



## The Apostate Church?

### I. Introduction

- a. Previous session: How do we as Messianic believers relate to the religions of Judaism and Christianity?
  - i. Biblical and historical overview
  - ii. My answers:
    - 1. The Messianic Jewish movement does not need to be a sect of Judaism or Christianity, nor a hybrid of both (making us a representative of neither)
    - 2. The Messianic Jewish movement is a Jewish movement because it centers on Jewish people—their salvation and service to God (not to the exclusion of Gentile participation and ministry)
    - 3. The Messianic Jewish movement is a prophetic movement that has emerged at this time as the firstfruits restoration of the Jewish people to God.
- b. Messianic Jews have a dual history sharing parts with Judaism and others with Christianity. To fully understand ourselves and our purpose as Messianic Jews, we also need to understand the inherent ties we have within both communities.
- c. This and the following session will explore some of the more volatile areas of those relationships.

### II. “The Apostate Church!”

- a. Many different reasons Jews and Christians come into the Messianic Jewish movement. The Church is “Babylon” is one such accusation.
- b. Defining “the Church”
  - i. Evangelical Christian—equivalent to “The Body of Christ”; “true” Christians; God’s “called-out ones” (ekklesia)
  - ii. Theological circles—the historical religious entity “Christianity”
  - iii. Scripture—“church” is not overwhelmingly used to refer to the Body; about 90% of the word “church” means “a congregation” or a gathering of believers.
  - iv. The point: “Church” can be used to refer to the institution of “Christianity,” and is the primary meaning behind “Church” when used in the accusation that the Church is apostate.
  - v. I will use the term “the Church” according to the broader definition of the historical, religious institution of Christianity and its doctrinal foundations.
- c. Defining “apostate”
  - i. In context, the Church has abandoned the true faith and become something that is contrary to the Word of God.
  - ii. Many enter the movement with this attitude—especially Gentiles
    - 1. They feel robbed of their “Jewish roots”
    - 2. They feel lied to because they perceive the Church to have

- spawned from paganism.
- 3. They consider Christianity to be an error that God never intended
- 4. They therefore seek their answers in a new religion called “Messianic Judaism,” which, in their understanding, restores Judaism as the true faith.
- d. The real question: Do the foundational doctrines and beliefs of historical Christianity constitute an abandoning of the faith?

### III. Points of Contention with the Church

- a. Pagan influence
  - i. Christmas
    - 1. Allegation: Christmas is the Christianization of a Roman holiday that celebrated the Winter Solstice as the rebirth of the sun
    - 2. Pagan sun worship combined with accounts of Yeshua’s birth to produce Christmas: symbolic of alleged apostate faith
  - ii. Easter
    - 1. Deliberate replacement of Passover (see Acts 12:4 in KJV)
    - 2. “Easter” allegedly comes from the Anglo-Saxon goddess of fertility
    - 3. Allegation: a pagan holiday has replaced a Biblical appointed time
  - iii. Sunday worship
    - 1. Belief that the “day of worship” was changed to Sunday from Shabbat
    - 2. “Sunday” named for the act of sun worship
    - 3. Allegation: Sunday worship resulted from pagan influence, usurping the place of the 7th day Shabbat
- b. Doctrines and practices
  - i. The Trinity
    - 1. Viewed as being contrary to Scripture, heretical
    - 2. Yeshua’s deity viewed as polytheistic
    - 3. (This is not my view)
  - ii. Replacement theology/supersessionism
    - 1. The Church has replaced or superceded Israel as God’s chosen
    - 2. Covenant theology, which spiritualizes the covenants to Israel, takes them away from Israel and gives them to the Church
    - 3. Unscriptural expectation of connecting to God through Messiah without the fulfillment of the covenants to the Jewish people
  - iii. Antinomianism—“Against the Law”
    - 1. All we need is the Spirit
    - 2. Any kind of obedience that leads to works or deeds is legalism
- c. Symbols and Icons
  - i. The Cross
    - 1. Symbol of victory and love for Christians; icon of anti-Semitism and hatred for Jews
    - 2. “Roman cross” is just a variation on the various, ancient crosses found in paganism. The ankh and the swastika preceded the Christian cross
    - 3. Objection: pagan origins, association with anti-Semitism

- ii. Communion/Eucharist/Lord's supper
  - 1. Origin: transubstantiation—actual body and blood of Yeshua
  - 2. This belief rejected by the Protestant Reformers
  - 3. Comes from a misunderstanding of Yeshua's words and 1Corinthians 11:17-34 (need context of 1Co.10:14-33 & 1Co.12)
  - 4. Some believe it was adopted from the popular mystery religion of Rome (Mithraism)
- iii. "Jesus"
  - 1. Ridiculous claim that "Jesus" in the Greek (Iesous) is derived from the name "Zeus".
  - 2. Use "Yeshua" because that's His real name, not because "Jesus" sounds like "Zeus"
  - 3. "Jesus" is associated with anti-Semitic Christianity; he is the god of the Gentiles
- d. Though these individual issues can seem trivial, when put together, they paint the Church as a religion with anti-Semitic or pagan roots. For me, as a Jew, most Christian practices are a non-issue. I do not find it absolutely necessary to begrudge church-going Christians of these celebrations and practices. The problem is that these issues pose a threat to true unity in the Body.

#### IV. Finding Common Ground: The Trinity as an Example

- a. In the Messianic Jewish movement: "tri-unity"
- b. Early church creeds written not just as positive statements of belief, but as responses to heretical teachings about Yeshua's divine nature
- c. If we are in agreement that Yeshua is indeed fully man and fully God, then we are in agreement with the crux of the doctrine of the trinity
- d. Nicene Creed (325 CE), predecessor of trinitarian doctrine

Nicene Creed	Scripture
We believe in one God,	"Hear O Israel! Adonai is our God, Adonai is one!" Deuteronomy 6:4
the Father, the Almighty	"Yet for us there is but one God, the Father..." 1Corinthians 8:6a
maker of heaven and earth, of all that is seen and unseen.	"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Ge.1:1
We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ	"...And one Lord, Messiah Yeshua, by whom are all things..." 1Co. 8:6
The only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, one in Being with the Father.	"He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." John 3:18  "For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form." Colossians 2:9
Through him all things were made.	"All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." John 1:3
For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven:	"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent me." John 6:38

by the power of the Holy Spirit he was born of the Virgin Mary,	"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, [Miryam], and the power of the Most High will overshadow you..." Lu.1:35
and [he] became man.	"And the Word became flesh." Jn.1:14
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered, died and was buried. On the third day he rose again in fulfillment of the Scriptures;	"...Messiah died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures." 1Corinthians 15:3-4
he ascended into heaven and is seated on the right hand of the Father.	"Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear." Acts 2:33
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.	"...This is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead." Acts 10:42  "... and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end." Luke 1:33

- e. Clearly, the Nicene Creed is supported by Scripture—but the Nicene creed is not the doctrine of the Trinity; the creed upholds the deity and humanity of Yeshua, but the Trinity doctrine goes beyond the scope of Scripture.
- f. For example, "in three persons"
  - i. We see Father, Son and Spirit in Mt. 28:19 and alluded to in Isaiah 48:16, John 14:26 and 15:26, but nowhere does Scripture clearly teach a triune "godhead".
  - ii. God is more than Father, Son and Holy Spirit
    - 1. Adonai appeared to Av'raham as a man (Genesis 18:1-2, 22, 19:1)
    - 2. Guided Israel in the pillar of cloud or fire (Exodus 13:21)
    - 3. Adonai has a "face," "hand" and "back" (Exodus 33:22-23)
    - 4. Can one truly say that these are examples of *only* the Father or the Son or the Spirit?
  - iii. Pre-incarnate Yeshua "Theophanies"
    - 1. Imposes greek thinking on the paradox of Scripture
    - 2. Nowhere do the Scriptures speak of Yeshua having a "preincarnate" state; John presents the paradox by referring to Him only as "the Word"
- g. Do you believe Yeshua is God?
  - i. John 1:1, 14
  - ii. Colossians 2:9

## V. Conclusion

- a. What makes a faith apostate? Isaiah 30:9-11, 2Timothy 4:3-4, 2Peter 2:1, Matthew 7:21, Revelation 3:15-16
- b. Two shared beliefs alone that outweigh all the other issues put together:
  - i. Acceptance of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures as the authoritative, inerrant Word of God.
  - ii. Yeshua is the way, the truth and the life.