

**Articles and Sermons :: Christianity is Jewish****Christianity is Jewish - posted by MSeaman (), on: 2007/7/31 16:03**

Christianity is Jewish  
Congregational Letter - August 2007  
By Rich Nathan

Christianity is Jewish

Almost everyone who is part of Vineyard Columbus knows that I was raised in a conservative Jewish family in New York City. As a child I went to a Jewish parochial school. When my parents transferred me to public school, I supplemented public school with Hebrew school. I also attended Hebrew high school and was bar mitzvah at age 13. My self-identity is that I am a Jew who believes that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah and the Savior of the world.

It is quite clear to any observer that Christianity and Judaism moved in two very different directions after Jesus and his early Jewish followers. In my opinion, many of the most serious problems that the church has experienced over the last 2000 years could have been avoided if the church did not repeatedly cut itself off from its Jewish roots. In bringing correction to the church, many people have tried to remind church leaders that Christianity is Jewish.

In saying Christianity is Jewish, I must immediately communicate what I am not saying:

1. In the current political environment, by saying Christianity is Jewish, I am not saying that we followers of Jesus need to support Israel right or wrong. Nor am I suggesting an anti-Muslim tilt towards our foreign policy, or towards the prospect of Palestinian statehood. Christianity is Jewish is not a political statement.
2. In the current worship music environment, I am not suggesting that we need to get back to certain "Hebraic" styles of worship. It was popular, particularly in the 1970's and 80's, in certain charismatic circles, to suggest that the use of minor key worship, models of the tabernacle, and Jewish dance steps were somehow more spiritual or more "biblical" than other forms of worship expressions. Saying Christianity is Jewish is not a statement regarding worship style preference.

What would be gained by recovering the Jewish roots of Christianity?

1. The beauty of block logic. Greek logic which has been the chief influence on the Christian church over the last 18 centuries uses a tightly contained step-logic whereby one argues from premise to conclusion in a rational, logical fashion. Jews, both in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament, made use of block logic. Concepts were expressed in self-contained blocks of thought. These blocks of thought didn't necessarily fit together in any obviously rational or harmonious pattern. This way of thinking opens the door for paradox or antinomies (apparent contradictions) as one block stands in tension with another block.

The church has had difficulty with the block logic of the Jewish scriptures. We constantly try to cut the tension by opting for one side of the truth versus the other. So, for example, it says in Exodus that Pharaoh hardened his heart, but it also says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart. We say either God did it or Pharaoh did it. It can't be both! The same is true with scriptures that deal with divine sovereignty and those that deal with human responsibility, and scriptures that suggest that God is one yet somehow three. By affirming the way Jews in ancient times thought, the church would not be tempted to cut biblical tensions or reject certain aspects of the truth in favor of other aspects.

2. God is in everything. Jews in biblical times did not make a distinction between sacred and secular areas of life. They saw all of life as a unity. God was involved in the birth of a baby and God was involved in the death of an old person. Farmers recited special prayers as they tilled the soil. The apostle Paul, reflecting his Jewish background, wrote, "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10.31). Jews recited prayers over wine, in the presence of thunder and lightning, and they even blessed God for their capacity to use the bathroom.

When the church has forgotten that Christianity is Jewish, it has drawn a sharp distinction between the sacred and the secular. As a result, many Christians wonder where God is in their work places. Christians often see work as "just tent-

making,“ enabling them to earn enough money so that they can get onto “God’s work” at church or in evangelism. The Christian world also became divided between clerical and lay people, and between secular and sacred institutions. Imagine what would happen to the average Christian if we saw our walk with God not being exhausted by “spiritual” activities such as prayer and fasting, but as involving the whole of our lives: our entertainment choices, what we ate, our sex lives, our spending choices, our work, etc. Imagine a world in which God is in everything, not just “spiritual” things.

3. Unity vs. Dualism. Following the Greeks, much of the church held to the perspective that there are two worlds – the visible material world and the invisible spiritual world. The invisible spiritual world was said to be higher than the visible material world. The Greek philosopher, Plato, likened the body to a prison for the soul. The goal of salvation was to escape the body and to live as a pure spirit forever.

Jews in biblical times had a very different view. According to the Jews, the world was good. Material was good. To the Jews, a human being is a dynamic body/soul unity called to serve God with all of our beings within the physical world. The ultimate goal for Jews was not escaping the body and living forever as pure spirit in a spiritual world called heaven. Rather, the goal was to live in a resurrected body on a new (renewed) earth.

Imagine what would happen to people in the church if we took on a more Jewish view of our bodies and of material creation. Perhaps we would be more mindful of our diets. And since salvation takes place in the body, perhaps sexual holiness would make more sense to us. Since material creation is valued by God, perhaps we would also exercise greater creation care. Environmentalism would not just be for tree-huggers! It would be the natural response of Christians to our understanding of the world.

4. The Individual vs. Community. Severed from its Jewish roots, the church has continually tilted towards an emphasis on the individual’s own relationship with God as opposed to the more Jewish emphasis on the community of faith. One of the early movements in Christianity was monasticism, which literally means “to be alone” or to “live in solitude.”

When the church is cut off from its Jewish roots, Christians tend towards “Lone Ranger” Christianity. Christians begin to believe that the church is a luxury, not a necessity and that we can successfully grow as believers on our own.

Jews living in biblical times thought of themselves as being part of a people. When they talked to God, they used the plural “we,” not the singular “I.” That’s why Jesus (a Jew) taught us to pray, “Our Father in heaven,” not “My Father in heaven...” The Bible teaches that when a person comes to Christ, they are immediately grafted into the church. Our growth, our learning, and our salvation is eternally bound up with our relationships in the community of God’s people.

In sum, many of the problems of contemporary (and historic) Christianity would be solved by remembering this one simple fact: Christianity is Jewish!

Source: <http://www.vineyardcolumbus.org>

I came across this article and I wondered what you all would think of it?

**Re: Christianity is Jewish - posted by PreachParsly (), on: 2007/7/31 16:25**

I agree with some of the points under

Quote:

-----What would be gained by recovering the Jewish roots of Christianity?  
-----

but I don't think it's "Jewishness" that needs to be acquired but just a knowledge and practice of the Bible.

Re:, on: 2007/7/31 16:32

There are some good things in this... but beware of the Judaizers. I've met some. It starts all good, but it doesn't take long before they begin to insist that you need to live under the Law. I see red flags all over this article.

Christianity is NOT Jewish. That's why Paul wrote so extensively to the Gentile Christians to not let the Jewish Christians steal their freedom.

Krispy

Re:, on: 2007/7/31 17:07

Quote:

PreachParsly wrote:

I agree with some of the points under

Quote:

-----What would be gained by recovering the Jewish roots of Christianity?  
-----

but I don't think it's "Jewishness" that needs to be acquired but just a knowledge and practice of the Bible.

I thought that's what the article is referring to - the correct knowledge and practice of the Bible in the context of the "worldview" of the culture in which God originally caused it to be written!

Maybe the title "Christianity is Jewish" is unfortunate. Would, "Christianity's roots are Jewish" would be better?

Jeannette

Re:, on: 2007/7/31 17:49

Quote:

KrispyKrittr wrote:

There are some good things in this... but beware of the Judaizers. I've met some. It starts all good, but it doesn't take long before they begin to insist that you need to live under the Law. I see red flags all over this article.

Christianity is NOT Jewish. That's why Paul wrote so extensively to the Gentile Christians to not let the Jewish Christians steal their freedom.

Krispy

Krispy Brother, I understand what you are saying, but on SI I don't get the impression that "Judaising" is the main danger!

Judaising in terms of religious practices doesn't come into it, that isn't what the article is talking about, as the writer himself makes clear. Your comment seems more like a knee-jerk reaction against the title of the thread, rather than what the article is actually saying.

The danger you see is real, but it probably wouldn't survive the pressure of public opinion here. Can you imagine the reaction if someone on SI insisted on things like keeping the Saturday Sabbath and not eating pork - let alone circumcision!

What of the danger of the opposite error - denying or ignoring our spiritual roots completely? As the article says, there is a danger of clinging to a Greek worldview that is far removed from the Scriptures, and then trying to interpret the Scriptures by means of this alien worldview.

Not only that, we still manage to fall into a distinctively "Christian" kind of legalism, instead of a Jewish one, in the pursuit of what we understand as holiness!

Its a very understandable reaction against the laxity and error and hedonism infiltrating the Church, but has sometimes gone to the opposite extreme instead. As human nature is prone to do.

Don't misunderstand, I'm all for holiness, but not holiness through self-effort, striving to come up to God's standards in our own strength, which is a definite tendency in many earnest Christians, and in myself. That's just as much of an error as insisting on keeping the Jewish Law.

I'm not pointing the finger, least of all at you, Brother, but I do see the opposite error as much more of a danger here.

Blessings

Jeannette

**Re: - posted by PreachParsly (), on: 2007/7/31 18:13**

Quote:  
-----I thought that's what the article is referring to - the correct knowledge and practice of the Bible in the context of the "worldview" of the culture in which God originally caused it to be written!  
-----

I agree it's good to look into the worldview of who it is that is writing and who they are writing to. It seems to me that most of the NT was wrote to those who would hold to a "non-Jewish" mindset. Wouldn't you agree that most of the letters are wrote to Gentiles? If we had to acquire Jewishness to become a fuller expression of the Body of Christ, wouldn't have Paul labored on the point? I interpret Paul as having a little bit of a different mindset.

Gal 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

1Co 9:19 For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.

1Co 9:20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law;

1Co 9:21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law.

1Co 9:22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

1Co 9:23 And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.

Quote:  
-----Maybe the title "Christianity is Jewish" is unfortunate. Would, "Christianity's roots are Jewish" would be better?

Jeannette  
-----

Well, in all honesty, I'm not sure that it would be. It depends on what you mean by "roots." I understand Jesus and all 12 Apostles were "Jewish." But does that make Christianity Jewish?

**Re: - posted by KingJimmy (), on: 2007/7/31 18:39**

Quote:

-----  
There are some good things in this... but beware of the Judaizers.  
-----

I'm sure this author is no more advocating a Judaizer attitude than that of our late brother Art Katz did. Art Katz was all for a return to embracing a Hebraic/"Jewish" mindset in the faith, but he was by no means advocating us taking up rabbinical practices... such he saw as shallow. Katz has a sermon on here called, "Has Jesus Made You Jewish?"

It's been a while since I've listened to this sermon, but to summarize, brother Katz simply was advocating a return to embracing a kingdom mindset and reality the church has always been called to, but has forgotten in its fury of services and programs. Indeed, we as Christians have been called to be "Jews" (see Romans 2-3), but not in the sense of sabbath observance or keeping circumcision. As Katz says, there is only one way to be Jewish, and that is by the Spirit.

**Re: Christianity is Jewish - posted by Nile (), on: 2007/7/31 19:06**

Thanks for posting the article!

Nile

**CHRISTIANITY IS CHRIST! ... - posted by Rahman, on: 2007/8/1 14:03**

Neither Jew nor Gentile in Christ ...

I'm always wary (and in some ways growing weary) of articles like this ...

I've said on post before that one of the things that often bothers me about the doctrine of many so called Messianic Jews (we're all Christians plain & simple) is that if not blatant, but most often subtly, the inferred suggestion that we somehow need to acknowledge a beholdedness to the Jew and/or Judaism in our Christianity (this is one of the problems I had in listening to bro Katz tho much on other subjects he spoke on I could agree with) ... I think in many ways much of this (even amongst saved Jews) is derived from a sense of a shared persecution complex (much like as plagues many African Americans) of past injustices, and even in coming to Christ is still hard to let go ... But I think much would be gained if we all took into account that once we come to Christ we are all new creatures, and former things are passed away as the old us is crucified with Christ ... I say this because this article ended thus ...

"In sum, many of the problems of contemporary (and historic) Christianity would be solved by remembering this one simple fact: Christianity is Jewish!"

The article seems initially to approach the current problems in the Church in our not embracing our "Jewishness" but in parenthesis is (and historic) which always seems to be the real rub between Jews and Christians - that bloody history just seems to never be able to go away ... Some of this theme is touched on at the end of this thread ...

Why are the Jews (Shem) Hated by so many Europeans & Russians (Japheth)? ...

[http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic\\_id=11893&forum=48#94604](http://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id=11893&forum=48#94604)

Scripture tells us that Christ is the fulfilment of all that came before with Israel and led up to His coming, and that once He came and died He became the propitiation to the new covenant between God and man where there is neither Jew nor Gentile anymore ...

Why is it that whenever we're lacking in our proper walk in Christianity it always has something to do with something other than following explicitly the primary example of Christianity: Jesus Christ Himself ... Yes some of the points brought out here are valid as to the type of thinking, and world view, we should have as saints, but I venture to say that if any of us never knew anything about, or from, the OT, if we followed explicitly what Christ said in the Gospels, and what

is subsequently written in the epistles we'd all be in pretty good standing with God apart from knowing anything about our OT Jewish heritage, but bless God He has even given us benefit of the OT history, and any saint worth his salt in studying the scripture knows we as once gentiles have been grafted into that history ...

Again this article ended thus ...

"In sum, many of the problems of contemporary (and historic) Christianity would be solved by remembering this one simple fact: Christianity is Jewish!"

i beg to differ ...

**"In sum, many of the problems of contemporary (and historic) Christianity would be solved by remembering this one simple fact: Christianity is Christ Jesus!"**

... And in light of any remedy we need to get right with Jesus what we need to do is stay in constant study of His Word, daily applying it to our everyday lives, and in continuous repentance before Him! ... If we ALL were as much into doing as He says, as we are into finding some outside method that All of us cannot agree on, we wouldn't be so much in need of correction and REVIVAL as we are now ...

i think Paul makes it pretty plain here about this issue ...

Gal.3  
But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

If we can't buckle under in surrender, and submission, in serving God our Father and His Christ for and by what He did for us in the middle of the Bible, i doubt very seriously we'd ever have the motivation to do so like they did in the beginning ...

#### Re: Christianity is Jewish, on: 2007/8/1 16:48

Bro Rahman said

Quote:  
-----i've said on post before that one of the things that often bothers me about the doctrine of many so called Messianic Jews (we're all Christians plain & simple) is that if not blatant, but most often **subtly, the inferred suggestion that we somehow need to acknowledge a beholdenness to the Jew and/or Judaism** in our Christianity (this is one of the problems i had in listening to bro Katz tho much on other subjects he spoke on i could agree with) ... i think in many ways much of this (even amongst saved Jews) is derived from a sense of a shared persecution complex (much like as plagues many African Americans) of past injustices, and even in coming to Christ is still hard to let go ... But i think much would be gained if we all took into account that once we come to Christ we are all new creatures, and former things are passed away as the old us is crucified with Christ ... i say this because this article ended thus ...  
-----

emphasis mine. I just wanted to say amen to your expression of this. I've felt it too, and it forces me to reject 'Jewishness' more than I want to - because of the relationship it seems to bear in the Jewish mind to the outward, the Jewishness of flesh rather than Spirit.

If the author had said, let's all us Christians understand that the Jewish culture as it developed under God's laws was intended to be exercised from a pure heart, and the spirit of its intention is restored to us in Christ, I could accept it easily. But the assumption that 'Jewishness' is to do with geneologies and 'Israel' is the Jewish people *per se*, rather than a key individual in history who paid double for the one he loved, who (as many other OT saints did) personified Jesus' in a particular way, pushes me away. I don't find those things supported by the New Testament. And I find (Christian) Jewish resistance to alterations in the covenant, surprising in the light of the many other covenants God made with man, and added to or changed completely, historically.

Lastly, am I the only person who has noticed that Paul says Abraham was to be heir of the world (not Israel)? (Rom 4:13)  
) This speaks of a far-reaching solution to 'Israel's' lack of land, does it not?

Now, I would like to comment on the leading post.

**Re: - posted by LoveHim, on: 2007/8/1 17:27**

brothers and sisters,

i personally don't have much of a problem with the article. i believe that my life and understanding would be helped by knowing how the jewish culture did or still does certain things. with that being said, i refuse to place myself or my family under the very law that we were redeemed from. didn't He become a curse for us so we wouldn't be cursed?? wasn't He born of a woman, born under the law to redeem us from the law??

the article had some good points, but my question would be "how does the author really think this should look like"?? in what practical ways does this jewishness work itself out?? the wall has been broken down and we are truly one in Him..

just my thoughts.. ;-)

**Re: Christianity is Jewish, on: 2007/8/1 18:00**

LoveHim said

Quote:

-----just my thoughts..

-----  
Good thoughts.

**Re: Christianity is Jewish, on: 2007/8/1 18:45**

The things I noticed in this article are

Quote:

-----In my opinion, many of the most serious problems that the church has experienced over the last 2000 years could have been avoided if the church did not repeatedly cut itself off from its **Jewish roots**.

-----  
Does this mean he thinks gentile Christians should become more 'Jewish' in their thinking, or more like Christ, Who is the 'Jewish Root'?

Quote:

-----Greek logic which has been the chief influence on the Christian church over the last 18 centuries uses a **tightly contained step-logic whereby one argues from premise to conclusion in a rational, logical fashion**. Jews, both in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament, made use of block logic. Concepts were expressed in self-contained blocks of thought. These blocks of thought didn't necessarily fit together in any obviously rational or harmonious pattern. This way of thinking opens the door for paradox or antinomies (apparent contradictions) as one block stands in tension with another block.

-----  
I'm not sure why 'block logic' is better for reaching 'Greeks' - that is, non-Jews.

If the gospel cannot be re-presented in non-block logic, then no Greek-thinker can be challenged to believe something better than his Greek philosophy.

Perhaps the intellectual feat which Paul performed with equally intellectual integrity - of presenting the gospel in such a way as non-Jews could *follow* the reasons they should believe - is something which gentiles had not appreciated?

I couldn't help remark on the word 'block' here:

1 Corinthians 1:18 - 29

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of



God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent."

Where *is* the wise?  
Where *is* the scribe?  
Where *is* the disputer of this age?  
Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling **block** and to the Greeks **foolishness**, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*.

But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence.

Quote:  
-----We say either God did it or Pharaoh did it. It can't be both!  
-----

philologos has worked hard on SI to move us towards accepting every bit of scripture as relevant to the whole, to counteract this kind of conflict.

Quote:  
-----When **the church** has forgotten that Christianity is Jewish, it **has drawn a sharp distinction between the sacred and the secular**. As a result, many Christians wonder where God is in their work places.  
-----

I believe this is more to do with the success of secularism than the failure of the church.

It is not possible to read 'pray without ceasing' or, 'in all things give thanks', or 'whatever you do, do it unto the Lord', and then walk out of church and *forget* God is everywhere else as well.

The matter of *forgetting* is more to do with the conditioning of the carnal mind than a failure to remember a 'Jewish' culture (this generation) may never have known.

Quote:  
-----The invisible spiritual world was said to be higher than the visible material world.  
-----

While I hear his appeal for a more Jewish way of resisting this thinking, I believe Christians have abused it for their own ends - such as doctrine which relieves the Christian of being heart, soul, mind, body and strength 100% all out for God. One that springs to mind is imputed righteousness without imparted righteousness and the consequent obligation to live up to a standard.

Quote:  
-----Jews living in biblical times thought of themselves as being part of a people. When they talked to God, they used the plural "we," not the singular "I." **That's why Jesus (a Jew) taught us to pray, "Our Father** in heaven," not "My Father in heaven..."  
-----

I would put this quite differently, in that God really was Jesus' Father, and He brought us into the same relationship, by sending the Spirit of adoption into our hearts which cries 'Abba, Father'. So now He *is* 'our Father'. Jesus did also refer to God as 'your Father' many times, but they had no real idea of what He meant, until after His resurrection (I believe).



Quote:  
-----**The Bible teaches that when a person comes to Christ, they are immediately grafted into the church.** Our growth, our learning, and our salvation is eternally bound up with our relationships in the community of God's people.  
-----

Definitely I do not agree with 'grafted into the church'. Grafted into the Vine. Grafted into the olive tree. Both Christ - yes . Made one with other believers as Peter describes 'living stones'; or 'the temple of the Holy Spirit', 'one loaf', 'members of His body' or 'one new man' to use Paul's words.

The phrase 'the church' is open to much misinterpretation.

Quote:  
-----many of the problems of contemporary (and historic) Christianity...  
-----

can never be solved by template other than Christ Himself.

That is the whole reason each believer needs to be born from above by the Spirit - that he or she may have their own so nship to God. Only as each person attends to the rightness of their standing with God, does the body of Christ make sense.

Indeed, there is a singularity of being a Christian, authorised by Peter when he challenged the listening Jews to 'save yourselves'. He was inviting each individual to faith. This *must* precede 'community'. In fact 'communion' also precedes *community* in the experience of the individual believer.