

“Let’s Answer Some Jewish Questions”

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This topic was given to me by the editor of 21st. Century Christian. As a Jew who believes in Yeshua the Messiah I can easily ask the questions that many Jews have asked about Christianity for many centuries. The questions that are asked by Jews who do not believe that Yeshua is the Messiah are valid, and we as His disciples ought to come up with some valid answers. The answers to these questions are not as important for the Jewish people as they are for us as Christians.

Before I get into this article I must confess that there is fear in my heart when dealing with such a sensitive subject. The fear comes from an uncertainty about the ability of many Christians today to understand the Biblical implications of these questions. With God’s help we all will overcome our fears and go on with the subject matter.

Question #1 - If Yeshua (Jesus) is the Messiah (Christ), and he is Jewish, and died as “The King of the Jews”, why do many Christians hate the Jews?

Answers: There are a number of different approaches that can be taken in answering this question.

- a) True Christians do not hate any one, and specially not the Jews. Those who hate on the basis of race or religious beliefs are not true followers of Jesus.[1]
- b) The Jews have rejected Jesus and therefore they ought to be hated. They have killed our God and they are the God-killers. Christians should have nothing to do with a reprobate nation like the Jews.
- c) Christians have fallen into sin and heresy over the centuries, and we are sorry that this has happened. It is not according to God’s will, nor is it according to Yeshua’s teaching to hate Jews or any people. Those dark centuries when the Christendom persecuted the Jews are a stain on the pages of the history of the Church. We as Christians in the 21st. century want to do all that is possible to fight against racism and prejudice and to actively be involved in reaching out to the Jews, as to all men, and showing them that Yeshua is their Messiah first.

Question # 2 - If the New Testament speaks of one Church. Why are there over 4000 different Christian Churches which all fight with each other? Why does the Church of Christ continue to split and create new denominations? Is this not a failure of the whole Christian system? Could this inbred trait of Christianity not be an indication that Jesus has failed in His mission?

Answer:

There is a cluster of a few questions which ought to receive the same answer. We have traditionally, and in the Joule Miller film strips, given a cliché answer to the problems of division and denominationalism. We have said that the reason that there is division in the Christian world is that people have followed a

mixture of Biblical and human traditions which created many different interpretations and view points. It was taught that in order to unite we must all go back to the Bible. Well, in the Churches of Christ, it has been claimed that "We have gone back to the Bible"; but the divisions have persisted and in fact they continue to gain momentum. If we look at the history of the restoration movement and compare it with the rest of the Protestant world, can we honestly say that the phenomena, and the party spirit, has been spared from us? I propose to the reader that the real reason for denominationalism and division in the Body of Christ is that Christianity has, some time in the early second century, cut itself off the root, the Jewish root, and taken on a Hellenistic - Greco-Roman - world view. The greatness of the Restoration movement is in the desire to return and look at the New Testament as a First Century document. But, practically speaking that would be impossible from both the textual and the cultural place that the movement stands today. The early Church was Jewish and was born in the Jewish Homeland and culture, without re-connecting to the Jewish roots of the New Testament, and relating to them there is no way for the modern Christians to know what the early Church looked like. The New Testament is the pattern for the life and faith of the Church, but it takes understanding and interpretation. When every one interprets according to the baggage that he brings with him, and does not make an attempt to look at the ancient document in light of it's original background, that in our case is Jewish, the result will always be division. It is impossible to be like the early church without being in a direct relationship and have common interests with the Jewish community. Paul, who was the Apostle to the Gentiles went each Sabbath to Synagogue. It was his "heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved".[2]

The church is described as a union in the Messiah between the Jews and the Gentiles.[3] If you have a non-denominational church who claims to want to be like the First Century Church and they lack the most basic ingredient for being like the First Century Church, namely Jews, and interest in their salvation, can it still be honestly called "a first century church".

We should understand that division in a "bad witness" to the whole world. In the West division is discussed as a "stalwart stand for the truth", in reality it is seen by the non-Christian world as a failure of the "whole Christian faith" itself.

Question # 3 - Who is really the God of the Christians? Jews and Muslims often get confused when they hear Christians talk about God. It is not clear who is really God, or how many Gods the Christians have. One Jewish man one time told me that it seems as if Christians have "retired God from his job and sent him to Acapulco for vacation". They have made Jesus into a postal Clark, who just transfers messages. The Holy Spirit they have burdened with every trivial pursuit to be the personal nursemaid.

Answer:

The Bible as a whole, and the New Testament in particular stands very clear in the teaching that there is only One God, and no more. It is also clear that God's oneness includes his Son, and His Spirit. The particular relationship and inter-working of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, is not directly or clearly addressed in the text of the New Testament. All that modern Christianity has about these, interrelationships, equality and hierarchy, comes from the creeds of Nicea, Chalcedon, and Westminster. We have to give a much clearer sound on the Oneness of God first, and only in stage two start dealing with the interrelationship between the Father and the Son. I sometimes wonder how was it that the early Church managed to survive for over 300 years before Nicea.

These are just a few questions that Jews, and I might add, Arabs ask about Christianity. I personally would like to think that even if the questions were not familiar to our readers at least the answers would be familiar. The biggest question for me personally would be how is it that so many of our brothers in Christ can claim to love Jesus, and Peter, and Paul, and Matthew, and Levy, and Joseph, and King David, and etc. etc. etc., and yet have no interest or love for the Jewish people today? How is it that they sing “we are marching to Zion” and have no interest in Zion? How is it that they pray to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and do not have the desire to bring home the “Good News” that they received from the physical seed of these fathers of Israel. How is it that they have forgotten the words of Paul, “For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. 27 They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews’ spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings.”[4]

I commend the 21st. Century Christian publication for undertaking so important a subject. It is not only important to me as a Jew, but it is important for the restoration of the first century church in both spirit and in truth.

Foot notes:

[1] Here are some reasons why answer (a) is not correct: In answer (a) the impression is left that the person giving the answer has not and is not participating in any anti-Semitic activity or feeling. He has set himself above the rest of his people. Jewish people do not like this kind of attitude because they know that it is automatically based on prejudice and religious pride.

[2] Romans 10:1

[3] Ephesians 2:11-22 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” (*Gentiles*) by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (*Jews*) -- 12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away (*the Gentiles*) and peace to those who were near (*the Jews*). 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. 19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

[4] Romans 15:26-27