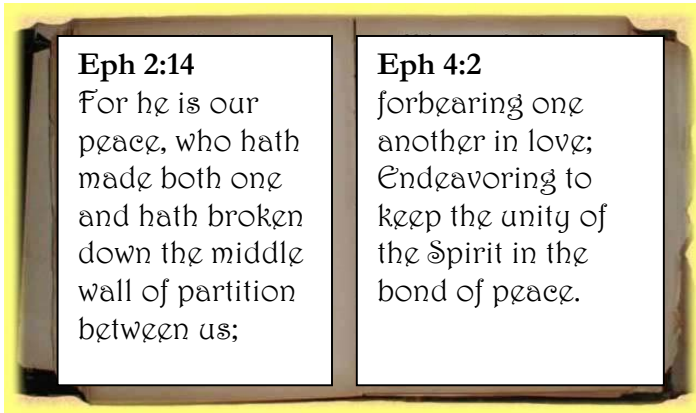


THE NEWS AND TEACHINGS OF

ECHO Ministries



Beth Shalom - - - - Instruments of Peace

One in Messiah

One in Yeshua

Just What Do You Mean “Messianic”?

When Noel Kegley, the trustee for Addilynn U.M.C., first was led to invite us to share their facility, he was preparing to present the proposal to the board. On the night before the board meeting he called with a question.

“Now, just what does messianic mean?”

What a good question. It’s a question we’re often asked. After all, people are familiar with Baptists, Methodist, and Pentecostals. So what does “messianic” mean? Is it a denomination? A new religion? A description of race or heritage? Just what *does* it mean?

In order to answer the question we have to look back on some of the history of the church. Throughout church history, from the very first converts to the sect of Judaism called

Christianity, to modern day, there have been Jewish believers in Jesus.

In fact, in the beginning, *all* the believers in Jesus were Jewish. Of course, *we* know God had plans to offer salvation to all peoples, but the apostles and first disciples didn’t know that—until He showed them. In Acts 10, Peter is puzzled by a vision, but then sees its interpretation when he goes to the house of Cornelius, a *gentile* of all things, and sees the Ruach HaKodesh, the Holy Spirit, fall on them when they accept Yeshua HaMashiach, Jesus the Messiah.

In short order the tables had turned and there were far more gentile converts than Jewish ones. By the 4th century, in fact, cultural prejudices were so prevalent as to outlaw biblical Jewish practices by Jewish converts. If a Jew wanted to be a believer in Messiah, no longer could he observe Shabbat, keep the Passover, or keep kosher.

This sad state of affairs continued into the twentieth century. While there were some congregations that focused on “Hebrew Christians” as Jewish believers were called, the overwhelmingly prevalent view was that Jews who accepted Jesus had to reject their own Jewish identity.

The tide began to shift in the 1900s. Initially there were just one or two congregations that focused on Jewish believers. But in the late 60s and early 70s, two phenomena coincided to bring about a sea change to their world.

First, there was the hippie Jesus Movement. While their peers were dropping acid and dropping out, some young college students were blessed by the revelation of Jesus as their savior. Among these were a number of young, highly educated Jewish intellectuals. As they turned from the traditions of their childhood to embrace their Savior, they turned their highly educated and finely tuned minds to *how* to embrace Him—and discovered that He was distinctly Jewish!

Second, both the Presbyterian and Episcopalian churches decided to found 3 congregations focused entirely on Jewish believers.

These two events coincided to fuel intense scholarship about the logical expression of a Jew’s faith in Yeshua, Jesus.

Imagine how difficult it would be for you if, as a Jew, you had been taught all your life that churches promoted idol worship (after all, they believe in the Trinity!), and that Christianity is a gentile religion, and that gentiles believe you are Christ-killer—imagine how difficult it would be for you to worship in a traditional gentile church!

Led by both the Ruach HaKodesh and scholarly research, many of these new Jewish converts began to express their belief in Messiah in a decidedly Jewish fashion. They saw that the traditional Jewish liturgy held much that glorified and pointed to Him; they saw that the Jewish festivals all pointed toward Him; they saw that the Old Testament (Tanakh) promoted worship that included various musical instruments and dance; and they read in Rom. 14:13—“Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in *his* brother’s way.”

Why *not* worship Jesus in a Jewish way? After all, He was Jewish and He went to synagogue, and so did all the apostles!

Amazingly, this trend did not originate with one person, or even with one group of people. After the initial three congregations supported by mainstream denominations, in 1975 the first entirely messianic congregation was founded in Chicago. By 1979 there were 19 congregations. And since that time, congregations that worship in a messianic style have sprung up, often independently, throughout the world. At last count there were more than 75 congregations or home groups in the nation of Israel.

So what does “messianic” mean? Well, of course, it has its most generic meaning of “believing in the Messiah”. In that sense, *all* Christian believers are messianic.

But, specifically, it implies a distinctly Jewish style of worship. Since this movement has sprung up in various places at various times, it would be misleading to imply that all congregations are the same. They aren’t.

But messianic congregations tend to have the following: use of the Torah and traditional

liturgy in worship; incorporations of congregational dance in worship; observance of traditional Old Testament and Jewish holidays; observance of the food laws; use of the prayer shawl (tallit), and other worship aids commanded in the Old Testament; use of alternative Jewish terminology for traditional Christian concepts; a regular reading from the Torah, as well as readings from the Haftorah (Writings and Prophets) and the Brit Hadashah (New Testament); and messianic worship music, both exuberant and reflective, with rich instrumentation, clapping, and involvement of the congregation.

One other factor is very common in messianic congregations, and must be discussed in particular. Most messianic congregations tend to be open to the overt expressions of the gifts of the spirit, including healing, prophecy, words of knowledge, and tongues.

Why? Not only do new Jewish converts to the faith see the New Testament account of the apostles and disciples with fresh eyes, recognizing the miracles there and expecting the same kind of ones today. Many of them have also experienced the Ruach HaKodesh in a rather forceful way themselves.

While most Jewish converts to Christianity will credit one or more gentile believers with guiding them to accepting Yeshua, there is a significant number, especially of those who later enter the ministry, who experienced miraculous events that convicted them of the reality of Yeshua as Messiah. I have heard several first-hand stories of how God chose to forcefully deal with those He was calling by pouring out upon them an Acts 2 type experience!

Perhaps that seems strange to many of us who have grown up with Christianity as our childhood faith. But consider how powerful the pull must be to penetrate the fear and indoctrination from birth against Christians, Christianity, and the Christian God, Jesus. Most Jews who come to the faith experience rejection from family and friends, and must deal with emotional baggage from being called Christ-killers, and perhaps from being beaten up at Easter time!


Furthermore, it appears that a great move of the Spirit is in effect during our age. More Jews have come to faith in Yeshua in the last 35 years than in the previous 2000! Romans 9, 10, and 11 chronicle a prophecy of the return of Jews to an understanding of the Messiah, after “the times of the gentiles” is complete. (See Luke 21:24.)

So every indication is that this upsurge in a vibrant, passionate, evangelistic faith expressed in a Jewish context is part of God’s end-time plan as it unfolds.

So what is a messianic congregation? In the broadest sense, it is any body of believers that anticipates the return of the Messiah. But specifically, it is a congregation of believers that expresses their faith in a distinctly Jewish way.

Join me next time as we explore whether that is “judaizing” or not, and what kind of people God calls to the messianic walk of belief.

By Susan Fiedler



I JUST WANT TO THANK GOD!!

Dear God:

I want to thank you for what you have already done.

I am not going to wait until I see results or receive rewards, I am thanking you right now.

I am not going to wait until I feel better or things look better, I am thanking you right now

I am not going to wait until people say they are sorry or until they stop talking about me, I am thanking you right now.

I am not going to wait until the pain in my body disappears, I am thanking you right now.

I am not going to wait until my financial situation improves, I am going to thank you right now.

I am not going to wait until the children are asleep and the house is quiet, I am going to thank you right now.

I am not going to wait until I get promoted at work or until I get another job, I am going to thank you right now.
I am not going to wait until I understand every experience in my life that has caused me pain or grief, I am going thank you right now.

I am not going to wait until the journey gets easier or the challenges are removed.

I am thanking you right now.

I am thanking you because I am alive.

I am thanking you because I made it through the day's difficulties.

I am thanking you because I have walked around the obstacles.

I am thanking you because I have the ability and the opportunity to do more and do better.

I am thanking you because you have not given up on me

God is just so good, and He's good all the time.

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