

## **Would Your Church Allow You To Be Like Jesus ?**

By: Jim Myers

Would Your Church Allow You To Be Like Jesus?

Which religion would a person be a member of if he did the following?

- (1) Was circumcised on the eighth day.
- (2) Kept Sabbath from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown.
- (3) Attended a synagogue regularly.
- (4) Kept Passover, Shavuot, Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur and Hanukkah.
- (5) Was a citizen of Israel.
- (6) His Bible only contained the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings.
- (7) Quoted passages from the Mishnah.
- (8) Taught that Deuteronomy 6:4 was the most important commandment.

I would guess that most of you came up with the same answer -- Judaism. As a friend of mine always says, "You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure that one out." Now, let's take a look at another person. See if you can identify the religion of this person.

- (1) Sabbath was on Sunday.
- (2) Attended a church.
- (3) Kept Easter and Christmas.
- (4) Bible contained an Old Testament and a New Testament.
- (5) Stressed a person's beliefs.
- (6) Taught that people had to be "saved" in order to go to heaven.
- (7) Taught that they were not under the law.
- (8) Taught that the church had replaced Israel as God's people.

I bet you got the right answer again -- Christian. Now let's take this discussion one more step by answering this question -- If a Jew wanted to become a member of a Christian religion could he continue practicing Judaism? Probably in the 99.9% of the cases the answer would be - NO!

What about the other side of the coin? If a Christian wanted to become a convert to Judaism could he continue practicing Christianity? Now, the percentage moves upwards, probably in 100% of the cases the answer would be - NO!

It is very apparent that not only are Judaism and Christianity different religions, they are exclusive in many ways. This reveals an amazing fact which can be seen by asking one very simple question -- Which religion did Jesus belong to -- Christianity, Judaism or both?

- (1) He was circumcised on the eighth day.
- (2) He kept Sabbath from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown.
- (3) He attended a synagogue regularly.
- (4) He kept Passover, Shavuot, Rosh HaShanah, Yom Kippur and Hanukkah.
- (5) He was a citizen of Israel.
- (6) His Bible only contained the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings.
- (7) He quoted passages from the Mishnah.
- (8) He taught that Deuteronomy 6:4 was the most important commandment.

The answer to the above question is a matter of historical record -- Jesus was a Jew, not a Christian and he was certainly not both. It is clear that Jesus was a practicing Jew who lived a very observant lifestyle. An amazing discovery for any Christian is the fact that there is simply no evidence that Jesus ever renounced Judaism and quit being a Jew. Also, his teachings do not indicate that he ever wanted any Jew to renounce their Judaism and join a new religion. How then, did he get credited with the distinct label that he was the person responsible for creating a new religion? Especially a religion which opposed the religion and way of life he continued to live? Can you answer the questions raised by such an assumption:

- (1) Would a rabbi prohibit circumcision?
- (2) Would a rabbi change the Sabbath to another day?
- (3) Would a rabbi create a replacement for the synagogue?
- (4) Would a rabbi substitute a pagan feast which was clearly idolatrous, Ishtar (Easter), for Passover?
- (5) Would a rabbi want his followers to celebrate the birth of a Roman god (Saturnalia - December 25)?
- (6) Would a rabbi teach his students to not keep the biblical commandments?
- (7) Would a rabbi teach Gentiles to hate Jews?
- (8) Would a rabbi add books to the Torah?
- (9) Would a rabbi replace Deuteronomy 6:4 as the most important commandment?

The answer to all the above questions is that a rabbi wouldn't, and that includes a rabbi named Jesus! If Jesus didn't create a new anti-Jewish religion, who did? Was it the men who acquired leadership after Jesus' departure? Did they continue teaching his message

or did they change things?

The book of Acts provides us with some very valuable information. Acts 21:17-25 records Paul's return to Jerusalem and his meeting with the leaders of the "church." Keep in mind that these were the men who had been personally taught by and lived with Jesus. Their words provide us with some very enlightening information. The translation given below is based on a cultural and historical methodology. Your translation most probably reflects the doctrines of the Roman church and therefore may differ.

"You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have become faithful (observant). All of them are zealous for the Torah (Law). They have been informed that you have taught the Jews of the Diaspora to not keep the Torah, that they should not circumcise their children or live according to the Jewish religion.... Take these men and do the following... so that everybody will know that there is no truth in these reports about your teachings, but that you yourself are living an observant lifestyle and keeping the Torah."

A quick summary provides us with some very significant information. Is your church producing the same results?

- (1) Jews became more faithful (observant) Jews because of the message.
- (2) They became zealous for the Torah (Law).
- (3) They kept the Laws of Moses (the Torah).
- (4) They circumcised their children.
- (5) They lived according to the traditions (Jewish religion).

Notice that Paul did as he was requested - he wasn't teaching the Jews to abandon their religion. Paul was "under the law" and lived an observant lifestyle. How then could he have been the author of a doctrine that advocated rejecting the law?

I don't mean to linger on this point forever, but are you really getting the importance of this message?

- (1) The message of the apostles caused Jews to repent and become observant Jews who practiced Judaism faithfully.
- (2) The apostles were causing Jews to become eager for the Torah and to pursue it with fervor. It is clear that they were not teaching them that "they were under grace and no longer under the law." This one point is in complete opposition to most fundamental teaching of every modern Christian doctrine.
- (3) The Jewish members of the early church continued to circumcise their children. In other words, they continued to see themselves as participant's in the Abrahamic Covenant, just as every practicing Jew does today. Their children were Jews, not members of some new mystical religion that replaced Judaism.
- (4) The Jewish members of the early church continued to practice Judaism. They did not switch to a new religion.
- (5) When we look at Paul's actions, after being asked to take the men to the Temple to prove that he was an observant Jew, we are faced with two possibilities: (A) Paul

intentionally deceived the apostles and the Jews in Jerusalem; or, (B) Paul's image and/or the teachings attributed Paul may have been altered by the Roman Church a hundred or more years later.

Did Paul intentionally deceive the apostles? After all they were the men who lived with and were personally taught by R. Jesus for three years. If Paul did deceive them, could you put much confidence in his teachings? On the other hand, if Paul's words were changed by the Roman Church could we base our foundational beliefs on forged documents?

Christianity, almost universally, requires a Jew to convert to Christianity before he can become a member of the church or be saved. This conversion process forces the Jew to renounce his or her Judaism and terminate or redefine any Jewish practices. Just answer the following questions.

(1) Would your church require a Jew to renounce or stop practicing Judaism if he or she wanted to become a member?

(2) How many circumcisions have you attended for the children of Jewish members of your church?

(3) How many of your church's members are zealous for the Torah and are pursuing it with fervor?

(4) Does your church conduct at least one Torah study per week?

(5) How many of your church's Jewish members are observant Jews?

(6) When was the last time you attended a Rosh HaShanah or Yom Kippur service at your church?

(7) Do you have a rabbi or a minister leading your church? Your answers to the above questions are probably -- Yes, None, None, No, None, Never and Minister.

I want you take some time to think about the next question before you answer it. What would your church require a rabbi to do if he applied for membership?

Would they allow him to continue to be a rabbi, practice Judaism, teach the Torah, wear his prayer shawl, observe all the Jewish festivals and teach the members that they were under the Law?

What if that rabbi was Jesus?

Is the light beginning to come on? Without a great deal of effort it becomes glaringly apparent that neither R. Jesus, the apostles nor the Paul of Acts 21, would be allowed to join a church. On the other hand, it is also clear that R. Jesus would not participate in any religion that not only opposes, but is actively dedicated to destroying his religion! Is it not true that the goal and stated mission of Christianity is to "save the world?" How is this mission to be accomplished? To put it very simply, the goal is to convert every non-Christian to Christianity. The convert must renounce any non-Christian religion, agree to accept the doctrines of Christianity and oppose any religion that opposes Christianity.

Instead of a physical Jihad (holy war), Christianity has engaged in a doctrinal Jihad. As I stated above, Christianity is an exclusive religion. Christians are not allowed to

simultaneously practice Islam, Buddhism, Judaism or any other religion. Therefore, if Christianity was to attain its goal of "getting every person on the face of the earth to believe in Jesus," including all the Jews, Judaism would be totally destroyed and cease to exist.

This would accomplish something that the crusaders, the inquisition, Hitler and a number of others have failed to accomplish. How do you think R. Jesus would react to the idea that such a mission was being carried out in his name? This really gets weird when you think about it! Christians base their proof for their ultimate salvation on a Jewish rabbi named Yeshua (Jesus), who was an observant Jew who faithfully practiced Judaism. On the one hand, his religion would most probably not allow him to practice modern Christianity. On the other hand, modern Christianity would not allow him to practice its religion without first renouncing his religion -- Judaism!

This should present a very important challenge to every Christian -- If R. Jesus could not, and would not, practice a religion dedicated to destroying his religion, how can anyone who bases their salvation on R. Jesus participate in and perpetuate it? Would R. Jesus agree with a salvation message being based on such a system? Are you getting the drift of this discussion?

How did the religion that R. Jesus and his followers practice evolve into what it is today? To begin to unravel this problem lets ask how a religion whose foundational position focused on teaching its members "to keep the Law" became a religion whose main message was that "members are no longer under the Law."

Early Christian writers taught that the Law had been fulfilled with the coming of Jesus. Fulfilled, as they defined it, meant that it had been canceled and therefore was of no importance to Christians. However, to R. Jesus, "fulfilled" meant (1) to keep the Law; and (2) to correctly interpret the teachings of the Bible. There is absolutely nothing said by R. Jesus that would support modern Christianity's doctrine of grace.

Next, the Roman Christian leaders focused on the story of God's unconditional and unending support. However, they claimed that this was something new and was created when God made a new covenant of grace. Again, this was unknown to R. Jesus and his apostles. Early Gentile Christian leaders and theologians continued to develop their new doctrines from the mid-second century on through the seventh century. As they refined their arguments they became much more antagonistic toward Judaism.

The anti-Judaic movement spanned almost all of Christianity -- from the Roman African communities represented by Tertullian (160-220 C.E.), to the Iranian monk Aphrahat (300-350 C.E.) of the eastern Syriac Christian tradition, and to Bishop John Chrysostom (349-400 C.E.) in Antioch.

Studies have clearly shown the extent to which leaders of the early church attacked Judaism for its position on the law, calling Jews "slavish adherents to the letter of the law." They claimed that Judaism was allowed to continue to exist primarily as an example of degradation. What do you think that rabbi Jesus would have thought about that position?

Origin, the third-century leader of the Christian community in Caesarea, summed up the difference between Judaism's and Roman Christianity's approaches to Scripture:

"It seems necessary also to explain how certain people by failing to read or understand Scripture correctly have given themselves up to a great many errors, since the way one

ought to approach the understanding of divine letters is unknown to a great many people. And so, the Jews, through the hardness of their heart and because they wish to seem wise in themselves, have not believed in our Lord and Savior....

Now the reason that those we have just mentioned [Jews and heretical Christians] have a false understanding of these matters is quite simply that they understand Scripture not according to the spiritual meaning but according to the sound of the letter....

[But] a person ought to describe threefold in his soul the meaning of divine letters, that is, so that the simple may be edified by, so to speak, the body of the Scripture's; for that is what we call the ordinary and narrative meaning. But if any have begun to make some progress and can contemplate something more fully, they should be edified by the soul of Scripture. And those who are perfect... should be edified by that spiritual Law (Rom. 7:14) which has a shadow of the good things to come (Heb. 10:1), edified by the spirit of Scripture. Thus, just as a human being is said to be made up of body, soul, and spirit, so also is sacred Scripture, which has been granted by God's gracious dispensation for man's salvation."

This new scheme for reading Scripture, and the charge that Jews miss all but the literal meaning, made for powerful arguments. Origin's dichotomy between "letter" and "spirit," or in other words, between reading biblical materials either at their face value for norms of behavior and as a more generalized stance toward the world, set the stage throughout history for Christians to increase the fervor of the charge of legalism. Legalism became synonymous with Jewish, and therefore was viewed in a negative light. However, the word "legalism" simply means someone that "lives in accordance with or adheres to a legal system." What would you call someone who "did not adhere to or live in accordance with a legal system"-- a Christian? The products of this anti-Jewish tradition still shapes the thoughts of over 1.6 billion Christians regarding Judaic law.

I am challenging every Christian to make a decision to return to the religion, teachings and lifestyle expounded by R. Jesus. There will be some differences between what the Gentile and the Jewish Christian will need to do. First, let me address the Jew who has converted to Christianity. As I stated above, according to the book of Acts, your conversion experience should have made you zealous for the Torah and brought you back to an observant lifestyle. Has it?

Becoming a member of R. Jesus' movement should have caused you to become a serious student of the Torah. You should be teaching the Torah to others, especially the flood of Gentiles who are coming to you to be taught. Is there any other way for you to be a "light to the Gentiles?"

If you are a Gentile, you will also need to take a very close look at Acts 15. Gentiles who were coming to the movement originated by R. Jesus were given very special instructions. First they were to place themselves under specific laws. For all practical purposes those laws were the Ten Commandments. Of special importance was their keeping the Jewish Sabbath and studying the Torah at the synagogue with the Jews.

Keeping the Jewish Sabbath is something that you can do immediately, however; many of you may find it difficult to locate a synagogue where you will be allowed to study the Torah. For very good reasons, after thousands of years of persecutions, the Jewish community is very cautious. I believe that as Christian Jews return to the synagogue, because of the teachings of R. Jesus, the doors will be opened wider to Gentiles desiring to know the God of R. Jesus.

Two things must be kept in mind as both Jews and Gentile Christians choose to return to the teachings of rabbi Jesus. First, almost two thousand years of conflict between Judaism and Christianity has left many scars. Both religions have developed reactionary doctrines and theologies. A reactionary doctrine created as a reaction to the another religion's actions or doctrines.

An example would be the Jewish position concerning kneeling for prayer. Because Christians knelt for prayer, the Jews took the position that they should no longer kneel but stand for prayers. Judaism altered its form of worship because of this practice of Christianity. There have been many reactionary doctrines created both between and within both religions. This is an area of research that deserves much attention. I would challenge my readers to consider such a research project.

It must be kept in mind that the Judaism of Jesus is not exactly the same as the Judaism of today. Also, the movement attributed to Jesus is not the same as modern Christianity. Obviously, many things have taken place since the time of Jesus which resulted in the separation and numerous differences between the two religions.

It is of the utmost importance for both Christians and Jews to understand these changes. You must know when the changes were made, identify the people who were responsible for making the changes, and discover why they made them? Which changes were motivated by inspiration, which were produced by the hunger for power and wealth and which were the results of human frailties such as anger, rejection, fear and hatred?

As you embark on this journey you will quickly come to realize that you have stumbled upon the greatest cover-ups in history. To compare it to the JFK controversy is like comparing an elephant to an ant! Two very important factors confront everyone who explores this territory:

(1) Leaders, especially scholars, have always been aware of this information and have deliberately chosen to ignore it.

(2) Information itself is virtually within the grasp of every American. In many cases it is as close as an encyclopedia.

Today, there are over 1,600,000,000 Christians on the face of the earth -- a sleeping giant, just waiting for the wake-up call. If they all returned to the teachings and life-style taught in Acts, we would see a moral and ethical revolution that would literally rock the foundations of the world. Would your church allow you to REALLY be like Jesus?

Copyright 2008: Jim Myers <http://www.biblicalheritage.org>