

SINLESS JESUS?¹

I. INTRODUCTION

The laws of sacrifice in the Torah specify that an animal brought as a sacrificial offering had to be free of any blemish or defect. This Biblical requirement was “adopted” by Christian theology and transformed into one of the linchpins of Christianity, the doctrine of a “sinless Jesus”, equating the death of Jesus on the cross with a sacrificial offering on the altar in the Temple that was brought for the purpose of atonement. Accordingly, those who accept Jesus as lord and savior are automatically “cleansed” of their sins by his blood.

Christian missionaries use this claim in their efforts to convince Jews that, since the Levitical sacrificial system ended with the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E., Jews have no way to obtain the remission of their sins except through the shed blood of Jesus.

The question “*Was Jesus sinless?*” is addressed in this essay via the analysis of a sample of cases selected from the Gospel of Matthew (there are many others throughout the four Gospels). These accounts, which describe behaviors and actions of Jesus, are contrasted against precepts in the Mosaic Law (Torah), “the Law” in force during the lifetime of Jesus, and for decades after his death, to determine if they represent violations of the Torah. The aim of this analysis is to test the Christian doctrine of a “sinless Jesus” rather than to single Jesus out as a sinner since, in fact, the Hebrew Bible teaches that *all* people sin (1Kings 8:46, Ecclesiastes 7:20).

II. JESUS AND BEING SINLESS

For Christianity, the purpose of the Four Gospels is to testify that Jesus is the Christ (the Christian messiah) and, as such, his sacred mission was to be the sacrificial offering that would make atonement for the sins of mankind. Consequently, each

¹ Transliterations of Hebrew terminology into the Latin alphabet will follow these guidelines:

- Transliterated terminology is shown in ***bold italicized*** font
- The accented syllable in transliterated terminology is shown in **SMALL CAPS** font
- Latin vowel-sounds, A – E – I – O – U, are used (not the English versions thereof!)
- Distinct Hebrew letter that have ambiguous Latin letter sounds are transliterated according to the following rules:
 - A vocalized letter א is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel
 - A vocalized letter ב is transliterated as the equivalent Latin vowel with an added underscore
 - The letter ח is transliterated as “h”
 - The letter ט is transliterated as “ch”
 - The letter ק is transliterated as “k”
 - The letter פ is transliterated as “q”
 - A vocalized שְׁ (שׁ) is transliterated as a superscripted “e” following the consonant
 - There is no “doubling” of letters in the transliterations to reflect the **daGESH** (emphasis)

Gospel climaxes with a narrative that recounts the historical events surrounding this atoning sacrifice.²

According to Christianity, the central core of the Gospels creates the pivotal theme of the salvation brought by Jesus, mediated by the suffering and death of this *sinless messiah*. This concept is perhaps best summarized in the following verse from the New Testament:

John 3:16(KJV) - For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

To the Christian believer, the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross was part of the heavenly Father's plan, from the outset, to redeem mankind. It was only through Jesus, the perfect sacrificial offering of the future, that the stain of sin left on humankind from the act of disobedience by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (the "*Fall of Man*") would be removed, not by a person's own actions.

How did this perfect sacrifice come into existence? The New Testament has Jesus being born from the impregnation by the Holy Spirit (one of the three "persons" of the triune godhead called the Trinity) of a *virgin*, Mary, who remained a virgin throughout the term of her pregnancy. Mary gave birth to a child that was not blemished by the stain of the "*Original Sin*", since he was conceived of God and not through an ordinary act of procreation by two sinful mortals. Moreover, Jesus allegedly remained sinless his entire life, since he is said to have perfectly kept all the commandments and, therefore, fulfilled the entirety of the Torah's precepts:

Matthew 5:17-19(KJV) – (17) Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. (18) For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. (19) Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Whether Jesus actually lived up to this declaration is tested in the following analysis.

Going on the premise that the historical Jesus existed, it should not come as a surprise that many statements attributed to him throughout the Four Gospels are consistent with Jewish teachings. After all, it is likely that Jesus, coming from a family of Pharisees and being exposed to this tradition, held to it and practiced Pharisaic (i.e., "Rabbinic") Judaism. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus acknowledges the authority of Sages and "Rabbinic" Judaism of his day:

Matthew 23:1-3(KJV) – (1) Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, (2) Saying The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: (3) All therefore whatsoever they

² Significant differences exist among the four accounts of "the Passion". The reader is referred to a complete exposition of this by Rabbi Tovia Singer titled, *Did Jesus Rise From the Dead? What is the Evidence?*, that is available at - <http://outreachjudaism.org/resurrection.html>

bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. [See also Mark 10:17-19, Lukr 16:16-17, John 14:21.]

Although Jesus viewed them as hypocrites, he nevertheless recognized that the Biblical authority rested in the hands of the Rabbis who, in his day, were the Pharisees. While he may have had some issues with various aspects of “the Law” (Torah), it is understood that Jesus did not advocate doing away with it. On the other hand, accounts in the Four Gospels reveal some conduct and teachings ascribed to Jesus that were at odds with Jewish Law.

III. JESUS AND TORAH

The Written Torah (Mosaic Law) contains 613 precepts [מִצְוֹת (*mitsvot*)], and no person can possibly comply with the entire set.^{3,4} This is because various commands pertain to different groups of people. For example, some precepts apply only to males (e.g., circumcision), others only to females (e.g., feminine hygiene); some apply only to Aaronic Priests (e.g., permitted marriages), others to those who own land in Israel (e.g., rotating the crops), etc. Therefore, anyone who claims to have fulfilled the Mosaic Law in its entirety is either ignorant or a liar.

A. Did Jesus act in accordance with Torah?

In the New Testament Paul maintains it is not possible to keep “the Law”, and that flawless fulfillment of “the Law” is necessary to please God.

Bearing in mind that, according to Christianity, those who transgress even a single precept of Torah are sinners who cannot, on their own merit, redeem themselves, a number of Torah commands are contrasted against the respective narrative found in the Gospel of Matthew to determine whether the conduct and teachings of Jesus were consistent with what the Torah requires.

1. Marriage and procreation (having children)

☆ The first of the 613 precepts, which appears early in the Book of Genesis, commands mankind to marry and have children:

Genesis 1:28 - And God blessed them [Adam and Eve], and God said to them, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that treads upon the earth."

³ A listing of the 613 precepts is available at – <http://www.jewfaq.org/613.htm>

⁴ Many of the 613 precepts in the Written Torah are stated in too vague a language to enable one to follow them, which is the reason that the Oral Torah that was passed down from generation to generation was eventually recorded in the form of the Talmud. Jewish Law (*Halachah*) is a living legal corpus that is based on the 613 precepts as well as on the Oral Torah, which includes the rulings and judgments rendered by the appropriate Jewish authorities.

† The New Testament is silent on whether Jesus obeyed this command. The New Testament contains no evidence that Jesus ever married and fathered any children. Christian theology completely rejects this notion.

Conclusion: Jesus did not fulfill the command to marry and procreate.

Sidebar Note: Christian missionaries attempt to neutralize this issue by claiming that celibacy was an optional lifestyle in Biblical days and thereafter. To support this claim, they cite the example of the Prophet Jeremiah as well as some Rabbinic literature. A detailed analysis of the relevant Rabbinic works is beyond the scope of this essay. Though, in summary, it can be said that, when presented in their proper context, they no longer support the claim.

Concerning the Biblical example of Jeremiah, the claim is based on the following passage:

Jeremiah 16:1-4 – (1) And the word of the Lord came to me saying: (2) You shall take no wife, and you shall have no sons or daughters in this place. (3) For so said the Lord regarding the sons and the daughters born in this place and regarding their mothers who bear them and their fathers who beget them in this land. (4) Deaths of sicknesses shall they die; they shall neither be lamented nor buried; they shall be as dung on the face of the ground, and with the sword and with famine shall they perish, and their carcasses shall be for food for the fowl of the heaven and for the beasts of the earth.

There are two ways to view this passage. First, this can be viewed as Jeremiah being commanded by God not to marry at all. In this case, it would not accrue to him as a transgression of the precept in Genesis 1:28. He had no choice other than to obey God's instructions.

Alternatively, the phrase "in this place" [in Hebrew, בְּמַקוֹם הַזֶּה (*ba'maqom ha'zeh*)] in verse 2 could be understood to imply that the order is tied to the particular location for a specific reason, which is described elsewhere in the Book of Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 11:21-23 – (21) Therefore, so says the Lord of Hosts concerning the men of Anatot, who seek your life, saying, "You shall not prophesy in the name of the Lord, and you shall not die by our hand." (22) Therefore, so says the Lord of Hosts: Behold, I will visit retribution upon them; the young men shall die by the sword; their sons and daughters shall die through hunger. (23) And they shall have no remnant, for I will bring misfortune upon the men of Anatot in the year of their remembrance.

Jeremiah, being a native and citizen of *Anatot* (Jeremiah 1:1), is commanded not to marry and have children *in Anatot*, since the people who live there will be severely punished for being false prophets. This is not necessarily an absolute prohibition to not marry at all.

2. Honor and respect of parents

✧ According to the Fifth Commandment in the Decalogue, children must honor their parents:

Exodus 20:12 - Honor your father and your mother; in order that your days may be prolonged upon the land which the Lord, your God, gives you. [See also Deuteronomy 5:16.]

Noteworthy is the reward for keeping this Commandment – a long life – the only Commandment in the Decalogue with that reward!

✧ The Torah also commands us to revere our parents:

Leviticus 19:3 – Every man shall revere his mother and his father, and keep My Sabbaths; I am the Lord, your God.

✧ The Gospel of Matthew contains the following account:

Matthew 12:46-50(KJV) – (46) While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. (47) Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. (48) But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? (49) And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! (50) For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother. [See also Luke 2:42-50; John 2:3-4.]

Perhaps because Jesus did not honor his parents, he did not enjoy the reward of a long life on earth as promised in the Fifth Commandment.

✧ This is what Jesus taught concerning the place of one's parents:

Matthew 10:34-37(KJV) – (34) Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. (35) For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. (36) And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. (37) He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. [See also Luke 14:26.]

Such conduct by Jesus is contrary to Torah.

Conclusion: Jesus violated the commands to honor and respect parents!

3. Burying the dead

✧ The Jewish Law of Burial is based on commands in this passage:

Deuteronomy 21:23 – His body shall not remain all night upon the gallows, rather you shall surely bury him on that day, for he who is hanged is accursed by God, and you shall not defile your land, which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance.

Burial within 24 hours of death is commanded for an executed criminal. The Sages argued that, if this is to be done for an executed criminal, it certainly is the proper procedure for an innocent person.

✧ The Gospel of Matthew describes the way Jesus tested one of his disciples:

Matthew 8:21-22(KJV) – (21) And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. (22) But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead. [See also Luke 9:59-60.]

Rather than allowing the disciple to properly bury his own father, Jesus demanded that the disciple follow him. Not only does this behavior violate the precept concerning the proper burial of the dead, it also violates the commandment to honor and respect one's parents.

Conclusion: Jesus violated the Jewish Law of Burial.

4. Observance of Passover

According to Christian tradition, and supported by the accounts recorded in the *Synoptic Gospels* (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), the *Last Supper* was the traditional festive Passover eve ritual, the *Seder*. When the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper are contrasted against the Torah laws that deal with the celebration of **Passover** [פסח (*PESAH*)], it becomes evident that Jesus and his disciples violated them.

✧ Jews are obligated to remove all **leavened product** [חמץ (*hAMETS*)] from their possession prior to the Passover:

Exodus 12:15 - Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, but on the first day you shall clear away leaven from your houses; for whoever eats leavened bread, from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.

✧ **Unleavened bread** [מַצוֹת (*mATSOT*)] must be eaten for the duration of Passover:

Exodus 12:18 – In the first [month], on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening, you shall eat unleavened bread; until the twenty-first day of the month in the evening.

✧ Jews are prohibited from having חֶמֶץ in their possession throughout Passover:

Exodus 12:19 – For seven days leaven shall not be found in your houses; for whoever eats leaven, that soul shall be cut off from the community of Israel, among the stranger and among the native born of the land.

✧ Jews may not eat food that contains חֶמֶץ during Passover:

Exodus 12:20 - You shall eat nothing that has leaven; in all places in which you dwell you shall eat unleavened bread.

✧ Jews may not eat חֶמֶץ during Passover:

Exodus 13:3 - And Moses said to the people, "Remember this day on which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, for with the might of the hand did the Lord bring you out from this place; and [therefore] no leavened bread shall be eaten."

† The account recorded in the Gospel of Matthew indicates that, at the *Last Supper*, Jesus and his disciples were eating ordinary bread, thereby violating the precepts listed above:

Matthew 26:26(KJV) - And as they were eating, Jesus took bread [ἄρτος (*artos*)], and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. [See also Mark 14:22; Luke 24:30.]

Note the use of ἄρτος (*artos*) in the Greek source, which is the Greek word for **ordinary leavened bread (or cake)**. Missionaries often argue that the authors of the New Testament, in writing their accounts, implied that Jesus and his disciples ate unleavened bread. Yet, the Greek word used in the Greek source for **unleavened bread** is ἀζυμῶς (*azumos*; see, e.g., Matthew 26:17; Mark 14:1,12; Luke 22:1,7).

✧ In addition to the precepts concerning the eating of מִצֹּת, there is also the precept concerning the consumption of the meat of the Paschal lamb:

Exodus 12:8 - And they shall eat the meat in that night, roasted over fire, and [with] unleavened bread; with bitter herbs they shall eat it.

† The accounts of the Last Supper, as recorded in the Four Gospels are silent about eating the flesh of the Paschal lamb and the bitter herbs by Jesus and his disciples at any time during the meal.

Missionaries argue that Jesus himself served as the Paschal lamb. This, however, conflicts with the requirements in the Torah.⁵

✧ The following instructions are spelled out regarding what had to be done with the meat of the Paschal lamb:

Exodus 12:9-10 – (9) You shall not eat from it raw, nor boiled in water; but roasted over fire, its head with its legs, and with its inner parts. (10) And you shall not leave any of it until morning; and that which left over until the morning you shall burn in the fire.

† Jesus is called the *Paschal Lamb* in the New Testament. However, there is no record this process was applied to him following his death.

Conclusion: Jesus violated the commands that relate to Passover!

5. Love of people and brotherhood

a. Attitude toward Gentiles

✧ The Torah requires Jews to not wrong a Gentile in speech, and love the Gentile:

Exodus 22:20 - You shall not mistreat a stranger, nor shall you oppress him; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 10:19 - And you shall love the stranger; for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

† The Gospel of Matthew contains the following account:

Matthew 15:22-27(KJV) – (22) And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. (23) But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. (24) But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. (25) Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. (26) But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. (27) And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. [See also Matthew 6:7,32, 18:17.]

This Gentile woman came to Jesus for help, and he called her a dog!

Conclusion: Jesus violated commands concerning the treatment of Gentiles!

⁵ This is discussed in the essay *A Knock-Out Punch: The "Last and Final Sacrifice" Takes the "Ten-Count"* - <http://thejewishhome.org/couner/JCSacrifice.pdf>. Specifically, Counts 4 and 5 address the "Paschal Lamb", though the remaining 8 Counts are all generally relevant.

b. Attitude toward Jews

✧ Several precept in the Torah deal with behavior toward fellow Jews:

Leviticus 19:17-18 – (17) You shall not hate your brother in your heart; you shall surely reprove your friend, and you shall not bear sin on his account. (18) You shall not take revenge on, nor bear any grudge against the people of your nation, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.

This teaches to not cherish hatred in one's heart, to not put another Jew to shame, to rebuke the sinner, to love all other Jews, to not take revenge, and to not carry a grudge.

✝ Curiously, when asked by someone what the greatest commandment was, Jesus replied:

Matthew 22:37-40(KJV) – (37) Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. (38) This is the first and great commandment. (39) And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. (40) On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

In other words, he essentially echoes Deuteronomy 6:5 and a portion of Leviticus 19:18. But, did he "walk the talk"?

Matthew 6:2,5(KJV) – (2) Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. (5) And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.

Matthew 23:13-33(KJV) – (13) But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!... (16) Woe unto you, ye blind guides, ... (17) Ye fools and blind: ... (33) Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, ...

The various highlighted descriptions do not sound like words of a Jew who may not necessarily agree with a particular ideology, yet tries to adhere to the precepts in Leviticus 19:17-18. This vicious, violent language sounds more like it is coming from the lips of a virulent anti-Semite, and its likes are found throughout the Four Gospels.

Missionaries typically counter by pointing out that the prophets often resorted to harsh language toward Israel, which is true. However, the difference is that the prophets reprovved the people for not obeying the Torah, whereas Jesus cursed at the Jews for not following him.

Conclusion: Jesus violated commands concerning the treatment of fellow Jews!

B. Did Jesus change (add to, or take away from) Torah?

The Torah contains explicit prohibitions on adding to or taking away from it:

Deuteronomy 13:1 – All that I command you, take care to do it; you shall not add to it, and you shall not diminish from it. [See also Deuteronomy 4:2.]

Did Jesus obey this command? Here is what he declared:

Matthew 5:17-19(KJV) – (17) Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. (18) For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. (19) Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus taught that Torah laws must be preserved. But, did he "walk the talk"?

1. Dietary laws

✧ The Torah specifies which animals may and may not be used for food. Most of the rules on this are found in *Leviticus 11*. This includes both specifications and lists of what is *clean* and *unclean* among land animals, marine animals, birds, and other living creatures – those that may or may not be consumed as food.

✝ The Gospel of Matthew contains the following instructions by Jesus immediately after the scribes and Pharisees question him about his disciples not observing the practice of washing hands before a meal:

Matthew 15:10-11(KJV) – (10) And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: (11) Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man. [See also Matthew 15:16-20]

To Christians, this passage shows that, by saying that nothing people consume could defile them, Jesus has voided the dietary laws prescribed in the Torah.⁶

Conclusion: Jesus violated the prohibition on changing Torah Law!

2. Divorce

The existence of the institution of divorce is taken for granted in the Torah:

⁶ It is interesting how this teaching is repeated by Paul in Romans 14:14. Yet, when he speaks to Gentiles, three of the four "laws" given by Paul in Acts 15:29 pertain to that which may not be consumed!

Leviticus 21:7 – They [the Priests] shall not take a wife who is a harlot, or defiled; nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband; for he is holy to his God.

Numbers 30:10 - But every vow of a widow, and of her who is divorced, with which they have bound their souls, shall stand against her.

✧ When a married couple "falls out of love" with one another, the Torah provides a process that must be followed:

Deuteronomy 24:1-2 – (1) When a man has taken a wife, and married her, and it comes to pass that she finds no favor in his eyes, because he has found some uncleanness in her; then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. (2) And when she has departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.

✝ According to the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus disapproved of this process:

Matthew 5:31-32KJV – (31) It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: (32) But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery. [See also Matthew 19:9; Luke 16:18.]

Jesus *changed* the Torah precept by attaching to it the condition that adultery is *the only* permissible grounds for a divorce.

This new rule on divorce also adds to the Torah law on adultery. According to Jesus, unless a spouse commits adultery, if the other spouse divorces and remarries, then both the divorcer and the new spouse become adulterers.

Conclusion: Jesus violated the prohibition on changing Torah Law!

3. The Sabbath

✧ **The Sabbath Day**, יום השַׁבָּת (*yom ha'shabat*), is ordained in the Torah as the weekly day of rest on which activities that are considered as work are not permitted:⁷

Exodus 20:8-11 – (8) Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. (9) Six days shall you labor, and do all your work; (10) But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates; (11) For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and made it holy.

⁷ The Rabbis specify 39 basic activities in the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shabbat, Folio 73a. Rabbinic authorities interpret these "primary labors" as they relate to various activities of "modern times" that did not exist in Talmudic times, such as using electricity, electronic devices, forms of transportation, etc.

The importance of שַׁבָּת (*Shabat*) is evident from the fact that the same message is repeated several times throughout the Torah (see, e.g., Exodus 31:13-17, 35:2-3; Leviticus 23:3; Deuteronomy 5:12-14). שַׁבָּת is such an important Holy Day that, while they were in the desert, the Israelites were to collect a double portion of the manna on Friday so as to not have to go out and collect their daily portion on שַׁבָּת:

Exodus 16:22-30 – (22) And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man; and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. (23) And he said to them, This is what the Lord has said, "Tomorrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath to the Lord; bake that which you will bake today, and boil what you will boil today; and that which remains over lay up for you to be kept until the morning." (24) And they laid it up till the morning, as Moses bade; and it did not stink, neither was there any worm in it. (25) And Moses said, "Eat that today; for today is a Sabbath to the Lord; today you shall not find it in the field. (26) Six days you shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none." (27) And it came to pass, that some of the people went out on the seventh day to gather, and they found none. (28) And the Lord said to Moses, "How long refuse you to keep my commandments and my laws? (29) See, because the Lord has given you the Sabbath, therefore He gives you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide you every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. (30) So the people rested on the seventh day.

The prescribed penalty for violating שַׁבָּת was death by stoning:

Numbers 15:32-36 – (32) And while the people of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man who gathered sticks upon the Sabbath day. (33) And those who found him gathering sticks brought him to Moses and Aaron, and to all the congregation. (34) And they put him in custody, because it was not told what should be done to him. (35) And the Lord said to Moses, "The man shall be surely put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp." (36) And all the congregation brought him outside the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the Lord commanded Moses.

† An episode is recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, which describes how Jesus felt about observing שַׁבָּת:

Matthew 12:1-7(KJV) – (1) At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn and to eat. (2) But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. (3) But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; (4) How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? (5) Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? (6) But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. (7) But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. [See also Mark 2:23-26.]

Aside from the factual errors in this passage,⁸ it appears that, by letting his disciples pick grain on תָּבַעַץ, a blatant violation of Torah law, Jesus disagreed with the Torah on the rules that pertain to observing תָּבַעַץ.

Instead of heeding the Rabbinic authorities and correcting his disciples' behavior (as he himself taught should be done [Matthew 23:3]), Jesus attempts to justify their actions and challenges the authority of the Rabbis. The flaw in his rationale is that it presupposes the fact that, under ordinary circumstances, there is no justification for picking grain on תָּבַעַץ. Hunger can have two extremes – ordinary hunger and starvation. If the disciples were starving, the account is meaningless since Rabbinic law permits life-saving activities on תָּבַעַץ. If the disciples were just plain hungry, such as before their next meal, the activity is not permissible, just as the laws concerning adultery may not be violated when one is “hungry” for sex.

Conclusion: Jesus violated the prohibition on changing Torah Law!

C. What about the Oral Torah?

The Torah contains instructions concerning issues of interpretation of the Written Law, and empowers the Supreme Court (*Sanhedrin*) to do this:

Deuteronomy 17:8-13 - (8) If a matter eludes you in judgment, between blood and blood, between judgment and judgment, or between lesion and lesion, [or any other case where there are] words of dispute in your cities, then you shall rise and go up to the place the Lord, your God, chooses. (9) And you shall come to the Levitical Priests and to the judge who will be in those days, and you shall inquire, and they will tell you the words of judgment. (10) And you shall do according to the word they tell you, from the place the Lord will choose, and you shall observe to do according to all they instruct you. (11) According to the law they instruct you and according to the judgment they say to you, you shall do; you shall not divert from the word they tell you, either right or left. (12) And the man who acts intentionally, not obeying the Priest who stands there to serve the Lord, your God, or to the judge, that man shall die, and you shall abolish evil from Israel. (13) And all the people shall listen and fear, and they shall no longer act wantonly.

In other words, the Torah instructs the Jewish people to accept the rulings and interpretations of every appropriate judicial body and not rebel against them.

Among the cases considered in this essay were examples from both the Written and Oral Torah. As was demonstrated, by deviating from that which was required, Jesus violated the commands to obey and not rebel against the rulings of the *Sanhedrin*. Although Christians generally reject the authority of the Rabbis, they seem to forget that the provisions for Rabbinic decisions are present in their own bible, in the Christian “Old Testament”.

⁸ Ahimelech was the High Priest, not Abiathar; and the priests did not violate the law in giving the showbread to David and his men

III. SUMMARY

Was Jesus without sin during his lifetime? The analysis presented above, based on examples from the Gospel of Matthew alone, demonstrates that Jesus transgressed “the Law”. In a broader sense, all four Gospels portray Jesus as someone whom the Sanhedrin could have found guilty of religious impropriety according to Jewish Law. The examples used in the discussion are summarized in Table III-1.

Table III-1 – Summary of Examples of Torah Precepts vs. Teaching of Gospels

Subject	Torah Precept	Gospels' (Jesus') View	WDJD? ⁹
Family Life			
• Marriage & procreation	Genesis 1:28	Silent	Violated
• Treatment of parents	Exodus 19:3, 20:12, 21:17 [Deuteronomy 5:16]	Matthew 10:34-37, 12:46-50 [Luke 2:42-50, 14:26; John 2:3-4]	Violated
• Burying the dead	Deuteronomy 21:23	Matthew 8:22 [Luke 9:59-60]	Violated
The Passover			
• Leavened/Unleavened	Exodus 12:15,18,19,20, 13:3	Matthew 26:26 [Mark 14:22; Luke 24:30]	Violated
• Paschal lamb	Exodus 12:8-10	Silent	Violated
Love and brotherhood			
• Treatment of Gentiles	Exodus 22:20; Deut 10:19	Matthew 15:22-27	Violated
• Treatment of Jews	Leviticus 19:17-18	Matthew 6:2,5, 23:13-33	Violated
Unchangeable Torah			
• Dietary laws	{Deuteronomy 13:1 [4:2]}	{Declaration: Matthew 5:17-19}	
• Divorce	Leviticus 11	Matthew 15:10-11,16-20	Changed
• Sabbath	Deuteronomy 24:1-2	Matthew 5:31-32, 19:9 [Luke 16:18]	Changed
• Sabbath	Exodus 20:8-11, 16:22-30; Numbers 15:32-36	Mt 12:1-7 [Mk 2:23-26]	Changed

According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus was taught by his parents as he was growing up (Luke 2:40-41) and, as a Jew, he was required to observe Jewish Law in accordance with the Torah. Yet, as the present analysis, even in its limited scope, has demonstrated that Jesus did not learn very well what he was taught, nor did he diligently follow that which is commanded in both the Written and Oral Torah. Thus, the conclusion is that Jesus was a sinner just as every other person who has walked on earth.

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⁹ WDJD? = What Did Jesus Do?