

The Misunderstood Jew (Amy-Jill Levine) Chapter 2: From Jesus Sect to Gentile Church

1. Jesus as a threat to Jewish family values:

“I have come not to bring (domestic?) peace to the earth . . . but to turn a son against his father, a daughter against her mother, daughter-in-law against mother-in-law

Matthew 10:34-36

“If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.” Luke: 14:26

“He said to another man, “Follow me.”

But the man replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”

Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” Luke 9:60

2. The Messiah?

Not all Jews have believed that a Messiah is coming: the Sadducees did not. Reform Jews? For Jews who believed in a Messiah in Jesus’ day, some believed that Jesus was the Messiah and other Jews (the vast majority) did not believe Jesus fit the job description. The Pharisees had a view of the Messiah that radically differed from that of followers of Jesus. Let’s talk.

3. Followers of *the Way*: Disagreement about the path to salvation—

- a. The views of Peter & James: **two tracks** (p. 76). Jews & Gentiles can proceed on two different tracks, one requiring circumcision (and obedience to Mosaic law) and the other not requiring this.

b. Paul’s gospel: one track.

The true children of Abraham: followers of Jesus the Christ (*Christos* is the Greek term for Messiah: *Mashiach* in Hebrew).

Paul’s allegory about Hagar vs. Sarah. One is our true *spiritual* mother: Sarah.

Paul’s view of the law: God’s covenant with Abraham does not require following the law given to Moses. This means that we can be justified (reckoned righteous) apart from the law—justified not by works of the law but through faith in Jesus the Christ.

Paul’s view of Jesus’ role: The crucified Messiah (“a stumbling block for the Jews”)—who justified a fallen humanity through the shedding of his blood—died as a sacrifice. In doing so Jesus defeated the powers of sin and death, *providing* humanity with both reconciliation with God & access to eternal life. (p. 67) The risen Christ points the way to a general resurrection.

“For Paul, there was only one track, and it was his.” (p. 76)

4. Should we celebrate the emergence of two separate religions?

Was the split between Judaism and what would become the Christian Church a bad thing? Amy-Jill’s Levine’s interesting answer: “Had the church remained a Jewish sect, it would not have achieved its universalistic mission. Had Judaism given up its particularistic practices, it would have vanished from history.” (p.84)