

# First Cause

The beginning of things ...



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# First Cause

By John Brown, June 2012

## 1. The Beginning Of Things

"First Cause" is the foundation, the beginning of things. First Cause is the details of how things started and became what they are now. First Cause will predict how an organization or movement will grow and develop.

In the early 60's, as a teenager, I was an Amway soap salesman. I attended company sales meetings and learned from Amway's founders, Jay Van Andel and Richard DeVos, that the character of any company, organization or movement is determined by the character and moral base of its founders. This First Cause principle, I have often thought of this as the "Amway Principle". That wisdom has allowed me insight into many organizations and movements since. I also apply this wisdom to my studies about Hebrew monotheism and the roots of Christianity.

Both Christianity and Judaism, as monotheistic faiths, are founded in the Hebrew patriarchs: Abraham, Moses and King David. Each of these three were given a covenant by God, an agreement or contract if you will.

Abraham was given a covenant about a land to live in. This was due to his heart to follow the One True God only. Abraham requested proper descendants to dwell with him in this land. God honored Abraham's request for descendants and offered him descendants like the sands of the sea, like the stars of the heavens.

Moses was given a covenant about righteousness, instructions about honoring God in daily living among God's people. This was due to his heart for his fellow Hebrew people and his heart for the Creator to do as God instructed him to lead his fellow Hebrews out of slavery. This covenant had built into it the plight of a sinful nation but with many symbols pointing to a Redeemer who would resolve this sinful state of man once and for all.

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David was given a covenant of rulership, an everlasting royal throne over the people of the land given to Abraham. This was due to his heart for the Creator, in spite of his short comings, to do as God instructed him. David listened and honored God's spokesmen, the prophets. This might seem odd when you realize that Israel was not supposed to have a king in the first place. It is a lesson that God will accommodate and bless when His people will truly seek Him first, above all else.

To apply my First Cause, "Amway Principle," the most foundational aspect of Hebrew and Christian monotheism, is a heart for God above and beyond all else. The summary of all the covenants is that a righteous people will dwell in a land God gives them and ruled by a Godly anointed king. The key to the monotheistic Hebrew faith was not looking for a secular king and land but becoming qualified to live in the coming kingdom by accepting God's Redeemer. The king and location is God's doing, not ours'. This was Jesus' message to Israel: Repent because the kingdom of God is near. The kingdom of God was near because its representative, its king was present (Hebrew thinking).

The king of the kingdom determines who is qualified to enter and live in his kingdom. The selection of inhabitants for the kingdom of God is done according to how people respond to kingdom's message and its messenger, God's first born son, as the natural representative of the owner of the kingdom, Jesus' Father.

Jesus' mission was to make qualifying for the kingdom of God a very easy event, available to all humans and based upon God's love for mankind as manifested by himself. To accomplish this, the righteous standard of God embodied in its 613 instructions of the Mosaic Law had to be transferred from an external form to an internal reality, written upon the tables of the heart, as prophesied (Jeremiah 31:33). Jesus did this through his sacrifice and requesting of the Father the outpouring of holy spirit (John 14:16-17), a prayer the Father granted at Pentecost.

## 2. The Righteous Covenant Fulfilled

All three covenants converge in Jesus Christ. But the only covenant Jesus fulfilled in his first coming was the Mosaic Covenant, the covenant of righteousness. By the time Jesus taught in the hills and towns of Judea, Israel had corrupted the fundamentals of the covenants. By Jesus' time, the lifestyle of the Hebrews was known as the Jew's religion, Judaism. Jesus' ministry and all of his teachings (until shortly before his crucifixion) were pitched to correct Judaism's errors and return Israel to a lifestyle of honoring God. In effect, Jesus was a reformer of Judaism! His reformation movement followed upon John's reformation ministry of repentance. So successful were John and Jesus that a whole new sect of Judaism arose called the sect of the Nazarenes, meaning the followers of the teacher from Nazareth.

The errors of Judaism were mostly embodied in the corruptions of the Pharisees but don't discount the Sadducees from errors either (remember the Temple cleansing?). Jesus taught the "lost sheep of Israel" to ignore the Pharisaic man-made additions (Rabbinical Law) to the Torah (books of Moses) and to ignore their arrogance as the authoritative interpreters of the Torah which is how they made their Rabbinical Laws effective.

Jesus taught Israel to focus on the kingdom of God as a righteous dwelling place for God's righteous people. The focus of Israel should have been attaining the divine qualifications to dwell in the Promised Land, the kingdom of God. Instead Israel had focused on the land and a secular conquering king, not the spiritual qualifications to enter this kingdom of righteousness. If they thought at all about entering the kingdom of God it was more in terms of avoiding doing things that would prevent them from entering. Otherwise, they thought of the coming kingdom as their birthright.

The Pharisees taught that salvation (safety and security in Hebrew thinking) came through doing the Mosaic lifestyle instructions (commandments in western thinking) in the Torah, the covenant of righteousness. However, Jesus taught that righteousness came through the Redeemer, which the Torah pointed to in its every symbol, instruction and rite.

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*ESV: John Chapter 5 [39] You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me*

The apostle Paul makes the same point but using an image from the Roman culture.

*ESV: Galatians Chapter 3 [24] So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. [25] But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian,*

This image is very descriptive though today we don't see it nearly so clearly. The 'guardian' from the Greek text is 'paidagógos' (Strong's #3807). In the Roman culture this was a child escort-tutor. This was a function in a Roman household where a servant escorted the child to and from his school. During the walks back and forth, the escort-tutor reviewed the school lessons and impressed upon the child the meaning and value of the teachings. The paidagógos was also expected to teach morals. That was what the Mosaic Law, the Torah, was all about: a tutor to teach about man's complete inability to attain righteousness on his own and therefor his absolute need for a Redeemer. This was the lesson of every blood sacrifice and offering.

This clearer understanding, the very heart of the Torah, represented a pure form of Judaism based solely upon the holy writings. This was the message taught to Israel, the lost sheep. Jesus was a reformer calling for a return to scripture only (pure Torah observance). The followers of this reformation movement became known as a Judaism division, the sect of the Nazarenes.

The Nazarenes were also viewed by the religious establishment as a heretical movement. It undermined the authority of their professional clergy, the Priests and Rabbis. This was the motivation for the Pharisees to kill Jesus, to rid themselves of this competing reformation movement by killing its chief proponent, the prophet of Galilee.

### 3. The Nazarenes Become A Universal Faith

The Pharisees had corrupted the understanding of the tutoring nature of the Torah. The Pharisees had replaced the Redeemer and salvation with themselves and their interpretations of the Torah. In essence, the Pharisees made themselves the holders and dispensers of salvation; no man can come to the Father except through the Pharisees and Temple ritual. When Jesus said, "*No man comes unto the Father except through me*" he was teaching pure Torah but heresy in the eyes of the Pharisees.

Jesus' reformation teachings were very popular. However, he was not turning Israel away from the Torah but back to the Torah by undermining the Pharisee's supposed authority and their interpretations which constituted 1<sup>st</sup> century Judaism (and still does today). The Pharisees were losing control over Israel. That led to a conspiracy to kill the teacher from Nazareth. Killing him was supposed to kill off his radical Judaism sect (Torah only people). They followed through with their conspiracy and accomplished the deed but their problems did not stop with Jesus' death. Jesus rose from the dead! This heretical sect would not die. If anything, it just kept on going and going and going ... and growing!

But, Jesus knew fulfilling the Torah was much greater just turning Israel's attention back to the Torah, reforming Judaism. He began to reveal this to his apostles shortly before his death by teaching them about the New Covenant in his blood. Jesus had prayed for the Father to send holy spirit (which would inaugurate the New Covenant) upon his followers so they could manifest the love and power from the Father just like he did (John 14:16-17). Without the power of holy spirit, his followers could not fully substitute for himself in representing the Father. So he told his apostles to wait in Jerusalem for the "promise of the Father" when they would be endued with power from on high (Luke 24:49).

It is very interesting to note that Jesus requested of the Father for the out pouring of holy spirit (John 14:16-17) yet he told his apostles that it was a promise of the Father (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4, Acts 2:33). Jesus knew without doubt that his prayer request was going to be answered. He also knew that the coming of holy spirit was not just a reformation of Judaism but a total transformation of the monotheistic faith of the Hebrews!

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The coming of the promised holy spirit transformed the faith from being a Jewish possession into a universal faith. This universal faith has its roots in the forefathers of the Jews but it would make both Jews and non-Jews equals in the One Body of Christ. This transformation was revealed to all the apostles (Ephesians 3:5) but it was the apostle Paul who put it in writing and unfolded its details. This transformation is embodied in a concept known as the New Covenant which replaced the Old Covenant (Torah observance or Mosaic Law). The New Covenant was made possible by Jesus' atoning work (shed blood) by making the final and complete sacrifice for the sin, not just for Israel but for all of mankind.

The book of Acts is a record of the transition from a Judaism sect in Jerusalem to a widely propagated universal transformed faith. This complete transformation of the Nazarene faith was not understood for quite a while after Pentecost. But during first century, the church grew in its understanding of the implications of the New Covenant. The apostle Paul grasped the whole truth and wrote it into his letters. The transformed universal Hebrew monotheism eventually became known as the Messianic Faith or by its western name: Christianity.

This growth into a fuller understanding of the New Covenant can be seen in the development of the first century church in the book of Acts of the Apostles. In the first part, the faith was mostly a Jewish thing, the sect of the Nazarenes, but in the latter half of Acts, the religious Judaism elements began to disappear, but the Hebrew worldview was retained. Judaism religion and the Hebrew worldview are not the same thing! The Hebrew worldview did not change with the Nazarene transformation and it was foundational to the universal faith. It was just the Judaism religious trappings of rites, ceremonies and symbols that were eventually dropped.

The message of the kingdom of God and the Hebrew worldview continued throughout the first century unaltered, with the Hebrew definitions of spiritual reality remaining unchanged. The universal faith of the 1<sup>st</sup> century believers was firmly rooted in the Hebrew world view but also contained the power of the New Covenant embodied in holy spirit.

## 4. The Universal Gospel Message

After Pentecost, Jesus' followers (Messianic Jews) continued to proclaim Jesus' original message about the kingdom of God (Acts 8:12, 14:22, 19:8, 20:25, 28:23, 28:31, Romans 14:17, etc, etc). This original Hebrew view of the kingdom underlies the whole record of the 1<sup>st</sup> century church in the New Testament. The kingdom would have been understood in the 1<sup>st</sup> century as a physical land of Canaan promised to Abraham and ruled by a Godly anointed Davidic descendant: Jesus Christ. But with Jesus gone, how did one qualify to represent the Father of the king and enter that future kingdom? Pentecost answered that question.

The 1<sup>st</sup> century concrete future kingdom view has since been westernized into an abstract spiritual realm which exists all around us. The “First Cause” of this change was the influx of gentiles. They neither understood the Hebrew heritage nor cared about the faith's Hebrew roots. This westernization of the kingdom message was also partly due to the long delay of the return of the king and the animosity of the messiah-rejecting Jews against Jesus' followers. Eliminating the Hebrew influence and redefining the kingdom became attractive under those conditions. Hence, the Hebrew worldview was eventually substituted with a completely different western abstract philosophical view.

However right or wrong the western view of the kingdom may be, it is a foreign idea, alien to scripture, in both the Old and New Testaments. No amount of Christian tradition nor theological speculation changes how the 1<sup>st</sup> century believers perceived the gospel of the kingdom of God.

The Hebrew view contends with western traditions. Christian scholars hotly debate reestablishing the historical Hebrew worldview back into the Christian faith. At stake in the debate is nothing less than “*What is the universal Christian message?*” The western message is an evangelical “Do you know Jesus? Are you born again? Are you going to heaven?” The historical Hebrew message is “*Can you prove you accept the messiah by manifesting the presence and power of holy spirit? Are you properly representing the Father of the king as His Agent?*” The western view is based on abstract theological thought while the Hebrew view is based on concrete visible actions (1 Corinthians 2:4-5).

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This viewpoint clash brings another even more fundamental clash. What is the authority for truth: Is it the traditional religious establishment or the first apostles who wrote the scriptures?

*ESV: II Peter Chapter 1 [20] knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. [21] For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

The religious professionals have a vested interest in reputation, position and wealth to maintain traditions. They have drawn a line in the sand against reintroducing the historical 1<sup>st</sup> century Hebrew church. If the laity were to adopt the 1<sup>st</sup> century Hebrew belief structure and practice, the religious professionals would be out of a job! The scholars who are unveiling the 1<sup>st</sup> century Hebrew beliefs and practices have no such secular concerns at stake. Their professional responsibility is to accurately portray the historical Jesus, his apostles and the 1<sup>st</sup> century church in its proper cultural setting with their Hebrew worldview.

Those who have left the corporate, institutional practices of the faith have already started on this path to reject western religious tradition. But the real question is how far along this path will you go? Will you stop at exploring how to gather or will you continue on this path and explore the Hebrew roots of the faith which effect doctrine?

Do not fear, this is not studying Judaism nor adopting any Jewish practice of form, speech or holidays. The apostle Paul makes this clear in Galatians 2:11-14 and to the believers in Rome.

*ESV: Romans Chapter 11 [28] As regards the gospel, they [Jews] are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers.*

What you believe is the universal gospel message depends on if you subscribe to a 4<sup>th</sup> century western view of the faith (the popular one) or a 1<sup>st</sup> century Hebrew view of the faith (the lesser known view).

## 5. The Faith's First Cause

If you are interested in pursuing the Christianity's First Cause, the Hebrew roots of the Christian faith, there is one fact that must be placed at the forefront of your thinking. This one single all important fact is that Jesus exclusively preached to Israel, his talk with the Samaritan woman and healing gentiles not withstanding. His message was a rejection of the Pharisees, a reformation of Pharisaic Judaism, to return Israel to pure Torah observance which pointed to himself as the Redeemer (John 5:39). His earthly ministry was not for gentiles, not in his day nor now. He was sent by the Father to the lost sheep of Israel only (Matthew 15:24).

If you do not lock this into your thinking, you will become engulfed in either Judaizing or become confused with ideologies which mix Hebrew 1<sup>st</sup> century eastern culture with western 4<sup>th</sup> century gentile theology. If you lose track of the nature of Jesus' ministry, you will lose your way toward comprehending the faith of the 1<sup>st</sup> century believers.

Jesus' ministry is not the foundation of Christianity. The parables and principles he taught are pure Torah observance. Looking to Jesus' earthly ministry as the foundation of Christianity is mixing the Old Covenant with the New Covenant. This confusion is due to ignorance of the transformation of the Hebrew monotheism, inaugurated on the day of Pentecost. Christians confuse the mediator with the thing he mediated.

Jesus' atoning work TRANSFORMED Nazarene Judaism, a pure Hebrew monotheism. The outpouring of holy spirit at Pentecost transformed the pure Hebrew monotheism into a universal faith but with its roots still deeply embedded in the Hebrew worldview. The Hebrew worldview is NOT JUDAISM! Judaism was the Pharisees dominating the Jews with their opinions. The Hebrew worldview derives from the Jew's forefathers, predating Judaism (See Romans 11:28 above).

Jesus was the mediator of the New Covenant. He was not the New Covenant itself. (This is radical but it is also fundamental.) Jesus did not live or teach under the New Covenant, he provided it.

*ESV: Hebrews Chapter 9 [15] Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive*

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*the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.*

*ESV: Hebrews Chapter 12 [24a] and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood ...*

Jesus' ministry and atoning work by his shed blood was all accomplished under the Old Covenant. Christians should never attempt to emulate the Jewish Rabbi of the Old Covenant. Jesus said the New Covenant was in his blood. He never said the New Covenant was in his earthly ministry. He gave his life that we might substitute for him to proclaim his kingdom and deliver God's people into it. That is the essence of the New Covenant. He did not give his life for us to become a messianic sect of Judaism by emulating him. If you want to build your faith on the Old Covenant, upon a pure Judaism, get honest, join a messianic synagogue.

One more thing: The apostle Paul did not teach any principle or doctrine contrary to the Hebrew worldview. Paul was a Hebrew of the Hebrews (Phil. 3:5). He was a Pharisee by education and a faithful Torah observant Jew. Paul thought and wrote like a Hebrew, he never abandoned his Hebrew heritage. Any teaching that Paul contradicted the Hebrew worldview or contradicted Jesus is just shallow ignorant western theological banter. Some Bible teachers propound such non-biblical ideologies due to their ignorance of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Don't believe it, Paul taught a Hebrew rooted monotheism, transformed by the power in the New Covenant.

The power of Pentecost is the New Covenant itself. It is the very heart of the transformed Hebrew monotheism, the faith practiced by 1<sup>st</sup> century believers who worshiped God in spirit by manifesting the power in holy spirit, the power of the New Covenant.

May God bless you and keep you on your journey into the Hebrew roots of the Christian faith and your own discovery of the New Covenant power of Pentecost IN you.