

Paul Sloan, *Jesus and the Law of Moses: The Gospels and the Restoration of Israel within First-Century Judaism* (Baker Academic, 2025)

“Throughout the Torah more widely, God instructed Israel in how they ought to obey him and live justly toward each other. This sequence of events implies that Israel does not keep these commandments in order to become God’s covenantal people; they are already God’s covenantal people whom he redeemed from slavery, and so now they expressed their allegiance to him through this obedience (13).”

“God is aware of Israel’s sinfulness and ‘stubbornness’ (on display since the crossing of the sea; Deuteronomy 9:6–7), and knowing this, he both commands their obedience and instructions how they can procure the forgiveness and atonement on offer through the divinely prescribed sacrifices. Thus Israel’s commission of transgressions is an assumed aspect of the covenantal relationship (13).”

“Thus, rather than pitting Leviticus and/or Pharisaism against Jesus on the basis of compassion, one ought to say that Jesus and the Pharisees agreed that God was compassionate and forgiving. What often distinguished Jesus from the Pharisees in the synoptic gospels was Jesus is claimed that he was the divinely authorized herald and executor of the restoration that was breaking in *now* (25).”

“Positively... (31).

“The Law’s commandments constitute the stipulations by which Israel maintains the covenant and enjoys its inherent blessings. Violating the covenant results in God’s employment of punitive curses through which Israel is disciplined. Importantly, the covenantal agreement assumes that Israel will commit transgression – hence the divinely prescribed sacrificial system. Thus Israel’s commission of certain transgressions does not automatically incur the covenant curses (43).”

The Discipline - (44)

“What Deut. 28 names ‘curses,’ Lev. 26 calls ‘discipline’ intended to turn Israel back to obedience. After describing a handful of hard times (terror, consumption, fever, being ruled by other enemies), God says: ‘if also after these things you do not obey me, then I will punish you seven times more for your sins’ (46-47).”

“But exile, subjugation, and an abandoned temple are not God’s last word. God promises that the discipline will end, and he will restore his people. The main text from the Law on this matter are Deut. 4:27-31; 30:1-6; and Lev. 26:40-45... And they are told that their exile and captivity are how they ‘pay for’ or ‘accept’ the cost of their iniquity (Lev. 26:41, 43) (47).”

“Key to these texts, then, is that endurance of the penalty and returning to God are the means through which Israel pays the debt accrued by their sin, exhausting the wrath manifest in various judgments, and arrives at the restoration (47).”

“In their state of punitive exile, then, what is expected of Israel is an eschatological ‘return.’ This terminology and the covenant-restoration realities it encodes ought to contextualize the interpretation of the Gospel's presentations of John and Jesus calling Israel to return to God in the last days (48).”

“The Synoptic Gospels operate within this restorationist framework and portrayed Jesus as its herald and executor, which is suggested by their depiction of him as the one anointed to proclaim ‘release to the captives’ and ‘to heal the broken’ (Isaiah 61:1 AT) (49).”

“Significantly, each beatitude’s promised outcome is one that Israel’s Scriptures name as a benefit of the restoration. Nearly every line of the Beatitudes derives from passages that describe Israel’s punitive state due to covenant violation and the divine act of restoration that resolves such plights (76).”

“Each of these plights is a punishment named by Lev. 26, Deut. 28, and prophetic literature as discipline resultant from Israel’s covenant violation, and each is named by Jesus as a situation to be resolved (77).”

“With these pronouncements, Jesus is not requiring sinless perfection. Mercy and forgiveness are assumed aspects of the divine-human relationship both in the Law and the Jesus’ instruction (79).”

“But Jesus’s instruction does place obligations on his hearers, as he states in the conclusion of his teaching: ‘Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine, and does them’ is like one who builds on a foundation of rock, but everyone who hears ‘and does not do them’ is like one who builds on sand, a house doomed to fall (Matt. 7:24-27) (79).”

“Jesus is a Jewish teacher instructing his Jewish disciples about the restoration of Israel from the Law given to Israel. Thus, the ‘newness’ of his teaching is not that of a new pattern of religion - ‘Christianity now, Judaism before’ - but that of *restoration*: Israel was disciplined, but now Israel will be restored (p. 79).”

“First, the instruction (5:21-48) is introduced by his assertions in 5:17-20, wherein he claims that he came not to abolish the ‘Law or the Prophets’ but to fulfill them. Consequently, Matt. 5:17-20 serves as the hermeneutical key to Jesus’s subsequent teaching, which is therefore not the Law’s abolishment but its fullest keeping (p. 80).”

“Third, the contrasts Jesus makes between his teaching and the Law are not intended to contradict what the Law requires. Rather, the content following ‘but I say to you’ draws from other parts of the Law to rightly interpret the referenced portion (81).”

“In Matthew 5:21-48, Jesus is not ‘revoking’ legal edicts based on his opinion; rather his instruction allude to Commandments that either override or condition the keeping of the passage he quotes (82).”

“In these cases, the positive command, exerts pressure on and 'overrides' the prohibition, such that the negative command is violated, but the Law is thereby kept. In other words, one commandment is being interpreted in light of another, and even when one commandment is broken to fulfill another, such breaking has as its goal the *keeping* of the law (82).”

“Jesus’s manner of legal reasoning throughout Matthew 5:21–48 is comparable to this example and those containing overrides. That is, the portion quoted/referenced with ‘You have heard that it was said...’ is not related or disputed as if Jesus simply disagrees with the Law itself; rather, other portions of the Law exert control either because they are regarded as weightier, exerting an influence on the keeping of the quoted portion, or because the restoration he announces activates accompanying legal overrides (82).”