

BOOK REVIEW

Barry C. Joslin, *Hebrews, Christ, and the Law: The Theology of the Mosaic Law in Hebrews 7:1–10:18* (Paternoster Biblical Monographs; Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008); xx + 334 pp. Pbk. £29.99.

Barry C. Joslin's study on the law in Hebrews was originally his doctoral dissertation under the guidance of Dr. Tom Schreiner from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. In this book, Joslin identifies a subject that has had little press in modern scholarship (the law in the Epistle to the Hebrews) and offers his study as a starting point for further discussion. Joslin is clear on his thesis: 'the work of Christ has transformed the law, and this transformation involves both its internalization and fulfillment in the New Covenant; the law has forever been affected Christologically' (p. 5).

In the first chapter, Joslin articulates this thesis and asks the three questions that will define Chapters 4–6 of his study: 'What does it mean for the writer of Hebrews that the law has changed?' 'What does it mean for the law(s) to be written on the minds and hearts if/since it has been changed?' and 'What does it mean that the "law has a shadow"?' Surveying recent scholarship, Joslin identifies two views related to the law in Hebrews: the law has either *on-going* or *no on-going* validity in the new covenant era. A purpose of this monograph is to build upon and advance the *on-going* validity view.

To set the stage for his thesis, Joslin's second chapter surveys how the law was understood in Second Temple Judaism. His goal is to identify what is meant by 'law' (νόμος) in the relevant literature of the period. Joslin traces the use of 'law' in the Old Testament Apocrypha, Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Josephus, Philo and the Dead Sea Scrolls. The survey reveals both obvious conclusions (i.e. that the law was held in high regard; piety was directly connected to the law) and some that are quite insightful. Some helpful insights include the point that νόμος overwhelmingly referred specifically to the written law of

Moses and that there existed no parallels to Hebrews' cessation of the practice of certain laws.

In the third chapter, Joslin takes up the issue of the literary structure of Hebrews. The first half of the chapter evaluates the approaches of D. Guthrie, Vaganay, Spicq, Nauck, Vanhoye, Bruce and Attridge. The second half details the approach of George Guthrie (to which the author subscribes) and then presents a structure of Heb. 7.1–10.18, the section on which the monograph focuses. Joslin's division of this section sets the course for the following three chapters: 7.1–28, 8.1–13 and 9.1–10.18. Using these subunits, Joslin begins to answer the three questions concerning the law in Hebrews that he posed in the first chapter.

The fourth chapter, therefore, looks closely at 7.1–28 with the purpose of answering the question, 'What does it mean for the writer of Hebrews that the law has changed?' The passage contains a comparison between Jesus and Melchizedek and refers to νόμος five times. The most significant aspect for Joslin's study is the relationship between v. 12, which says that if the priesthood is changed, then the law must be changed (νόμου μετάρθεις), and vv. 18–19a, which states that 'the former regulation (ἐντολῆς) is set aside because it was weak and useless (for the law [νόμος] made nothing perfect') (TNIV). Joslin differentiates between νόμος and a specific ἐντολή. This specific command, it is argued, refers to lineage requirements for the priesthood. It is this command that the writer of Hebrews says is 'set aside', not the whole law. He also argues for an understanding of μετάρθεις as 'transformation' rather than 'abrogation'. Joslin then makes the distinction that νόμος and διαθήκη, while closely related, are not virtual synonyms. This is significant since Hebrews speaks of a new διαθήκη that replaces the old one. While Joslin argues that νόμος is affected by Christ, it is not replaced with a new law. Rather, it is transformed (μετάρθεις).

In the fifth chapter, Heb. 8.1–13 is examined with the intent of answering the question, 'What does it mean for the law(s) to be written on the minds and hearts if/since it has been changed?' More specifically, it asks how the concept of the νόμου μετάρθεις in 7.12 is connected to the promise found in Jeremiah that God will write the law on the hearts and minds of believers in the new covenant. After an initial overview of 8.1–13, Joslin looks specifically at Jeremiah 31 and its original context. He argues that Jeremiah spoke of an end to the old

covenant, yet a continuity of the law in both covenants. When the author of Hebrews incorporates the passage from Jeremiah, Joslin argues, he is keeping with this original intent. Yet, in light of Christ, it is viewed in a fresh way: God has brought about a new covenantal arrangement that incorporates the internalization of the law, producing universal knowledge of and obedience to God (p. 207).

Joslin then proceeds to survey current Hebrews scholarship on the issue of νόμος in 8.10. He divides the views of scholars into three categories: (1) the non-view; (2) the no correspondence view, and (3) the direct correspondence view. Those in the first category simply make no comment on how νόμος should be understood in 8.10. The no correspondence view includes those who would argue that νόμος in 8.10 has no relation to the law of Moses but has some other meaning. Typically, those in this view understand νόμος as symbolic of God's internal renewal of the new covenant people. The direct correspondence view understands νόμος to correspond to the law of Moses. Joslin certainly sides with the third view, but modifies it into a fourth view, the transformation view. This view maintains that νόμος refers to the law of Moses (like the third view), but that this law has been transformed christologically. That is, the law's regulations have been fulfilled by Christ and can now be internalized in the new covenant believer.

The sixth chapter looks closely at the remaining subunit (9.1–10.18) and poses the question, 'What does it mean that the "law has a shadow"?' This phrase is found in 10.1 (σκιὰν γὰρ ἔχων ὁ νόμος). Joslin makes the argument that the participle ἔχων should be translated 'has/possesses' rather than 'is'. That is to say, Hebrews is writing that the law *has* a shadow, not that the law *is* a shadow (as with the TNIV/NIV). Joslin argues from 9.1-28 that it is the cultus that is the shadow, including the tabernacle, priests and sacrifices. These things merely point to the true tabernacle, priest and sacrifice that are brought about through Christ.

Joslin's monograph is a solid addition to Hebrews scholarship. Future studies on the epistle, especially those dealing with the concept of law and/or covenant, will need to grapple with the ideas Joslin puts forth. Particularly helpful is his understanding that the Mosaic law still has a place in the new covenant, although it has been transformed christologically. The law has been fulfilled in Christ and internalized to ensure obedience and forgiveness. Also insightful is Joslin's emphasis

on where νόμος is understood positively in Hebrews. His exegesis proves to be quite perceptive and at several points it provides valuable insights (for example, his argument for a translation of ‘has’ for the present active participle ἔχων in 10.1).

However, Joslin’s study is not without its shortcomings. It is unclear why an entire chapter is devoted to various approaches to the structure of Hebrews. While it is helpful to place 7.1–10.18 within its wider context in the argument of Hebrews, this was not furthered by an evaluation of various scholars’ structures. When Joslin does land on an option (George Guthrie’s), it is equally unclear how such a proposal aids in his understanding of the law. His justification seems to be that Guthrie’s proposal emphasizes that the expositional material (into which all of 7.1–10.18 falls) supports the hortatory sections, but this could have been presented in a more succinct fashion. Also, since Joslin did decide to devote a chapter to the issue, I would have liked to see him interact with Cynthia Westfall’s structure of Hebrews more directly (rather than in footnotes) and more fully (he seems to comment just on the places where Westfall differs from Guthrie).

Another issue is how the book engages with current Hebrews scholarship. At certain points, Joslin sets out to divide modern scholars into categories to which they might not willingly subscribe. This is possibly because so few have written directly on the topic but rather have commented indirectly on the law through a discussion on covenant or the priesthood. I was left wondering if those scholars placed in the no-correspondence view (from Chapter 5) would say that νόμος in 8.10 has *no connection* to the Mosaic law. It could very well be so, but I suspect that many of the scholars mentioned did not intend to pick one category over the other.

At the same time, this is why Joslin’s monograph is so important. It draws attention to the issue of the theology of νόμος in Hebrews and forces New Testament scholars to interact with the views Joslin puts forth. I look forward to future interaction with this monograph and with the theology of νόμος in Hebrews.

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