

Jesus – Yeshua

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Jesus – Yeshua.

Rabbi? Prophet? Healer? Deliverer? Savior? Messiah? Son of God?

Jesus – Yeshua.

Deceiver? Apostate? Magician? Rebel? Traitor? Liar? Accursed of God?

Jesus-Yeshua. Who is this man?

Two thousand years have come and gone, but the question remains the same: Is Jesus of Nazareth the Jewish Messiah, the Savior of the world? If He is, then let's follow Him, for we have no other way. If He's not, let's expose Him, for only the truth will set us free.

Although the world is full of religions, the controversy surrounding the Messiah-ship of Jesus is unique, because both those who accept Jesus and those who reject Him base their beliefs on one and the same Book. Jews who follow Jesus say: "He must be the Messiah. He fulfilled all the prophecies of the Bible." Jews who don't follow Jesus say: "He can't be the Messiah. He fulfilled none of the prophecies of the Bible."

Who's right?

From one Book, the Hebrew Scriptures, have come two faiths, one faith says: We'd rather die than confess the name of Jesus. The other faith says: We'd rather die than deny the name of Jesus. One faith says: There are two Messiahs who will come only once. The other faith says: There is one Messiah but He will come twice.

"So how can I know the truth?"

Simple. Only one of these two faiths has really followed the Bible. The other has gone it's own way. Only one has really continued in the power of God. The other has followed the traditions of men. If we listen carefully to the voice of God, then His Word will be "a light to our path and a lamp to our feet." His Word is sure. He cannot lie.

Recently I was speaking to a well educated, ultra-orthodox rabbi about the Messiah-ship of Jesus. He didn't want to hear my opinions (and I can't blame him for that!) He didn't care about what anybody else had to say. He just wanted to go back to the original sources. "Let's go back to the Talmud," he said. "That's where we can find the truth."

I think my answer surprised him. "Why should I go back to the Talmud," I said, "when I can go all the way back to the New Testament?" To my surprise, he didn't argue.

You see, many Jewish people today are told that Judaism alone is the real religion of the Bible, and that “Christianity” is a much later, predominantly Gentile religion. And yet statements such as these, intimidating as they may sound, are simply not true.

Here are the facts: traditional Judaism as we know it today is absolutely not the religion of Moses and the prophets. It’s the religion of the rabbis who lived and taught over 1500 years later. Instead of being the religion of Temple and sacrifice as prescribed by the Torah, it is the religion of no Temple and no sacrifice, in spite of the Torah. It may shock you to know this, but some of Judaism’s most sacred books did not even exist before the late Middle Ages. Christopher Columbus had already discovered America before the Code of Jewish Law used by orthodox Jews today had ever been compiled!

As for Messianic Judaism, the Judaism that believes in Yeshua the Messiah, the facts are as follows: the sole authority for faith and practice is the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Covenants. Rather than the New Covenant being a late Gentile book, all its authors, save one, were Jews, Jews who lived in the days before the Second Temple was destroyed in 70 C.E. Many other traditions and customs added in the following centuries by the church have had nothing to do with the Bible and therefore have absolutely no connection with Messianic Judaism. Although some people may call them “biblical” or “Christian,” they are totally devoid of scriptural authority.

The writers of the New Covenant were Jews who recognized that Messiah had come to atone for the sins of His people. They based their beliefs on the Hebrew Scriptures, and on the Hebrew Scriptures alone. Thus they knew that Yeshua was the Jewish Messiah because He fulfilled the Old Covenant prophecies. If He did not fulfill the prophecies then they would not have followed Him. They recognized Him because He fit the description to a tee.

Then why didn’t the other Jewish leaders of the day acknowledge that Yeshua was in fact the Messiah? The answer again is simple: They weren’t looking for Him. They were looking for another. The Messiah of the rabbis was not the Messiah of the Bible. And yet the thing they longed for most was the very thing they missed, *for Messiah had come to save them from their sins.*

So in 30 C.E., as Yeshua “approached Jerusalem and saw the city, He wept over it and said, ‘If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace-but now it is hidden from your eyes. For you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.’” Forty years later Jerusalem was destroyed, and tens of thousands of her inhabitants were dead.

“But wait one second,” you say. Weren’t these rabbis the very ones who studied the Law day and night? And weren’t these the men who were responsible for some of the most beautiful prayers and teachings that were ever written? How did it happen, then, that some of the most scrupulous and zealous Jews who ever lived missed the Messiah? It is to this question that we now must turn.

Substitution

There is no more important word in the Hebrew Bible than this if we are to understand God's holy love for us.

Substitution

It is the key that unlocks the door to our redemption. And it is the rock that makes men stumble. *It alone can fully explain why Yeshua's own people missed Him, and it alone can open their eyes again.*

Substitution. Without this word Yeshua's death is a farce. The rabbis of the Talmud debated about how to be made right with God. While some recognized that "there was no atonement without the blood," they didn't all agree on the rest. Some said, "For certain sins, the Day of Atonement alone is sufficient," while others argued, "No! There must be repentance as well." Some claimed that only the Day, plus repentance, plus suffering would do the trick, while there were those who said, "The only hope for forgiveness is in the Day of Atonement and death!"

And yet they missed the point of the Day, and they missed the point of the blood. They failed to grasp the lesson that was before their eyes.

Day after day, the Sadducees offered their sacrifices at the Temple. Thousands upon thousands of animals were slain, and gallons of blood were poured out on the altar. Lambs and goats and rams and calves were offered up to a holy God. Yet the people could not see.

The Pharisees studied the Torah day and night. They added new regulations to old laws, and they developed the most detailed system of ritual purity that the world has ever known. They taught that study of the Law was more loved by God than even the offerings themselves. Yet they failed to see the heart of the matter. They failed to grasp the fundamental meaning of it all.

For it was not the blood of bulls that God wanted for Himself; it was not the fat of rams that He desired. It was not a people of outward holiness that He sought for; He did not require a new code that would keep men clean. No. He wanted a substitute, a righteous lamb who would bear His people's sins. He wanted a spotless sacrifice who would purify the people within.

Over and over again, a thousand times ten thousand, the offerings were brought before the altar. And over and over again, in numbers too great to count, their innocent blood was spilled. And over and over again, the message of God was crying out: "A substitute must come! A substitute must come!"

The Jewish people of Yeshua's day were all looking for a Savior. Some hoped for a mighty military Leader, while others looked for a Deliverer from the sky. Some looked

for a holy Priest, while others looked for a Teacher of Righteousness. Yet no one was looking for a Crucified Messiah. And no one was looking for the Lamb of God. They had forgotten that the righteous Servant of the Lord was Himself to be an 'asham – an offering for sin (Isaiah 53:10). And they had forgotten father Abraham's words that God would provide the lamb for the burnt offering (Genesis 22:8).

Yes, there were some rabbis who claimed that every sacrifice was accepted on the basis of Abraham's offering up of Isaac. And they claimed that in the Passover rite, when God "saw the blood" (Exodus 12), He was looking at the sacrifice of Isaac and not at the blood of the lamb.

Yet, Isaac was not offered, and his blood was never shed. And it was God Himself Who provided the sacrifice that saved the life of Abraham's son. It was Messiah who suffered and died, and it is by His wounds that we are healed (Isaiah 53:5). It was He who bore our sins (Isaiah 53:7, 12 and Leviticus 16:22).

Oh yes, there were Jewish teachers who believed that the suffering of the righteous could bring atonement to the world. Yet when the truly Righteous One suffered and died, they said that it was for nought.

Our rabbis tell us that when Messiah comes, He will establish peace on earth. When the real Savior comes, He will remove us from sin. *But a Savior who takes us out of sin without taking the sin out of us is really no savior at all. And a Messiah who establishes peace on earth without first establishing peace in our hearts is really no Messiah at all.*

Messiah *had* to die. Messiah *had* to take our place. *There was no other way.* No other substitute was found. No one else could pay the price. Nothing else could heal our wounds, for sin required death.

Yeshua paid the price. It was *His* death that brought us life. He alone was the Substitute for the sinful human race, and *He* alone can offer us redemption.

The traditional Judaism of our day has its roots in the religion of the Pharisees, a small group of Jews who banded together over two thousand years ago. These were the men who would not eat with ceremonially unwashed hands, the men so famous for their attention to detail. These were the men who even tithed on insignificant crops, and who studied every jot and tittle of God's Law.

Yet many of these men were the ones who missed *Yeshua* when He came. They did not see the forest for the trees.

For it is not ritual observance that makes a man clean within, and it is not attention to an outer system of laws that brings us to God. The heart of the Torah is to "love God with all our hearts, and to love our neighbor as ourselves." Yet this is the truth that these zealous men missed, since in their passion for the Letter of the Law they messed the Spirit of the One Who gave it.

And as the Pharisees went, so have the Jewish people gone.

Traditional Judaism as we know it today is the religion of those who rejected Yeshua. It is a decided reaction against faith in Him. It is a system which has been reconstructed to negate and counteract Messiah's real claims. That's why traditional Jews throughout the ages have stumbled over the person of Yeshua. But in the beginning it was not so.

The Jewish teachers *before* Yeshua emphasized the miraculous and believed in the power of God's testimony from heaven. But when the followers of Yeshua had all the healing cures, they said, "We don't depend on a miracle!"

Many of the Jews of Yeshua's day were looking for a Deliverer who would come in the clouds of heaven. Yet when Yeshua came and said, "I will come again in the clouds of heaven," they said, "Not so! Our Messiah will be a teacher of the Law, a rabbi like ourselves!"

They had the prayers, they had the laws, they had the covenant tradition – how did our forefathers miss it? The answer again is simple. They truly had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge (Romans 10:2). They did not attain what they sought after, for they stumbled over the grace of God.

Messiah had come to make them well, yet they said in reply, "We're not sick!"

But not all of our forefathers missed it. The writer of almost half of the New Covenant was himself a Pharisee, born of the tribe of Benjamin. And the Book of Acts records "how many myriads of Jews" there were who believed and were zealous for the Torah (Acts 21:20). In fact, "a great many of the [Jewish] priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7), and even today in our country and throughout the world, there are tens of thousands of Jews who believe and confess, "Yeshua is the Messiah! Yeshua is Lord!"

This, then, is the real Judaism, the Judaism that is truly Messianic. And this is the Faith that will bring the world back to God, the Faith that will cause the nations to believe. And Yeshua is the One who will establish justice in the earth, "and the coastlands shall [and do!] wait for His law!" (Isaiah 42:4)

The Talmud teaches that for the last forty years before the Temple was destroyed, God did not accept the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement (Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 39). Year after year, for the life of one whole generation, the LORD was saying, "No."

You see, God had provided one Sacrifice for all a final Atonement for the sins of mankind. God had provided the Lamb. And it was forty years before the Temple was destroyed that Yeshua offered His life. From that day to this, God had been saying "no" to His people. "No more of your sacrifices, no more of your prayers, no more of your works. I have provided the Way."

Yet to all who have ears to hear, God has been saying: “Yes, you may come! Yes, you can know Me! Yes, I will cleanse you from all your sin! Believe in the One that I have sent. Messiah Yeshua has come.”

The spiritual leaders of our people who tell us that we cannot know God are wrong. They are only saying, “I don’t know Him, so how can you? I’ve studied for years and I’m still learning. How can you be so sure?”

Once again, our answer is simply and clear. Messiah Yeshua has made God known. He has revealed the Father to us. And through His blood we have been brought back to God.

Tradition will not save us.
Opinions will not set us free.
Messiah has ransomed our souls from the pit.
Let all His Jewish people come!

Isaiah 49:6

“Indeed He says, ‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.’”