

An Important Message for Both Christians & Jews

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A word to religious Christians here in America and elsewhere in the western world.

The Christian world has long considered itself to be “spiritual” Israel. Yet, now a time has come that those who call themselves “spiritual” Israel are learning what it means to be treated like physical Israel, the Jews.

Just like Jews in Europe faced prejudice and discrimination from their neighbors because of their religious faith, so now are Bible-believing Christians facing the same kind of prejudice and discrimination from their secular neighbors because of their beliefs.

Bible-believing Christians have become the “new Jews.” Christians should view this with alarm. Remember what European intolerance led them to do to the Jews. Judging from what we see today, Bible believing Christians are next. Take it from one who knows, watch out!

And now, a deeper teaching and message for Jews and Christians.

In the days when the ancient Temple stood in Jerusalem, the Jewish priests would offer sacrifices during the festival of the Succot for the benefit of all the nations of the world. Their prayers and sacrifices were not for the purpose of converting anyone to any religious persuasion, but rather their purpose was to pray that the nations should be well, and that their governments should always be the bastions and stalwarts of righteous justice.

Unlike the nations of the world, the religious of Israel have always emphasized the importance of righteous action as being the foundational expression of religious faith. While other nations and religions are so overwhelmingly caught up in defining proper doctrine and necessary beliefs, the religion of Israel, follows the example of the Biblical prophets, and proclaims that what God wants more than anything else is righteous action. All acts of ritual religion, and certainly all statements of religious creeds and faith, come in a very far second place to the primary requirement of righteous action.

Indeed, even today, Judaism is more about emphasizing righteousness than emphasizing doctrines and creeds. This is one of the major differences between Judaism and many other world religions, most notably many groups within Christianity. While Christianity proclaims its primary message is “faith in Jesus,” Judaism proclaims its primary message that, “righteousness is the key to both serving and pleasing God.” Judaism considers what one believes as secondary to what one does. Many Christian groups are just the opposite. What one believes must come first and foremost in order for one “to be saved.”

This is where Judaism and these Christian groups radically differ. Judaism can welcome and embrace righteous Christian individuals as brothers in God's Word and its righteousness. These Christian groups, on the other hand, can never be so embracing of either Jews or Judaism. Without the embrace of their primary creed and doctrine these Christian groups say, no one can have a relationship with God.

So, while Jews can and do embrace Christians, there are those Christians who, however well-meaning, can never theologically embrace those Jews who embrace them, because these Jews embrace their Judaism. Unfortunately this is a terrible imbalance, which we today, like the priests in the ancient Temple, pray can be overcome. Jews today do not pray for others to embrace our faith. Others, of course, never cease from praying that we accept theirs. While we extend our hand and embrace, we find very few who reach out, in sincerity and truth, and return our embrace in a spirit of brotherhood and equality. So, like the priests in the ancient Temple, we continue to pray.

Even in spite of the theological differences between the two faiths, there really is a combined Judeo-Christian tradition. Both faiths believe in God, the Creator and that the Bible is His Word. We both embrace the same code of morals and righteous behavior, symbolized by the Ten Commandments. With regards to morals and proper deeds, there is not much in which we differ. For Judaism, which defines faith as one's deeds, this is sufficient. However, as for many Christians who define faith as doctrine and creed, the theological chasm that separates us is insurmountable.

Christians, as we all know, believe that the individual Jewish rabbi, Yeshu haNotzri, who they call by a Latin form of his name/title, Jesus Christ, is the long-awaited messiah of Israel. Surprisingly enough, this issue of belief, is not what is objectionable to Judaism. Judaism has no law or rule to prohibit one from believing in a messiah of one's choice. Granted, there are Biblical criteria for one to be the true promised Messiah, but until the Messiah comes, one may choose to believe that anyone is a messiah, however rightly or wrongly such belief is based. There is simply no prohibition.

The doctrinal issue that has always separated Christianity from Judaism is the fundamental doctrine, codified very clear by the founding Catholic Church in their Nicaean Creed in 325 c.e. It states that Jesus is god himself who is to be worshiped.

“We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the

Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father. Through him all things were made.” (<http://www.creeds.net/ancient/nicene.htm>). This is a statement of belief that Judaism, and no Bible believing Jew, can or will ever accept.

The beliefs of Judaism are summarized in these scripture verses, in spite of any attempts to interpret them outside their clear and evident meanings. *“I am the Lord, your God, Who took you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall not have any other gods before Me. You shall not make a graven image or any likeness”* (Ex. 20:2-4). Believing that Yeshu is or was a messiah is one thing. Believing that Yeshu is god incarnate in quite another. In the Jewish faith, both are not accepted, but the latter is simply not acceptable. And nevertheless, Judaism teaches to work with, and embrace, even those whose beliefs are unacceptable, as long as their deeds and behavior are righteous and moral.

Throughout the centuries, thousands of Jews have been tortured and killed by so-called Christians trying to force Jews to abandon their faith, and to embrace a creed and doctrine that since their beginnings they have lived and died for. The historical Jewish Yeshu, as a historical Jew and rabbi, would have never accepted the Nicaean Creed being said about himself or anyone else. Indeed, if Yeshu were alive to see what Christianity has done in his name, Yeshu himself would have become a martyr and victim to those who supposedly declare his name.

Over many generations, Gentiles transformed the Jewish rabbi Yeshu into something more akin to their own self-image, the Christian (and definitively not-Jewish) Jesus Christ. The original teachings of the Jerusalem Church and First-Century Jewish-Christianity were eventually labeled as sectarian and cast out of the growing Church. All Biblical scholars agree that the Christianity of the third-century onwards is not the Christianity that existed beforehand, and it certainly was not the original Jewish Christianity practiced by the original Jewish followers of Yeshu, James and Peter.

Biblical scholars can debate about what kind of Jew Yeshu was, but one thing is clear, even from every Christian record, Yeshu was a religious Jew who practiced the religion of Judaism. In other words, Yeshu embraced the Law and lived by it. As such the historical Jewish rabbi Yeshu would have never deviated from this fundamental Biblical truth, that God is not, was not and never will be incarnate as a human being. The historical Yeshu himself, like every other religiously faithful Jew, before him and after him, embrace the scripture that states, *“God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent. What He has said, will He not do it? or when He has spoken, will He not make it good?”* (Numbers 23:19).

Christians too read the very same scriptures as do Jews, and insist that Judaism reads them wrong. In spite of the fact that Jews have been reading these scriptures, and living by them and dying for them, for over a thousand years before the dawn of Christianity, many Christians still say that Judaism was correct, right up until the coming

of Yeshu, and from then on Judaism is wrong and only Christianity is right. And herein lies the “red line” which divide Christian and Jew.

Again, Judaism says, what one believes is one's personal business, and is thus a matter between the individual and God. As long as one's deeds are righteous, then we can embrace as brothers in righteousness. Most Christians however, because of how they interpret the word and meaning of “faith,” cannot be as magnanimous and embracing as Judaism can be. Christianity looks to beliefs, Judaism looks to actions. This about sums it up.

So, while Christians will continue to pray for the Jewish people to accept their religion in place of our own, Jewish people will continue to pray that Christians grow in righteousness and excel in moral behavior. As for ideas, doctrines and creeds about God and His messiah, the two great religions do agree in many areas about these things too. However, it is the same old fundamentals that create the divide, which in my opinion, only direct Divine intervention will ever finally settle.

Christianity has, since its inception, created its own different, and almost comprehensive interpretation of Jewish scriptures, and then declares to Judaism that this “new” interpretation is the only proper and correct one, completely replacing that which Judaism has embraced for centuries before. Doctrinal differences will never be settled by any kind of human debate, not between Jews and Christians, and not between variant Christian sects and denominations.

For their part, Christianity (2 Cor. 3:15-17) posits another Jew, Paul of Tarsus to say that Jews have a “veil of Moses” over their eyes, that spiritually prevents them from seeing the Jewish scriptures as later Christians do. In this, and in many other instances throughout the Christian Bible, many Biblical scholars recognize the clear misunderstanding of Jewish words, written by a Jew (Paul) and read by non-Jews (in this case, the Gentile Corinthians), without understanding their original Jewish context. The historical Jewish Paul, like the historical Jewish Yeshu, would be appalled to see how their Jewish teachings have become so misunderstood in the hands of those who are oblivious of their original Judaic contexts.

Biblical scholars, of all religious backgrounds, research the Bible untethered by dogma, creeds and polemics. They honestly and freely follow history and scholarship to unravel, and reveal, lost and sometimes hidden ancient truths. Biblical scholars do have their individual religious beliefs, and many times these individual religious beliefs can and do “color” their research. Yet, other Biblical scholars recognize the prejudices expressed by many of their peers and reveal them to be the disqualifying factors that underlie any fundamentalist polemics.

With regards to Bible study, there are some Jewish scholars who are well versed not only in the Jewish Bible, but also with the Christian Bible. Jewish Biblical scholars often wish to offer Jewish insights into the Jewish writings of the Jewish authors of the

majority of the texts in the Christian Bible. However, rather than there being a “veil of Moses” over the faces of the Jews, there seems to be a similar “veil of Jesus” over the faces of many a Christian.

Many simply do not want to hear or entertain any notion or idea, that challenges their present beliefs, in spite of the fact that such revelations are completely historically accurate and might indeed have been the original teachings of the Jewish Yeshu and his Jewish followers. Mind you, revelations of this kind need not come from Jewish scholars. Indeed, the world of Biblical scholarship is full of Christian scholars who have also researched many controversial subjects and have drawn some non-orthodox conclusions as have many of their Jewish counterparts.

Yet, the veils still blind the eye. Christians claim that Jews suffer from the veil of Moses, and Jews claim that Christians cannot see through the veil of Jesus. And, like I said above, Christians will continue to pray that Jews surrender their religion and convert to theirs, while Jews pray that Christians continue to act as righteous brothers united in the common belief in the Creator, His Word and His moral code.

For me personally, like every other Torah faithful Jew, the common belief in the Creator, His Word and His moral code is enough for me to embrace my Christian “neighbor.” I pray that our Christian brothers might also embrace this. For as we all know, especially in today's world, where there is such active hostility against all Biblical beliefs and practices, practicing Jews and Christians are under constant assault because of our beliefs and practices. We are under assault together, therefore in my opinion, it is even more imperative for us to learn to stand together. As the saying goes, “united we stand or divided we fall.”

Like priests in the ancient Temple in Jerusalem, we all must pray for the nations of the world, that they live in righteousness and peace, and that together we can share this world, until the coming of the true Messiah, whoever he may be.

Once the Messiah finally comes, let him solve all our theological differences. Until then, my prayer is that we can all learn to live together in peace so that we can all be here to greet him when he does finally come. *“Behold how good and pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity”* (Psalm 133:1).