

TORAH - HEBREW

In the continuous line of our timeline of God's dealings with man, we began with the creation and God's dealings with Adam and Eve. We were able to see the fall of man kind from the paradise God had created for them and the beginning of sin against God. Sin may be defined as a missing of the mark, or also as a rebellion against God and His requirements for man. The first law of God would appear to be very simple to follow and understand "Do not eat of the tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil". Soon the influence of that third party called Satan corrupted all of mankind except one line of patriarchs which resulted in the selection by God of a man named Noah who was still faithful to God and His law of sacrifice. Then God destroyed all of the evil persons in the world with a deluge, a flood, and saved Noah and His family. The story of this flood is told in the Holy Bible in the book of Genesis. It is also found in Archaeology and History in the 'epic of Gilgamesh, and in folklore of almost every civilization.

The Torah, also called the Pentateuch, is the cornerstone of the Hebrew religion. The Pentateuch consists of the first five books of the Bible, which in order are Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The Pentateuch presents the continuous story from the creation to the death of Moses and the preparation of the People descending from the patriarch Israel, to enter the land of Canaan as promised to them and overseen by God.

When Adam and Eve, the first people sinned against God the penalty for that sin was death. Adam knew that he had sinned and learned that he was naked. He tried to cover that nakedness with fig leaves sewn together. God in His mercy provided an animal to provide a 'coat of skins and clothed' them, covering their sin. God provided the first sacrifice of an animal to protect man from separation from God and the spiritual death resulting, by shedding the blood of this animal. God required the sacrifice of animals in worship to Him as told in the story of the sacrifices of Cain and Abel. God also promised that the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, (Israel) would bring the earth a savior from man's sin, and allow man to be re-deemed, or made whole, before God again.

After the flood and the re-habitation of the earth by the descendants of Noah, God's dealing with mankind again involved the sins of man and the breakup into nations and languages as recorded in the story of the building of the Tower of Babel, which violated the requirement of God's law to 'replenish the earth'. Man had begun to build large cities and were honoring men and forgetting God.

God choose a righteous, but not perfect man, to carry the seed of the woman from the promise in Genesis three, and then promised his son Isaac, and grandson, Jacob, that they also would carry that seed of promise. From the line of Israel, it was to be Judah that continued the line and down though the generations to David, and finally to Jesus, from His mother Mary who was of this seed

The Old Testament books from Joshua to Malachi follow the adventures of this race, and record the prophecies of the coming Savior. These books also tell of the failing of the people of Israel who failed to remain faithful to God, the many ways they rebelled against Him, and how they went after other gods of the pagan people who lived around them. In many ways and times they returned to God and were restored to His religion and followed His commandments, but eventually, as had been foretold, they were brought into captivity for rejecting God's commandments. After a period of captivity in foreign lands there was a return of the remnant of the people, and a temporary return to God.

The details of this timeline of history which was the true religion of the one true God is given in the Old Testament although the order of the books are not arranged according to the time sequence in which they

occurred. It should be noted that while God had selected the line of Abraham to carry the seed of the Savior, these were not the only people who were faithful to God. Abraham, himself acknowledged Melchisedec as a king and priest of the Most-High God; Moses married a daughter of the priest of Midian; Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon was shown and acknowledged the power and majesty of the Most High God; Jonah was sent to Nineveh to preach repentance and the people there did repent and acknowledge God.

The story line of this religion and the men in God's plan for redemption brings us through the captivity in Egypt and the Exodus, or departure from Egypt, the conquest of the land that God had already promised them in Canaan, the continuing conflict between the people of Israel and their neighbors, the frequent worship of other gods and their return to the God of Heaven, the building of the empire through the times of Kings David and Solomon, the divided kingdom, the decline of the kingdoms, and the subsequent enslavement and emancipation. The stories of the King of Israel and Judah are told with regard to their faithfulness and following God's commandments. Whether these Kings purged the land of the gods of the pagans, or whether they were themselves wicked Kings is told in vivid detail. All of the sins of these kings are brought to light, even the sins of King David who was overall a man after God's own heart.

The laws and commandments to God's people were given to Moses beginning with the Ten Commandments listed in Exodus 20, and including the laws of worship, health and cleansing, food restrictions, social, moral and criminal. Rituals and priests were established and were to be maintained by the tribe and descendants of Levi, a son of Israel. These laws were recorded in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and repeated in the book of Deuteronomy.

The prophets show the call for the return to God when the people strayed away, foretelling of the doom to come because the people did not listen to the prophets of God, and the foretelling of details of the promised Savior, as to when He would come, where He would be born, what His attributes would be, and even of His suffering and death as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. These prophecies are recorded many times in the New Testament as having been completed by Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection from the dead.

There is evidence that there were people who had continued to be faithful to the Hebrew religion even as the period of the years B.C. (Before Christ or before the Christian era) ended and the period of time A.O. (C.E. - Christian era) began. In Luke chapter one, Zacharius a priest is mentioned, and his wife Elisabeth, were both righteous before God. Joseph and Mary are mentioned and Mary was said to be highly favored of the Lord. Cornelius was called a devout man and one that feared God, as recorded in Acts, chapter ten. In Acts, chapter 8, a man from Ethiopia, a man of great authority under the Queen of the Ethiopians had come to Jerusalem to worship and was found reading from the writings of Isaiah, the prophet of God.

This was the true religion of God, and there was no other religion equal to it, because this was the religion established and nurtured by the one true and Holy God. Its purpose was to protect the seed of the Savior and the laws and commandments, the holding of a nation together, the prophets, the Torah and the writings, the priests and religious system, worked together to accomplish this.

When the time was fulfilled as written of by the prophets, the Savior was born into this world, lived the perfect life, declared Himself by miracles and signs, taught His disciples, was rejected as foretold and was crucified, rose again from the dead, and ascended into heaven. Mission accomplished! After His ascension

His church was established by His disciples and the need and purpose for the Hebrew religion was complete.

Every scripture and prophecy speaking of the kingdom of Christ in the Hebrew period, every scripture before Acts chapter 2 in the establishment of the church (the Kingdom), speaks of it as in the future. Every scripture after Acts 2 speaks of it as being in existence. In **Daniel 2:44** the prophecy is made that the Kingdom will be established. In **Matthew 3:1-2**, John the Baptist is found preaching that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. In **Matthew 16: 18 & 19** Jesus said "I will build my church" and gave Peter the "keys to the Kingdom of Heaven", The Lord's church and His kingdom are mentioned as one and the same. In **Colossians 1:13** we read that the Father, (God) "has translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son" This is past tense, meaning it is already done, not a future event.

The law of the Hebrew religion had completed its purpose and was nailed to the cross of Christ.

Colossians 2:14 "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross". **Galatians 3: 16** to the end of the chapter explain the promise, the law, and the new faith in Christ very well. Excerpts from this passage read "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made"- one seed- "which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was 430 years after, cannot dis-annul, that it should make the promise of none effect, for if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. But the scripture has concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which afterwards should be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ"

In **2 Timothy 2:15** it says, "Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth". It is necessary when looking at religions to keep in mind the time period of God's dealing with man. The early periods in the Bible tell of God's dealings with the Patriarchs, (Heads of families) After the law of Moses was established that people were to live under that law as defined in the Old Testament (covenant), The early books of the New Testament tell of the life of Jesus the Christ who lived under the law of Moses. The establishment of the church of Christ begins in Acts 2 and the remainder of the New Testament is written to establish and provide the ordinances of His church. The teachings found in these epistles written by the Apostles and Disciples of Christ are what are to be binding on the church today. The law of Christ and the commandments given in the New Testament has not been changed. Jude verse three tells Christians "that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," and he goes on to warn us that men will come to corrupt the faith, even denying the only LORD God; and our Lord Jesus Christ" The Apostle Paul warned many times that there would be those that would pervert the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In **Galatians 1:6-9** he wrote, "I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel; which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preaches any other gospel unto you than that you have received let him be accursed."

Is any other religion as good as the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Is any other church or religious organization as good as the church of Jesus Christ? Does any other religion follow the promises of God as does the church of the New Testament? Is one religion as good as another? Does another religion promise eternal life with God both here and in the afterlife to come? Does another religion offer peace within and the blessing of God's promises as does the religion of Jesus Christ?

The Hebrew religion is no longer needed, nor is it followed. The Christian religion has superseded it. The Jewish religion does not follow it and no longer follows the ritual, sacrifices, feast days, or priesthood of the Hebrew religion.