



Paul and Judaism Revisited: A Study of Divine and Human Agency in Salvation

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Preston M. Sprinkle (PhD, University of Aberdeen) is associate professor of biblical studies at Eternity Bible College, Simi Valley, California. He is the author of *Law and Life: The Interpretation of Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and in Paul*, coeditor (with Michael Bird) of *The Faith of Jesus Christ* and coauthor (with Francis Chan) of *Erasing Hell*. He was previously assistant professor of biblical studies at Cedarville University.

Does Paul's theology of salvation match the Dead Sea Scrolls?

In Preston Sprinkle's new book, *Paul and Judaism Revisited*, the idea that the apostle Paul's doctrine of soteriology is the same as that of the Dead Sea Scrolls is thoroughly challenged. The aspects of discontinuity between the two are highlighted, providing a thorough comparison on a variety of levels. Additionally, it brings many new ideas about Paul and his doctrines to the forefront of academic discussion, while at the same time bridging the gap between the old and new perspectives on Paul.

"We might be tempted to think that there is nothing more to say about Paul's soteriology and that the ground has been thoroughly plowed since the new perspective," says Thomas Schreiner of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. "Sprinkle opens new windows by comparing the soteriology of Qumran with Paul, particularly by emphasizing Paul's distinctive slant on divine agency. Scholars and students will profit from this careful reappraisal of Paul's soteriology which is rooted in robust exegesis."

The book's topics explaining the differences include:

- How Paul and early Judaism understood the eschatological spirit
- Anthropological pessimism within Paul's and Judaism's teachings
- Justification by faith and judgment according to works in Paul and Qumran

Offering new investigations for thinking about crucial issues of Pauline theology, these conclusions should be immensely helpful for scholars, who have been wrestling with these concepts for decades. Ever since E. P. Sanders published *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* in 1977, students of Paul have been probing, weighing and debating the similarities and dissimilarities between the understandings of salvation in Judaism and in Paul's writings. Sprinkle uncovers here the ideas that help to unlock Paul's critiques of Judaism.

Essentially Sprinkle draws the conclusion that although Paul was a Jew, things can change: "So Paul remained a Jew," writes Sprinkle in chapter nine. "His theology, however, reconstituted through his encounter with the risen Messiah, shifted from the *Deuteronomic* conventions of Moses to the *Prophetic* framework of Isaiah . . . and others, and therefore embraced a heightened awareness of divine agency and anthropological pessimism."

"This is a bold and wide-ranging study of Paul and Judaism with a fresh approach," says Simon Gathercole, senior lecturer at Cambridge University. "It succeeds in avoiding the false antitheses in both old and new perspectives without shying away from the difficult issues."

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