



The history of Christianity is deeply rooted in the traditions of the Jewish people. The first Christians were not strangers to the Law of Moses or the promises of the Old Testament. In fact, they lived and grew within this religious framework. However, their encounter with Jesus Christ radically transformed their lives and led them to embrace a new identity as followers of “The Way,” the term initially used to describe the disciples of the Messiah. This transition, from being practicing Jews to becoming Christians, marked the birth of the Church and remains a topic of profound theological and spiritual reflection.

In this article, we will explore the journey of the first Christians, from their adherence to the Law of Moses to their full embrace of the Gospel of Christ. This journey not only transformed their lives but also shaped the very essence of Christianity as we know it today.

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## **The Law of Moses: The Religious Foundation of the First Christians**

To understand the transition of the first Christians, it is essential to comprehend the context in which they lived. They were observant Jews, deeply rooted in the Law of Moses, which encompassed not only religious commandments but also ethical, social, and ceremonial regulations.

### **1. The Law as a Covenant with God**

The Law of Moses was not merely a set of rules; it represented the covenant between God and Israel, a sign of His election and love for this people. By observing the commandments, the Jewish people expressed their faithfulness to Yahweh.

### **2. The Temple and Sacrifices**

The Temple in Jerusalem was the center of religious life. Sacrifices were offered there to atone for sins and worship God. Before distinguishing themselves as a unique group, the first Christians actively participated in this liturgical life.

### **3. The Hope for the Messiah**

At the heart of Jewish faith was the expectation of a promised Messiah who would restore Israel and bring salvation. The first Christians recognized in Jesus of Nazareth the fulfillment of these promises.

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## **The Encounter with Christ: A Radical Transformation**

The event that changed everything was the encounter with Jesus Christ. His teachings,



miracles, and, above all, His death and resurrection gave new meaning to the promises of the Old Testament and the Law of Moses.

### 1. **Jesus and the Law: Not to Abolish, but to Fulfill**

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus made it clear that He did not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it (Matthew 5:17). His life and teaching revealed the true purpose of the Law: to guide people toward love for God and neighbor. For instance, the commandments not only regulated external actions but also called for purity of heart.

### 2. **The Cross: The New Covenant**

Jesus' death on the cross marked the establishment of a New Covenant. Instead of the animal sacrifices in the Temple, Christ offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice, atoning for the sins of all humanity. This fulfilled what the Law of Moses prefigured, leading the first Christians to see in Jesus the definitive path to salvation.

### 3. **The Resurrection: The Fulfillment of Faith**

Jesus' resurrection confirmed that He was the Son of God and the promised Messiah. This event gave the first Christians new hope and a new mission: to proclaim the Gospel to all nations, transcending the boundaries of Judaism.

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## **The Dilemma of the First Christians: Jews or Something New?**

During the early years, Jesus' followers continued practicing Judaism. They attended the Temple, observed Jewish festivals, and respected the Law. However, their faith in Jesus increasingly set them apart.

### 1. **Conflicts with Traditional Judaism**

Not all Jews accepted Jesus as the Messiah. Religious leaders saw His message as a threat to tradition and established order. This led to tensions between Christians and Jewish authorities, including persecutions, as narrated in the Acts of the Apostles.

### 2. **The Controversy of the Gentiles**

One of the most significant issues was whether Gentiles (non-Jews) who converted to Christianity needed to observe the Law of Moses, including circumcision and dietary laws. This issue was debated at the **Council of Jerusalem** (Acts 15), where it was decided that salvation came through faith in Christ, not through works of the Law. This marked a crucial point of divergence.

### 3. **The Fall of the Temple (70 AD)**

The destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans had a profound impact. Without the Temple, the sacrifices and many Jewish practices could no longer continue.



This led to a reorganization of Jewish faith and also reaffirmed the Christians in their distinct identity centered on Christ.

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## The Gospel of Christ: A New Identity

The first Christians began to understand that, while they came from Judaism, their faith in Christ led them to something new. They were no longer defined by the Law of Moses but by the grace of God revealed in Jesus.

### 1. A Universal People

In Christ, salvation was no longer limited to Israel but was offered to all humanity. This gave rise to a universal community, the Church, which transcended cultural and ethnic divisions.

### 2. The New Commandment

Jesus summarized the entire Law in a new commandment: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart... and your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-39). This radical love became the defining mark of Christians.

### 3. Life in the Spirit

With the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Christians received the power to live according to the Gospel. They were no longer slaves to the letter of the Law but lived in the freedom of the Spirit, guided by God’s grace.

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## Practical Applications for Our Lives

The transition from the Law of Moses to the Gospel of Christ is not just a historical event; it also offers profound lessons for our spiritual lives:

### 1. Opening Ourselves to God’s Grace

Like the first Christians, we must recognize that our salvation does not depend on our own works but on God’s grace. This frees us from perfectionism and invites us to trust fully in His love.

### 2. Living Love as the Supreme Commandment

The Gospel calls us to a love that transcends external rules. Loving God and neighbor must be at the center of our lives, guiding our daily decisions and actions.

### 3. Being Witnesses of Christ in a Divided World



The first Christians faced challenges in proclaiming their faith in a hostile context. Today, we are called to do the same: to live our Christian identity with courage and joy, being a light in the midst of darkness.

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## Conclusion: The Legacy of the First Christians

The transition from the Law of Moses to the Gospel of Christ was a journey full of challenges but also of profound spiritual transformation. The first Christians did not abandon their Jewish heritage but saw it fulfilled and perfected in Jesus. Their faith, sustained by grace and the Holy Spirit, gave birth to a Church that has endured through the centuries.

Today, this legacy inspires us to live with the same faith, trust, and courage, recognizing that in Christ we have found the fullness of the Law and the promise of eternal life. **Let the Gospel transform our lives, just as it did for the first disciples, and let us be faithful witnesses of God's love in the world.**