

Issues with “Divine Invitation Theology” Part 3

Issue #3: This new teaching defines “Torah” and “obedient to the Torah” in ways that are not biblical.

The operative word in this new teaching is “invitation.” It is careful not to speak in clear terms because the goal is to “invite Gentiles” at the same time it teaches a covenant “obligation” to the Torah for Jews.

Because this new teaching insists on using the word “invitation” regarding a Gentile’s relationship to the Torah we must ask, ***an invitation to what, really?*** Regarding this new teaching’s insistence of Jewish obligation to the Torah, we must ask, ***an invitation to what, really?***

This is where this new teaching confuses the issue, because it defines “Torah” in much the same way that Orthodox Judaism does. For example: this new teaching says that Gentiles have an obligation to the “moral and ethical” parts of the Torah plus the four dictates of Acts 15:20; 29; 21:25. It goes on to teach that as long as a Gentile believer keeps these, they are in fact “keeping the Torah.” Whereas a Jewish believer is obligated to keep the commands that pertain to “Jewish identity” (as this new teaching defines them). Although this new teaching rejects Orthodox Judaism’s “Seven Noachide Laws” as the basis for Gentile righteousness, it defines “Torah observance” similarly to normative Judaism. Here are some examples:

- Circumcision is invalid unless it meets the rabbinic conversion standard
- Kosher is invalid unless it meets the rabbinic kosher standard (claiming no such thing as “biblical kosher”)
- Sabbath observance is invalid unless it meets the rabbinic Sabbath standards

This new teaching is careful not to clearly define what the Gentile invitation to “Torah” entails.

Bereans Online responds:

As human beings, we all like words like “may,” “invite,” “permitted” – while at the same time we are put off by words like “should,” “must,” “obey.” What does the Bible say about such an “invitation” – does any “invitation” of Scripture speak to equal outcome no matter what one’s response is to the “invitation”?

For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore...

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living G-d, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels...

See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, ***much more shall we not escape if we turn away*** from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve G-d acceptably with reverence and ***godly fear.*** ***For our G-d is a consuming fire.***

Hebrews 12:18-19; 22; 25-29

This passage reminds us of the awesomeness of the Sinai experience in order to teach how much more awesome it is that Messiah "invites" us even now. Does Messiah "invite" us to be a part of His People? Does Messiah "invite" us to be holy as He is holy? Does Messiah "invite" us to be full citizens in His Kingdom, under His singular jurisdiction? If that is the meaning of the word "invitation" – we would completely agree. See to it that you ***do not refuse*** this "invitation" – for our G-d is a consuming fire!

What is the Torah? Who gets to define "obedience to the Torah"? Are we permitted to define righteousness? The answer of course is clear, and it is the Torah itself that says it.

*Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments **which I teach you** to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which HaShem G-d of your fathers is giving you. You **shall not add to the word** which I command you, **nor take from it**, that you may **keep the commandments** of HaShem your G-d which I command you.*

Deuteronomy 4:1-2

Beloved, the Torah is self-defining and we are not at liberty to redefine it – nor to let tradition define it. While traditions may be helpful for us know some of the "how" of obedience, there is no question that the traditions are simply man-made. This new teaching seems to want to blur that distinction as it does when it holds "Torah Observance" only counts if it meets the test of Rabbinic Judaism. While we find rabbinic praxis to be welcome in many ways and on many levels, we reject it as the test for obedience to the Torah.

While "inviting" those who hear to take hold of the Torah (as much or as little as one likes), it promotes its own definition of what that "taking hold" looks like. For a traditional Christian, it might be enjoy Sunday rest a little more; a Seventh-Day Adventist to consider the Jewish nature of the Sabbath; a Messianic Gentile to do a little bit of the Torah; and a Jew to full Orthodox praxis.

Truly, this new teaching promotes invitation; but it does not clearly state what we feel will be the consequences of this invitation: Gentiles invited to go back their churches or invited to go through ritual conversion to Judaism. This new teaching stakes out what it feels is an overarching position between traditional Christianity and traditional Judaism. At the same time it is promoting both of those religious traditions' lines of demarcation (Jews do "Jewish things," Gentiles do the "moral things"). We feel the outcome will not be "one people" – but rather the opposite.

There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call - one L-rd, one faith, one immersion, one G-d and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:4-6