119 MINISTRIES

"The following is a direct script of a teaching that is intended to be presented via video, incorporating relevant text, slides, media, and graphics to assist in illustration, thus facilitating the presentation of the material. In some places, this may cause the written material to not flow or sound rather awkward in some places. In addition, there may be grammatical errors that are often not acceptable in literary work. We encourage the viewing of the video teachings to complement the written teaching you see below."

Paul: The Nazarene Ringleader

Like our Messiah, every author of the Bible was Hebrew and kept and practiced the Torah, the Law of God. This daily walk in the Torah would include obedience to the dietary instructions, the wearing of tzitzits, the observing of the Sabbath, circumcision, and other commandments long forgotten by mainstream Christianity, as such observance has been labeled to be Jewish and no longer a part of the faith. This is not an attack on mainstream Christianity. This is not a promotion of a new religion. We are simply exposing the dichotomy of what was believed and practiced by those who wrote the Bible and what many of those who claim to follow the Bible believe and practice.

It wasn't long before Paul's letters began to be misunderstood. His letters were used to teach that our Messiah changed the law of God by removing some of the commandments that our Creator considered to be rather important. Peter explains this well.

2 Peter 3:15-17

> 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, 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. 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.

Faith is what we believe and not *just* what we believe but what we believe to such an extent that it impacts our behavior. What we believe regarding which parts of the Bible we believe to be true for His people today will directly dictate how we observe our faith. For example, for those who believe that the instructions found in Leviticus 11 are truth, will practice the dietary instructions. For those that believe that Leviticus 11 has been abolished by our Messiah, or believe such instructions are only for Jews, then the evidence of observing Leviticus 11 would be present in their walk. So, today, we see a sharp contrast between the faith believed by and consequently evidenced in the lives of those who wrote the Bible, and those who claim to believe everything written in the Bible. When did this happen?

When did those in the faith start to look different than the way our Messiah practiced, than the way the

apostles practiced; different than the way that Paul practiced? As we just read, Peter seems to suggest that the initial phase of this separation began rather early. He said that people began producing lawless ways based on their misunderstanding of Paul's letters, thus causing him to issue this warning:

2 Peter 3:17

> 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.

The thing that is really interesting to point out is that early Christian leaders did not hide this change. They fully admitted that they began to distance themselves from what the authors of the New Testament practiced. They were distancing themselves from a very specific group. Our Messiah, Paul, Stephen, and every author of the Bible were called Nazarenes, the Sect of the Way.

Acts 24:5

> For we have found this man (referring to Paul) a plague, one who stirs up riots among all the Jews throughout the world and is a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

This group practiced and believed and taught everything in the Bible as truth and relevant to everyone in the faith. Paul defines what it means to be a "ringleader of the Nazarenes" a few verses later.

Acts 24:14

> But this I confess to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our fathers, believing everything laid down by the Law and written in the Prophets,

Ironically, Paul used to persecute those who claimed to be of "the way."

Acts 9:1-2

> But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

Early Christian leaders admit to separating themselves from the beliefs and ways of the Nazarenes and instead created a new label with new beliefs. They invented a concept that made Gentile Christians into one box, that do not observe the whole Torah; and the Way of the Nazarenes into another box, that do observe the whole Torah. Here is a short list of some of the examples of those in the Bible that would fall in the bucket of being of the "Way of the Nazarenes" in the first century.

"Way of the Nazarene" (Observed Torah): Yeshua (Jesus) our Messiah, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, James, Peter, Paul, etc.

Here is the known list of names in the Bible that did not observe the whole Torah in the faith:
None

This idea or belief that those in the faith were to no longer observe the Torah as Moses wrote (as everyone else taught and practiced), was an admitted invention of early Christian leadership. This means that the Bible did not teach that the Law of God changed. It means that men made it up so that they would not appear "Jewish." Don't believe us? They even admit to it.

The fourth century "church father," Epiphanius, gives a detailed description of this**, "***But these*

*sectarians...**did not call themselves Christians--but "Nazarenes,"** ... However they are simply complete Jews. They use not only the New Testament but the Old Testament as well, as the Jews do... They have no different ideas, but confess everything exactly as the Law proclaims it and in the Jewish fashion--except for their belief in Messiah, if you please! For they acknowledge both the resurrection of the dead and the divine creation of all things, and declare that God is one, and that his son is Yeshua the Messiah. They are trained to a nicety in Hebrew. For among them the entire Law, the Prophets, and the... Writings... are read in Hebrew, as they surely are by the Jews. They are different from the Jews, and different from Christians, only in the following. They disagree with Jews because they have come to faith in Messiah; but since they are still fettered by the Law--circumcision, the Sabbath, and the rest--they are not in accord with Christians.... they are nothing but Jews.... They have the Good News according to Matthew in its entirety in Hebrew. For it is clear that they still preserve this, in the Hebrew alphabet, as it was originally written." (Epiphanius; Panarion 29)*

We learn the following things:

1) The Nazarenes (like Paul) kept the whole Word of God. They did not change the law of God.
2) The Nazarenes professed to believe and follow our Messiah Yeshua.

Take a moment and reflect on the significance of this. The supposed "church fathers" made an admitted intentional departure from the faith walked by those in the New Testament. Paul was called the "leader of the Nazarenes." This means that not only Paul kept and practiced the Torah but all who followed Paul and was discipled by Paul also studied and observed the Torah.

> *The "church father," Jerome (4th Cent.), described these Nazarenes as those, "...who accept Messiah in such a way that they do not cease to observe the old Law." (Jerome; On. Is. 8:14).*

In a letter to Augustine, Jerome makes an amazing admission concerning the Nazarenes:

> *"The matter in debate, therefore, or I should rather say your opinion regarding it, is summed up in this: that since the preaching of the gospel of Christ, the believing Jews do well in observing the precepts of the law, i.e. in offering sacrifices as Paul did, in circumcising their children, as Paul did in the case of Timothy, and keeping the Jewish Sabbath, as all the Jews have been accustomed to do. If this be true, we fall into the heresy... [of those who] though believing in Christ, were anathematized by the fathers for this one error, that they mixed up the ceremonies of the law with the gospel of Christ, and professed their faith in that which was new, without letting go what was old. ...In our own day there exists a sect among the Jews throughout all the synagogues of the East, which is called the sect of the Minæans, and is even now condemned by the Pharisees. The adherents to this sect are known commonly as Nazarenes; they believe in Christ the Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary; and they say that He who suffered under Pontius Pilate and rose again, is the same as the one in whom we believe. But while they desire to be both Jews and Christians, they are neither the one nor the other. I therefore beseech you, who think that you are called upon to heal my slight wound, which is no more, so to speak, than a prick or scratch from a needle, to devote your skill in the healing art to this grievous wound, which has been opened by a spear driven home with the impetus of a javelin. For there is surely no proportion between the culpability of him who exhibits the various opinions held by the fathers in a commentary on Scripture, and the guilt of him who reintroduces within the Church a most pestilential heresy. If, however, there is for us no alternative but to receive the Jews into the Church, along with the usages prescribed by their law; if, in short, it shall be declared lawful for them to continue in the Churches of Christ what they have been accustomed to practice in the synagogues of Satan, I will tell you my opinion of the matter: they will not become Christians, but they will make us Jews. (Jerome; Letter 75)*

(1) "Minæans" apparently Latinized from Hebrew (MINIM) (singular is MIN) a word which in modern Hebrew means "apostates" but was originally an acronym for a Hebrew phrase meaning "Believers in Yeshua the Nazarene."

Jerome repeats Augustine, saying of the Nazarenes, *"since the preaching of the gospel of Christ, the believing Jews do well in observing the precepts of the law, i.e. in offering sacrifices as Paul did, in circumcising their children, as Paul did in the case of Timothy, and keeping the Jewish Sabbath, as all the Jews have been accustomed to do." (Jerome; Letter 75 Jerome to Augustine)*

Jerome responds saying of the Nazarenes, *"though believing in Christ, [they] were anathematized by the [church] fathers for this one error, that they mixed up the ceremonies of the law with the gospel of Christ, and professed their faith in that which was new, without letting go what was old." (ibid)*

In other words, Augustine and Jerome tell us that the Nazarene doctrine that the Torah should still be observed began with "the preaching of Christ" and this was the doctrine kept by Paul, but that of the church "fathers" of Christianity declared this to be an error and a heresy. In other words, Augustine and Jerome tell us that the Nazarene doctrine, that the Torah should still be observed, began with the preaching of Christ and as the doctrine kept by Paul. But the church "fathers" of Christianity declared this to be in error and a heresy. Yes, a heresy despite the fact that this is what Yeshua practiced and taught as well as Paul and every author of the bible.

So, according to the Church Fathers, Nazarene Judaism began with the Messiah and Paul, and Gentile Christianity began when the Nazarene faith was rejected as an error by the church "fathers." Thus, there are two options presented before us - two possible paths.

We can believe the doctrine of the supposed "church fathers" that labeled what Paul taught and practiced, as well as our Messiah, as heresy, **OR** we can simply believe what the authors of the Bible practiced, taught, and wrote as part of our faith. The new religious inventions of men or the eternal unchanging Word exampled by our Messiah.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

EMAIL: Info@119ministries.com
FACEBOOK: www.facebook.com/119Ministries
WEBSITE: www.TestEverything.net & www.ExaminaloTodo.net
TWITTER: www.twitter.com/119Ministries#