanting to murder Jesus thing, because the Pharisees are the origin of the rabbinic authority FFOZ exalts as the only lens to interpret the New Testament.

Are we really to believe that Jesus and the Pharisees agreed on everything important, that he might as well have been a Pharisee himself?

Is that how the Gospels portray the Pharisees? Isn't that what should matter to us?

Question: If the Pharisees, ardent keepers of Torah, were 99% correct in their views, how on earth did they fail to recognize Jesus (champion of the Torah as FFOZ portrays him) as the Messiah? Wouldn't Jesus be the ultimate Pharisee hero {And the Apostle Paul for that matter}? FFOZ must account for the visceral hatred of Jesus and all of his followers by the Pharisees, especially since they overcame their generations long feud with the Sadducees to oppose him.

Yeshua did not reject the Pharisees and the teachers of the Torah. He didn't even object to their authority. Instead, Yeshua acknowledged and endorsed the God-given authority of Jewish religious leaders when He told his disciples:" – 4.12

Followed by a quote of Matthew 23:2-3a, but crucially, not 3b. Why is that?

Seriously? Jesus didn't reject them or their authority? Do the Gospel accounts matter at all?

"The scribe and Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe."
(Matthew 23:3-3) – 4.12

The way FFOZ treats the text of Matthew 23 here is disgusting. They spit in the face of the actual context of Jesus' words to twist them into the opposite meaning. They should be, but are not, ashamed of themselves here.

Mathew 23:3 So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach

If only we were to read the whole verse we would see that FFOZ is lying to you because Jesus' words are obviously, contextually, a brutal biting sarcasm. How do I know? CONTEXT!!

Matthew 23:1-36 Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples: 2 "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. 3 So you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. 4 They tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.

5 "Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; 6 they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; 7 they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called 'Rabbi' by others.

8 "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. 9 And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. 10 Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah. 11 The greatest among you will be your servant. 12 For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

Seven Woes on the Teachers of the Law and the Pharisees

13 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

15 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when you have succeeded, you make them twice as much a child of hell as you are.

16 "Woe to you, blind guides! You say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gold of the temple is bound by that oath.' 17 You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred?

18 You also say, 'If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gift on the altar is bound by that oath.' 19 You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? 20 Therefore, anyone who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. 21 And anyone who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. 22 And anyone who swears by heaven swears by God's throne and by the one who sits on it.

23 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected

the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. 24 You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.

25 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. 26 Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

27 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. 28 In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

29 “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. 30 And you say, ‘If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ 31 So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Go ahead, then, and complete what your ancestors started!

33 “You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell? 34 Therefore I am sending you prophets and sages and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify; others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. 35 And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berekiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. 36 Truly I tell you, all this will come on this generation.

This is the context FFOZ ignores, not even quoting Jesus’ whole sentence, in order to rehabilitate the image of the Pharisees. Why do they care so much about the Pharisees? We all know why, to uphold rabbinic authority and Torah supremacy.

Why would anyone trust this organization’s interpretation of God’s Holy Word?

FYI, this is supposed to be a lesson about Jesus...

“The Torah defines sin. Sin is the transgression of the Torah’s commandments.” – 4.12

Romans 5:12-14 Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned—

13 To be sure, sin was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not charged against anyone’s account where there is no law. 14 Nevertheless, death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, who is a pattern of the one to come.

The thing is, sin is MORE than just disobeying the Law of Moses. Sin existed before the Law, and all who perish apart from the Law are still dead in their trespasses and sins. This is the primary argument of the Apostle Paul’s argument in *Romans* with respect to Gentile guilt before God. So, why such a narrow definition when the biblical text in both *Genesis* and *Romans* shows it to be incomplete, at best? As previously stated, Torah supremacy is the idol being embraced by FFOZ (and those like them in the HRM).

Question: What about sin not mentioned in Torah?

FYI, this is supposed to be a lesson about Jesus.

“Replacement theology has completely misrepresented Yeshua. Yeshua did not come to cancel the Torah or bring an end to the Law. The promised land is still the promised land. The Jewish people are still the chosen people in covenant with God. The Scriptures of Israel retain their integrity. The whole Bible is standing on a firm foundation.” – 4.12

Take note of the Straw Man hysteria employed by FFOZ in order to promote Torah’s ongoing centrality. None of this is a true reaction to the teachings of the Church, and none of it reckons with the implications of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.

Conclusion: The lesson is supposedly about the Jewish Jesus, but the proof is in the pages; it is really about the supremacy of Torah over all

things, including Jesus.

To accomplish this goal, the very words of Jesus are manipulated, shorn of their context to assert a meaning antithetical to the Gospels' intent. You be the judge of who is misrepresenting Jesus.

Lesson Five: The Disciples

This is a relatively straight-forward lesson, the bulk of which is focused on the idea that discipleship is a significant burden, something not to be entered into lightly. On that level, I agree because that is how Jesus and the NT scriptures describe it.

The Church would benefit from more intentional and serious discipleship. In fact, it has been my observation that it is the desire for just that rigor that FFOZ utilizes to draw some of its followers away from the Church. Ironical? Yes, and frightening.

"Yeshua employed the Jewish ritual of immersion – baptism – to symbolize entrance into His school of discipleship. The community of Yeshua's disciples is called the ekklesia in the New Testament. This word is commonly translated as 'church' but literally means 'assembly.'" – 5.1

We will return to the idea of the origins of baptism later, for now note the oft-used fable promoted by FFOZ that the Church does not exist in the NT...In case you think they're being profound, there are many words in the Bible, or any other written work that is being translated, that "literally" mean something other than the word(s) translators chose to convey the author's intended meaning.

There is nothing mysterious or conspiratorial about this practice, the whole point of a good translation is to convey meaning, not literalism. A

“literal” translation of the Bible would be profoundly difficult to understand in any receptor language. {Think about idioms: “pushing up daisies” is the literal translation of the German Gänseblümchen hochschieben. (Kicked the bucket would be English’s version) Some may be able to guess that it is talking about death, wouldn’t a more accurate translation make that connection clear?}

FFOZ routinely takes advantage of widespread ignorance about how languages and translations work, employing the trope of “literal” meaning when it suits their purpose.

“The Hebrew word for disciple is talmid (plural: talmidim).” – 5.2

This word only occurs once in the OT:

1 Chronicles 25:8 Young and old alike, teacher as well as student, cast lots for their duties.

μαθητής (*mathētēs*) occurs 261 times in the NT, plus 4 uses in verbal form.

Once again we see FFOZ claiming that a Hebrew term/concept is the same (actually, the controlling definition) as one in the NT {recall the debacle in lesson 2 of “chen = charis = favor”}, with zero consideration that it might not be exactly the same idea in both the OT and NT. Were Jesus’ followers *talmidim*? The assumption with FFOZ is always full continuity, no need to establish it.

In this case the difference between a talmid and a mathetes may be small, even inconsequential, but the methodology of not letting the NT speak for itself has disastrous consequences other times it is employed, as with what was done to works, grace, and faith in lesson 2.

Question: Since talmid only occurs in the OT one time, where does the detailed meaning of it that FFOZ employs in this lesson come from? Extra-biblical sources. In the end, it is they, not the NT, that FFOZ will use to define what a true disciple of Jesus must be.

“First-century disciples could follow their rabbi and watch his every move, constantly learning about the Torah. While we wait

for Yeshua's return, we must rely on the eyewitness accounts of His life and teachings – the Gospels.” – 5.3

Two big things: (1) Jesus' disciples didn't watch his every move to learn about Torah. Why would they? He is the Son of God, the very Word of God. Watch Jesus to learn about God! Why look back at the intermediary of the Torah when you have the honest-to-goodness Immanuel among you?

This is thus another example of the diminishment of the person of Jesus (subordinationism) by FFOZ.

(2) Yes! We must **rely** on the Gospels to learn about Jesus. So, why is FFOZ obsessed with pointing us to the Torah instead? Why the need to rely on extra-biblical sources as the lens through which to read the Gospels? I truly wish they actually did rely upon the Gospels, and not other non-inspired texts, and all of the four Gospels, not just cherry-picked verses like Mt 5:17.

“You had to follow him around and eat with him. You had to dress and act like him...In a Jewish context, real discipleship meant radical imitation of one's teacher in every aspect of life.” – 5.3

Given that the “Jewish context” is inherently the correct one in FFOZ's framework, this is a not-very-subtle endorsement of full Torah observance by Jew and Gentile alike. One Law may be unofficially kaput with FFOZ, but its rationale remains.

Perhaps rote copying isn't the best way to be a disciple? I know that FFOZ assumes that whatever 2nd Temple Judaism did in the 1st century must be normative, but in this case that kind of discipleship is a dead-end street. What copying mannerisms and style does is freeze discipleship into **human** cultural expressions, just as much of Islam is frozen in 6th and 7th century Arab cultural expressions.

FFOZ has expressed antagonism toward understanding the spirit of the commands of God and seeking to apply them to diverse circumstances with wisdom, preferring to rely upon “literal” obedience. {See: Beginning of

Wisdom lesson #48}

This is the path of legalistic fundamentalism (ironic given how much Daniel and Jacob seem to be reacting against that upbringing).

Even though FFOZ's ideas are radical and ever-changing now, given time this methodology will likely result in calcified dogmatic adherence to the particular expressions of Torah observance of the movement's founder, i.e. Boaz Michael.

"Regardless of what type of baptism you might prefer, all of them originate in a simple Jewish purification ritual." – 5.9

"All forms of Christian baptism derive from Jewish ritual immersion." – 5.12

The origins, meaning, and purpose of Christian baptism are much too big a topic for this short rebuttal. Suffice it to say, while John the Baptist and Jesus are certainly utilizing the existing cultural expression of ritualistic washing (an idea not unique to the Jewish people in the A.N.E.), they are in fact giving it new importance and usage beyond its origins.

There is no problem with considering where the idea of baptism originated, but its usage by John and Jesus, and its profound symbolism as expressed by the Apostle Paul, go far beyond the ideas of ritual purity expressed in Judaism.

Christian baptism is not about ritual purity, in the New Covenant we have been forever washed clean by the blood of Christ, the old rituals of purification (i.e. clean and unclean) are no longer needed; thanks be to God!

"A disciple apprentices himself to a teacher in order to learn Torah." – 5.12

This would be true of a Jewish disciple studying under any ordinary rabbi, but what about Jesus? What did his disciples follow him to learn?

Conclusion:

This lesson continues the HaYesod focus of uplifting Torah in every context, here mostly by implying that to be a proper disciple of Jesus one must eat, dress, and act just like him.

The reality of true devoted discipleship of Jesus is a matter of the heart and mind, deeper and more profound than what we eat or how we dress. We need to **be** like Jesus, not pretend to be living with him in the 1st century.

Lesson Six: The Kingdom of Heaven

What this lesson reveals is a FFOZ hyper-focused on the specific time-period and geographic location of Jesus' earthly ministry, but at the same time disconnected from the growth of that ministry beyond the 1st century Jewish people and Israel after his death and resurrection as the Holy Spirit led the Early Church.

"Yeshua's message, the 'good news' – the gospel – is summed up in the Gospels as, 'Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand.' the idea of the 'kingdom of heaven' is the foundation and centerpiece of all of Yeshua's teaching. 'The kingdom of heaven' is another way of saying 'the kingdom of God,' a term that describes God's reinstatement of the Davidic monarchy and restoration of the people of Israel to their land." – 6.1

FFOZ's version of the Gospel is primarily a nationalistic one. That this cannot be the true message of Jesus in the Gospels is made very clear by Jesus when he refuses, repeatedly, to fulfill the role of the Messianic warrior-king who would overthrow Rome and establish a new Davidic Kingdom. IF Jesus' Gospel was centered on a renewed Israelite kingdom, he failed, for no such kingdom was established for over 1,900 years.

If “kingdom of God” = “kingdom of Heaven” = Davidic monarchy...

Why would the Jewish people believe that Jesus was/is the Messiah when he refused to establish a new kingdom, even AFTER his resurrection?

Examples of Jesus refusing the nationalistic call:

Matthew 22:21 “Caesar’s,” they replied. Then he said to them, “So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”

Matthew 26:52 “Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.

Mark 8:36 What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul?

John 6:15 Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

John 17:16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.

John 18:36 Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.”

Acts 1:6-8 Then they gathered around him and asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” 7 He said to them: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

The refusal of Jesus to limit his kingdom to this world was echoed throughout the NT:

2 Corinthians 10:3-4 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.

Ephesians 2:19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

Philippians 3:20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,

1 Peter 2:11 Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul.

"He didn't come to replace the Jewish people; He came with a promise of their national redemption. He asked them to respond to this good news with repentance – by turning from sin and living in obedience to the Torah." – 6.1

There are two fundamental flaws in FFOZ's version of the Gospel message of Jesus: (1) The 1st century Jewish community in Judea was already solidly Torah observant.

The idolatry and worship of false gods that had plagued Israel until the Exile were no longer much of an issue. If Torah observance was THE answer, why did Jesus oppose the Pharisees instead of supporting their mission?

(2) Torah observance will not save anyone. The rejection of Jesus as the Messiah/Savior overrides any level of Torah observance. Obeying the commands of God while rejecting his Son is still rebellion against God. When Paul agonized in *Romans* over the failure of his people, it wasn't insufficient Torah observance that he bemoaned, but a rejection of Jesus.

"Yeshua was a rabbi – a teacher. But what did He teach? He rarely taught about the afterlife. More often, He taught the Torah." – 6.2

I honestly don't know how to respond to, *"He rarely taught about the afterlife."* Do we really need to list all the times Jesus taught about it?

Matthew 6:20 {treasures in heaven}, 7:13-14 {narrow gate}, 13:47-50 {weeping and gnashing of teeth}, 25:31-46 {sheep and goats}
Mark 10:21 {treasure in heaven}
Luke 10:20 {names written in heaven}, 16:19-31 {Rich Man and Lazarus}, 18:22 {treasure in heaven}
John 3:16 {everlasting life}, 11:25-26 {I am the resurrection}, 14:1-4 {In my father's house}

Also: The Olivet Discourse in Mt. 24, Mk. 13, Lk. 21 {The End Times, being prepared for the coming judgment}

Also, *"He taught the Torah"* is once again remarkably dismissive of the authority of Jesus' teachings. Did Jesus utilize the Hebrew Scriptures in his teachings? Absolutely. Were his teachings connected to them? Very much so. Yet Jesus taught an expansive (everyone is my neighbor, even my enemy) and deep (not just actions, judging the thoughts and attitudes of the heart) discipleship that went beyond what God had revealed through Moses at Sinai.

{i.e. Jesus didn't "literally" teach the Torah, he taught as one with authority over it.}

"In a Jewish context, the 'good news' referred to the good news of God's redemption of the nation of Israel. We find the 'good news' in the prophecies of Isaiah...It's a message of national redemption and restoration. – 6.2-3

The prophets absolutely speak of national revival and the reign of the Messiah. But that wasn't Jesus' goal when he came in the flesh and dwelt among us, in this case the *"Jewish context"* was wrong, Jesus' aims and purposes were greater than these, he wasn't what they expected/desired.

Those prophecies will be fulfilled, but the Good News of Jesus is actually far MORE important than such things. Saving souls is more important than any earthly kingdom, even that of Israel in the Holy Land.

“Today this prophecy is fulfilled in your hearing.’ This prophecy is about the final redemption: the restoration of the land and the people of Israel.” – 6.3 {referring to Isaiah 61:1-4}

If Jesus had no intention at this time of bringing about a restoration of the land of the people of Israel, how could the prophecy have been fulfilled in their hearing? Maybe, just maybe, Jesus’ usage of Isaiah’s prophecy was greater than even the prophet himself would have imagined.

Isaiah 61

*The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
² to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
³ and provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to bestow on them a crown of beauty
instead of ashes,
the oil of joy
instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise
instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the Lord
for the display of his splendor.
⁴ They will rebuild the ancient ruins
and restore the places long devastated;
they will renew the ruined cities
that have been devastated for generations.
⁵ Strangers will shepherd your flocks;
foreigners will work your fields and vineyards.
⁶ And you will be called priests of the Lord,
you will be named ministers of our God.*

*You will feed on the wealth of nations,
 and in their riches you will boast.*
⁷ *Instead of your shame
 you will receive a double portion,
 and instead of disgrace
 you will rejoice in your inheritance.*
*And so you will inherit a double portion in your land,
 and everlasting joy will be yours.*
⁸ *“For I, the Lord, love justice;
 I hate robbery and wrongdoing.
 In my faithfulness I will reward my people
 and make an everlasting covenant with them.*
⁹ *Their descendants will be known among the nations
 and their offspring among the peoples.*
*All who see them will acknowledge
 that they are a people the Lord has blessed.”*
¹⁰ *I delight greatly in the Lord;
 my soul rejoices in my God.*
*has clothed me with garments of salvation
 and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness,
 as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest,
 and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.*
¹¹ *For as the soil makes the sprout come up
 and a garden causes seeds to grow,
 so the Sovereign Lord will make righteousness
 and praise spring up before all nations.*

Jesus did not literally fulfill everything that is mentioned in Isaiah 61, which makes FFOZ's use of this passage to portray Jesus' Gospel as a nationalistic one, even more off-base in the context of Luke 4. Once again, FFOZ is ignoring the context of scripture to twist it to their own viewpoint. Let's see what was actually happening when Jesus spoke those words...

Luke 4:14-30 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. 15 He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. 16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of

the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

*18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." 22 All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked. 23 Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself!' And you will tell me, 'Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.'" 24 "Truly I tell you," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. 25 I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. 26 Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. 27 And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian." 28 All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. 29 They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him off the cliff. 30 But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

Question: In context, is Jesus preaching a message of the restoration of the Land and the People of Israel? Is that what Luke wanted his audience to hear?

Note: Luke 4:25-29, is this a message of national restoration? Why did Jesus talk instead about Gentiles. Why did they try to kill him for saying what he did?

Note: Jesus chose to end the quote of Isaiah at 61:2a, FFOZ wants to emphasize 61:4 while skipping 61:3.

Takeaway: The repeated instances in *HaYesod* of the context of Gospel quotes being purposefully ignored is a massive red flag, this is not how God-honoring exegesis is done.

“Yeshua taught his students the good news. From the Jewish perspective, the term ‘good news’ refers to the good news about the redemption of the nation of Israel and the reign of God” – 6.4

The repetition underlines that this is the key point (false as it is) that FFOZ wants its followers to learn about the Good News. This was indeed the “Jewish perspective,” but Jesus didn’t embrace it, he rejected it, and Jesus offered them so much more as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

“When he instructed us to ‘seek first the kingdom of God,’ He meant that we were to seek the restoration of Israel and the Jewish people.” – 6.6

By now you shouldn’t be surprised to learn that this isn’t what Jesus meant by, “seek first the kingdom of God” in Matthew 6:33. Time for the context of scripture once more.

Matthew 6:1-4 – giving to the needy

Matthew 6:5-13 – prayer

Matthew 6:14-15 – forgiving others

Matthew 6:16-18 – fasting

Matthew 6:19-21 – treasures in heaven

Matthew 6:22-23 – “The eye is the lamp of the body”

Matthew 6:24-25 – Can’t love God and money

Matthew 7:1-2 – do not judge

Matthew 7:3-5 – specks and planks in eyes

Matthew 7:6 – pearls before swine

Are any of these about, *“the restoration of Israel and the Jewish people”*? What about the immediate context? Why not look about what Jesus was talking about when he said these words?

25 “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life[e]?

28 “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 **But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.** 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

“For Jewish people living in the days of Yeshua, the word ‘repent’ meant to quit breaking God’s commandments and turn back to the Torah. As a prophet, Yeshua foresaw a coming time of darkness and exile. But He also knew that if the nation repented, God would bring the Messianic Era instead of exile.” – 6.7

To call this bonkers is too kind. Jesus would have set up the Messianic Kingdom right then and there IF Isreal had returned **to Torah?**

What about accepting him as the Messiah? Isn’t that important in all this? You need the Messiah to have the Messianic Kingdom, don’t you?

What about Gospel proclamation to the nations in fulfillment of the promise to Abraham?

In a not happy coincidence, FFOZ’s viewpoint is very similar to that of the Apostate Bart Ehrman, who in a blog post in 2015 wrote, “Jesus’ proclamation was all about the coming kingdom of God. He was an

apocalypticist who believed that God would soon intervene in the course of history, overthrow the forces of evil, and establish a good (and very real, political) kingdom here on earth. His listeners had to turn to God in preparation for this imminent end.”

{FYI, Ehrman teaches that Jesus didn't believe he was God, and that he didn't rise from the dead.}

“In other words, the gospel message was about the Land, the People, and the Scriptures of Israel. Yeshua wanted the people of Israel to repent by turning back to the Scriptures of Israel so that they would not be driven from the land of Israel. Unfortunately, the collective nation did not heed the message.” – 6.7

They did not heed the message because they rejected the messenger. Jesus told the parable of the Tenants for a reason. Scripture records no post-Exile prophets warning of a 2nd Exile. Even John the Baptist didn't include such a warning. The first Exile was preceded by a host of warnings from prophets over multiple generations. If a repeat of that judgment was near at the time of Christ, why had God been silent since *Malachi*?

Continuing the pattern, FFOZ's emphasis is on the rejection of Torah, not the rejection of Jesus. The Gospel accounts are repeatedly clear about which is the most important, if you know Jesus you know the Father as well (John 14:9).

“All of this is in the future, but there is a sense in which we can enter the kingdom of heaven right now by becoming citizens of the kingdom. To become a citizen of the kingdom, we just need to cast our allegiance with the King.” – 6.10

Citizens of the Kingdom in a sense? No thank you, I'll take the assurance of the very real thing offered by scripture:

Romans 8:14-17 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your

adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

{Don't sell short what God has already accomplished for those who are in Christ}

"Repentance is turning from sin and obeying God's commandments in the Torah." – 6.11

It is to those living under the covenant at Sinai. However, in a biblical sense utilizing the whole counsel of God, repentance is more than what is contained in Torah, and repentance cannot please God if Jesus Christ is not one's savior.

Conclusion:

Within the Gospel accounts, FFOZ's focus is too narrow, when the whole of the NT is also in view, it is tragically short of what Jesus accomplished and the Amazing Grace the true Gospel offers to the whole world.

Lesson Seven: The Jewish Paul

How one overturns the traditional understanding of the Apostle Paul is central to any Hebrew Roots Movement teacher or organization.

Some choose to write him off as a false teacher and condemn him. What FFOZ does is much more subtle, and thus more dangerous.

They piggyback on modern scholarship, the New Perspective On Paul, to twist the plain meaning of his writings into the opposite of what

Christians have always believed them to be saying. That process includes a radical reimagining of *Acts* {see lesson 8}.

“Contrast this with Paul’s own account in Philippians 3:4-8... ‘Confidence in the flesh’ means _____ Paul is saying, ‘If anyone has good credentials for being an apostle and teacher, I have better credentials.’ – 7.2

It actually means so much more, IF you look at the whole context...

Philippians 3:1-9 (NIV) Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. 2 Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— 4 though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.

7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

As they did blatantly with quoting Jesus out-of-context in earlier lessons, so too is the full meaning of Paul’s message in *Philippians* obscured by omitting the context. The dangerous pattern continues to be repeated in *HaYesod*.

So, is Paul only saying here that he has better apostolic/teaching credentials? Not at all, instead Paul is making a much more important point, one FFOZ rejects: Paul has a better case for works-righteousness,

that is, legalistic salvation by works, than anyone else, but he counts all such efforts as “garbage” because only faith in Jesus Christ can save us.

Why would FFOZ seek to obscure that key message against legalism? It is their contention that Paul isn’t talking about legalism when he warns about the “works of the Law,” they need to do that in order to proclaim Torah observance as the foundation of discipleship in Jesus. Which makes Paul’s intended meaning problematic, it needs to go.

“You may be surprised to learn that the term Pharisee does not mean ‘hypocrite.’ It was a sect of Judaism with a particular set of beliefs.” – 7.3

In lesson 6 we saw the bold claim that Jesus mostly agreed with the Pharisees. Here the image rehabilitation of the Pharisees continues with an effort to portray the movement as simply a sect of Judaism. In reality, for FFOZ’s purposes, the Pharisees are the only 1st century sect of Judaism that matters because it is their heritage, and not those of other viewpoints within Judaism in Jesus’ day, that was codified as the Talmud. The Talmud is what FFOZ routinely quotes to share the “Jewish viewpoint” of Rabbinic Judaism.

Which means that the Pharisees cannot be wrong, not about anything fundamental, because FFOZ is proclaiming that this viewpoint is what Jesus intended his followers to not only follow and be a part of, but he also wanted them to obey the authority of the Pharisees (i.e. Rabbinic Judaism).

Note: This Pharisaic viewpoint is the one that FFOZ utilizes as the only proper lens to interpret the NT. It is embraced even when contrary to the writings of the Early Church Fathers.

“Paul is not bragging about the fact that he persecuted believers, but he is bragging about the fact that he was so passionate about his faith that he even went so far as to campaign against those he at first perceived to be heretics.” – 7.4

This statement is flawed on multiple levels:

(1) Saul of Tarsus before he met Jesus on the road to Damascus was NOT living by faith. A “faith” that includes murderous hatreds is no genuine salvific faith.

(2) Saul didn’t “campaign” against Jesus’ followers, he participated in murdering one of them and tried to arrest and kill others,

(3) “first perceived” is a major understatement. Saul was absolutely convinced that they were heretics worthy of death until he met the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus.

Why is FFOZ downplaying the significance of Saul’s (and the entire leadership of Judaism at this point) hatred of Jesus’ followers?

Remember, FFOZ believes there is no Church in the NT, only a sect of Judaism, so minimizing the gulf between those who saw Jesus as a fraud and those who worshiped him as the Risen Lord is necessary to fit that narrative.

Think about how incompatible these two ideas are:

(1) Jesus and the Pharisees only argued because they mostly agreed, it was a family squabble,

(2) after they murdered him, the Pharisaic movement (along with the Sadducees and Sanhedrin) were determined to stamp out any further signs of devotion to Jesus.

If Jesus’ followers were a sect WITHIN Judaism, why view them as heretics at all? Why the consistent extra-judicial (violating the Law) violence toward them?

After quoting Philippians 3:7-8...

“If we were to end our study of Paul with these verses, we would conclude, as so many have, that when Saul became a disciple of Yeshua, he renounced Judaism and walked away from the Torah to convert to Christianity.” – 7.5

Back to the lack of context for Philippians 3:4-8 (i.e. 1-3 and 9-11).

In context, Paul's words are not about establishing his own authority, rather they are a proclamation of how little his prior life as a devout Pharisee means to him today. Why? Because he found in Jesus true righteousness, a righteousness apart from the law.

Let's take a closer look at vs. 9, one verse after FFOZ stops quoting the text...

Philippians 3:9 (NIV)

and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

Question: Did the Pharisees with whom Jesus regularly contended believe they have a righteousness "from the law"?

The Gospels portray them as overflowing with self-righteousness, as well as contempt for the "sinners" they believed were unworthy of God's grace. Are we really to believe Paul maintained this viewpoint after realizing that Jesus truly is the Messiah?

"Many modern scholars have formulated a new premise regarding Paul: Paul differed from other faithful Jews of his day only in that he believed Yeshua of Nazareth to be the Messiah." – 7.6

What a stunning sentence: "**only in**"?? Really? Is it a small thing for one group of Jews to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah (as well as the Son of God, a member of the Trinity) and another group to think of them as heretics for that profession of faith?

It is shocking to hear this eternal destiny altering distinction minimized as if it were a small difference of opinion.

Remember: FFOZ has hinted in multiple publications that Torah observant Jews may not need to acknowledge Jesus as their Savior at all in order to please God.

{See Lesson 8 for the idea that Paul has a separate Gospel message than that of Peter/James for the Jewish people}

In the end, the idea that Saul of Tarsus and Paul the Apostle believed and thought all of the same things, with “only” his view of Jesus changing, is entirely foreign to *Acts* or any of Paul’s letters.

The Damascus Road experience didn’t fundamentally change Paul? If he was only wrong about Jesus, why was his heart full of murderous rage? Paul’s “fruit” as a Pharisee was rotten and diseased.

“This is how our faith looked in the days of the apostles: Torah-observant Jews. Faith in Yeshua should make a Jewish disciple zealous for the Torah. That’s what repentance is all about. The natural result of faith in Yeshua is that people should be zealous for Torah.” – 7.6

Are we not counting the faith of the Gentiles? That certainly existed in the days of the apostles.

What about being zealous for the teachings of Jesus? What about the instructions of the Apostles and the guidance of the Holy Spirit?

Once again, FFOZ does not believe anyone is living in the New Covenant, everything must look back to Sinai, the focus can’t even be on the Son of God.

“teaching Jews to break their covenant obligations makes Paul a heretic.” – 7.7

Do you see the presupposition inherent in this statement? How an argument is framed can be crucial.

Covenant obligations? They didn’t have any anymore. Why? Because of the finished work of Jesus Christ and his victory over sin and death. This is a fundamental teaching of the NT about the New Covenant that FFOZ utterly rejects in favor of an ongoing (eternal) obligation for everyone everywhere to covenant at Sinai.

“Advocates of replacement theology claim that Paul hid his negative feelings about Judaism and took a nazirite vow only as a concession to James and to smooth things over with the other apostles. However, this interpretation should be rejected, as it casts serious doubts on Paul’s integrity and credibility.” – 7.8

FFOZ’s reimagining of *Acts* ignores human nature and Paul’s chosen testimony about his motives and methods: When Paul returns to Jerusalem with the donation for the poor he collected from the Gentile brethren, the situation is critical, a tinderbox. Also, Paul has already been warned by a prophet (*Acts* 21:10-14) that persecution awaits him in Jerusalem. It is this context that informs his actions.

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. 23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

*“If Paul wanted to make a theological statement about grace vs. Torah, *Acts* 21 would have been the time to do it. Instead, he consented to go through with the plan to prove to everyone that he was obedient to Torah. Any seemingly contrary statements from his epistles must be weighed against *Acts* 21.” – 7.8*

A surefire sign of trouble: When one uses unstated (by the author) insights into a narrative account to OVERRULE the very words that person chose to speak or write.

FFOZ’s logic is this: If Paul wasn’t willing to risk his life and the lives of the

entire Jerusalem Christian community by provoking a riot, we should ignore the things he chose to write both before and after this incident.

What if, and hear me out on this radical theory, the Apostle Paul followed his own stated method from 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 by actually being who the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem needed him to be for the sake of the Gospel. Can we imagine a scenario where Paul does what he said he would do for the reasons he said he would do it?

“Any seemingly contrary statements from his epistles” is carrying a lot of water. By this they mean multiple statements in multiple letters written over time all of which tell a different story than FFOZ’s view of Acts 21.

One non-contextual interpretation of Paul’s motives is used to overthrow his purposeful statements of theological truth. This is beyond irresponsible.

“From the time of his arrest in Acts 21...” – 7.9

Wait a minute? I thought Paul was a faithful Pharisee in full enthusiastic observance of the Law of Moses? So why was he public enemy #1 in Jerusalem? Why such hatred for a man who “only” disagreed about Jesus?

Lesson 7 quotes Acts 21:3 and Acts 23:6, but curiously skips vs. 2-5, why might that be?

“Paul testified under oath before the Sanhedrin that he continued to be a Pharisee.” – 7.10

Acts 23:1-11 Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, “My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day.” 2 At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. 3 Then Paul said to him, “God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!”

4 Those who were standing near Paul said, “How dare you insult God’s high priest!”

5 Paul replied, “Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it

is written: 'Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.'"

6 Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead."

7 When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.

8 (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees believe all these things.)

9 There was a great uproar, and some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood up and argued vigorously. "We find nothing wrong with this man," they said. "What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" 10 The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them. He ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks.

11 The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."

FFOZ is only willing to quote Acts 23:6b because 6a entirely explains WHY Paul says what he says, and it isn't what FFOZ is trying to sell us.

"If Paul was actually an apostate no longer observing the commandments, then he perjured himself because the Pharisees were strictly Torah-observant." – 7.10

So, after being struck in the face (against the Law of Moses) by the thugs of a corrupt High Priest (vs. 2) whom Paul mocks with sarcasm (vs. 5), at a show trial where Paul knows that justice is not a factor, FFOZ is claiming that Paul could not have been willing to manipulate the internal divisions (vs. 6a) of those who want to kill him by pretending to still be a Pharisee?

"But after examining the evidence, the Pharisees who served as judges on the Sanhedrin ruled: 'We find nothing wrong with this man.' (Acts 23:9)" – 7.10

I do not know if Lancaster believes what he wrote here, if he does, he's drinking his own Kool-Aid.

At what point in the narrative was there any evidence presented? When was it thoughtfully examined?

What is happening instead? A bitter shouting match between long-time rival factions, one of which decides to use Paul as a pawn in their ongoing struggle. Note that it was the Pharisees that momentarily defended him because politics is a blood sport, Paul was once on their team, that's enough. In the end, the feud with the Sadducees outweighs even their hatred of Jesus' followers.

"In Acts 24, Paul stand trial before the Roman procurator Felix. His accusers are certain Sadducees who are hostile to the Pharisaic belief in the resurrection of the dead." – 7.10

It feels like a broken record, but once against let's actually look at the context, as usual it will render FFOZ's assertion untenable.

Acts 24:1-9 Five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor. 2 When Paul was called in, Tertullus presented his case before Felix: "We have enjoyed a long period of peace under you, and your foresight has brought about reforms in this nation. 3 Everywhere and in every way, most excellent Felix, we acknowledge this with profound gratitude. 4 But in order not to weary you further, I would request that you be kind enough to hear us briefly. 5 "We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect 6 and even tried to desecrate the temple; so we seized him. [7] 8 By examining him yourself you will be able to learn the truth about all these charges we are bringing against him." 9 The other Jews joined in the accusation, asserting that these things were true.

So, where does it say that Paul's accusers are hostile to the Pharisaic belief in the resurrection? Where does it say they are only from the party of the Sadducees?

Note the ongoing rehab of the Pharisaic reputation, overturing Paul is the #1 priority of this lesson, that seems to be priority #2.

“Unfortunately, many followers of Yeshua have been taught that Paul’s accusers were correct – that he no longer kept the Torah’s commandments. Let’s make sure we side with Paul and not his accusers!” – 7.11

Here’s the thing, we just read Acts 24:1-9, and that’s not what he was accused of. The primary charge was an attempt to “desecrate the temple” (by bringing a Gentile beyond the dividing wall).

FFOZ instead reframes the scene in order to make a laughable claim accusing the Church of siding with Paul’s accusers for the past 2,000 years. A smear worthy of a politician.

“The ‘customs of the fathers’ refers to what we call the Orah Torah, that is, the traditional interpretation of Torah and Jewish law.” – 7.12

This reference to Acts 28:17 is part of an attempt to make Oral Torah authoritative to Jesus’ followers, and in essence, authoritative over the NT.

“- Paul was still an observant Jew and Pharisee.”- 7.13

“- Paul upheld the Temple and customs of the Jewish people.” – 7.13

Except he wasn’t by his own admission. How do we know?

Note: FFOZ has already proclaimed that “seemingly contradictory statements” from the Epistles should be ignored.

Galatians 2:11-14 When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. 13 The other Jews

*joined him in his **hypocrisy**, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was **led astray**.*

*14 When I saw that they were not acting in line with **the truth of the gospel**, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to **follow Jewish customs**?"*

*"8. Why did Paul say that he regarded his Jewish credentials as 'rubbish.'"
– 7.14*

In FFOZ's warped paradigm there is absolutely no answer for this question. If he remained a proud Pharisee in full Torah observance, Philippians 3:7 makes no sense.

Conclusions:

(1) This lesson almost completely side-steps Paul's writings in favor of out-of-context interpretations of narrative moments in the book of *Acts*. What Paul chose to write, under inspiration, ought to be of primary importance, not relegated to secondary status because of the assumptions made by FFOZ about Paul's motives and choices.

{Paul's letters should inform our understanding of his actions chronicles in *Acts*, not be sidelined by what FFOZ thinks of *Acts* without them.}

(2) This lesson fails to address the contradiction at the heart of this fantasy reconstruction of *Acts*: IF Paul was fully Torah observant, a proud Pharisee, and a believer in the ongoing authority of the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin, why did they hate him so much? Saul hated Jesus' followers before his conversion experience, why if they were all enthusiastically upholding the traditions held sacred by 2nd Temple Judaism?

Lesson Eight: Torah for the Nations

With respect to this topic: the Gentile response to the Torah, FFOZ has shifted its stance multiple times over the years. They began with a hard One Law edict, but abandoned it after being rebuked by those in leadership in the MJ movement. After spending time advocating Divine Mandate and Divine Permission, they've arrived in a new place: Distinction Theology

"The apostles issued a directive that, in addition to observing the Torah's universal laws – the Noachide laws – the Gentile disciples of Yeshua should also observe a few additional prohibitions – the laws of the resident alien." – 8.1

I look forward to seeing where in the NT this directive is given. I'm sure the Apostles spent time explaining what it means to the Gentiles in the Diaspora to be a Ger Toshav ("resident alien") living in Israel (even though they were not)...

"Paul's epistles are dedicated to arguing his controversial interpretation of the gospel – something he refers to as 'my gospel.'" – 8.2

I'm out already. There is only one Gospel, Paul certainly didn't think he had a different one.

Romans 2:16 This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

Romans 16:25-26 Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, 26 but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith—

2 Timothy 2:8-9 Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended

from David. This is my gospel, 9 for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained.

"Paul sums up his controversial version of the good-news message in Ephesians 3. He claims that he received a special revelation about the gospel that had not been previously revealed." – 8.2 {emphasis mine}

Ok, so Paul refers to the Gospel as "the Gospel" 65 times, as "his gospel" (i.e. Jesus') 1 time, as "this gospel" 3 times, as "our gospel" 3 times, and as "my gospel" 3 times.

FFOZ will now attempt to paint the picture that Paul had a "controversial version" of the Gospel using Ephesians 3:3-7

There's one tiny problem, that revelation of the mystery wasn't exclusive to Paul, all the Apostles received it. They were taught it directly by Jesus, Paul was taught through divine revelation, but it was the same Gospel.

Ephesians 3:2-6 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. 6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

"Paul and Barnabas were living with the community of disciples in Antioch. They weren't assembling in churches as we know them. The Jewish and Gentile believers probably attended synagogue together, maybe the Synagogue of the Christians." – 8.3

The evidence for this being? There is zero evidence offered that the followers of Jesus in Antioch were not meeting together as a community

for prayer, worship, and fellowship (i.e. the Love Feast of Communion). There is also zero evidence that they were welcomed into the synagogues of Antioch. "Synagogue of the Christians"??

"To settle the matter, the leaders in Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas on a trip to Jerusalem." – 8.3

The leaders of what? FFOZ contends there is no Church in the NT. So, the leaders of what? The synagogue leaders? Really?...What we actually see in Acts 11 is the leaders of the Church at Antioch acting on their own authority, seeking answers from other followers of Jesus to an important question. Why seek answers from the Christians in Jerusalem if they were a part of the local synagogue? That rabbi could have settled any dispute, couldn't he??

"James 'the Just' was actually the leader of Yeshua's disciples, occupying a position even higher than the Twelve." – 8.3

How is it, then, that Jesus' half-brother has a "higher position" than the Twelve? He certainly takes a leadership role among the Jewish followers of Jesus in Jerusalem (which makes sense given the evangelistic role given by Jesus to the Twelve), but it would be disingenuous to look to him as THE leader of Jesus' disciples, or to say that his authority exceeds that of Jesus' chosen Apostles.

"When messengers sent from James arrived in Antioch to visit the community, Peter broke table fellowship with Gentile disciples and started eating only with Jews." – 8.3

And that's all they have to say about that. This is a huge moment in the Early Church that actually impacts FFOZ's primary focus (Torah observance) directly, yet it passes by with no comment.

Table Fellowship was a key issue, one the "Pharisee" Saul would have viewed differently than the Paul we find in *Acts*.

Galatians 2:11-16 When Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. 12 For before certain men came from

*James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. 13 The other Jews joined him in his **hypocrisy**, so that by their **hypocrisy** even Barnabas was **led astray**.*

*14 When I saw that **they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel**, I said to Cephas in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to **follow Jewish customs**?"*

15 "We who are Jews by birth and not sinful Gentiles 16 know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.

We know that Paul and Peter were eating with Gentile believers in Antioch, in violation of Oral Torah {which FFOZ believes to be authoritative and binding}. How could the Paul that FFOZ is promoting, one who is a zealous Pharisee who was still bound by the Law, not only take that action, but oppose Peter to his face as a hypocrite for not continuing in it? What was Peter's hypocrisy, why did he refer to Barnabas as being "led astray"?

"Today, it seems normal that Gentiles should be allowed to join God's people. But in Paul's time, this was a highly disruptive innovation. Remember, Paul grasped it only through a special, divine revelation from God. (Ephesians 3:3)." – 8.5

An "innovation"? Really? It was, in fact, the will of God as revealed to his Apostles (first Peter with Cornelius and then Paul at Antioch), an outpouring of grace that James and the entire leadership of the Early Church recognized and rejoiced to see. That's a bit stronger than an "innovation."

Remember, Paul wasn't the only one to whom this revelation was given, he needed to be taught it directly by God because he wasn't with Jesus, and he needed to learn it because Saul the Pharisee would have hated, he

would have loathed, this embrace of Gentiles as equals before God. Paul **changed**, fundamentally changed, when he met Jesus.

FFOZ cannot allow the idea that Paul changed, they can't let the Pharisaic viewpoint be called into question, but there is no other way to faithfully interpret the scripture on this point: Paul changed.

"Jewish disciples should remain Jewish. Gentile disciples from the nations should remain Gentile. We call this decision 'distinction theology.' Distinction theology is the theological perspective that teaches a distinction between Jewish disciples and Gentile disciples." – 8.7

"Distinction Theology" is FFOZ's current stance, to support it they quote 1 Corinthians 7:17-20, and then conclude,

"This rule says that Jews remain Jewish, and Gentiles remain Gentile. But it also says, 'What matters is the keeping of the commandments of God.'" – 8.7

1 Corinthians 7:17-24 Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches. 18 Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. 19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts. 20 Each person should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.

21 Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so. 22 For the one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord's freed person; similarly, the one who was free when called is Christ's slave. 23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of human beings. 24 Brothers and sisters, each person, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.

Once again we see that FFOZ has ignored the context of scripture to portray its meaning as nearly the opposite of that which the author intended. In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul is making an expansive point about how the circumstances we find ourselves in have no bearing on our ability to be saved and live a faithful life. It doesn't matter if we are Jews or Gentiles, slave or free, our circumstances do not determine our outcome. Paul is arguing AGAINST valuing our distinctions, FFOZ uses this text to claim Paul wanted us to emphasize them.

You would think they'd have something to say about, *"19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts."* How could Paul believe that Jewish followers of Jesus are obligated to keep the Law and say such a thing? If circumcision is a matter of obedience, and not being circumcised as a Jewish follower of Jesus is a sin (because they remain under the Law), how could he call it nothing and then in the same breath emphasize keeping God's commands? What commands was he talking about? How could it be the Law of Moses in this context?

"If Gentile disciples aren't supposed to become Jewish, what commandments are they supposed to keep? Does the Torah apply to them at all?" – 8.7

Clear definitions are important. All of scripture is profitable to all believers which means it all applies, that's not the same thing as being obligated as a matter of sin/righteousness by all parts of it.

This is a question raised by HRM folks all the time. The response typically assumes that the Torah (i.e. Law of Moses, Covenant at Sinai) does indeed apply to Gentile disciples of Jesus. But on what basis? Covenants in the A.N.E. are between two willing parties who enter into them. How can one apply to a group that wasn't a party to it in the first place?

"Judaism already had laws that are still considered to be universal. The sources refer to these as the laws of Noah." – 8.8

Not to quibble, but commandments given to Noah are not a part of

Judaism given that he lived BEFORE God called Abraham, as well as before the Law at Sinai.

Wouldn't the NT spend time talking about Noah if he was an important link between the universal laws of God given to humanity and the supposed obligation of Gentile followers of Jesus to obey the Law of Moses? Yet, no NT author refers to Noah in this way, not one mentions commandments given to Noah...

"These laws already existed in some form in the days of the apostles and were already understood to apply to everyone, both Jew and Gentiles. They are a baseline of ethical monotheism. But the apostles decided that Gentile disciples of Yeshua should also observe some additional laws from the Torah because by joining the assembly of Yeshua they had become like the ger toshav, the stranger living in the midst of Israel." – 8.8

What were the laws of Noah? Who decided what they were? Who decided that they applied to everyone? Wouldn't something as important as, *"a baseline of ethical monotheism"* be addressed in scripture, and not simply exist "in some form"?

The answer is going to be found in Oral Torah (i.e. traditions), not in scripture itself.

(The Seven Laws of Noah as traditionally enumerated in the Babylonian Talmud (Sanhedrin 56a-b) and Tosefta (Avodah Zarah 9:4)

{The *ger toshav* will be addressed below}

"Gentile disciples...have been brought into the Yeshua community and are now living, so to speak, like resident aliens within the nation of Israel." – 8.9

Except they aren't, and they are not. So, what gives?

In *The Beginning of Wisdom* Torah Club series, Lancaster bashes the Church for not taking Torah literally by calling it Solomon's folly:

"Solomon felt that he understood the spiritual intention behind the letter

of the law against multiplying wives. He thus reasoned, 'If I keep my heart from going astray, then I am free to multiply wives.' He also felt at liberty to edit the text of the Torah to reflect his new insight. He felt that because he understood the principle of the law, he did not need to obey the literal meaning." (lesson 48, p. 15)

"Solomon's folly is still with us today. It's easy to rationalize away the literal meaning of God's commandments. It happens ever time the Torah is read from the perspective of replacement theology. The ceremonial commandments are explained away as allegorical, symbolic, spiritual, or just plain obsolete." (lesson 48, p. 17b)

So, why is it that FFOZ thinks it is ok for James to, supposedly, not take the law of the *ger toshav* literally? Were the Gentile followers of Jesus literally living in Israel? Nope. They lived there, "so to speak," they were "like" resident aliens.

If the Law is, "perfect, eternal, and unchanging" as Lancaster claims, how can James choose to amend it to include Gentiles living outside of the Promised Land? If Jesus didn't have the authority to go beyond Torah, why does James?

The logical inconsistencies are a red flag, Torah needs to be taken literally when it suits FFOZ, it needs to be viewed "so to speak" when that fits better.

IF the Jerusalem Council was initiating the status of *ger toshav* for every Gentile follower of Jesus for generations to come the world over, wouldn't this idea be mentioned, somewhere, anywhere, in the NT? Wouldn't that status be referenced by Paul when telling Gentiles what their discipleship consists of?

This view of Acts 15 and the Jerusalem Council is foundational to everything FFOZ teaches. They write about it endlessly and build their entire understanding of Gentile discipleship in Christ upon it. And yet, not a single NT author even mentions the idea of Gentiles being *ger toshav*, while at the same time writing extensively about the Fruit of the Spirit as our true test of living and active faith. FFOZ's view is unbiblical.

“the prohibition on ‘things sacrificed to idols’ is a dietary law that requires the Gentiles to adopt the prohibition on consuming something polluted by idolatry.” – 8.9

So, Gentiles are required to adopt the Dietary Laws? This is another use of the Talmud as the authority for interpreting Acts 15.
After quoting Ephesians 5:3

“The Torah has a lot of laws that apply directly to Gentile believers. When we combine all the universal laws with the four essential laws of the apostolic decree, we discover that a hefty proportion of the Torah’s prohibitions apply equally to both Jews and Gentile disciples.” – 8.9

Ok, so if the Jerusalem Council is putting the Gentile under the Law as ger toshav, why did Paul address the topic of meat offered to idols in 1 Corinthians 8? How could the, supposedly, Pharisee Paul write that this was a matter of conscience/freedom and not causing a brother/sister in Christ to sin? Wouldn’t he have just said, “It’s the Noahide law for the ger toshav, you can’t do eat it for any reason, period.”?

1 Corinthians 8:1-13 Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that “We all possess knowledge.” But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. 2 Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. 3 But whoever loves God is known by God. 4 So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that “An idol is nothing at all in the world” and that “There is no God but one.” 5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”), 6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. 7 But not everyone possesses this knowledge. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. 8 But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.

9 Be careful, however, that **the exercise of your rights** does not become a stumbling block to the weak. 10 For if someone with a weak **conscience** sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol's temple, won't that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? 11 So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. 12 When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak **conscience**, you sin against Christ. 13 Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall.

"Therefore, all the commandments that fall under the category of 'you shall love your neighbor as yourself' apply equally to Jews and Gentile disciples...This means that all the Torah commandments that relate to how we should treat others apply equally to both Jewish people and Gentile disciples." – 8.10

The principle applies, Jesus taught us this. Are Gentiles required to, literally, leave part of the harvest in the field for gleaners? This is but one of many examples of how a literalist application of Torah to all times, peoples, and places, is not only not possible, but often results in a lower obligation to our neighbor than the higher standard Jesus requires of his disciples.

"Even though the Torah was given to the Jewish people, it is a reflection of God's character. Therefore, it has something to say to everyone and will remain eternally relevant." – 8.10

This is too big a topic for this moment {See my 13-part "Torah in its Ancient Israelite Context seminar} , but suffice it to say, calling the Torah a "reflection of God's character" is too simplistic, misleading, and ultimately dangerous. Is slavery a reflection of God's character? What about gender inequality? In reality, God condescended to create a covenant that would be the ideal for the A.N.E. culture of the Israelites, not one that is ideal for all peoples, places, and times. That was never its intent...Relevant? Yes. That much is true.

“The concept of the ger toshav (‘resident alien’) relates to the land of Israel. Nonetheless, the apostles decided that God-fearing Gentile believers should be held to this legal standard even if they lived outside the geographical borders of the Holy Land.” – 8.10

This is the death knell of FFOZ’s false teachings. They claim that Jesus cannot alter the Torah one iota, but the Apostles can “decide” to hold the Gentile followers of Jesus to a standard that does not apply outside of the land of Israel?

Either FFOZ thinks its followers will never notice this logical pretzel, or they hope they won’t care.

“In those days, Gentile disciples of Yeshua still assembled within those synagogues. They considered the synagogues as their houses of worship.” – 8.10

Just another reminder that this assertion has zero evidence. None is given, none exists.

“They lived as strangers and resident aliens among the Jewish people, so those rules applied to them.” – 8.10

Except they didn’t. The LAW itself said it only applied in the land of Israel, how can it be “extended” if it is eternal and unchanging?

“As they attended the synagogues and heard the Torah read each Sabbath, they would quickly learn the difference between the commandments that applied to them and those that applied only to the Jewish people.” – 8.11

So, it is FFOZ’s thesis that Jewish synagogue leaders in the Diaspora were happy to explain this distinction to the Gentile followers of Jesus, the very man they had rejected as a false Messiah? This is not, in any way, shape, or form human nature.

Conclusion:

Once more out-of-context quotations of scripture have been used to reach conclusions nearly the opposite of the author's intentions.

In addition, the concept of the ger toshav outside of the land of Israel is so antithetical to FFOZ's view of Torah as to cause one's head to spin. In the end, the discipleship focus of FFOZ is not on the teachings of Jesus, but on the Torah.

In Christ, the Holy Spirit teaches us to embrace the Fruit of the Spirit, not a literalist quest of Torah observance. We are co-heirs with Jesus, brothers and sisters of Christ, not resident aliens.

Lesson Nine: The Appointed Times

With every other lesson in *HaYesod* we have examined a plethora of issues and concerns sprinkled throughout each chapter. With lesson nine we will focus on the one flaw that makes the whole lesson moot: A false presupposition that there is one, and only one, biblical calendar, one intended to be eternal for all peoples, places, and times.

"Where the biblical calendar is in the Bible" – 9.1

"biblical holidays" – 9.2

"the biblical calendar" – 9.4

"The Bible's calendar" – 9.5

"We learned about the Biblical calendar" – 9.11

"List the biblical appointed times." – 9.13

This false presupposition leads then to erroneous statements like this:

“Understanding the biblical calendar is essential to understanding the Bible.” (9.2)

Thus, to FFOZ, the idea of a singular biblical calendar is elevated beyond its God-given intention to become much more than it was even to ancient Israel.

“They are heaven-sent opportunities to experience holy time from the mundane in order to meet with God.” – 9.3

“The Bible’s calendar creates a repeating annual cycle of spiritual disciplines and opportunities for growth in the ongoing process of conforming our lives to Messiah’s righteousness.” – 9.5

That’s a lot of importance with respect to being a disciple of Jesus assigned by FFOZ to observing the Jewish holy days, a lot for both Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus.

But does this presupposition hold water? FFOZ makes no effort to establish it, biblically or otherwise, they don’t even quote “the sages,” they simply assume it to be true.

Here is a non-exhaustive list of the reasons why the calendar contained within the Law of Moses as part of the Covenant that God made with Israel at Sinai, cannot be, nor was it intended to be, the sole opportunity to experience holy time and/or the primary spiritual discipline of God’s people

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1. This calendar was not given to Adam & Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph.

IF it is THE biblical calendar, a necessary path of righteousness, why didn’t the Patriarchs participate in it? If this is how humanity is supposed to connect with God, why did it have to wait for the Exodus? As they often

do, FFOZ's Torah emphasis does not account for the progressive nature of revelation even within the Torah itself.

2. A kingdom with blessings and curses tied to economic prosperity needs a calendar connected to the annual agricultural cycle, which is precisely what God gave ancient Israel. BUT, a people called from every nation the world over with no such blessings & curses system to live up to, does not.

3. Viewing the Israelite calendar as key to connecting with God is an Old Covenant mentality (limited access via priests, rituals, and sacrifices) that does not account for the way which Jesus opened to the Father through his sacrifice, or the arrival of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. In the New Covenant, every day is a day we can connect, directly, with the Lord.

The function of the holy days with respect to allowing continued access to the presence of God by a sinful people, no longer is needed. They allowed Israel to draw near to God, in the New Covenant everyone saved by grace has that right every day.

4. The Israelite calendar requires a tabernacle/temple, a priesthood, and a sacrificial system. These no longer exist. Because of Jesus Christ, they are no longer needed. FFOZ's insistence on the centrality of the Mosaic system's mechanisms calls into question the effectiveness and the finality of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God.

5. From the lesser to the greater is an oft-used biblical mode of illustrating what is important. If something applies to the lesser example, how much more to the greater? It is this method that the author of *Hebrews* utilizes to establish Jesus' superiority over all things. Let us then apply this principle to the concept of holy days:

If the release from physical bondage is worthy of celebration, how much more so release from spiritual bondage?

If the deliverance of one nation is worthy of celebration, how much more so the redemption of the whole world?

If God's intervention to redeem one generation is worthy of praise in

subsequent generations, how much more so the redemptive plan that saved every generation?

God commanded Israel to celebrate and remember what he had done for the generation of the Exodus. How much more would God desire that his people celebrate and remember what he has done through the incarnation of his only Son, his life, death, and glorious resurrection? How can the focus remain on the lesser when the immeasurably greater has happened? The festivals of the Mosaic Covenant point forward toward the redemption of the Messiah. He does not point backward toward them.

So, why are HRM groups so hostile toward the celebration of Christmas and Easter?

FFOZ doesn't even mention these holy days honoring the person and work of Jesus Christ in this chapter.

Oddly, they say this instead,

"This lesson covers only the festivals commanded in the Torah. However, traditional Jews celebrate many other holidays – Purim, Hanukkah, and Tu Bishvat." (9.5)

If the only holy days that God commands are those spelled out in the Torah, then Purim and Hanukkah would be off the table, even though we know that Jesus celebrated them (John 5:1, 10:22-23). So, if it was ok for Jesus to update the calendar to reflect the ways in which God had delivered his people AFTER the giving of the Torah, why does that principle not also apply to what Jesus himself did that is even more worthy of our praise?

Given this evidence of Jesus' approval of non-Torah feasts, FFOZ rightly doesn't deny the right of the Jewish people to celebrate Purim and Hanukkah, they are allowed to **ADD** to the calendar (the supposedly perfect, eternal, and unchanging Torah calendar). Why the hostility then toward the ways in which Jesus' followers celebrate him?

In the end, because of our freedom in Jesus Christ, the holy days that we choose to celebrate, or not, and the ways in which we celebrate them are a matter of conscience, not mandate. The Apostle Paul makes this clear, *"One person considers one day more sacred than another; another*

considers every day alike. Each of them should be fully convinced in their own mind. Whoever regards one day as special does so to the Lord. (Romans 14:5-6a)

Paul further emphasizes the point, *"Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ."* (Colossians 2:16-17)

An eternal calendar that is a matter of sin/righteousness for Jewish followers of Jesus is wholly incompatible with Paul's proclamation of freedom in Christ. Either they are an eternal mandate from God that still applies, or not. Once more the plain meaning of the words of Paul are of no use to FFOZ.

6. The deliberate timing of the death of Jesus Christ to coincide with Passover, and the coming of the Holy Spirit to coincide with Pentecost demonstrates that it was the will of God that these celebrations of his grace, love, and power to Israel in the past were to be at least partly subsumed by his New Covenant with all of humanity. As great as the celebration of Passover is, the celebration of the giving of the body and blood of the Lamb of God is far greater.

Why would Jesus choose this day, and the bread and wine of Passover to inaugurate a New Covenant if Passover could never be,

"changed, canceled, replaced, or set aside."? (9.4)

Conclusion:

In a recent article Aaron Eby threw Torah Club members who go further than FFOZ intends under the bus, blaming them for not knowing when to stop on this journey toward abandoning Christianity for Judaism.

The reality is, as this lesson demonstrates, the leaders of FFOZ have charted this course by falsely insisting that a Torah-based calendar is eternal, unaffected by even the Advent of the Son of God or his death and resurrection.

Lesson Ten: The Land, People, and Scriptures of Israel

Lesson ten is primarily a summation, as such it serves as a reminder to us of the things that FFOZ values and holds dear.

“His followers must rediscover the centrality of the Jewish people, the Jewishness of Yeshua, the Jewish Scriptures, and the Jewish gospel message.” – 10.1

One of the key dangers of FFOZ’s stance is that Jesus becomes a means to an end, not the end itself, that is always Torah.

When speaking of repentance, the answer is to return to Torah, not to Jesus. While they say, *“This happens only through the Messiah” (10.4)* it isn’t faith in Jesus that is envisioned, but instead being guided by Jesus into Torah observance.

This is most clear when FFOZ talks about what the failure was of the generation that witnessed the life of Jesus, and when they proclaim what the Jewish people need to do now to bring about the End Times. In both cases the answer isn’t Jesus, its Torah observance.

“As the appointed Messiah of Israel, Yeshua had the authority to invite His generation to take hold of the Bible’s prophetic promises about the redemption, enter the kingdom, and bring the Messianic Age and the final redemption.” – 10.3

It is FFOZ’s view that Jesus’ first choice was to bring about the Messianic Age before the Gospel went to the end of the Earth. To FFOZ, the Gospel proclamation to the Gentiles was God’s Plan B, only the result of the failure of the Jewish people in Jesus’ day. Failure to do what?

“He was ready to gather the children of Israel, restore the Davidic monarchy, and restore His Father’s House as a house of prayer for all nations. The generation only needed to heed His message and repent by returning to the Torah’s covenant obligations.” – 10.3

Jesus is secondary, Torah is primary. Don’t miss this blasphemy. To FFOZ the failure of Jesus’ people in his generation was not their hostile rejection of him, but undefined failures to be fully Torah observant.

Were not the Jews of 2nd Temple Judaism Torah observant? How can failures on this front, and not the rejection of the Messiah be the heart of the matter?

Note: Nowhere in the Gospels is there any indication that Jesus was poised to establish a renewed Davidic Kingdom, that was not his mission, period.

Do not let this denial of the Gospel go unnoticed. In this scenario that FFOZ is advocating, the death and resurrection of Jesus would not have been necessary if the Jewish people had only heeded his call to renewed Torah observance. If they had, he would not have died, no sacrifice for sins would have been made.

This can only be possible, if, as we’ve noted previously, FFOZ teaches that the Jewish people don’t really need Jesus to be saved. Their Torah idolatry is so strong that it negates the entire reason for the Incarnation. Why send the Son of God to do the work of an ordinary prophet?

{Another reason why FFOZ wants so badly to rehab the idea of works-righteousness and downplay all of Paul’s warnings about legalism.}

What about the End Times? Surely if there is one thing the Jewish people would need to do to precipitate that day it would be to embrace Jesus? Right?? No, Torah is always the answer to FFOZ and the HRM.

“The people of Israel must return to the Scriptures of Israel to bring about the redemption.” – 10.11

On page 10.5, HaYesod quotes Ephesians 3:11 and then Ephesians 3:6. Why out of order, why skip vs. 7-10 and vs. 12? Let's take a look.

Ephesians 3:1 For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—

2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, 5 which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. 6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

*7 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. 8 Although I am less than the least of all the Lord's people, this grace was given me: **to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, 9 and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. 10 His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, 11 according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.***

It is clear enough why Paul's full context isn't helpful to FFOZ. It proves that the mystery of God was always going to entail using the Church to accomplish his will of proclaiming the Gospel. This was always Plan A.

Instead of utilizing the Church to share the Good News, as Paul explains, FFOZ has a different plan...

"There's no need to wait until the final redemption to benefit from the good things of the future kingdom. People from the nations can take hold of that future kingdom reality now." – 10.5

So, FFOZ misquotes a passage where Paul is talking about the mystery of God's grace revolving around the Gentiles. A passage that proclaims God's love for us all, as the means to try to convince Gentiles that they should want to embrace Torah observance here and now. Once more, the opposite of the author's intention is being advocated.

"The kingdom will be universal, as will the calendar of the kingdom." – 10.7

The fixation on "the biblical calendar" was noted in lesson 9, this is another example of FFOZ using its own interpretation of prophecy (Zecariah 14:16-19 follows) to overrule the plain meaning of the New Testament. Remember, to FFOZ, scriptures must be read backward to the Torah, not forward to the New Covenant's unfolding in the NT.

"We never discourage Gentile disciples from celebrating the Sabbath, the festivals, and the sanctities of Israel along with the Jewish people if they feel called to do so. We encourage everyone to 'take hold' of King Messiah and the good things of the coming kingdom." – 10.7

One Law by any other name, it smells the same. FFOZ realized years ago that they couldn't proclaim this as a mandate, so they've morphed it into a test of true devotion to Jesus. Anyone who really loves Jesus will want to 'take hold' of Jewish identity.

The apostasy that this organization is causing deserves to be laid at their own feet, they are the ones who have placed the focus on Torah instead of Jesus.

After quoting John 3:16-17,

"Those of us who cast our allegiance with King Yeshua today, whether we are Jews or Gentiles, are getting a head start on the rest of the world. We are the early adopters of His coming kingdom" – 10.8

Nowhere in the NT is this notion commanded, or even hinted at.

Let's look at John 3:16-17...

John 3:16-17 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Neither belief in Jesus, nor salvation through Jesus, has been the focus of HaYesod. That's a big problem.

What instead is the focus?

"We want to restore the Torah's authority as God's unchanging standard. The Torah is the universal revelation of God's will and wisdom... The Torah defines sin." – 10.9

When someone tells you that their focus isn't on Jesus, believe them...

"We want to restore the authentic good news proclaimed by Yeshua: Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. The message is all about the coming kingdom, and it's a message closely tied to the Land, the People, and the Scriptures of Israel." – 10.10

When someone tells you that one part of the Bible matters more to them, believe them...

"What part of the Bible is God's unchanging standard and universal revelation?" – 10.12

Conclusions:

(1) *HaYesod*, as a whole, largely represents what FFOZ teaches in Torah Club lessons and other publications. Its faults, failings, and outright heresies are consistent with those same dangers elsewhere.

(2) *HaYesod* is a warning sign: Proceed further at your own risk.

The focus moving forward will be away from the Church and the Gospel, toward apostasy. The focus moving forward will be on works, not faith. The focus moving forward will be on Torah, not Jesus.