

Nazarenes or Messianic Jews?

You may be surprised to find out that the original Jewish followers of Yeshua were NOT “Messianic Jews”. As Daniel Juster writes:

No form of Judaism or Christianity... has used the term “Messianic Judaism” as its appropriate designation.
(Jewish Roots; 1986 edition, p. viii)

The original followers of Yeshua were a sect of Judaism known as “Nazarenes” (as we read in Acts 24:5).

The term “Messianic Judaism” was invented in the late 60’s and it is a human invention. David Stern writes in his Messianic Jewish Manifesto:

According to Scripture the word “Christian” does not denote Jewish believers in Yeshua at all. The New Testament calls them followers of “this way” (Acts 9:2, 22:4) and “Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5)... the New Testament does not call Jewish believers “Christians”. According to New Testament usage the term “Christian” is reserved for Gentile believers in the Jewish Messiah Yeshua.

Acts 11:19-26 tells how in Antioch some Jewish believers... did not limit their proclamation of Yeshua as the Messiah to Jews, as had been the norm previously, but broke new ground... Many of these Gentiles came to believe... the other Gentiles in Antioch... coined the word christianoi (Christians),... Thus the term “Christian” was invented by Gentiles to describe Gentiles in a Gentile environment. The New Testament tells us explicitly that “the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” [Acts 11:26]
(Messianic Jewish Manifesto; David Stern; p. 32)

Now it is important here to note that David Stern himself in his Jewish New Testament and Complete Jewish Bible, translates Acts 11:26 with:

...it was at Antioch that the talmidim for the first time were called “Messianic”.(Acts 11:26 JNT)

In his commentary to this passage in his Jewish New Testament Commentary Stern writes:

“Messianic,” or “Messianics,” Greek Christianoi, which could be rendered... as in other translations, “Christians.” ...the name “Christianoi” was applied to Gentile believers by Gentile nonbelievers. The name nonbelieving Jews gave to Jewish believers was “Natzaratim”... (“Nazarenes”),...

Again in Messianic Jewish Manifesto Stern writes:

“Messianic” comes from the Hebrew mashiach, which means “anointed.” “Christian” comes from Greek christos, which is the [Greek] New Testament’s translation of mashiach AND MEANS THE SAME THING. ...in the New Testament the term “Christian,” which appears only three times, apparently denotes being a Gentile believer in Yeshua, so that scripturally “Jewish Christian” is a contradiction in terms.
(Emphasis and brackets added)
(Messianic Jewish Manifesto; David Stern; p. 20)

Now we can see from David Stern's own words above:

1. The terms "Christian" and "Messianic" are alternate translations of the Greek word "Christianoi" "and mean the same thing".
2. The term "Christianoi" or "Christian" is used in the scriptures only to denote a GENTILE believer in Yeshua, so that scripturally the term "Jewish Christian" is "a contradiction in terms".

Therefore we may conclude that:

- The term "Messianic" is used in the scriptures only to denote a GENTILE believer in Yeshua, so that scripturally the term "Messianic Jew" is a contradiction in terms.
- The logic is inescapable... the term "Messianic Judaism" is scripturally invalid, it is a human invention and a contradiction in terms.

So what were the original Jewish followers of Yeshua called if they were not Messianic Jews? Stern admits:

The New Testament calls them followers of "this way" (Acts 9:2, 22:4) and "Nazarenes" (Acts 24:5) (Messianic Jewish Manifesto; David Stern; p. 32)

In fact if we quote Stern, but substitute the word "Messianic" for "Christians" (since Stern admits "they are the same") we read:

According to Scripture the word "MESSIANIC" does not denote Jewish believers in Yeshua at all. The New Testament calls them followers of "this way" (Acts 9:2, 22:4) and "NAZARENES" (Acts 24:5)... the New Testament does not call Jewish believers "MESSIANIC". According to New Testament usage the term "MESSIANIC" is reserved for Gentile believers in the Jewish Messiah Yeshua.

So the BIBLICAL term for Jewish believers in Messiah is NOT "Messianic" but "Nazarene". We should be seeking a restoration of "Nazarene Judaism" not creating "Messianic Judaism" which, being "Christian Judaism" (i.e. "Christianized Judaism") is a contradiction in terms.

Source: <http://wnae.org/nazarenemessianic.htm>

One Faith, Two Expression Theology

By James Scott Trimm

The Systematic theology of the "One Faith Two Expression" theology or "Two Torah" Theology is the theology of much of Messianic Judaism including the majority of the IAMCS and the UMJC.

Two Torah Theology maintains that the "Church" or "Body of Messiah" is made up of two two groups who are united together in one body. The two Groups are Messianic Jews and Gentile Christians. Stern illustrates this theology on page 46 of his Messianic Jewish Manifesto with a circle graph. The graph shows the "Church" and "Jewish People" (Israel) as two overlapping circles. The area of the overlap is labeled "Messianic Jews". The chart also places some dots in the "Church" circle but outside the overlap with the "Jewish People" circle and labels this "Jews who are saved and freely choose to express their faith in a non-Jewish context."

Stern then writes:

"...the small circle represents the Jews and the large circle the Church, but now they overlap. The intersection of the two circles represents Messianic Jews. ...the remainder of the Church circle represents Gentile Christians."

(Messianic Jewish Manifesto p. 46)

Later in the same book Stern writes:

"The Messianic Jew has two non-neurotic roles to play in the Church. ...the issues raised in this book need to be brought to the attention of all in the Church, Gentile Christians as well as Messianic Jews. ...

The second role he has to play is being instrumental in fostering Jewish evangelism, helping the Church..."

(ibid p. 71)

In his book Jewish Roots Daniel Juster has a similar illustration for this same theology. Juster first illustrates the Dispensationalist view with three circles which do not overlap at all which he labels "Jews" "Church of former Jews & Gentiles" and "Gentiles" (p. 35). He then gives his own correction of this view with an illustration of three circles, with each of the two outside circles overlapping with the circle in the middle. The two outer circles are labeled "Israel" and "Gentiles" while the middle circle is labeled "The Church". This results in two groups in "The Church" which Juster calls "Jewish followers of Yeshua" (i.e. Messianic Judaism) and "Gentile followers of Yeshua" (i.e. Gentile Christianity).

One Faith Two Expression Theology teaches that Messianic Judaism and Gentile Christianity are simply two culturally different expressions of the one true faith. This theology maintains that only Messianic Jews are obligated to observe the Mosaic Torah while Gentile Christians are not obligated to observe Torah. Stern asks:

"...observance of the Torah, as it applies to Jews, is not a condition for the salvation of a Gentile. ...can faith in God and his Messiah transcend Jewish culture? Can a Gentile become a Christian without also becoming a Jew?"

(JNT Commentary p. 273)

Now in truth "observance of the Torah" is not a "condition for the salvation" for anyone, however Stern's point seems to be to pose the question of whether Gentiles should observe Torah. Stern answers the question later in his commentary:

"...Gentiles do not have to become Jews in order to believe in Jesus... This point, irrelevant for Jews and therefore not part of the Gospel as it was presented to them, is essential for Gentiles; because it removes a major barrier, namely, the requirement, in addition to trusting God and the Good News, that Gentiles should leave one culture and join another... because when a Gentile allows himself to be circumcised, he obligates himself to obey the entire Torah..."

(JNT Commentary pp. 526-527)

One Faith Two Expression theology teaches that when Gentile Christians observe Sunday as their weekly day of worship, celebrate Christmas and Easter and eat porkchops that's culturally appropriate for them and when Messianic Jews observe the Sabbath, keep Biblical Jewish festivals and eat kosher that's culturally appropriate for us. Stern writes:

"Gentile believers are free to observe or not to observe rules about dining and Jewish holidays..."
(JNT Commentary p. 610)

Regarding Sunday worship Juster writes:

"...Sabbath is a day of crucial significance to Jewish identity. The principle of weekly rest, worship and renewal is one of universal significance. In this sense, the Sabbath principle is a spiritual and humanitarian guide for all peoples. Christians are free to incorporate this principle on Sunday or other days. The seventh day Sabbath for Israel is a special central sign of the Covenant between Israel and God."
(Jewish Roots p. 195)

Even the FFOZ publication Take Hold says:

"There is nothing wrong with worshipping on Sunday. There is nothing biblically wrong with going to a place of worship on a Sunday and becoming as much involved as one desires.... It [the Sabbath] can be honored fully, even if one worships on Sunday or any other day of the week.... we suggest you inform your friends...that you do not have a problem with worshipping on a Sunday just as long as they do not insist that it be called 'the Sabbath.'"
(Take Hold by Ariel and D'vorah Berkowitz pp. 239-240)

And Stern writes:

"There are today all kinds of sects and denominations that likewise create false guilt by non scriptural teaching-- for example... that observing one one day rather than another as a day of worship is a sin..."
(JNT Commentary p. 280)

One Faith Two Expression theology even teaches that there is nothing wrong with Gentile Christians celebrating Christmas, Easter and other pagan holidays. Stern writes:

"I do not believe these verses (Gal. 4:8-10) prohibit the celebration of Christmas, Good Friday, Easter and other events of the Christian calendars followed by various Christian denominations. ... those who wish to celebrate, may; and those who prefer not to, may not-- all so long as whatever is done honors the Lord and builds up the Messianic Community."
(JNT Commentary. 558)

This is the live and let live theology of much of Messianic Judaism. They maintain that Messianic Jews and Gentile Christians are united together as one big "Church" or "Body of Messiah" together, They maintain that These two groups are simply culturally different expressions of the one true faith. They maintain that it is culturally appropriate for Messianic Jews to observe Saturday as the weekly day of worship, keep biblical Jewish holidays and eat kosher. On the other hand Gentiles are free to incorporate the Sabbath principle into a weekly Sunday worship, celebrate Christmas, Easter and other pagan holidays, eat unkosher foods etc. because they need not leave their gentile culture to join the Jewish "culture" of Torah observance.

NAZARENES, THE ORIGINAL FOLLOWERS OF YESHUA

Yeshua ("Jesus of Nazareth") did not come to found a new religion, he came to be Messiah of the old

one. Yeshua lived his entire life without ever violating Torah, yet creating a new religion itself would have been a Torah violation. The original followers of Yeshua were not part of a new religion, they were a sect of Judaism. Not one "New Testament" writer refers to himself as being a "Christian" yet Paul continually identifies himself as Jewish (Acts 21:39; 22:3) and on one occasion he even declares "I am a Pharisee" (Acts 23:6).

Now I know that within many Christian circles there is a teaching that says that originally Judaism was the true faith but that it has now been replaced by a new faith "Christianity" which is now the true faith. This theology is totally counter to the teachings of the "New Testament". The "New Testament" is plain in telling us that there is one true faith (Eph. 4:5) which was given once and for all time (Jude 1:3). This means that the theology that claims that Christianity is a true faith which has replaced Judaism which had been the previous true faith is absolutely false! There is, according to the "New Testament" itself ONE TRUE FAITH and it was ONLY GIVEN ONCE. Christianity is so young to be that ONE true faith that was ONCE given, that ONE true faith that was ONCE given therefore MUST be Judaism!

The first believers in Yeshua were a Jewish sect known as "Nazarenes" or in Hebrew "N'tzarim" (Acts 24:5). The "church father" Jerome (4th Cent.) described these Nazarenes as those "...who accept Messiah in such a way that they do not cease to observe the old Law." (Jerome; On. Is. 8:14). The fourth century "church father" Epiphanius gives a more detailed description:

But these sectarians... did not call themselves Christians-- but "Nazarenes," ... However they are simply complete Jews. They use not only the New Testament but the Old Testament as well, as the Jews do... They have no different ideas, but confess everything exactly as the Law proclaims it and in the Jewish fashion-- except for their belief in Messiah, if you please! For they acknowledge both the resurrection of the dead and the divine creation of all things, and declare that G-d is one, and that his son is Y'shua the Messiah. They are trained to a nicety in Hebrew. For among them the entire Law, the Prophets, and the... Writings... are read in Hebrew, as they surely are by the Jews. They are different from the Jews, and different from Christians, only in the following. They disagree with Jews because they have come to faith in Messiah; but since they are still fettered by the Law--circumcision, the Sabbath, and the rest-- they are not in accord with Christians.... they are nothing but Jews.... They have the Goodnews according to Matthew in its entirety in Hebrew. For it is clear that they still preserve this, in the Hebrew alphabet, as it was originally written.
(Epiphanius; Panarion 29)

BIRTH OF GENTILE CHRISTIANITY

The authors of the "New Testament" also refer to this great apostasy:

11 And many false prophets will arise, and will lead many astray. 12 And because apostasy will abound, the love of many will wax cold.
(Mt. 24:11-12 DuTillet Hebrew text)

Do not let anyone deceive you in any way, because [it will not come] except an apostasy should come first and the son of man of Torah-less-ness be revealed, the son of destruction ,
(2Thes. 2:3)

Now the spirit plainly says that in the last times some men shall depart from the faith and shall go after deceiving spirits and after teachings of shadim, Those who deceive by false appearance and are speaking a lie, and are seared in their conscience,
(1Timothy 4:1-2)

What does it mean "depart from the faith"? There is only one true faith (Eph. 4:5) which was once and for all delivered (Jude 1:3). But that faith was Judaism not Christianity.

Paul also said to the Ephesians on his last visit to them:

I know that after I am gone fierce wolves will enter in among you without mercy upon the flock. And also from among you there will rise up men speaking perverse things, so that they might turn away the talmidim to follow after them.
(Acts 20:29-30)

Paul seems to indicate that after his death leaders would begin to rise up in his stead that would draw people to follow themselves and draw them away from Torah. Perhaps the some of the very men who had twisted Paul's teaching into anti-nomianism would oneday become the leadership. In fact Paul died in 66 C.E. and the first overseer (Bishop) of Antioch to take office after his death was Ignatius in 98 C.E.. Ignatius fulfilled Paul's words precisely. Upon taking the office of Bishop over Antioch Ignatius sent out a series of epistles to other assemblies. His letters to the Ephesians, Magnesians, Trallianns, Romans, Philadelphians and Smyrnaeans as well as a personal letter to Polycarp overseer of Smyrnaea have survived to us.

In these letters Ignatius asserts the absolute authority of the office of "bishop" (his own office) over the assembly. Ignatius writes:

...being subject to your bishop... ..run together according to the will of God. Jesus... is sent by the will of the Father; As the bishops... are by the will of Jesus Christ.
(Eph. 1:9, 11)

...your bishop... I think you happy who are so joined to him, as the church is to Jesus Christ and Jesus Christ is to the Father... Let us take heed therefore, that we not set ourselves against the bishop, that we may be subject to God... . We ought to look upon the bishop, even as we would upon the Lord himself.
(Eph. 2:1-4)

...obey your bishop...
(Mag. 1:7)

Your bishop presiding in the place of God... ..be you united to your bishop...
(Mag. 2:5, 7)

...he... that does anything without the bishop... is not pure in his conscience...
(Tral. 2:5)

...Do nothing without the bishop.
(Phil. 2:14)

See that you all follow your bishop, As Jesus Christ, the Father...

(Smy. 3:1)

By exalting the power of the office of bishop (overseer) and demanding the absolute authority of the bishop over the assembly, Ignatius was actually making a power grab by thus taking absolute authority over the assembly at Antioch and encouraging other Gentile overseers to follow suite. In the past such disputes were resolved by the Nazarene Sanhedrin of the Nazarene assembly in Jerusalem (Acts 15).

Moreover Ignatius drew men away from Torah, not only at Antioch but at other Gentile assemblies to which he wrote:

Be not deceived with strange doctrines; nor with old fables which are unprofitable. For if we still continue to live according to the Jewish Law, we do confess ourselves not to have received grace...

let us learn to live according to the rules of Christianity, for whosoever is called by any other name besides this, he is not of God... .

It is absurd to name Jesus Christ, and to Judaize. For the Christian religion did not embrace the Jewish. But the Jewish the Christian...

(Mag. 3:1, 8, 11)

(This is the first time in History that Christianity is characterized as a new and different religion apart from Judaism).

But if any one shall preach the Jewish law unto you, hearken not unto him...

(Phil. 2:6)

Now Paul's prophecy was being fulfilled. Gentile leaders were causing men to follow after themselves and drawing people away from Torah, and it was springing forth from the first Gentile assembly. The result was the birth of a new Gentile religion that had effectively rebelled against Torah based Judaism, a religion known as Christianity.

Thus the Ancient Nazarene Historian and commentator Hegesippus (c. 180 CE) writes of the time immediately following the death of Shim'on, who succeeded Ya'akov HaTzadik (James the Just) as Nasi of

the Nazarene Sanhedrin and who died in 98 CE:

Up to that period (98 CE) the Assembly had remained like a virgin pure and uncorrupted: for, if there were any persons who were disposed to tamper with the wholesome rule of the preaching of salvation, they still lurked in some dark place of concealment or other. But, when the sacred band of Emissaries had in various ways closed their lives, and that generation of men to whom it had been vouchsafed to listen to the Godlike Wisdom with their own ears had passed away, then did the confederacy of godless error take its rise through the treachery of false teachers, who, seeing that none of the apostles any longer survived, at length attempted with bare and uplifted head to oppose the preaching of the truth by preaching "knowledge falsely so called."

(Hegesippus the Nazarene; c. 185 CE)

Hegesippus indicates the apostasy began the very same year that Ignatious became bishop of Antioch!

ONE LAW

Two Torah theology immediately contradicts the Torah:

"One Torah shall be to him that is homeborn, and to the stranger that sojourns among you."
(Ex. 12:50)

According to the Torah, Jews and Gentiles must follow the ONE Torah.
THE GREAT COMMISSION: GO TEACH THE GENTILES TORAH!

Just before his ascension Yeshua instructed his [Jewish] talmidim:

"Go you therefore, and teach all the Goyim (Gentiles), and immerse them in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Ruach HaKodesh, and teach them to observe all that I have commanded you,"
(Mt. 28:19-20a)

Yeshua told his original Jewish followers to go teach the Gentiles "to observe all that I have commanded you [Jews]." The Great Commission was a commission to the Jews to go teach Torah Observance to the Gentiles!

Source: <http://nazarenespace.com/page/one-faith-two-expression>
