

## JUDAISM, CHRISTIANITY, AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

Why There Is A Separation Between Judaism and Christianity. . . OR Is There?

### CONSIDER:

Why would Jewish people converge at the Jordan River when John the Immerser/Baptizer was preaching a message of repentance? Why would John say, upon seeing Jesus come down to the waters of the Jordan, “Behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world?”

What would that mean to Jewish people?

Repentance – Jer. 3; Isa. 55; Ezekiel; Hosea 5:15; Zech. 12:10ff; Malachi; Matt. 23:37-39

The Lamb:

Gen. 22:8

Exodus 12:1-13

Isaiah 53:5-7

The Bible records ONE story. We don’t turn over to the Gospels and read a new story. It’s the continuation of the story that God has laid out in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Judaism – the monotheistic belief – the belief in one God – given to the Jewish people by that one God.

So, what’s with the “separation”?

The Messiah is Jewish (Rev. 5:5 – He will return as the Lion of Judah and the root of Jesse).

The disciples were Jewish.

The early church was Jewish.

3000 Jewish people accepted the Lord at the FEAST of Pentecost/Shavuot in Jerusalem.

This was one of the Feasts God gave to the children of Israel in the wilderness as read in Lev. 23.

Consider this – in the early church the question was (Acts 15 – Jerusalem Council) – can a Gentile accept the Messiah?!!

We’ve reversed the whole thing, haven’t we? Today we ask – “Can a Jew accept the Messiah?”

How did this whole reversal come about?

Israel’s history in the First Century through the Fifth Century:

- What was the center of belief in Jesus during the first century? Jerusalem!

- Christianity was at first considered a sect of Judaism (Nazarenes, Essenes). The first believers in Jesus were Jewish. The early Church was Jewish.
  - The Church was birthed in Jerusalem at Pentecost (Jewish Feast of Shavuot) 50 days following Jesus' resurrection which occurred on the Jewish Feast of First Fruits).
  - As time passed, Christianity became known as totally distinct. Why? Nothing changed. God did not change His plans at the cross. Jesus' death on the cross was the ultimate sacrifice. Jesus' death was the culmination of what He had been teaching the Jewish people through the sacrificial system which He had given to Israel. What was written in the Old Covenant was a shadow – then fulfilled in Jesus Who was the substance (Col. 2:16).
- 70 AD – what happened? The Temple was destroyed and there was a scattering of Jewish people – the beginning of the Diaspora. Some of the Jewish believers – when they saw Jerusalem surrounded – they remembered the words of Jesus (Luke 21:20-22 – when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains). Jewish believers in 70 AD were watching as the Romans were converging - so, they fled.
- Some returned to Jerusalem after things settled down. There began to be a parting of the ways between Jewish believers in Jesus and Jewish non-believers. AND, there was a continual struggle for Jewish independence until 130-135 AD. Another uprising ensued. Rabbi Akiva proclaimed Simon Ben Kosiba, the general leading the revolt – “Bar Cochba” – “Son of Light” – the Messiah. Jewish believers could not fight under the banner of a false Messiah. Jewish believers didn't remain with the Jewish non-believers in Jesus to fight against Rome. Jewish believers “deserted.”
  - The revolt was doomed. Bar Cochba was put to death along with Rabbi Akiva. Jerusalem was destroyed and was declared off limits to all Jews.
- Rome became the center of faith.
- The Roman Emperor Hadrian regained Jerusalem and banned the Jewish people from Jerusalem under the penalty of death.
  - Hadrian rebuilt and renamed Jerusalem: Aelia Capitolina. The land became known as Syria et Palaestina. This name change was in honor of the ancient enemies of the Jewish people – the Philistines. This was Hadrian's attempt to wipe away all memory of the Jewish people. The Jews were not allowed in their capital city for the next 500 years.
  - The land was known as Palestine from approx. 135 AD until 1948. It is now known as the land of Israel. It was known as the land of Israel in Jesus' day (Matt. 2:20-21). I will not call this land Palestine. Why did Hadrian rename the land Palestine? Hadrian was determined to wipe the memory of Judea and the Jewish people from the pages of history.
- For the next 500 years – no Jews would be allowed in the city of Jerusalem – except for one day a year – the anniversary of the burning of the Temple! (Tisha B'Av – the ninth of Av [August]).
- As Jewish believers were scattered – they began taking the Gospel to Gentiles. More and more Gentiles were becoming believers in Jesus.

- Without a background in Jewish history and Jewish life – the Gentiles didn't understand why the Jewish believers wanted to continue to do the things they'd always done, i.e. Passover, the Feast of Tabernacles, etc.
- Constantine came upon the scene (4<sup>th</sup> C) and "Christianity" became the state religion. He moved the capital of the empire from Rome to Byzantium which he renamed Constantinople.
  - 325 AD he also declared that nothing of a Jewish origin could be used in the worship of Jesus. Thus, there went the church's Jewish roots.
- The intentional push to separate Christianity from its Jewish roots was evident. The first Council of Nicea (325 AD) was attended by 318 bishops that are said to have had no Jewish ancestry.
  - Jewish believers celebrated Passover on the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. Jesus rose from the dead within Passover week on the Feast of First Fruits. That was their celebration of Jesus' victory over death. The bishops changed the date of the Resurrection celebration to the Sunday following the first full moon after the vernal equinox," which is a time associated with the spring festival of the Persian fertility goddess Ishtar also known as Eastre. (Constantine's goal was to remove Jesus from the context of Passover.)
- The Council of Antioch (341 AD) prohibited Christians from celebrating Passover with the Jews.
- Believers had had their choice of how and when to observe the Sabbath and Jesus' resurrection. Constantine changed that in 364 AD during the Council of Laodicea. Constantine decreed in Canon 29: "Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday, but shall work on that day; but the Lord's day they shall especially honor, and, as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day. If, however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out from Christ."
- An Iranian Rabbi said, "You took a Jewish Messiah from a Jewish homeland, brought Him to Rome, made Him a Gentile, and forced us to bow down and worship Him and when we didn't, you killed us."

Jewish believers became more separated from Jewish non-believers. Jewish believers became more separated from Gentile believers. All believers – Jews and Gentiles – should be united – one new man (Eph. 2:15ff). Paul rejoices in the unity of the Church, the body of Christ (Rom. 15:8-9).

What do we mean by "Judaism"? Definitions are crucial. When I talk about Judaism today, I'm speaking of Judaism as taught in synagogues by Rabbis. This Judaism as taught by the Rabbis is called Rabbinical Judaism and it is NOT based on the Hebrew Scriptures. Rabbinical Judaism and Christianity are indeed separate.

Rabbinical Judaism is based on the Talmud – a collection of debates among Rabbis. The Talmud is Rabbinic opinion/Rabbinic commentary based on the oral law. There is no oral law! Scripture teaches that everything God gave Moses was written (Ex.

24:4; Josh. 8:34). Rabbis have embellished the 613 commandments God did indeed give to Israel in the Torah – the first five books of Moses.

The Bible teaches Biblical Judaism – from the Old Testament – the Hebrew Scriptures – which is our Bible too!

What does Biblical Judaism teach? The OT begins with the free gift of forgiveness – when God killed an innocent animal to cover the sins of Adam and Eve; when God said He requires blood for the atonement of the soul; when God gave the Jewish people the sacrificial system and we see substitutionary atonement – a life for a life; when Abram believed in God alone (not on his good works) and God declared him righteous.

We're talking about Biblical Judaism – as being taught straight from the Hebrew Scriptures – the Tanakh. Biblical Judaism embraces:

The Hebrew Scriptures

The Shema – Deut. 6:4 – *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one*

The Feasts of Israel which point to the Messiah – Jesus!

The Messianic prophecies

The Millennial Kingdom – as promised to Israel.

Rabbinic Judaism teaches that Judaism is a religion of the deed – of works. In teaching that, Rabbis will state that Christianity is a religion of the creed – of belief.

Rabbinical Judaism teaches that what an individual believes about God or the afterlife is not nearly as important as how one lives.

NOTE: the NT teaches:

Gal. 6:10 - *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

Eph. 2:10 - *For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

AND, the OT teaches:

Hab. 2:14b - *the just shall live by his faith*

Gen. 15:6 - *And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for*

Isa. 64:6 - *But we are all like an unclean thing,*

*And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags*

Why then is Judaism today, Rabbinical Judaism, teaching that their religion is based on good works?

In 90 AD – after the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed, Rabbi Yochanan Ben Zakkai, who had not come to faith in Jesus, called a council at Jamnia. Judaism became a “religion” based on four pillars: prayers, fasting, charitable giving and good deeds. The rules were changed from what God laid out in the Tanakh.

Rabbinical Judaism elevates man. Rabbinical Judaism was clearly taught in Jesus' day. John the Immerser and Jesus spoke out against Pharasaic teaching which embellished the

Scriptures – which added to the written word of God – which added to the 613 commandments.

CONSIDER: Messianic or Biblical Judaism – (The promise of the Messiah goes back to Gen. 3:15) – is older than Rabbinical Judaism. BUT – Rabbinical Judaism has become mainstream Judaism. It is mainstream Judaism that rejects Jesus as the Messiah. What becomes important then is what is Biblical – not what is “Jewish”. What becomes important/crucial is what the Hebrew Scriptures say not what the Rabbis say!

Christianity has Jewish roots – from the Hebrew Scriptures:

“The account of Jesus and the kingdom He came to establish has deep roots in the soil of Israel’s history. For centuries, the strip of land between the eastern side of the Mediterranean Sea and the western boundary of the Arabian Desert has been – and continues to be – ground zero for ongoing conflict between good and evil. The conflict is – and will be cosmic, NOT political. Therefore it is no accident that Jesus was born there or that His destiny was so intricately intertwined with the future of Israel.” (Chuck Swindoll, *The Greatest Life of All, Jesus*, p. 61)