

Why Christians Should Learn About “Jews and Jewish Traditions”

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Part One

Why should Christians learn about Jews and Jewish traditions? The answers to these questions cannot only be informative and enlightening, they can also be somewhat challenging because they force us to rethink centuries of tradition and stereotyping regarding Christianity and Jews.

Most do not realize there was a vital connection between Christianity and Judaism that was severed by the Christian church centuries ago. Once that severing took place, biblical Judaism and biblical Christianity, which God intended to be one, went their separate ways with tragic consequences for both.

Returning to Our Roots

We are living at a time when the Lord is calling both Jews and Christians back to their biblical roots. The biblical root of Christianity grew from an everlasting covenant God made with Abraham. Christians become part of that covenant through faith in Jesus (Yeshua).

There were 2,000 years of Hebrew history, culture, language, traditions and customs that formed the root of Christianity. We may not like it nor want to acknowledge it, but Christianity is nourished from that Hebraic/Jewish root. The more we can learn about our Hebraic/Jewish roots, the more blessed we will be in our Christian lives.

A Fuller and Clearer Understanding of the Bible

While Christians in America view life with a Western mind and world view, the Bible was written by Abraham's descendants who had an Hebraic culture, language, and world view. This presents a real problem and challenge. We have a Middle-Eastern book that we seek to understand from our Western culture.

Our Western perspective can easily cause us to misunderstand the Bible. Furthermore, our mind has been more influenced by Greek philosophy than biblical, Hebrew thought. This is why we must study the Hebraic/Jewish roots of Christianity.

When we read the Bible through Hebrew eyes, our understanding becomes much richer, deeper, and clearer with more detail than we could ever imagine.

We gain new and powerful insights and clarity of vision because we are perceiving the Bible through the eyes of the writers.

We see truths that we just cannot see with our Western eyes no matter how honorable our motives and intense our desires.

Exciting New Insights About the Teachings of Jesus

While Christians have a good understanding of the divinity of Jesus, few know Jesus the man. Every culture makes Jesus over into their own image.

Westerners get upset when they discover that Jesus was not a European. Religious groups get upset when they discover that Jesus was not a member of their denomination. The PLO is trying to make Jesus into a Palestinian.

Jesus was a Jew born into a Jewish family in the Jewish village of Bethlehem in the land of Israel. His heritage was Hebraic and He kept all the Laws of God.

Jesus' followers were Jewish. The New Testament tells us that they worshipped on Saturday (the biblically appointed day), attended the Synagogue and kept the feasts.

They acknowledged Jesus as the Jewish King and Messiah, wrote the Jewish New Testament, and lived Torah-observant lifestyles (Acts 21:20)

Jesus and His early followers were deeply rooted in the rich Hebraic soil of their ancestors. They thought, taught, and lived out of this soil. God planted Christianity in this soil and we must return to it in order to be biblically nourished.

Part Two

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Clarification of Pauls Writings

Paul is one of the most misunderstood persons in history. Both Christians and Jews believe Paul was an anti-Law Jew who established a Gentile brand of Christianity that was different from his ancient faith. We learn otherwise when we study Paul's writings from his Hebraic-Jewish roots.

The greatest misunderstanding of Paul's writing relates to his views on Law and Grace. For centuries, the church has taught that, in the First Testament, the Hebrews were saved by Law, but in the New Testament we are saved by grace and faith.

From a Western view, the Law was understood as a legalistic system of rules which the Hebrews had to keep in order to be saved. Grace was understood as freedom from the Law. Judaism with its Law, and Christianity with its grace, were placed in opposition to one another.

This is a Western view, but it is not Paul's view, nor is it what he intended us to understand from his writings.

TORAH

- The Hebrew word for law is Torah.
- It means to teach, instruct, guide, and direct.
- Torah is teaching people the way to walk with God.
- It does not mean a legalistic set of rules one must follow in order to be saved.

The consequence of this misunderstanding has been a disaster for the church. Christianity became a lawless religion in which people believed they could simply confess a creed and live as they pleased.

The entire New Testament is Torah teaching us how to walk with God in order to live an abundant Christian life.

A Better Follower of Jesus

Another exciting benefit of studying our Hebraic/Jewish roots is that we will be a better follower of Jesus.

Jesus said to two of His followers, ... O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ (Messiah) to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself (Luke 24:25-26).

Luke recorded this story and went on to say, "Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him. ... And they said to one another, Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:31-32).

When we learn our Hebraic-Jewish roots, the Spirit of the Living God will open our spiritual eyes to know Jesus more clearly and more intimately. God's words will burn within our hearts with a fresh fire that cannot be quenched.