

The Christian Faith

The first believers of Jesus as Messiah began with John the Baptist. John is the witness from God which identified Jesus as The Anointed One from God.

John baptized with water all who believed that the Kingdom of God was soon to come. John also baptized Jesus, the one anointed to bring the Kingdom. Then John revealed that Jesus would baptize with the Spirit of God. Jesus is the only one baptized by John that the Holy Ghost came upon. Jesus never baptized others while in the flesh life, but when He rose from the dead He began Christian Baptism with the Holy Ghost.

John's followers were baptized believers in a soon coming kingdom. We could not call them Christians until John identified the Christ and they began to follow the Christ. We can call them believers, but not Christians. Those who believed the witness that John gave Jesus began to follow Jesus, but they found it very difficult to understand Jesus in things concerning the Kingdom. This is because they were looking for the restored Kingdom of David - not a new, spiritual Kingdom with the Holy Ghost within the heart.

Jesus called twelve disciples to represent Him to the twelve tribes of Israel. These twelve disciples would become twelve apostles sent to witness for the Messiah. Whether disciples of John or disciples of Jesus, we can call them believers, but not Christians until they were baptized by Jesus.

Christians were believers in the resurrection of Jesus. This is not what the disciples of John or the disciples of Jesus believed before the Resurrection.

The followers of Jesus before His death were people of faith, but what their faith believed caused it to fail when Jesus was crucified. When Jesus arose, their faith was revived, and this resurrection faith became the Christian faith, which still exists as the basis for Christianity today.

Today, after two thousand years, the Christian faith has evolved into many faiths. There exist many statements of faith declaring exactly what is believed by those with that profession of faith. Anyone who believes in Jesus or is born into a family whose religion is Christian goes by the name "Christian". This, however, is not how Christianity was defined when it first began.

To understand the Christian faith as found in the Bible, we must determine what the first Christians believed. This faith was in the Resurrection of Messiah and the Holy Spirit, which they were experiencing in their hearts and community life. They did not believe in the Resurrection when Jesus was teaching about it.

When the apostles were disciples, following Jesus

and learning about Messianic things, they did not believe in a Messianic Resurrection or a Messianic Priesthood. They believed in Moses and the Prophets. They believed in a coming Christ who would be a descendent of David and reign on a throne in the Kingdom of God. They believed in the resurrection of the dead and the Mosaic priesthood, but they did not believe in the resurrection of Jesus until He arose, and they never believed in the Messiah's priesthood until it was revealed about thirty years later in the book of Hebrews. No one can believe until he sees or hears.

Defining the Faith

The disciples heard John and followed him in faith, they heard Jesus and followed Him with the same faith. However, they did not believe that Jesus would die, even though He tried to get them to believe it before it happened.

The Jewish faith in the days of Jesus was very different from that of Abraham, the Father of Faith, who believed God when He spoke, without waiting until He acted. The Jews required a sign before they would believe. Likewise, the Jewish disciples never believed the Christian gospel until they saw the Christian Resurrection.

Jesus taught them that the Kingdom would be Spiritual and not of this present world, but they did not understand Jesus' teaching on the Kingdom of God. It was a mystery to them. They had faith and they were believers in all that their Bible said about the Christ - about the resurrection of the dead, about temple worship and the priesthood, but they did not believe the Christ would die until He died, and they did not believe that He would live again until He lived again.

They did not change their faith until current events proved them wrong. They had a Bible-based faith, but it was very physical. They expected the Messiah to restore the physical kingdom which God gave to Moses, while Jesus taught them to expect a Spiritual kingdom.

We might understand this better if we considered Superman, who came from another world where x-ray vision and power over gravity were normal, but in this world such a man is a "superman". Jesus claimed to be a "Godman" from a God world (His Father's world).

Suppose that Superman, instead of fighting evil in an evil world, came to get people out and bring them into his world where they would be like him, with the same physical powers. But when too many people prepared to leave, evil forces prevailed over Superman to prevent his "good news plans". Such an event would destroy all faith and hope, which a resurrection would, of course, revive.

When the followers of Jesus grew and exceeded that of others who claimed to be the Christ, the

Sanhedrin decided that it would be best for Jesus to die rather than for so many followers to be killed by Pilate.

This helps us to see the difference in what Jesus' followers believed and expected before His death, and what His apostles believed after His resurrection.

His disciples were Jews, but His apostles were Christians.

The disciples were circumcised in the flesh; the apostles were circumcised in the heart.

The disciples were baptized by John in water; the apostles were baptized by Jesus in the Spirit.

The disciples were born of the flesh; the apostles were born of the Spirit.

The disciples were born once; the apostles were born twice.

The disciples were the children of Israel; the apostles were the children of God.

The disciples were heirs in the O.T. house of Moses; the apostles were heirs in the N.T. house of Christ.

The disciples believed the historical Jesus in the days of His humiliation; the apostles believed the mystical Jesus in the days of His Glorification.

Discipleship faith before Christ's death is very different from apostolic faith, where Christianity began with the resurrection of the (Messiah) Christ. If the faith of the Disciples had been fulfilled by Jesus in the flesh, then a restored Kingdom of David would have come to fulfill the Gospel of John the Baptist, because that is exactly what they expected. Even John the Baptist was disappointed when a physical kingdom didn't come.

If the Messiah had established a physical kingdom of this present world, it would have replaced a physical kingdom of the world. But Jesus put His Spiritual kingdom in the hearts of His disciples and then sent them out into the world to give the kingdom to others.

If the Messianic kingdom at hand had come before the death of Jesus, it would have been a flesh and blood kingdom of this present world, composed of flesh and blood people, who, of course, must be descendants of the flesh and blood ancestors of the kingdom of Moses and Joshua. The kingdom would, of course, be in the Promised Land with boundaries from Dan to Beersheba and from Rueben's east bank to the sea. This means that to be in the Messianic kingdom required that you be in the Land of Promise just as in the days of Joshua. It means that Gentiles can be partakers with Jews, but only by circumcision and keeping of Torah.

The fathers had been in the Moses kingdom; now the Messianic kingdom would be in the disciples. The inheritance of the fathers was land; now the inheritance of the disciples is life. Moses gave the fathers earthly life in an earthly place; now Jesus will give the disciples heavenly life in heavenly places.

By considering the Christian Kingdom according to the faith that we find in the Gospels, firmly believed by all believers among the circumcised, we can clearly see the difference in the Kingdom which Jesus brought from the Kingdom of their Faith. What they expected was not what they received.

If an earthly kingdom like David's had come, then John's followers and Jesus' followers would not be the only believers in Jesus as the Christ, because every Jew would then believe that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah.

There would not have been divided households; there would not have been persecutions for Messianic believers, because all Israel would profess faith in Jesus. No Jew would question the Messianic claims of Jesus any longer once He established His throne. They always believe what they see. It is in believing God's Word that they fail to believe.

The Jewish faith professed hope in a Messiah, but the Christian Faith believed very differently. The hope of Israel was not fulfilled in Jesus, but rather was very disappointed in Him. This helps us to understand the difference in the Jewish faith with its hope, and the Christian faith with its hope. It will also help us to see the change in Christian faith, which today has become unchristian. If faith produced the wrong hope in the first century, then faith today may also produce a false hope.

The change of the priesthood was not expected in the faith of Israel but the Messianic priesthood becomes the profession of faith for all Christians, both Jewish and pagan. The Messianic Priesthood was not established by the Messiah during His earthly life. In fact, it could not have been established without His death, because His shed blood was the one offering of Himself - the High Priest whose blood was sprinkled to make a new and better covenant than Moses'.

Defending the Faith

When Christianity began, it was just one Faith in one Church in one community in Jerusalem with about 120 people. They were all of one accord in their faith, which was the same religion of their birth. It was Judaism with its kosher lifestyle and temple worship.

The first Christians had to gather together because of fear from the rulers of Judaism. Judaism was a faith given to the nation of Israel by Moses some 1500 years before Jesus had come teaching the Christian Faith.

I am using "faith" as it is commonly used today, to identify a different religion like Hindu or Islam. Faith is belief and different religions have different beliefs, but every religion will acquire different beliefs as time passes and situations change.

These different beliefs in the same religion are different faiths, and they become controversial and contentious. A faith may have zealots, extremists, and

activists, or it may have moderates seeking tolerance or “inactivists” with a “live and let live” policy for their faith.

It’s just human nature for cults to develop and cause division in faith as well as for tradition to make changes in faith.

Changes from tradition will produce different faiths within the same religion, while cults will produce another religion, worshiping in totally different ways.

We see this in Judaism when the kingdoms split. It resulted in Judaism remaining in Jerusalem where tradition produced different faiths in contention for authenticity with the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. Among these would be Herodians, who actively sought to preserve the Hasmonean throne, and Pharisee zealots like Saul of Tarsus, who defended his faith, or should we say performed his faith with extreme zeal.

We see this in Christianity, which began as one faith, but now is the most diverse of all the religions of the world.

Why is this? The answer is clear and simple. Consider Judaism, which began in Moses and was limited to geographic boundaries as well as circumcision in the flesh.

The religion could not be taken out of the land given to Israel by God, and all immigrants must be circumcised and must worship and live a kosher lifestyle according to Moses’ rules.

Therefore, there can be division of faith only in the land, and then only in Judaism, because that is the one and only religion of the land.

When the Kingdom is conquered by world empires then Judaism goes out into the world, but it remains only to the circumcision and the nation of Israel. Then situations develop which result in different faiths, but not different religions, and not very many different faiths.

But when the cult of Christianity, the branch of Judaism at Pentecost, began to bear fruit in Judaism, it was severely persecuted by the rulers in order to prevent the spread.

The rulers of Judaism used capital punishment to preserve the faith. This is not new; it was given by Moses in the Torah and had been used to stone many prophets that God had sent to Israel. The rulers had used it with Jesus when they concluded that He was also a false Prophet and yet gathered a big following. The followers of the dead Messiah are growing out of Judaism, which is threatening the very life of Judaism. Now they are gaining followers quickly, and all are coming from the Jewish faith - whether Pharisee, Sadducee, Essene, or Zealot.

The more the cult grows and increases, the more Judaism decreases, and some, like Saul, feel that it is

very serious and requires immediate action.

The persecution of Judaism upon this cult of Judeo-Christians did severely damage its growth in Judea, causing it to fragment into surrounding provinces.

As long as Christianity was a Jewish cult seeking converts from Judaism it remained one faith in one accord, and since it was anchored in Judaism, the Torah, and circumcision, it would be difficult to develop a faith very different from Judaism.

The faith got out of Judea when it went to the synagogues in Asia, Africa, and Europe, but it cannot go to the Gentiles until it gets out of Judaism and Moses. As long as converts must come from the Jewish nation, as required by the gospel of circumcision, the faith cannot prosper due to unbelief. Without the gospel of uncircumcision, the Christian faith would have ended in the first century due to unbelief among the Jews.

Persecution tends to make people support one another and hold fast to what they have in common. This common faith was simply that Jesus was alive and therefore not a false Prophet worthy of death. Any Judeo-Christian who shared his Christian faith risked certain persecution and maybe even death from the rulers of the Jews’ religion. This, however, would change when they shared their faith with the Gentiles.

When the Jewish faith of the Christian followers of Jesus went out from Judaism to the Gentiles, it completely lost its connection to Israel and Judaism and Judeo Palestine. But the Jewish Christians kept the faith of circumcision, which was connected to Moses and the first covenant. This would, of course, cause a wall between Christians based on circumcision.

The Gentiles were not required to be circumcised, to live kosher, to worship at the temple, or to keep the feasts of Judaism. They were to keep the Christian faith with the law of love written within the heart, which would guide and constrain them in daily life.

This, of course, separates the original Jewish faith of Christianity from Israel, Moses, the land, and the temple, where it becomes a different religion altogether called Christianity. Soon all Christians would worship in the heart, where God abode, for the temple would be destroyed in 70 A.D.

Going out into the world where there are many other faiths and religions will result in exposure, compromise, and adaptation on a scale never seen by a religion. Why is this?

Observing the Faith

We can see how Judaism, being locked in to one nation, one land, and one circumcision cannot be changed without destroying its original authenticity, but Christianity goes out into the world claiming to be a religion which others may embrace without an allegiance to Judaism and the Torah.

Judaism anchored in Torah can be defined by Torah, but Christianity is anchored in a faith – in a belief which has no tradition or literature to support its faith. It will be hazardous for this faith to survive out in the world as one common faith and practice. The only literature and textual support for the Christian faith is found in the Jewish Bible. It will be years before apostolic writings are available for textual criticism to support the Christian faith.

Paul anchored the faith in the book of Genesis, which Moses wrote, but not in Moses and the Torah. Paul took it back to the time before Moses and the law, and even before circumcision.

It is very important for the Christian faith to know what it is, or else it can become something else.

The Jewish faith, being rigidly anchored in the letters of the law, makes it difficult to change very much, but when Christianity was severed from Judaism, it became free to become a religion of many faiths unless it also is a text-based faith.

Paul immediately established Christianity with its origin in Abram before circumcision. He defined it as a provision made by God for every tongue, tribe, blood and nation of the world. It is a faith with only one law to live by, and that is “Love.”

Without this anchor for Christian faith, it is subject to other definitions, which of course, we have today in abundance.

Judaism was a text-based religion where faith was based upon the Word of God (scripture). It was expressed in a lifestyle which conformed to the rules (letters) of the text. Jesus wanted lifestyle to express love for God – not love for a text. Kosher living was failing to express a genuine love for God.

There is only one way to be Kosher, but many ways to live un-Kosher. Likewise, there is only one way to be Christian, but many ways to live un-Christian.

When there is only one place to worship, the worship can't be very different, even though the worshipers are Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenees. But when worship is anywhere at any time (no calendar for worship) without a prescribed procedure, it may become very diversified, and such was Christianity when it left Palestine.

After two thousand years of separation from Judaism, Christianity has split, splintered, branched, and “culted”, and become whatever its subjects want it to be. It is a diverse religion of many faiths, defined by many different beliefs (creeds). If we call the original “one faith” of the apostles “Christian”, then we must define the many faiths of Christians today as “un-Christian.”

In defining the faith of Judaism, we can see how it was defended. But Judaism, being a kingdom of this present world, meant that it had borders to defend and

subjects with earthly possessions to secure.

This enables us to see why Jesus did not defend His Kingdom against the Jews of the Remnant, nor against the Romans. Christianity cannot defend its faith with resistance, or use force, to advance the faith.

Look at the first Christians in Jerusalem who did not defend, but rather defined and spoke their faith. The Christian is a Spiritual citizen in the Spiritual commonwealth of the Spiritual Christ with nothing to lose (but faith). Nothing in this kingdom can be stolen, spoiled, or taken by the enemy, like in Judaism or other religions. There is nothing to defend from other kingdoms, because all possessions in Christ are Spiritual and secure.

This is why we Christians can live the Faith in this present world without defending the Spiritual possessions which we have in this Spiritual kingdom.

A border exists between a physical world and a Spiritual world. We Christians can give Spiritual treasure to people in the physical world, but they cannot enter our Spiritual domain and take them from us, so why would we resist? Our defense is like original, authentic Christianity – with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. We can defend our faith, but we cannot defend ourselves from harm related to our faith. In other words, if the persecution is because we are Christians, we don't resist; but if it is because we are Americans, then we do resist.

We can defend ourselves, our family, and our country from physical evil. But like original Christians, we love and pray for those who persecute us for Christ's sake. We can also defend our faith from spiritual harm with spiritual weapons, for Christ's sake.

All Christians are not apologists to defend the faith, but all are apostles called to express the love of God in their faith.

Original Christianity was only one faith, which was established in the Jewish text through circumcision. As long as all Christians were Jews, oneness and unity would be preserved in both faith and practice, talk and walk, lip and life.

When the Apostle Paul removed the faith from circumcision, it was free to believe apart from Judaism, which had bound it to Torah. This liberty resulted (as liberty always does) in alternatives to the bondage of circumcision, which we now see manifested in modern pluralistic Christianity.

The Christian religion today consists of a multitude of diverse faiths that believe so differently they cannot worship together.

Much of Christian faith today is just simply faith in faith. People really don't know what they believe or why they believe as they do.