

# The Religion Of The Jews Is A Religion Of Men

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In the early days in the Worldwide Church of God in the '50s and '60s, and it was certainly true in the mid '60s when we came into the Church, that to have Jewish blood in your veins was a badge of honor. And people who were Jews and could trace their heritage back that way, in many cases some people put them on a pedestal because they were in essence—in many people's eyesight—they had Christ's blood in their veins because He was a Jew. It was a badge of honor.

But in the last few years some Church of God brethren have reverted back to Judaism in reaction to some of the troubles in the Church. And you have to ask yourself why. And I've looked into it. Many of those people who left God's church and went back to Judaism felt that by combining a belief in Jesus Christ with the religion of the Jews that somehow it was a more pure form of religion—combining a belief in Christ, yet, with the practices of the Jews.

Now, of course, that begs a huge question. Is that true? Is combining a belief in Christ with the religion of the Jews somehow something that we should be doing or a more pure form of religion? Well, when you think about it, if their religion, the religion of the Jews, was a more pure form, then why did Christ warn the disciples about the Jews? Let's go to Matthew 16 and verse 12. This is one of many scriptures, but by way of introduction, you have to ask the question: Why would Christ say this if the religion of the Jews in His day was a purer form of religion? Matthew 16:12, He's talking to His disciples and they understood this, understood this principle He was trying to get across. He was using leavening as an example, an analogy. Matthew 16:12.

**Matthew 16:12.** *Then understood they [meaning the disciples] how that He bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but [beware] of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. (KJV)*

Why would Christ say that and tell them "You'd better beware of their teachings"? Now, if the Jews were more pure, why did Christ criticize them? We won't turn there but we know Matthew 23, the whole chapter, is all about Christ criticizing the Jews. He said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" He said that six times in that chapter. He said, "You fools and blind." He said, "You blind guides." He said, "You blind Pharisees." And He concluded by saying, "You serpents, you generation of vipers." Now, if they were so pure, why would Christ say these words? Why would He?

So, today, what we're going to do is we're going to investigate why Christ criticized the Jewish religious leaders and their beliefs. And we're going to find that Judaism is the exact opposite of being "more pure"—just the exact opposite!

So the title of the sermon is

### Judaism is a Religion of Men

It was true at the time of Christ and it is true today. There will be five main points. I'm going to give this in outline form because I believe it will make it more clear because there are some sub-points and I want to make. If you outline, you'll make sure the sub-points are related to the proper larger points. So, please outline if you would like. There are five major points.

#### **1. The first major point we're going to start with; we're going to ask the question, how did Judaism come to be?**

What are the influences that took the religion of Moses to where it is today? And we're going to find out that there are three important influences, A, B, and C under this first point number 1.

##### **1. A. The first influence is the Babylonian Exile.**

Now the Jews went into captivity in 586-585 BC and they were forced to move from Jerusalem, the area of Jerusalem/Judah, to Babylon. And as the crow flies, it's about 550 miles from Jerusalem to Babylon. They, obviously, had to walk. When they arrived in Babylon, they were captives. And remember there was no temple in Babylon. The local synagogue became a substitute for the temple. And, as we're going to see, as a result of that, the authority of the Aaronic priesthood began to be diluted because the Aaronic priesthood, of course, was centered around the temple. Now, there is no T temple.

The Persian Empire conquered the Babylonian Empire 46 years later, 539-538 BC. And we all know the decree of Cyrus (It's in Ezra chapter 1) where he decreed under God's inspiration that a certain number of Jews should leave Babylon, come down to Jerusalem, rebuild the temple and rebuild the walls. And this, of course, occurred during the days of Ezra and Nehemiah.

And the fact is that of all the Jews that were living in Babylon, only a minority went back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and rebuild the walls. The vast majority of the Jews stayed in Babylon. Why? Because they were prospering. It was well off. It was a huge cultural center and they were very happy to live where they lived.

Under Ezra, the scribes were responsible for copying the scrolls, the scrolls that they brought from the temple up to Babylon. The scribes were copiers and their life's work was to copy these scrolls. We won't turn there but in Jeremiah 36:32, Baruch was under Jeremiah and he was a scribe copying scrolls. They went to great lengths to assure accuracy of those scrolls. They would count the letters in each line and then they would count the total number of letters on a page. And they would compare their copy to the original to make sure they got it right. Because of that process, the scribes

came to be called the “sopherim” (s-o-p-h-e-r-i-m). And in Hebrews that means *counters* because of all the counting they had to do.

Now after the deaths of Ezra and Nehemiah, the era of strict adherence to God’s written law ended. They were dead. Nobody was watching over the Jews or the priesthood. And what happened is these scribes, the counters, the sopherim, began to expand their role as authorities on scripture because that was their job—to copy, to count, to read.

And after the deaths of Ezra and Nehemiah, after they were gone, there was a slow change in the religious leadership of the Jews. Over time a new elite class began to take over the place of the priests and these were the scribes, the sopherim, the teachers of the law. Now this happened over generations. It did not happen overnight.

Let me read from a book, Exploring the World of the Jew by John Phillips. It’s on page 34. He says, “... after the deaths of Ezra and Nehemiah a new breed of interpreters, the sopherim or scribes, emerged” and notice what he says, “and took over the interpretation of scripture.” They began to take that onto themselves.

Now, this was accelerated because in the Babylonian exile, in the captivity either in Babylon or down in Judah, the fact is that over that time the average Jew could no longer speak Hebrew or could no longer read Hebrew. The average Jew, both in Babylon and Palestine, spoke Aramaic. And that language, the Aramaic language, was the language of diplomacy in the Persian Empire. So, therefore, they needed an interpreter or interpreters to read the scriptures, to explain the scriptures because they couldn’t read the scriptures themselves. They couldn’t speak Hebrew. They couldn’t write Hebrew. They couldn’t read Hebrew. And, again, understand that this happened over generations.

So, the scribes now filled that void. The scribes, who knew Hebrew, read it, wrote it, took the place now of interpreting scripture to the average Jew. And ultimately the Jews became highly dependent upon the scribes for their religious teaching and understanding. And ultimately, again, this was over decades—the word “scribe” became synonymous with “wise men.” The average Jew looked at a scribe as a very wise man.

Now at this time, an extremely important heresy entered the religion of the Jews. This cannot be understated. Let me read from John Phillips again, Exploring the World of the Jew on page 58. “During the captivity in Babylon, these new teachers [referring to the scribes, the sopherim] assumed the custodianship of divine truth. In the process of time they evolved a fundamental principle...” This is where the heresy comes in. This is the heresy they were teaching. “At Sinai God handed Moses two sets of laws.” Not one. Two. “The written Law, inscribed on tablets of stone [the first one], and the oral law, which, they said, gave specific elaboration on the [written] Torah.” Now the Torah means the first five books of the Bible.

So what they're saying is: Yes, God gave the tablets of stone to Moses, but He also gave Moses an oral law and that Moses passed down that oral law generation to generation, decade to decade. And so you have two laws, one written and one oral. That is the heresy that started during the Babylonian Exile.

Now slowly, over time, the scribes' explanations of scripture, their interpretations of scriptures, this oral law, began to be written down. So, in addition to copying the scrolls from the destroyed temple as they did under Ezra and Nehemiah, the scribes began to set in writing the oral law. And this, later after the death of Christ, became the Talmud (t-a-l-m-u-d). The Talmud is the writing down of this second law that they say God gave Moses.

Let me read John Phillips, going on, continuing on page 34. He said, "... the scribes' commentaries gradually assumed semi-inspired status and eventually [over a period of several decades] practically replaced the word of God altogether." Huge change here!

Let me read from the book, Jerusalem at the Time of Jesus, by Joachim Jeremias. He says, "... it was knowledge alone which gave their power to the scribes. Anyone [of any lineage] who wished to join the company of scribes by ordination had [only] to pursue a regular course of study for several years." That's on page 235. So unlike the Aaronic priesthood which was a family line, anybody could become a scribe if they would go to school for several years under the tutelage of the existing scribes.

He goes on to say—now notice this: "... the scribes were venerated, like the prophets of old, with unbounded respect and reverential awe, as bearers and teachers of sacred esoteric knowledge; their words had sovereign authority." That's on page 243. What he's saying is that over time the scribes' oral law and what they taught orally had the weight of God speaking. Huge change! Enormous change! So just look at how far scribes came from mere secretaries of copying scripture to where they are at this time. After the Babylonian exile and down to the time of Christ. Look at how their status changed.

He goes on to say typically, at the age of forty the trainees became a "member with full rights, an ordained scholar... [And] only ordained teachers transmitted and created the traditions derived from the [written] Torah which ... were regarded as equal to and indeed above the Torah." So over the decades, the commentaries of the scribes that they made on the written law, those commentaries began to have the effect, to have importance greater than that of the written law itself. It would be like today, you would take the commentary of Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown and say, "That commentary supercedes what we read in the Bible." And that's exactly what happened.

So, during the exile after the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, modern-day Judaism began and it evolved for about 500 years until Christ walked this earth. And the oral traditions of the Jews began to replace the written law and were in full effect when Christ walked this earth.

So point A (under point 1, the influences that formed Judaism), the first was the Babylonian Exile.

### **1. B. The second influence was the Greek culture.**

That is called “Hellenism.” When you say the word “Hellenism,” you’re referring to the influence of the Greek culture.

Now Alexander the Great conquered the Medes and the Persians in 333 BC. The Medes and the Persians had conquered the Babylonians. So now, Greece is ruling that part of the world. This is approximately 250 years after the Babylonian exile. And Greek culture began to influence all of the conquered countries. People were just enthralled with Greek culture. When they conquered an area, people began to imitate their form of dress, began to learn their language, began to study all of the Greek legends and myths and all of that.

We have an example of that in modern times. After World War II when Japan unconditionally surrendered, U.S. troops went in and administered Japan. Look at how the culture of Japan changed within a very short period of time—ten, twenty years. The Japanese started playing baseball. They started playing golf. They started smoking cigarettes. They started changing their form of music. They just love jazz, American jazz music and classical music. Within twenty years, their culture was transformed.

So you see the same thing was happening in Jerusalem and in Babylon to the Jews when the Greeks conquered the Medes and the Persians. Hellenism had a dramatic effect in three areas of Jewish life on three groups of people, and, therefore, had a huge effect on the life of the average Jew.

#### **1. B. (1) Hellenism, the influence of the Greek culture, influenced the priesthood.**

Now you would think how could that happen? But what happened.... It blows your mind! The priesthood, the Aaronic priesthood accepted Hellenism outright. They began to incorporate Greek culture into their very lives. Part of the reason is they wanted to retain their power. Remember they were conquered people. They wanted to retain their power by appeasing the rulers over them by trying to be like them.

Let me read from a book, Judaism—Revelation of Moses, or Religion of Men?, by a man named Phillip Neal. He says, “Ironically, those best equipped to resist the temptation of Hellenism proved the most vulnerable.” It’s just amazing. Blows your mind! He goes on, “Instead of realizing the humble, *servant nature* of their God-given role, the priesthood clearly identified itself with nobility, the upper class, the elite of Judah, who were also strongly attracted to Hellenistic culture.” That’s on page 38. The problem is the priesthood viewed themselves as above the people. They were the elite. They were the aristocrats. And they adopted Hellenistic culture like crazy.

Now we've seen that in the Worldwide Church of God. The ministry was up here. They were the elite. They were the aristocrats. They went to Ambassador College and all of that—same thing!

And so the priesthood at the time when Greece conquered that area of the world, they viewed themselves in a similar manner and they glommed onto Greek culture and just accepted it whole-heartedly. So, the first group to be influenced by the Greek culture was the priests.

### **1. B. (2) Hellenism, the influence of Greek culture, influenced the scribes.**

We've just been talking about the scribes and how their status was elevated over the centuries. Let me read again from Phillip Neal's book, Judaism—Revelation of Moses, or Religion of Men?, on page 37. He says, "... in the case of the scribes, the effects of Greek culture were *subtle*, yet equally profound. For the most part, the scribes resisted the liberal ideas of Hellenism, finding them contrary to scripture." As an example, the Greek culture was filled with homosexuality. And, of course, the scribes knowing the Bible resisted that aspect of it.

But notice this. Then he says, "...there was Greek *logic* – utterly irresistible to the scholarly mind of the scribe." We're told "knowledge puffs up." Well, this is exactly what happened. "The rabbis [or scribes] **began to add Greek reasoning to biblical revelation. The result was the *Mishnah*, the work of a new set of Jewish scholars...**"

Now what is the Mishnah? The Mishnah means *teachings* in Hebrew. The root word for Mishnah means *to repeat*. And so the Mishnah was the writing down of these oral traditions, these oral teachings starting at the Babylonian Exile from father to son and son to his son and so on. They were the "repeaters." They were the teachers. And the Mishnah was the writing down of those teachings. Let me read from the Jewish Encyclopedia under the term "Mishnah." "Mishnah is used to designate the law which was transmitted orally." And when these oral teachings were eventually written down, the Mishnah became the first part of the Talmud. And we'll talk about the Talmud in just a minute.

So we see here that the scribes incorporated Greek logic with what they read in what we call the Bible, the Old Testament, and then they began their oral teachings and oral traditions. Neal continues on page 38. "Thus, while *outwardly* supporting the scriptures and resisting Hellenization, the scribes could *justify virtually any doctrine* by making the claim that it was part of an esoteric oral tradition – hidden all along in the ... the written Torah." So they say our oral teachings are probing the depths of the Torah and we have a better understand than the Torah itself. So, Hellenism subtly, but importantly, influenced the scribes.

### **1. B. (3) Hellenism, the influence of Greek culture, created a new reactionary religious group.**

And this was a grass-roots movement in reaction to the Greek culture by pious Jews. They saw the Greek culture infiltrating their beliefs and their religions and these were just average people, no education. They just had a reaction, a gut reaction to it because they wanted to retain their “old-time religion.” They didn’t want these changes.

Now we’ve been through that too. Haven’t we? In the Worldwide Church of God when Protestant doctrine began to creep into the Church in the late ‘80s and early ‘90s, grass-roots people all of a sudden just stood up and said, “Hey, this isn’t right. We can’t be doing this.”

The same thing happened at the time of the Greek culture’s influence on the Jews. And this group was called the “Hasidim” (h-a-s-i-d-i-m), the Hasidim. Phillip Neal says on page 38, “The rise of *Hasidism* is of particular importance in the development of Judaism. ... the Hasidim were, in fact, the immediate forerunners of...” What? “The *Pharisees*.” So the average grass-roots guy got up in arms about this and over a period of decades the result down the road by the time of Christ was the Pharisees. And as a result you see Hasidic Jews today in the United States. Occasionally they’ll be an article about them on television or something. They’re the ones with the black hats and the long black coats. And they have the sideburns that are long and curled. Those are the Hasidic Jews, going all the way back to this time, all the way back to this time.

So the Hasidim were the uneducated commoners who opposed Greek culture. And because of their lack of education and because they spoke Aramaic and not Hebrew, they depended heavily on the scribes. And often, as we’re going to see, the scribes and the Pharisees were mentioned together because they were dependent upon each other.

So Hellenism’s influence on these three groups helped create the Judaism of Christ’s day and today. So that is the second big influence on Judaism and how it came to be. The first is the Babylonian Exile and the second is the Greek culture.

### **1. C. The third is the influence of the Maccabean Wars.**

The influence of the Maccabean Wars. In 171 BC, Antiochus replaced the high priest with a more pro-Greek priest—not of the Aaronic line. And this Antiochus, we know as Antiochus Epiphanes. In 167 BC, he issued a decree which effectively abolished the Mosaic Law. And, as we know, pig’s blood was sacrificed on the altar with the priests watching and that just inflamed the average Jew. The result was the rebellion led by the Maccabees. Now that happened in 167 BC and by 165 BC, the Maccabees had pushed the Greeks out of that area and they cleansed the temple and began the sacrifices all over again. Antiochus was gone.

Phillip Neal says in his book, Judaism: Revelation of Moses, or Religion of Men?, on page 42 (referring to the time of the Maccabees); he says, “More significant, however, was the ever widening rift between the Hasidim and the still Hellenistic priesthood.” So, you have these two groups fighting each other—the priesthood which had adopted

whole-heartedly the Greek culture and the Hasidim which rejected it entirely and they were just common folk, common people. He goes on: "In fact, what had evolved over numerous generations as a fundamentally moral conflict between the grassroots Hasidim and the elite priesthood was soon to erupt into a virtual war between the Hasidic Pharisees and the aristocratic Sadducees."

And that was what was in place at the time of Jesus Christ. Now Judah remained independent after Antiochus was gone and the Greeks were gone. They remained independent until about 63 BC when the Roman Empire began to exert its influence in Palestine. So, by the time of Christ we have the Pharisees and the Sadducees who absolutely hated each other. And the scribes and the Pharisees were ascending in influence. The Aaronic priesthood and the Sadducees were decreasing in influence at the time of Jesus Christ.

So that ends point number 1, the three major influences on Judaism: the Babylonian Exile, the effect of Hellenism, and then the effect of the Maccabean Wars.

Now we come to the time of Jesus Christ.

## **2. What was Judaism like at the time of Christ?**

Now we have the second big point. (There are five of them.) Let's look and see what Judaism was like at the time of Christ.

At the time of Christ, Jerusalem's population was about 80,000 by most estimates. And at that time there were three influential religious groups. We've talked about them already, but now we're focusing on the time of Christ.

### **2. A. The first influential religious group was the Pharisees.**

And as we have seen, they were the outgrowth of the Hasidim and they were a reaction to the Hellenizing of the Jews.

Now the Greek word for "Pharisee" is Strong's #5330. It's the Greek word "pharisaios" (far-is-ah'-yos). And it's a Hebrew word which means *a separatist*. So the Pharisees wanted nothing to do with anything having to do with Jewish culture. They wanted nothing to do with people who were influenced by [Greek] culture. And by the time of Christ if a Pharisee's sleeve rubbed up against a Gentile, he would go home and wash and bathe himself because he was unclean. That's how far it had been taken.

The Pharisees appealed to the common people because they were common people. The common people did not like the Aaronic priesthood because they were the elite. They were up here. They had nothing to do with us. Now, the Pharisees controlled the synagogues and Josephus puts their number at about 6,000. Jerusalem is 80,000. The number of Pharisees was about 6,000. And they became, over time, along with the scribes the self-appointed guardians of the truth. They were going to hold fast to the



truth no matter what—the truth as they understood it. Most had no formal education and because of that they had a close association with the scribes who did have a formal education.

## **2. B. The second influential group at the time of Christ was the scribes.**

And, as we have seen, they began to grow in prominence after the Babylonian Exile. They were looked up to by the Pharisees because of their education and because of their training. And by Christ's day, most scribes had become Pharisees—not all but most. That's why they were often named together. In the New Testament, scribes and Pharisees are named together twenty-two times. The Pharisees looked up to the scribes and over time the scribes became Pharisees.

Joachim Jeremias in his book, Jerusalem at the Time of Jesus, says on page 254, "The leaders and influential members of the Pharisaic communities were scribes." On page 243, he says, "Pharisaic communities especially gave their scribes unconditional obedience...." Unconditional obedience—and, again, we've experienced that in the Worldwide Church of God. Unconditional obedience was given to the scribes. He goes on to say, "And Pharisaic scribes were [among all first-century scribes] by far the most numerous." So the scribes and the Pharisees actually came together.

The Jewish Encyclopedia says this about Pharisees: "The Pharisees claimed that the scribes possessed a level of biblical authority." Now notice this! The Pharisees are saying that the scribes possessed a level of biblical authority that even "endowed them with the power to abrogate the [Mosaic] Law at times..." Their teachings could [countervail] what was said in the Mosaic Law. Their teachings had superior authority to what was written in the Mosaic Law. He goes on to say, "... going so far as to say;" the Pharisees went, "so far as to say that he who transgressed their [the scribes'] words [the *oral law*] deserved death." Look at the change that happened by the time of Christ.

So we've seen the Pharisees, A; and the scribes, B.

## **2. C. The third influential group at the time of Christ was the Sadducees.**

The Sadducees were a small elite group that included the high priest. They were wealthy. They were aristocratic and they were very influential with the Romans. They were very influential, because of their wealth and power, with the average Jew. They numbered less than 3,000, about half the number of the Pharisees.

So we see here when we look at Judaism at the time of Christ, these three groups—Pharisees, scribes, and Sadducees—were the most influential religious groups when Christ began His work on this earth.

Now this leads us to the third big point, and this is the huge one. This is the one that makes all the difference. The third point is:

**3. All three of these groups, the Pharisees, scribes, and Sadducees, placed the oral law above scripture.**

That heresy that was introduced shortly after the Babylonian Exile has now influenced all three of these groups where they, in their belief, place the oral law, the teachings of the scribes, above the written scripture.

Understand the first five books of the Bible are called the Torah. The Torah literally means *teaching, direction, instruction*. It's most often translated "law." Now it is also called the Pentateuch. That is from the Latin word "penta" meaning *five*, and the Latin word "teukhos," which means *books*. So the Pentateuch and the Torah refer to the first five books of the Bible.

Let me read from John Phillips again, [Exploring the World of the Jew](#), on page 55. By the first century AD, the time of Christ, the written law had been—and I'm quoting him now: "... buried beneath vast accumulations of tradition and encrusted with enormous [amounts] of human interpretation. The Torah itself has been largely superseded in Judaism by the Talmud. The five books of the Torah can be written out in 350 pages. The Talmud takes up 523 books printed in 22 volumes."

At Christian Book Distributors, you can buy that right now, all 22 volumes if you want to do that. The Talmud in standard print is over 6,200 pages long, compared to the Torah of 350 pages. The Talmud is almost 18 times larger in writing than the first five books of the Bible.

Now, let's ask the question: How did the Talmud come to be? This is under the third point of these three groups place the oral law above the written law. How did the Talmud come to be?

The word "Talmud" in the Hebrews means *instruction or learning*." And today the Talmud is the central text of Rabbinic Judaism. The Talmud is basically the writing down of the oral law, all of these traditions, all of these commentaries by all of these scribes and teachers over centuries. It contains the teachings and the opinions of thousands of rabbis. And it dwells on a variety of subjects. It includes the law. It includes Jewish ethics. It includes philosophy. It includes customs and history and a whole bunch of other stuff—6200 pages of it!

It has been taught orally since the Babylonian Exile. If you take from the Babylonian Exile to the time to about 200 AD when the Talmud began to be written down, you have a long period of time for all of these teachings and commentaries to be taught orally and passed down from generation to generation. And after Christ's death starting approximately 200 AD, the Mishnah and the Talmud began to be written down and it was completed by about 500 AD. It was oral at the time of Christ, but today it is written; the oral law is written in the form of the Talmud.

Now this is what Christ was referring to in Matthew 5:43. Let's go there. When you read these scriptures if you don't understand this background, these scriptures don't mean a whole lot. But understanding what was going on, these scriptures take on a new found importance or understanding. Matthew 5:43, notice what Christ says here.

**Matthew 5:43.** *You have heard ... (KJV)*

He didn't say, "You have read." He said:

**Matthew 5:43.** *You have heard that it [has] been said ... (KJV)*

So He's obviously referring to the oral law taught by the scribes and the Pharisees. He says:

**Matthew 5:43.** *You have heard that it [has] been said that [you] shall love [your] neighbor and hate your enemy. (KJV)*

Now where did that come from? It's not written in the Bible. You can't find it in the Bible.

God said in Leviticus 19:18, "You shall love [your] neighbor as [yourself]: I *am* the LORD." But Christ is saying "You've heard that it's been said you shall love your neighbor but you shall hate your enemy." And He heard this, the average person, Jew, heard this from the scribes and the Pharisees. So, we see here this is one example of where the oral law taught exactly the opposite of what the law of Moses said and what Christ intended as the one who spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai. And Christ is calling them to task. He says, "You've heard. It's been said to you, but I'm telling you it's not true. You're deceived."

Now you go through all four gospels, Christ only referenced the written law. When He was establishing something or a principle, He only referenced the written law. Look at verse 18 of Matthew 5. He says:

**Matthew 5:18.** *For truly I say unto you, until heaven and earth pass... (KJV)*

I'm reading out of the King James.

*18b) ... one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, until all be fulfilled. (KJV)*

Now a "jot" or a "tittle" are the smallest letters or accent marks in writing. So He's obviously referring to the written law. He says, "That written law is not going to go away. I'm here to fulfill it." And He says, "Not one little accent mark, not one little letter is going to be countermanded."

Look at Matthew 12 and verse 5. Notice what He says. He never refers to the oral law. He never refers to what later became the Talmud. Matthew 12:5, notice what He says. He says:

**Matthew 12:5.** *Or have [you] not read in the law, ... (KJV)*

He's obviously referring to the written law.

**Matthew 12:5.** *Or have [you] not read in the law, how that on the Sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath and are blameless? (KJV)*

They're working up a sweat slaughtering all these animals. And He says, "They're blameless. Haven't you read that in the law?"

Now let's go over to Luke chapter 10 and we'll read verses 25 and 26. This is the account where a lawyer tried to set up Christ to trip Him up. Luke 10:25, notice what He says. We're told:

**Luke 10:25.** *And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and [tested] him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? (KJV)*

Now notice Christ's response.

*26) He said unto him, What is written in the law? how [read you]? (KJV)*

He's not saying here, "What have you heard?" He's referencing the written law because the written law is the authority. The written law was what He gave Moses and what was written down in what we know as the Old Testament. He never mentioned the oral law because it was so polluted by men at that time.

And we've experienced the same thing in Worldwide. Haven't we? Haven't we over the years, back in the '50s and '60s and '70s, haven't we had our own oral law? How long a skirt should be; what the length should be. Where is that in the Bible? But boy we had a law about it. What about hair and all of that stuff? In local areas they had all kinds of oral laws. We've experienced that. This is what was happening.

Christ said, "Look, you can't pay attention to that. You've got to pay attention to the written word of God."

God has accomplished in ten basic principles what the rabbis have failed to achieve in thousands of commandments, occupying 6,200 pages. God accomplished that in ten commandments. And the truth is God expects us to learn through His holy spirit to apply those ten in our lives as outlined in principle in the Ten Commandments. He expects us to use our minds as motivated by the holy spirit to make those determinations.

So, that's the end of point number 3: Those three groups put the oral law above the written law.

Now that leads to the fourth big point.

**4. The fourth big point is that modern Judaism is nothing more than an evolution of the religion of the Pharisees.**

Modern Orthodox Judaism is nothing more than an evolution of the religion of the Pharisees.

Today's rabbis are descendents of the Pharisees and the scribes. I'll say it again. Today's rabbis are direct descendents of the Pharisees and the scribes. And the rabbis' oral law, the Talmud, attempts to legislate behavior through thousands of commandments—thousands of them!

Let me read from Phillip Neal. Again, Judaism: Revelation of Moses, or Religion of Men? This is in his introduction on page v. "... Judaism [is] ... a deeply flawed humanly-devised *religious system*. ... this Jewish system of religion evolved over centuries, based on [the] so-called 'oral law' allegedly given to Moses along with the written Torah. Over time, this 'oral law' – which Jesus called 'traditions of men,' – grew into a vast code of rules and regulations."

He goes on to say, "The Talmud attempts to *legislate* behavior in a comprehensive fashion." He asks the question: "Is it really feasible to create a *code of law* that covers every conceivable circumstance a person might encounter? Apparently the rabbis thought so," by writing 6200 pages of these laws. "In fact the Talmud is a vast code of regulatory law that serves only to diminish human discernment in favor of rote obedience to rabbinic decrees." That's on page 70.

In other words, you don't have to think. You don't have to exercise God's holy spirit. You don't have to apply principles. All you have to do is just obey. There's a rule; there's a law in there somewhere for the question you have right now and it covers every aspect of human behavior.

Michael Hoffman in his book, Judaism Discovered, on page 145 says, "... everything about Orthodox Judaism is either a distortion or a falsification of the Old Testament because it is based ... [on] traditions that *void* the Old Testament," as we've already seen. On the next page, page 146, he says, "Talmudic texts ... benefit those who would replace the Bible with their own authority. Most of the laws of the religion of Judaism have no Biblical warrant; they contradict and nullify the Word of God." And, of course, that's what Christ said about "You follow your own traditions."

Paul Johnson in his book, A History of the Jews, on pages 83 and 84 says this. There "have been four great formative periods in Jewish history: [the first one] under Abraham, [second] under Moses, during and ... after the Exile, and [then the fourth is] after the

destruction of the Second Temple”—four big epochs in Jewish History. He goes on to say: “The first two (under Abraham and Moses), produced the religion of Yahweh – that is, the true way of life defined by God’s laws and commandments – the second two [after the exile and after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD] developed and refined it into Judaism itself.”

And, as we’ve seen, Judaism has very little to do with the law that God gave Moses.

Let’s go to Galatians chapter 1 and see what Paul, who was a Pharisee of Pharisees had to say about this. Galatians 1, we’ll read verses 13 and 14. Paul is a Pharisee. Notice how he words this in his letter. Verse 13:

***Galatians 1:13.*** *For [you] have heard of my conduct in time past in the Jews’ religion, ... (KJV)*

Now why did he say that? He could have said “the religion of Moses.” He could have said “the religion of the”—they didn’t have the New Testament at the time, but—“the religion of the writings of the Old Testament,” as we would know it. He could have said any number of things, but he said:

*13b) ... [you] have heard of my conduct in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God, and wasted it:*

*14) And profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous ... (KJV)*

About what? The laws of God? He says:

*14b) ... the traditions of my fathers. (KJV)*

He’s clearly saying that “the traditions of my fathers” are totally different than the law of God. And he said, “I was so zealous about the traditions of my fathers.” And by the time of Christ and the time of Paul, Judaism had become a religion of men, a religion of men that directly descended from the Hasidim which became the Pharisees, which today are the rabbis.

So that’s the fourth point: Modern Judaism is nothing more than an evolution of the religion of the Pharisees.

## **5. Now in the fifth and final point we’re going to cover four parallels between modern Judaism and modern-day “Christianity.”**

And when I say “Christianity” in this section, I’m talking “Christianity” in quotes. I’m not talking about the Church of God. I’m talking about “Christianity” as it is in the world today, which we know is very polluted.

**5. A. The first parallel: “Christianity” appropriates the name of Jesus Christ (we know that) but does not keep His commandments.**

Catholicism and Protestantism both use the name of Jesus Christ but they don't obey Him. And we know that. The Sabbath, the holy days—we could go on and on and on. So modern “Christianity” uses Christ's name but they don't do what He says. Similarly, Judaism claims to follow the Torah written by Moses, but they contradict it in spirit, in intent and in the letter of the law. They totally contradict it. They claim the name of Moses, they claim the Old Testament, but their teachings contradict it just as “Christians” do today. And while Judaism claims to follow the Torah as written by Moses, they contradict it in almost every respect.

Let's go to John chapter 7. We're going to read verses 14 and 15. Notice what Christ has to say about them, the Jews, and their religion. John 7, we'll read 14 and 15 and then jump to 19. John 7:14.

**John 7:14.** *Now about the [middle] of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and [he] taught.*

*15) And the Jews marveled, saying, How [does this man know his letters? He hasn't learned]. (KJV)*

We would say today, “He hasn't been to seminary” or “he hasn't been to the schools of the scribes.” They were just marveling that He knew so much.

Verse 19, Christ is now speaking.

*19) Did not Moses give you the law, and yet none of you keeps the law? ... (KJV)*

What a condemnation! The law you keep is not the law that was given to Moses. You're keeping something totally different. You don't keep the true law.

Let me read from book, [Is Judaism the Religion of Moses?](#) by Earnest Martin. I think if you've been in the Church any length of time you recognize the name Earnest Martin. We called him Doc Martin. And he wrote for the *Good News* and the *Plain Truth*. He taught at Ambassador College. He wrote many scholarly papers for Church during the '70s. He says on page 1, [Is Judaism the Religion of Moses?](#): “History shows – and the Jews themselves admit – that their religion has drifted far away from the simple doctrines of scripture, commonly called the ‘Old Testament.’ The Jews had modified God's law and even instituted laws and commandments of their own which were, in many instances, diametrically opposite of the precepts of Moses.”

So we see here, in Point A, the parallels between “Christianity” and Judaism, that the modern-day “Christians” and modern-day have drifted far, far away from their origins—very similar paths, both polluted; both corrupted from their origins.

**5. B. The second parallel between Judaism and modern-day “Christianity,” and again I say that in quotes, is the average Jew and the average “Christian” are not all that interested in religion.**

They claim to be Jews; they claim to be “Christians,” but in their lives, they’re just not all that interested. The majority of the Jews were not interesting in religion at the time of Jesus Christ. Let me again quote from Earnest Martin in his book, Is Judaism the Religion of Moses? on page 42. And now he’s talking about the time of the Maccabees prior to Christ’s arrival on this earth. Notice what he says. “The majority of Jews had not been anxious to depart from their Hellenism.” The majority of the Jews. “What they wanted primarily was their freedom from the foreign yoke.” They didn’t care that much about religion. They just didn’t want anybody telling them what to do. They didn’t want a conqueror to come in and rule them. “The matter of religion was really (only) invoked to get the people united in one common cause – to drive the foreigner from Judea. There was no real desire among the multitude to get back to the law of God... [Religion had] only become a major issue when Antiochus Epiphanes voiced his anti-religious decrees.”

So at the time of Christ, the average Jew was not all that religious.

Now the average “Christian” today—think about the average “Christian” today. They attend either the mass or Sunday service once or twice a year, three or four times a year. No big deal. In fact, a recent Gallup Poll said in the US—I was actually surprised. I thought it was less than this—but they said 40% of the American population attends church regularly—40%. That’s way down from 100 years ago. In France it’s only 15%. In Canada and the United Kingdom it’s only 10% and in Australia it’s only 7-1/2 %. In the USA, many churches adjust their Sunday services to comply with the NFL schedule. They work their services so the average guy or gal that attends can go watch NFL afterward. That’s very common. And similarly today, you see, the majority of Jews are cultural Jews, not religious Jews. They look at their heritage and, yes, maybe they go back to Moses, but they don’t practice the religion. They’re just cultural Jews.

And I had a personal experience of this back in the 1970s. I went to work in 1971 for a loudspeaker manufacturer that was the largest specialty loudspeaker manufacturer in the United States at the time. It was called “Advent.” And it was owned and managed by three Jews—Kloss, Pressman, and Goldstein.

And so when they interviewed me for the job and it was time for me to talk about the Sabbath and the holy days, hey, this is great! These Jews, they’ll know exactly what I’m talking about. So, I mentioned that I keep Sabbath from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset and they kind of got this deer in the headlight look. And then I said, “By the way in Leviticus 34, I keep the annual holy days.” And I rattled off the names of the holy days. And they looked at each other. There are three of them and I’m over here. And they started kind of laughing and said, “You do that?” And I said, “Yeah,”—I’m implying. “Don’t you?” And it turned out, “Well, we don’t do that.” And I said, “Well, do you mind if I do?” And I was trying to be a little lighthearted here because now I was on thin ice I



thought. And they said, “Well, you can keep them for us.” Ha-ha-ha! So okay, whatever you want. We’ll make it happen.

But the fact is—and I met a lot of Jews as a result of the connection. I used to travel and teach down in New York City and most of the retail audio stores were owned by Jews, but they were all cultural Jews. They weren’t religious Jews at all.

So you see here that today those who claim to be “Christians” and those who claim to be Jews are not religious at all. That’s the second big parallel between today’s “Christianity” and the Judaism of today.

### **5. C. The third big parallel between “Christianity” and Judaism is that today Judaism is just as divided as modern “Christianity.”**

They’re all divided.

We talked about the Pharisees, the scribes and the Sadducees. But at the time of Christ, there were four other groups I didn’t mention because they were not all that influential, but there were four. The first were the Essenes. They were the largest group of all. And their doctrine was you had to withdraw from the world. They went out and lived in caves or lived on hilltops or lived out in the desert. So they didn’t have an influence religiously in Jerusalem or in Babylon, but they were the largest group of all, the Essenes.

The second were the Zealots and the Zealots were Jews but it was a political movement to get rid of the Roman occupation. And they were the ones that stirred up a lot of trouble prior to the destruction of the temple in 70 AD.

A third were the Herodians. And the Herodians were a political party who supported Herod Antipas, just a political party. But what I’m pointing out is that at the time of Christ, the Jews were divided all over the place.

And the same is true today because you have Orthodox Jews, which we’re primarily referring to because they’re the only ones that attempt to keep anything. And then you have the Conservative Jews and then you have the Reformed Jews. And the Reformed Jews, you can believe anything. They don’t keep the holy days. They don’t keep the Sabbath. The Conservatives are somewhere in between. And it’s all divided.

It’s the same thing today in “Christianity.” You have the Catholics. You have the Protestants. You have the Charismatics. You have the Evangelicals. The list goes on and on and on.

And my point is in parallels between “Christianity” and Jews, both today are as divided as each other, just completely splintered apart.

**5. D. The fourth parallel between Judaism and “Christianity” is the fact is that modern Judaism is just as polluted as modern “Christianity.”**

Now we’re heading toward a conclusion here.

They are no more pure than Catholics are pure. We know the changes the Catholics brought in the early New Testament Church—Christmas, Easter, the worship of Mary, the worship of a man in the form of a Pope. Dorothy and I saw a documentary this week about the corruption in the Catholic Church. It was on “Frontline” which was an excellent, outstanding documentary. I think it was broadcast last week sometime. But anyway, they showed the priest kneeling down in front of the Pope and they showed one where he was actually ordained, the laying on of hands and all of that. And the Pope said, “You must swear loyalty to me personally and to my successors.” No mention of God. No mention of Christ. “You must swear loyalty to me and to my successors.” That is part of the ordination service of every priest.

Talk about polluted. Talk about corrupted—Mary worship, worship of men, Christmas, Easter, Halloween, all the worshipping of saints and so on and so forth. The point is that we know all about that pollution, but modern Judaism is equally polluted. The Orthodox religion of the Jews is a works-based religion based on tens of thousands of commandments, based in the Talmud. You don’t have to think. You just have to do. It’s not of the heart. It’s just outward obedience.

Look at Mark chapter 7. Christ had a lot to say about this. And when we read these words, now we can understand why He was saying what He was saying. Mark 7, we’re going to read verses 7 and 8. We can understand why He is saying this sentence right now.

**Mark 7:7.** *Howbeit in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men [the oral law].*

*8) For laying aside the commandment of God, [you] hold the tradition of men, ... (KJV)*

Then He gives an example.

*8b) ... as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such ... things [you] do. (KJV)*

The commandment was you had a different set of cookery for meat and a different set of cookery for milk. And there were rules and regulations of how you had to wash. Men had to roll their sleeves up to their biceps. And then you had to dip your hands in the water so many times and you had to scrub above the elbows and then you had to rinse so many times. All of that was laid out in rules and regulations. It’s just amazing.

And so Christ says,

8b) ... the washing of pots and cups: and many other such ... things [you] do.  
9) And He said unto them, Full well [you] reject the commandment of God, that [you] may keep your own tradition. (KJV)

It applied to the Jews back then. It applies to the Jews today and it applies to the “Christians” today. John Phillips in his book, Exploring the World of the Jew, on page 57 said, “The laws of the Talmud [which Christ called grievous burdens] constitute...” This is a good analogy. He says, “The laws of the Talmud constitute cold concrete poured over Jewish life and hardened by time into a rigid prison for the soul.” You were just constrained by all these minute doctrines.

A former Talmud-observing Jew, Abi ben Mordechai—he wrote a book on Galatians—says this. He describes the oral law as “a deep, black hole and an endless system of legal minutiae.” (Galatians – A Torah-Based Commentary in First-Century Hebraic Context, page 48.) It just sucks the life out of you. There’s a rule and a regulation for everything.

And so the conclusion here in these four parallels is that Modern Judaism is not the religion of Moses, just like modern “Christianity” is not the religion of Christ.

Okay, let’s summarize. We’ve seen today how modern Judaism came to be. We’ve seen the influences on the Pharisees and the scribes and the Sadducees. We’ve seen how they placed the oral law above the written law of God. And we’ve seen the parallels between modern-day Judaism and modern-day “Christianity.”

And the point is that both of them are completely polluted, modern-day “Christianity” and modern-day Judaism.

Why is that? When you think about that, why is that? The answer is in Revelation 12:9. Let’s go there. There is a being that wants to pollute everything, that wants to twist everything. And we can’t forget that. Revelation 12:9.

**Revelation 12:9.** *And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives ... (KJV)*

Part of the world? Part of the religions? Part of the political systems and the economic systems? No. It says, “He deceives:”

9b) ... the whole world... (KJV)

And all religion is subject to Satan’s deception. And Satan has even infiltrated God’s true Church from time to time. We know that. He will not give up. He wants to pervert and corrupt all religions to lead men and women astray.

But let’s go to Matthew 5 and verse 17 and notice what Christ said. As we know, Christ was talking about the written law right here. Matthew 5:17, He says:

**Matthew 5:17.** *Think not that I am come to destroy the law, ... (KJV)*

The Jews in their religion through the Talmud and the oral law destroyed the law, but Christ said, "I've not come to destroy the Law."

*17b) ... or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to [fill to the full]. (KJV)*

And we need to worship Jesus Christ in truth and in spirit. And, as I said before, God has accomplished in ten basic principles what the oral law cannot do through the Talmud through thousands of commandments. God calls each one of us to apply these broad ten principles as outlined in the Ten Commandments through the enlightenment and the power of the holy spirit because with the holy spirit and the power of the holy spirit, we only need ten. Everything follows from that. The holy spirit guides us in the application of those Ten Commandments. The holy spirit gives us the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5). The holy spirit gives us the mind of Christ, which wrote those commandments, which developed those commandments.

Now we know ultimately the Jews and their religion rejected Jesus. They outright rejected Him. Let's go to a final scripture in John chapter 5 and we're going to read verses 45 through 47. Look at Christ's condemnation of the religion of the Jews. We see now why He said the things that He said. John 5:45, He says:

**John 5:45.** *Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: [He says] there is one that accuses you, even Moses, in whom [you] trust.*

*46) For had [you] believed Moses, [you] would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me.*

*47) But if [you] believe not his writings, ... (KJV)*

Not oral traditions!

*47b) ... his writings, how shall [you] believe My words? (KJV)*

They didn't believe because their religion was so perverted and polluted by that time.

You remember Solomon said, "There is nothing new under the sun" in Proverbs? You remember the Acts 15 conference? It was called because a group of Jews said that to become a Christian, you had to convert to Judaism. The men had to be circumcised and you had to convert to Judaism. Then you could be baptized as a Christian. And what did that conference conclude? They concluded that you don't have to do that. You don't want to convert to a religion that is so polluted—the religion of men, traditions of men as Paul said and Christ said—to become a Christian. And so that conference settled that under God's guidance and under the inspiration of the holy spirit.

But you see the same is happening today. People are saying, "Well, the most perfect form of worship in Christ is to go back and be a Jew like He was when He walked this

earth. And the fact is that He criticized that way of life. He condemned that way of life. And the last thing we need to do is to go back to a polluted religion thinking somehow it is more pure.

Those leaving the Worldwide Church of God and going to Judaism for purity's sake would be like the brethren going back to the Catholic Church because it was somehow more pure. Both are polluted. Both are religions of men. So, let's not be deceived into thinking modern-day Judaism is something we should seek.