

# THE JOURNAL

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Welcome	The Journal Committee
Does Congregation Play a Role in Biblical Worship?	Dr. Michael Lynette
Enhancing Dynamics of Corporate Worship in Church Planting	Dr. Michael DeRose
The International Leadership of Dietrich Bonhoeffer	Dr. Mike Haggard
The Cross-Generational and the Cross-Cultural of the Word and the Day	Dr. Mike Holland
The Tale of Two Temples: Worship in 1-2 Kings	Dr. Kirk Kilpatrick
Authentic Worship	Dr. Ben Green
Reversing Employee Performance in the Church	Mr. Randy Hald
The Sabbath Day	
Its Formative in the Old Testament, Its Fulfillment and Function in the New	Dr. David Sheehard
Culturalized Worship and Identity Formation in the Holiness Church	Dr. Sue Ling Lee
Building a Culture of Worship	Mr. Steve Higgins
Intergenerational Worship	Dr. Ben Williams
Book Reviews	



**BIBLICAL  
WORSHIP**

...AND THANKS AND PRAISE YOU

***Paul & Judaism Revisited: A Study of Divine and Human Agency in Salvation.*** By Preston M. Sprinkle. Downers Grove, Il.: Intervarsity Press, 2013.

**Review by Dr. Roger Duke**, Baptist College of Health Sciences, Memphis, Tennessee.

Preston Sprinkle earned his PhD from the University of Aberdeen. He currently serves as Vice President of the Boise Extension of Eternity Bible College, Simi Valley, California. He has also written; *Law and Life: The Interpretation of Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and in Paul*. Additionally he co-edited *The Faith of Jesus Christ* with Michael Bird and co-wrote *Erasing Hell* with Francis Chan.

Chapter Summaries

In Chapter 1, Sprinkle declares “the aim of our study” (36)—“ [T]o compare soteriological motifs in Paul and Qumran in order to better understand how these two Second Temple Jewish communities understood divine and human agency in salvation” (36). He elaborates, “[I]n short, the Old Testament says that Israel will be restored when it repents (which we will call a *Deuteronomic* restoration motif), but also that God will initiate restoration prior to [their] repentance (which we will call a *Prophetic* motif)” (36). The meat of his work contrasts and compares the Deuteronomic and Prophetic understandings in selected Qumran and Pauline literature.

In Chapter 2 Sprinkle’s two programs of restoration aid understanding the Old Testament views of the Qumran and Pauline communities. Here he wants “to show that the Scriptures hold out diverse paradigms of [eschatological] restoration” (67).

Chapter 3 considers the “curse motif” as a lens to view both patterns of restoration. He asserts “that both Paul and Qumran believed that national Israel lived under the curse of the covenant . . .” (68) for their unfaithfulness to God.

In Chapter 4 Sprinkle frames his discussion around the question: “Did Paul and the covenanters at Qumran envision the same Prophetic paradigm of restoration when they read Ezekiel 36-37?” (95). He investigates the differences in the ways in which the two communities saw these chapters.

Chapter 5 asserts there is great deal of “discontinuity” (122) between the Old and New Covenants. In contrast Sprinkle explains: “Paul argues that the old covenant only had a measure of glory before the coming of the new, the old now has no glory at all. So the discontinuity between the letter and spirit, or old covenant and new, is maintained” (122).

In Chapter 6 he considers the Pauline doctrine that is at the heart of Protestantism—Justification. This doctrine is not just Pauline, as “it can be observed among the Dead Sea Scrolls, as many scholars have noted, so it provides a fitting point of comparison” (145). To tease it out, he focuses on specific soteriological questions.

Chapter 7 is quite interesting for the novice and scholar alike. Sprinkle seeks to answer the question: “What interplay does justification and works play on Judgment Day?” He notes, “Paul and Qumran exhibit a good deal of discontinuity in their views of justification” (172). He asks how this concept applies to Israel’s covenant?

In “Divine and Human Agency in Early Judaism,” Sprinkle surveys auxiliary Second Temple documents which provide theological underpinnings rooted in both Qumran and Paul. He confesses; “[T]he historical context, rhetorical purpose, social location, and textual tradition of the writings . . . must be ignored if we are to achieve such a survey” (209). He argues, however, that the problems with this approach are to be offset by considering the broad range of sources.

Chapter 9 is entitled “Paul and Judaism,” with the subtitle “Soteriology Revisited.” He summarizes the findings in hopes of making a contribution to the understandings—and debate—concerning Paul and Jewish soteriology. He asserts:

Obedience to the law and restoration from the curse will materialize only after God has circumcised the heart of Israel, poured out his spirit on them and put into the core of their being to obey. The *Deuteronomic* worldview (what was written in TORAH based on their keeping of the Covenant) is not abandoned, but it is reread through the *Prophetic* lens (what was written in the Prophets concerning God giving them a new heart) (204).

He ties it all together for the reader. It is written in the TORAH that eschatological redemption would be based on Israel's keeping the covenant. However, the Prophets would later write that Israel's God would take the initiative and give them a "new heart." Sprinkle shows that Pauline soteriology of the New Testament best captures what seem to be categorical theological disjunctions of the Old Covenant. These disjunctions—the human versus divine initiatives—concerning eschatological soteriology were misunderstood.

### **Critique & Recommendation**

The crux is found in Sprinkle's "Excursus." He asks: "Justification by Grace and Future Judgment Not by Grace?" (204). Consider these "bullet points."

- "If justification is by grace, then it would seem that final judgment cannot be by grace" (240).
- In the Mediterranean world an undeserved gift was given without preconditions.
- "By grace and judgment according to works: the unconditional gift of grace . . . carried with it obligations" (206).
- "The notion that gifts are in principle 'purer' by expecting nothing in return is a peculiarly modern conception that has no counterpart in antiquity" (206).
- This is why Paul "can call eternal life both the *telos* of holiness and the *charisma* of God" (206).
- There is no "hint of tension or contradiction, because . . . [Paul] expects that the abnormal, unfitting gift will be completed" (206).

This book is one of the best works this reviewer has ever read for tying the theological motifs of grace and works for the "Last Day." The "Excursus" alone is well worth the price of admission.