



## The Art of Anti-Assimilation

### I. Introduction

- a. Review—covenants
  - i. What covenants are
  - ii. Scripture's promises given in the context of covenants
  - iii. Paradigm challenger: All Scriptural Non-universal covenants made exclusively with Israel
  - iv. The nations are brought near—not just to the covenants, but to the (Messianic) Jewish people—through the blood of Yeshua
- b. Critical realization: Messianic Jews specifically are the covenant keepers
  - i. John 5:23, 39, 45-47
  - ii. Messianic Jews are “the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16), meaning, the righteous remnant of Israel; we need to see ourselves not just as part of the Body of Messiah, but as Israel
  - iii. As the remnant, the ones faithful to the covenant, we have the responsibility to fight against assimilation on our peoples' behalf—in the world, and in the Body of Messiah
- c. This session: to expose areas of potential assimilation that could keep the Messianic Jew from fulfilling his purpose in God's plans.

### II. Assimilation

- a. Definition—to be made similar; absorbed into the main culture
- b. Why do people assimilate (general)?
  - i. Outside pressure to conform/not be different
  - ii. Internal desire to conform/not be different
- c. Assimilation igniters specific to Jewish people
  - i. Jewish pressures (Messianics seen as traitors)
  - ii. Anti-Semitism (hatred of Semitic people [descendants of Shem], specifically meaning Jews)—pagan influence and oppression
  - iii. Anti-Semitism—Christian pressures/pressures from the Church
  - iv. Self-inflicted—Enamored with the lifestyle of the nations; hoping to escape persecution
  - v. Additional pressures for Messianic Jews (real or imagined)
    1. From Jews to appear more Jewish to prove they are still Jews
    2. From Christians to appear less Jewish to prove they are still believers

### III. Torah—The First Line of Defense Against Assimilation

- a. Torah teaches us the art of Anti-Assimilation (Deuteronomy 12:28-32)
- b. Modern Jewish Identity is lost
- c. By design, Torah is antagonistic toward and incompatible with the cultures of the nations. Keeping Torah defends against assimilation.

#### IV. Practices & Beliefs for Jewish Believers That Can Destroy Jewish Identity

- a. Replacement Theology
  - i. An undercurrent that runs through all Christianities
  - ii. (Oversimplification) The Church is now “New Israel” or “Spiritual Israel,” filled with “True Jews” (Jews inwardly, Romans 2-3). The people of Israel—the Jews—are now just another people group, and the Church is “the Israel of God.” (Gal.6:16)
  - iii. All believers in Yeshua are “Christians” regardless of lineage.
  - iv. We buy into this theology every time we spiritually apply Scripture to our lives without at all considering the original Jewish audience. Watch out for this! Spiritual application *never* negates the original application—and the Church *never* replaces or supercedes Israel! (This goes back to covenants)
- b. Covenant Theology (Reformed, much of Protestant; Augustine, Calvin)
  - i. Displacement Theology (a kind of replacement theology)
  - ii. Oversimplification
    1. Israel foreshadowed the Church
    2. Scripture’s covenants form one continuous, unbroken covenant for the sole purpose of the redemption of the Elect (the Church)
    3. The Church has not “replaced” Israel, per se—the Church has *always been* (i.e. those in Israel who were righteous saints)
  - iii. Ignores/Spiritualizes the plain teaching of Scripture with regard to covenants
- c. Dispensational Theology (1800s)
  - i. (Oversimplification) God dealt with the Jews before Messiah; we are now in the Church era (law vs. grace), later (after the rapture) God will (or may) deal with the Jews again
  - ii. All believers are “Christians” regardless of lineage
  - iii. Jews don’t need Yeshua because God may (or will) deal with them again later before the end (Two-covenant theology)
- d. The idea of Jews becoming “Christians” (Conversion)
  - i. “Christian” in the Scriptures
    1. Acts 11:26, “...and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” (Epithet—term used in a degrading manner)
    2. Theologically correct to refer to a follower of Messiah (Christ) as a “Christian”—that’s what “Christian” means
    3. But incorrect culturally, historically and linguistically to call a Jew a “Christian”
  - ii. Converting to Christianity or becoming a Christian assumes leaving one religion and going to another.
- e. Church sacraments, rites, rituals and symbols
  - i. The cross—symbol of Christianity (as opposed to Judaism); not denying the cross and what it means, but not using it as identifier or symbol
  - ii. Baptism = immersion — immersion in a mikveh is a purely Jewish concept, but the church baptism will always be construed by Jews as conversion (conscious avoidance of Christian rites, ceremony and symbolism may help)

- iii. Lord's supper (communion)—one of the best examples of Christian appropriation of a Torah command
  - 1. Context: Passover. Not the institution of a new sacrament, but the fulfilling the teachings of Torah
  - 2. When we “do” the Pesach (as commanded in Torah), we are to do it in remembrance of Him, but not at the expense of its original context
- iv. Note: This is not a judgment on these practices. Though Christianity may have its roots in a Jewish faith, it is *not* a Jewish faith—it developed independently and in spite of the Jewishness of Scriptures. The Messianic Jewish Movement is not a merging or restoration of two faiths (much more on this in a later teaching).
- f. The Self-hating Jew—personal thoughts and testimony

**V. Practices & Beliefs for Jewish Believers That Can Fight Against Assimilation**

- a. Joining a Messianic Jewish community
- b. Cultural identification as Jews (versus modern identification with the “sub-culture” of Christianity)
- c. Restoring Hebrew terminology/avoiding Christian terminology in personal use; the big three: Jesus, Christ, Church
- d. Not despise Jewish traditions
- e. Embracing Torah commands given to set Israel apart from the nations
  - i. Examples: Shabbat, “kosher”
  - ii. Separation is good, when it is for God!

**VI. How Gentile Participants in the Messianic Jewish Movement (modern-day “Geriyim”/Sojourners) Can Fight Assimilation of Messianic Jews**

- a. Be happy to be Gentile; remember: blessing of all the families of the earth (ultimately, salvation) was the point from the beginning! (Gen.12)
- b. Not despise, but reconsider practices associated with the Christianities
- c. Fully participate in the customs of the local Messianic Jewish community with whom you have attached yourself
- d. Don't come to the Messianic Jewish movement expecting a better Christianity
- e. Empathize with Jews—historical and present-day anti-Semitism

**VII. Conclusion**

- a. The spirit of anti-Semitism is the same spirit that seeks to cause the disciple of Messiah to conform to the standards of the world.
- b. A Jew is a Jew. When a Jew assimilates—even into the Christianities—he loses his Jewishness, which causes him to lose sight of his purpose in God's plans for the salvation of the world.
- c. There is no one single way to live out one's Jewishness. The point is that the Jewish believer has to accept and embrace his Jewishness in order to fight against the spirit of assimilation, and fulfill his specific and unique calling among the nations.