The Doctrine of the Judaizers

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I. Definition and Description

A. The Judaizers were both regenerate and unregenerate Jews who taught strict adherence to the oral traditions of the Rabbis (Mk. 7), which are now, documented in the Mishna and the Talmud as well the 613 mandates found in the Mosaic Law (Acts 15:1-35).

B. The 1st Church Council in Jerusalem that is recorded in Acts 15 was designed to resolve the problem of circumcision that the Judaizers were championing.

C. The Judaizers claimed that circumcision was necessary for salvation, the Council disagreed and decided not to teach circumcision among the Gentiles.

D. The Judaizers based their relationship with God upon their racial background and that in order to maintain that relationship one must strictly adhere to the many traditions and laws of the Pharisees.

E. Biblical Christianity maintains that a relationship with God is achieved through faith alone in Christ alone and that once saved always saved.

F. The legalism of the Judaizers is described in Scripture as “leaven” (Mt. 16:6, 11-12; Mk. 8:15; Lk. 12:1. Cf. 1 Co. 5:6-8; Gal. 5:9).

G. It is also described as “hypocrisy” (Mt. 23:13, 23, 25, 27; Lk. 12:1).

H. Legalism is hypocrisy (Lk. 12:1).

I. Webster’s New Universal Unabridged Dictionary defines hypocrisy, “a pretense of having a virtuous character, moral or religious beliefs or principles, etc., that one does not possess; a pretense of having some desirable or publicly approved attitude.

J. The hypocrisy of the Pharisees was based upon the fact that they were men-pleasers rather than God-pleasers.

K. Acts a 15:5 and 21:20 state that many of the Pharisees who were teachers of the Mosaic Law believed in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation but after salvation they still adhered to the Mosaic Law rather than the Mystery Doctrine for the Church Age that Paul was teaching.

L. This is all indicated in Philippians 1:12-18, “Now I want you all to know royal family that my circumstances have resulted rather for the advancement of the Gospel so that my imprisonment because of Christ has become well-known among the entire Praetorian Guard and all the rest. Even the majority from the Royal Family are confident in the Lord because of my imprisonment, increasingly daring, fearlessly communicating the Word of God. In fact, some even are authoritatively proclaiming Christ because of jealousy and inordinate competition but some also because of proper motivation. In fact, some from virtue-love knowing that I have been appointed for the defense of the gospel. But others from inordinate ambition are proclaiming Christ everywhere, insincerely, because they keep on thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. What under these circumstances is my mental attitude? Nevertheless, that by any manner, whether by pretext or by truth, Christ Himself keeps on being proclaimed everywhere and because of this I keep on rejoicing, yes, indeed, I myself will continue rejoicing.”

M. The Judaizers were occupied with their own interests rather than the interests of Christ.

N. Their motivation in life was to seek followers for themselves rather than for Christ.

O. The Judaizers proclaimed Christ everywhere in Rome but from inordinate ambition resulting in improper motivation.

P. These individuals were doing the right thing in a wrong way, thus it was wrong.

Q. The right thing:

1. Philippians 1:15: “authoritatively proclaiming Christ”
2. **Philippians 1:17**: “proclaiming Christ everywhere”

R. The wrong way:
   1. **Philippians 1:15**: “because of jealousy and inordinate competition”
   2. **Philippians 1:17**: “from inordinate ambition”
   3. **Philippians 1:17**: “insincerely”

S. The Judaizers were inordinately ambitious people seeking to gain proselytes for themselves at the expense of Paul.

T. In Philippians 3:1-3 Paul issues a warning to the Philippians to beware of these individuals and their legalistic teaching.

U. They followed Paul throughout his missionary journey’s seeking to discredit and destroy his ministry (Acts 13:45; 17:5).

V. They were proclaiming Christ everywhere in Rome but from improper motivation.

W. Their motives were selfish.

X. They sought to destroy Paul and his ministry.

Y. They coveted Paul’s ministry.

Z. The Judaizers were inordinately competing with the apostle Paul for adherents as teachers of the Scriptures.

AA. They were promoting themselves rather than the Word of God, Bible doctrine.

II. Vocabulary

A. “Dogs, evil workers, the false circumcision” (Phil. 3:2).

B. “Drifting off course from grace” (Gal. 5:4).

C. “Enemy of the cross” (Phlp. 3:18).

D. “Coming short of the grace of God” (Hb. 12:15)

III. Documentation

A. Acts 13:45

B. Acts 15:5

C. Acts 17:5

D. Acts 21:20

E. Galatians 1:6-7

F. Philippians 1:12-18

G. Philippians 3:1-3

IV. Mosaic Law

A. These individuals were Jewish teachers of the Mosaic Law.

B. The Judaizers would publicly proclaim Christ but their real motive was to gain adherents to the Mosaic Law.

C. They followed Paul from city to city on his missionary journeys throughout the Rome Empire seeking to discredit and destroy his ministry and his message of grace.

D. Paul denounces their teaching in the book of Galatians.

E. They taught a “different gospel” according to Gal. 1:6 and “distorted the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:7).

F. They taught that one had to observe and practice the Mosaic Law in order to get saved.

G. Paul taught that salvation by grace through faith in Christ and not through the works of the Mosaic Law (Eph. 2:8-9; Gal. 2:16).

H. The book of Galatians was a denunciation of their teaching and Paul warns the Philippians about them referring to them as “dogs, evil workers, the false circumcision (Phil. 3:2).”

I. Now, the question arises, why would Paul be so strident in his denunciation of them in the book of Galatians and not be upset that Christ was proclaimed by them here in Philippians 1:15-17?

J. The answer is simple; Christ proclaimed is better than Christ not being proclaimed.
K. Even though the Judaizers would omit grace and would add the works of the Law to their proclamation of Christ, Paul was content to have Christ proclaimed rather than not at all.

L. Paul knew that the purpose of the Law was to ultimately lead you to faith in Christ anyway (Gal. 3:24), thus his reason for contentment where distress might be expected.

M. The Judaizers were those individuals who proclaimed Christ from improper motivation seeking to gain adherents for themselves while at the same time desiring to distress Paul in prison.

N. The Judaizers taught strict adherence to the Mosaic Law while Paul taught grace.

O. The Judaizers were ignorant of the fact that a new dispensation, the Church Age was now in progress and that the Age of Israel had ended.

P. The Judaizers failed to acknowledge that the Mosaic Law had been fulfilled completely by our Lord during the Great Power Experiment of the Hypostatic Union (Rom. 10:4).

Q. The Judaizers failed to acknowledge that God had set aside the Ritual Plan of God for Israel for the Protocol Plan for the Church Age.

R. They failed to acknowledge that Israel had been temporarily set-aside for the Church (Rom. 11:13-25).

S. The Judaizers failed to orient to the Protocol Plan of God because they failed to acknowledge that a new dispensation had indeed begun and that the Law had been fulfilled and Israel had been temporarily set-aside for the Church.

T. Their stubborn adherence to the Mosaic Law made them totally incapable of executing God’s Plan for their own personal lives.

V. Circumcision

A. The 1st Church Council in Jerusalem that is recorded in Acts 15 was designed to resolve the problem of circumcision that the Judaizers were championing.

B. The Judaizers claimed that circumcision was necessary for salvation, the Council disagreed and decided not to teach circumcision among the Gentiles.

C. Paul uses the term katatomen, “mutilation” for this outward circumcision unaccompanied by any spiritual change (Phil 3:2).

D. The question of circumcision occasioned a protracted strife among the early Christians.

E. The 1st generation Christians were Jews and many continued to frequent the synagogues and Temple (Acts 5:42; 6:7).

F. However, as converts among the Gentiles began to multiply, a great controversy arose (Acts 10-15).

G. Essentially the issue was this: since circumcision is the mark of the people of the covenant, and since Christ brought and is bringing the fulfillment of the covenant promises, is it not necessary for one to be circumcised (be a proselyte Jew) to participate in these promises? Or to be phrased another way: Does one have to be circumcised and become a Jew in order to be saved and follow Christ?

H. At Jerusalem a “circumcision party” was formed and Paul and his students opposed this group, whereas Peter vacillated (Acts 11; 15; Gal. 2).

I. Judaizing Christians argued for the necessity of circumcision.

J. It was a reminiscence of the unrelenting legalism, which had sprung up during the prolonged oppression of the Greek and Roman period.

K. According to their view salvation was of the Jews and for the Jews.

L. It was necessary to become a Jew in order to become a Christian.

M. Paul consented to circumcision in the case of Timothy "because of the Jews" (Acts 16:3).

N. But he saw that a principle was at stake and in most of his epistles he points out the sheer futility of the contention of the Judaizers.

O. The 1st Church Council (Acts 15) was formed because of this controversy and Paul won support from the apostles.

P. Although Paul won a victory the issue continued to plague him throughout his ministry as evidence by the Roman, Galatian and Philippians epistles.

Q. The circumcision controversy caused Paul to rethink the whole of Jewish legalism and come to his position that only faith alone in Christ alone is the means of salvation, and therefore has no significance after salvation as well (Eph. 2:8-9; Col. 2:6).

R. The circumcision controversy was not only the first but also the most important controversy in church history.

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S. Paul taught that faith alone in Christ alone produces the reality of salvation and lays the foundation for the believer’s spiritual life after salvation.
T. He taught the principle that ritual without reality is meaningless.

VI. Jealousy

A. They were jealous of Paul’s worldwide ministry and they were involved in inordinate ambition and competition.
B. Jealousy is a mental attitude sin.
C. Our Lord describes it as having an “evil eye” or soul filled with Satanic viewpoint (Mark 7:22).
D. It is the production of the old sin nature (Rom. 1:29; 13:13; 1 Cor. 3:3; Gal. 5:20; Titus 3:3; James 4:1-2).
E. It is the sin of both unbelievers (Rom. 1:29; Titus 3:3) and believers (2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:20; Rom. 13:13) since both have a sin nature.
F. Jealousy produces rottenness to the bones (Prov. 14:30).
G. It is demonic (James 3:14-16).
H. Jealousy was the sin of Satan directed toward the Pre-Incarnate Christ as He received the worship of the angels.
I. Jealousy leads to revenge motivation (Prov. 6:34).
J. There was a grain offering in the Mosaic Law for the sin of jealousy (Num. 5:14-31).
K. Jealousy is not satisfied until its seeks its revenge (Prov. 27:4).
L. It is found in local assemblies among believers (Gal. 5:26; 2 Cor. 12:20; James 3:14-16).
M. Jealousy leads to murder (Rom. 1:29; Gal. 5:20).
N. It was the sin of the Pharisees who delivered our Lord over the Romans to be crucified (Matt. 27:18; Mark 15:10).
O. It was also the sin of the Judaizers who attacked Paul and sought to destroy his ministry (Acts 13:45; 17:5; Phil. 1:15).
P. Jealousy leads to inordinate ambition and competition (Phil. 1:15; 1 Tim. 6:4).
Q. The Scriptures often place them side-by-side since one produces the other (Rom. 13:13; 1 Cor. 3:3; Phil. 1:15; James 3:14, 16).
R. Jealousy is the mental attitude sin that produces the overt sin of inordinate competition.
S. It is the sin among Pastor-Teachers within the Church.
T. Jealousy in believers is a result of negative volition towards Bible Doctrine and Satanic indoctrination (James 3:14-16).