



Paul, Moses, and the History of Israel : The Letter/Spirit Contrast and the Argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3

Scott J Hafemann



Second Corinthians has long been recognized as one of the most difficult texts for understanding Paul's apostolic self-conception, his view of the law in relationship to the gospel, and his distinctively Christian use of the Old Testament. In this work, Scott Hafemann offers a detailed exegetical and traditions-geschichtliche study of Paul's argument in 2 Corinthians 3 against the backdrop of the call of Moses and the prophets on the one hand, and in view of the Second Giving of the Law from Exodus 32-34 and the ensuing history of Israel on the other. Against this backdrop, Hafemann proposes that Paul understood himself to have been called like Moses, albeit with a ministry unlike that of Moses because of the distinctive new covenant context of his apostolic ministry. The author puts forth the provocative thesis that within this redemptive-historical context the letter/Spirit contrast is not to be seen as a contrast between the law and the gospel per se, but between the law itself with and without the power of the Spirit, the former of which is essential to Paul's gospel ministry. Hafemann argues that Paul supported this position on the basis of a careful and contextual interpretation of Exodus 32-34, Jeremiah 31, and the canonical history of Israel, which remained true to their original intention. In conclusion, the significance of Paul's argument from Scripture in 2 Corinthians 3 for understanding Paul's view of the Law, the relationship between Israel and the Church, and his OT hermeneutic is outlined. This work breaks new ground in offering a thorough study of the contours of Paul's thought concerning the nature and defense of his apostolic ministry in view of the ministry of Moses, the Sinai covenant, and the history of Israel. It also interacts extensively with the secondary literature in the field.

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