

# D I G G I N G

## The Apostle Paul: Hypocrite or Hard to Understand

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**Acts 18:18b** At Cenchreae he (*Paul*) had cut his hair, for he was under a vow.

Here we see the apostle Paul keeping the Law of Moses by taking part in the *Nazarite Vow* from 'Numbers' chapter 6. "*If*" Paul taught that the Law of Moses was abolished, *why* would he do this? Why would the Spirit of God inspire Luke to write this, as if it were important information to relay to the reader of his letter? On the surface it seems to be quite an arbitrary comment in the context of the chapter. Yet, there it is, *in the Word of God*; the apostle Paul observing the Law of Moses years after the ascension of Jesus.

*If only* so-called "moral Laws" are valid now, as almost every denomination teaches, why would Paul keep this vow that mainstream theology calls a "ceremonial Law"?

In 'Acts' 21 (below) James, the brother of Jesus and head of the Christian Council, also confirms that this so-called "ceremonial Law" is still in effect and worthy of observance, decades after the Messiah's ascension. James encouraged Paul to "**purify**" himself and to pay for the 'Temple offering' of four believers that James knew were taking the same vow that Paul took in Acts 18:18 (above).

What does the text say?

**Act 21:23 – 24, 26** 23Do therefore what we tell you (*Paul*). We have four men who are under a vow; 24take these men and **purify** yourself along with them and **pay** their expenses, so that they may **shave their heads**. **Thus, all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself (*Paul*) also live in observance of the law...** 26Then **Paul** took the men, and the next day **he purified** himself along with them and **went into the temple**, giving notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the **offering** presented for each one of them.

According to the Law of the Nazarite Vow, from the Law of God given through Moses in 'Numbers' chapter 6, the "purification" and the "offering" that Paul paid for and participated in involves "**animal sacrifices** at the **Temple**" ~

**Numbers 6:13-20** 13"And this is the law for the Nazarite, when the time of his separation has been completed: he shall be brought to the entrance of the **tent of meeting**, 14and he shall bring his gift to the LORD, one male **lamb** a year old without blemish for a burnt offering, and one ewe **lamb** a year old without blemish as a sin offering, and one **ram** without blemish as a peace offering, 15and a basket of unleavened bread, loaves of fine flour mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers smeared with oil, and their grain offering and their drink offerings. 16And the priest shall bring them before the LORD and offer his sin offering and his burnt offering, 17and he shall offer the **ram** as a sacrifice

*of peace offering to the LORD, with the basket of unleavened bread. The priest shall offer also its grain offering and its drink offering. 18And the Nazarite shall **shave his consecrated head** at the entrance of the tent of meeting **and shall take the hair from his consecrated head and put it on the fire that is under the sacrifice of the peace offering.** 19And the priest shall take the shoulder of the ram, when it is boiled, and one unleavened loaf out of the basket and one unleavened wafer, and shall put them on the hands of the Nazarite, after he has shaved the hair of his consecration, 20and the priest shall wave them for a wave offering before the LORD. They are a holy portion for the priest, together with the breast that is waved and the thigh that is contributed. And after that the Nazarite may drink wine.*

So, the apostle Paul, on his final journey to Jerusalem to meet with the Council of believers, observed and kept the Law of the Nazarite Vow from the Law of Moses; with all its rituals, sacrifices and customs. This is Scriptural documentation that he observed *this* specific Law at least twice, post-resurrection.

What does the text say? ~

**Acts 21:21-26** *21and **they have been told about you (Paul)** that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs.* 22*What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come.* 23*Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; 24take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, **so that they may shave their heads.*** ***Thus, all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself (Paul) also live in observance of the law.*** 25*But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality.”* 26***Then Paul took the men, and the next day he purified himself along with them and went into the temple, giving notice when the days of purification would be fulfilled and the offering presented for each one of them.***

Again, *why in the world* did Paul condone and participate in this vow “*if*” the Law of Moses had been done away with and didn’t apply anymore? Why would the Holy Spirit have Luke mention it “*if*” the Law of the Nazarite Vow was abolished?

This is even more surprising “*if*” the apostle Paul had just spent a great many years going throughout the nations “*supposedly*” denouncing and condemning those that kept the Law of Moses?

**Why** didn’t Paul scream at the top of his lungs to James and the Council that “*the Law of Moses is done away with and abolished*”, **if** that’s what he was teaching to everyone throughout all of his journeys? What a hypocrite! Paul, the ‘do as I say and not as I do’ apostle!?!?

As I discussed in the study ‘**You Yourself Also Live in Observance of the Law**’, the most common way for the mainstream theology to excuse away the Scriptural fact that Paul kept the ‘Law of the Nazarite’, is to throw out the haphazard declaration of, “*Well, Paul was a Jew and not a gentile*”.

The argument that “**only Jews can keep the Law**” is illogical, hypocritical, unscriptural.

First of all, the Law of Moses is either abolished or it’s not. Period. How in the world could it be abolished for the nations/gentiles who didn’t observe the Law of Moses, but *not* abolished for the Jews? “*If*” Paul preached that it was abolished, done away with, null and void throughout his congregations, and then turned right around to keep it himself, then he taught a hypocritical doctrine. Period.

Secondly, there isn’t a single verse to back up the idea that the Law of Moses is current and valid today for the “believers of Jewish origin”, but abolished for the “believers of gentile origin”.

However, there are numerous verses out of *Paul's own mouth* where he emphatically stated that there is **no difference** between Jew and Greek; there is **no distinction** between those from Judea/Israel and those from the nations/gentiles if they are in Messiah.

What does the text say?

**Romans 10:12** For there is **no distinction between Jew and Greek**; for the **same** Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him.

**1 Corinthians 12:13** For in one Spirit we were all baptized into **one body—Jews or Greeks**, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

**Galatians 3:28-29** *28*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for **you are all one** in Christ Jesus. *29*And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

**Ephesians 3:6** This mystery is that the Gentiles are **fellow heirs**, members of the **same body**, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

**ALL are the same before the Lord!**

According to the apostle Paul, there is no Jew and there is no Greek before God for those in Christ Jesus; **"If"**, if you are in Messiah, then you are "Abraham's offspring"!

According to the apostle Paul, **"all in Christ"** are the **same**. The **same** father Abraham, the **same** offspring and the **same** heir. Not one set of rules for the believer from Judea and a different set of rules for the believer from the nations. **The same** offspring, the **same** body, the **same** heir; **"The same"**, at least according to Paul...

Therefore, Paul was either a hypocrite, mentally deranged, or he has been completely misunderstood, and truly did observe and keep the Law of Moses (see Acts 21:24 above)!

The apostle Paul falls into one of these categories:

1. **A hypocrite:** he told everyone he met to not keep the Law of Moses, that the Law of Moses is abolished, yet he himself kept it as a valid Law, worth observing; "do as I say but not as I do..."
2. **Mentally unstable:** because he didn't have a rational or a logically consistent doctrine; "hey Timothy, let me circumcise you so we can go tell all the other believers that if they get circumcised they've fallen from grace"! It's abolished, it's not, it's abolished, it's not, it's abolished, it's not...
3. **Misunderstood:** as Peter stated in his second letter, Paul was hard to understand; therefore, he did observe/keep the Law of Moses all his life, and he did not teach that it was abolished ~
  - **2 Peter 3:15-17** *15*And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother **Paul** also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, *16*as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. **There are some things in them that are hard to understand**, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. *17*You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, **take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people** and lose your own stability.

His behavior can only be explained by one of these three possibilities. If Paul falls into the first or second category, then why are we listening to anything he had to say? If Paul was a hypocrite or mentally unstable, then he's an unreliable source for **any** doctrine.

However, if he has been *misunderstood*, then the Law of Moses is not abolished, and we need to do what Paul recommended in many of his letters, which is to emulate him and do what he did ~

**1 Corinthians 4:16** I urge you, then, **be imitators of me**.

**1 Corinthians 11:1** Be imitators of me, **as I am of Christ**.

**Philippians 3:17** Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.

**Philippians 4:9** What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

**2 Thessalonians 3:9** It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate.

As 1 Corinthians 11:1 states, “be imitators of me as I am of Christ”; Christ taught and kept the Law of God given through Moses (please click this link and read, ‘[Examining the Scriptures](#)’).

Therefore, since Paul was an imitator of the Christ then we should do the same; **not** for justification or salvation, **but** to be obedient, set-apart, righteous, and to show our love for our Redeemer; to walk in the same way in which he walked (please click these links and read, ‘[Justification vs. Righteousness](#)’ and ‘[Salvation vs. Eternal Life](#)’).

What did John say of those claiming to be believers of the Christ? He said the same thing as Paul; to imitate Christ ~

**1 John 1:6** whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

How did the Messiah walk? Jesus, our Master, walked in obedience to the Law of God given through Moses!

How did Paul walk and how does he command us to walk?

**1 Corinthians 11:1** Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ – (please click this link and read ‘[Paul Commands Us to Uphold the Law](#)’)

**Final thought:** In 1 Corinthians the apostle Paul, whom mainstream theology claims taught that the Law of Moses was abolished, quoted from the Law of Moses as a current, valid and authoritative Law:

“Do I say these things on human authority? **Does not the Law say the same? For it is written in the Law of Moses**, “You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.” Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not certainly speak for our sake? **It was written for our sake** | 1

**Corinthians 9:8-10**

Since Paul just taught from the Law of Moses, that shatters all assumptions that he taught the Law of Moses was abolished; that verse, along with Acts 21:24 concludes the matter ~

Thus **all will know** that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but **that you yourself (Paul) also live in observance of the law.** | Acts 21:24

The apostle Paul taught the Law of Moses **and** lived his life in observance of the Law decades after the



ascension of Jesus. Period.