



How to Love God & Recognize Jesus

By Jim Myers

I was saved when I was thirteen years old and by my mid-thirties I was an ordained minister – *preaching the Gospel of Jesus and saving people*. But, I had never even considered that my understanding of Jesus could be wrong! How could I? I lived in a small town that had over 100 churches and in a nation with over 100 million believers -- *I thought they all believed the same things I did about Jesus*.

Over the years I have written a lot about my journey and how I learned about using linguistic, fact-based models to reconstruct the teachings of Jesus in the Hebrew language he spoke. My goal was to understand what the words of Jesus meant to him. It didn't take long for me to discover two very scary things.

1. I had not understood anything Jesus taught.
2. Most of what I had been preaching came from the writings of Paul, not the teachings of Jesus.

The Confusion over Who Jesus Was

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Today it is easy to see that even in the *New Testament* there was a great deal of confusion over who Yeshua was. Oh, by the way, that is his name -- "**Yeshua**" -- not "**Jesus**." In my writings, you will see this a lot – *Yeshua, the Jewish Jesus*. I do it to make sure my readers remember which Jesus I am talking about – *there are many different beliefs!*

It is clear that the Pharisees, Sadducees and even some of the apostles in the *New Testament* were not sure who he was. Below is the primary question that people asked him in the *New Testament*.

Are you the Anointed One?

Sadly, readers of most English translations never see the words “*Anointed One*” immediately following the name “*Jesus*.” What we see is the word “**Christ**.” It is a transliteration of the Greek word that means “**anointed**.”

“**Christianity**” is a name based on a word that means “*the Anointed One*.”

Yeshua, the Jewish Jesus, was **never** called a “*Christian*.” He **never** called himself a “*Christian*.” His followers **never** called themselves “*Christians*.”

Followers of Paul were the first people to be called “*Christians*” – *and that was about 20 years after the Romans crucified Yeshua, the Jewish Jesus*. By the way, the Romans crucified Yeshua because they found him guilty of calling himself – *The King of the Jews*.

About 40 years after the crucifixion, the Romans also destroyed the Temple in Jerusalem, and that was a major factor in causing Christianity to spread in the Roman Empire, and even to other regions. New Christians and Christian leaders were Gentiles – non-Jews – and they knew nothing about **Judaism** or the “**Jewishness of Jesus**.”

They created new beliefs about Jesus, some included things from their earlier religions, and new versions of Jesus began to appear in different places. This created a lot of disagreements and between Gentile Church leaders. Three of the most popular positions about Jesus were these:

- *Jesus is **just a human**.*
- *Jesus is **the god of the Old Testament**.*
- *Jesus is **a new god that was unknown before**.*
- *There was also lots of confusion over who or what “**the Holy Spirit**” was.*

In 325 CE, a conflict between the Bishop of Alexandria, Egypt and a church leader named Arius caught the attention of Constantine the Great, Emperor of the Roman Empire. The Bishop of Alexandria taught that “*Jesus was a god*” and Arius taught that “*Jesus was just a human*.” Determining who was right is secondary to something much more important.

- *This controversy took place in 325 CE.*
- *The Jewish Jesus was crucified around 27 CE.*
- *This controversy took place **298 years after Jesus was crucified**.*
- *After 298 years people were still confused about who Jesus was.*
- *The United States **will be 298 years old in 2074**.*
- *298 years is really a very long time.*

*No clear cut definitive understanding of who Jesus was
had been passed down, intact, unaltered, from Jesus to Roman church leaders.*

In 1517 Martin Luther launched a protest against Pope Leo X and his “**fund raiser**” – *people were paying to get their loved ones out of Purgatory and buying “Get Out of Purgatory Free Passes” for themselves.* The Church called those things “*indulgences.*” Luther disagreed with the pope and went so far as nailing “**a list of 95 things he disagreed with the Church about**” on the **front door of All Saints' Church** in Wittenberg, Germany. That took place **1,192 years after Constantine** became involved in Christianity. **WOW! THAT’S REALLY A VERY LONG TIME!!!**

*During those 1,192 years Councils of the Roman Catholic Church
determined who the “official Jesus” was.*

Luther created **a completely new religion** – *Protestantism.* It was not a “**reformation of the Catholic Church**” -- *it was a completely new religion that had never existed before!* I don't think Luther intended to do that. It was an unintended consequence. Why? The Roman Catholic Church taught that “**only members of the Church will be saved.**” The pope excommunicated Luther -- *and with a loss of church membership Luther lost his salvation.* Luther had to come up with “**a new way to be saved**” that did not require membership in the **Roman Catholic Church.**

Luther created a new way to be saved 1,493 years after the crucifixion!

Luther’s new religion transferred “*religious authority*” from “*Roman Catholic Church Councils and the Pope*” to “*individual believers.*” He called it “**The Priesthood of the Believer.**” Soon **leaders of Protestant churches** were coming up with their own answers to “**who Jesus was**” – *and they came up with a lot of new beliefs about Jesus.*

*Now there are Roman Catholic models of Jesus
and a lot Protestant models of Jesus to choose from –
but very few people know anything about Yeshua, the Jewish Jesus!*

So, that’s why I call “*Yeshua, the Jewish Jesus*” – “*The Real Jesus.*” The way to learn about how the “*Real Jesus*” viewed himself is “*examine what Yeshua taught.*” If you had walked up to Yeshua, looked into his eyes and asked him this question – “*What do you want me to do?*” This would have been his answer:

*Do things for yourself that protect and preserve your life,
make your life more functional and increase the quality of your life.*

*Do things for others that protect and preserve their lives,
make their lives more functional and increase the quality of life for them.*

Do those things and you will enter into eternal life someday!

That’s it!

For any pastors that might be reading this, do not make the mistakes I made as stumbled in the darkness trying to figure out who Jesus was. A major mistake I made was focusing on "all of the wrong things churches were teaching." Please, do not do that. Below are my suggestions.

- *First, help your congregation learn what Yeshua, the Jewish Jesus, actually taught. You will be amazed at the power of his words.*
- *Second, when members begin asking questions about why the church focuses on other things, teach them how to explore their biblical heritages. Exploring is much better than defending institutional beliefs that disagree with what he taught.*

Yeshua Teaching About the Greatest Commandment

One of the most important teachings of Yeshua, the Jewish Jesus, took place when he was surrounded by leaders of other Jewish sects who were trying to get him to agree with their interpretations of laws written in the **Torah and Prophets**, two sections of the modern *Jewish Scriptures*. It is important to understand that those writings were not viewed as "religious texts" and *there was no "separation of religion and state."* The words of the *Torah and the Prophets* were entwined in every area of the people's lives.

*The **Pharisees** went and plotted how they might entangle him in his talk . . .
Tell us, therefore, what do you think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"*
(Matthew 22:15, 17)

*The same day the **Sadducees**, who say there is no resurrection, came to him
and asked him . . . Therefore, in the resurrection, whose wife of the seven will she be?*
(Matthew 22:23, 28)

*But when the **Pharisees** heard that he had silenced the Sadducees,
they gathered together. Then one of them, **a lawyer**, asked him a question,
testing him, and saying, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Torah?"*
(Matthew 22:34-36)

The Temple was controlled by the priests, most of whom were Sadducees. The priests were required to follow the laws of the Torah that applied to the operation of the Temple. How those laws were interpreted was up to the Sanhedrin – *the highest court of land*. There were 71 judges and the majority was controlled by the Pharisees. So, as you can probably guess, the relationships of the Pharisees and Sadducees were more like American politics than any Christian religion.

The question asked by Pharisee, who was a lawyer, was the most important question to Yeshua, the Jewish Jesus. The title "*lawyer*," meant he was a scribe who may have also been a member of the Sanhedrin. Yeshua's answer summarizes his entire movement and teachings.

*"You are to love Yahweh your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, and with all your mind.'
This is the first and great commandment."
(Matthew 22:37-38)*

He was quoting the second part of a law that every Jewish person in his world – *and every Jewish person our world today* – considered one of the most important law of all.

*“Hear, O Israel: Yahweh our God, Yahweh is One!
You are to love Yahweh your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, and with all your strength.”
(Deuteronomy 6:4-5)*

A Jewish tradition is the last words of a dying person should be -- *“Hear, O Israel: Yahweh our God, Yahweh is One!* That’s how important the commandment Yeshua declared as the “*great commandment*” was!

*Yeshua, the Jewish Jesus, was a master teacher of the Torah and the Prophets. They were extremely important to him. The Christian Jesus of the Roman Catholic and Protestant religions, according to the doctrines of those religions – did away with the Torah and the Prophets. “The Church,” according to some doctrines, became the “New Israel” – *and they did away with the old Israel (Yahweh’s Chosen People)*. Yeshua was a member of “the old Israel,” not “*the New Israel*.”*

*Yeshua’s “Bible” was the “Jewish Scriptures” – the books of the New Testament had not been written yet. The Jewish Scriptures at that point in time literally were three groups of scrolls – the codex, a book form, was not in popular use then. The names of those groups were – *Torah, Prophets and Writings*. The first group was written on one scroll, a Torah Scroll, which contains the books of *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy*.*

As I pointed out above, Yeshua, the Jewish Jesus, was an expert teacher of the *Jewish Scriptures* and used a number of teaching techniques that were very well known. He used one technique when he gave his answer above. The first sentence below is what Yeshua said, and the second is what was written in Deuteronomy:

“Love Yahweh . . . with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”

“Love Yahweh . . . with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.”

He changed the last word! Jewish teachers used that technique to make and highlight important points. He expected his followers to be familiar enough with the words of the Torah to spot changes like that. When they saw that he had changed a word of the text – *they focused their attention on it*. What point was Yeshua making? I think it was probably this.

Loving Yahweh with all of your mind requires using all of your strength too.

Why would he want to make that point? He was setting the lawyer and the group of Pharisees and Sadducees for a big surprise. Then he said:

*“And the second commandment is like the great commandment:
‘You are to love your neighbor as yourself.’”
(Matthew 22:39)*

Yeshua was quoting a portion of Leviticus 19:17-18.

*You shall not hate your brother in your heart.
You shall surely rebuke your neighbor,
and not bear sin because of him.
You shall not take vengeance,
nor bear any grudge against the children of your people,
but you shall love your neighbor as yourself:
I am Yahweh!*

Now we know why he added the word “strength:”

*It takes a lot more strength to love a neighbor you can see
than to love a god you cannot see!*

Jesus, however, didn't give just a second commandment – *he gave a third commandment too!*
The second commandment actually contains another commandment.

You must love yourself first. Then love your neighbor that way!

Now let's find out what “**love**” meant to Yeshua. The Hebrew word for “love” is אהבה (ahavah). It is made up of three Hebrew letters, אהב. An example the rabbis use to explain their meaning is that the three letters actually are broken down into two parts: a two letter base or root, הב (hey & bet) and the first letter, א (aleph), which is a modifier. The meaning of the two letter base הב is “to give.” The letter א which precedes the two letter root modifies the meaning of the root word, “give.” The meaning of אהבה is “I give.”¹ Now let add this information to the teaching of Yeshua above.

*Hear, O Israel: Yahweh our God, Yahweh is One!
You are to **give to Yahweh** your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, and with all your strength.
And you are to **give to your neighbor** as you **give to yourself**.*

Give to Yahweh + Give to Yourself + Give to your Neighbor like you gave to Yourself!

How are people supposed to give each other? The answer is -- “give the same way that the Creator gave the creation to people.” The Creator measured everything he did by a standard.

*For things to measure up to the Creator's Standard
they must protect and preserve lives,
make lives more functional and increase the quality of life!*

- Love yourself by giving yourself things that protect and preserve your life, make your life more functional and increase the quality of your life!
- Love your neighbor by giving your neighbor things that protect and preserve your neighbor's life, make your neighbor's life more functional and increased the quality of your neighbor's life!

Yeshua has one more thing to teach the lawyer before he finishes the answer to the question he was asked. He uses an example that children would understand.

*On these two commandments hang all the Torah and the Prophets.
(Matthew 22:40)*

When they were taught how to write the Hebrew alphabet, they learned that the first thing they did was learn to draw a line. Then they learned how to hang the tops of each Hebrew letter from that line. For English writers, we learned how to set each letter on the line. *The point Yeshua makes in closing is this:*

Without people loving Yahweh, people loving themselves and people loving their neighbors – all of the commandments in the Torah and Prophets would fall down!

Love God by Letting Your Light Shine

The Hebrew word “**TOV**” above, which is part of the name of the **Creator’s TOV Standard**. It is translated into English as “good.” *What does “**TOV**” (good) mean in Yeshua’s well-known verse below?*

*Let your light so shine before men,
that they may see your TOV (good) works
and glorify your Father in heaven.
(Matthew 5:16)*

You love God by causing people to glorify him when they see you doing TOV works!

When the Jewish members of the audience heard the phrase “**let your light shine**,” they knew Yeshua was referring to a very well know section in the scroll of **Isaiah the Prophet**.

***Then your light shall break forth as the dawn, your healing shall quickly spring up,
your acts of tzedeq shall go before you and the glory of Yahweh shall gather you.***
(Isaiah 58:8)

Notice the above verse begins with “then.” What did the person do that caused his “**light to break forth**?” The answer is found in Isaiah 58:6-7.

*He opened the bands of wickedness, undid the thongs of the yoke,
let the oppressed ones go free, and pulled off every yoke.
He broke his bread with the hungry, brought the wandering poor to his house,
covered the naked, and did not hide from his own flesh.*

It was after he did those things that “*his light broke forth*.” Those things are called **acts of tzedeq** and **acts of tzedakah**. They are “**TOV**” (good) works. When you do them, it makes “*a light shine that people and God can see*.” When people see it -- *they glorify God in Heaven*. When God see them glorifying him – *he knows you have given him a gift*.

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March Memorials

In Loving Memory

**DOVER IDA
GREGORY**

b. March 14, 1907
d. March 7, 1997

*May you dwell under His wings
in complete SHALOM forever!*

In Loving Memory

**MINNIE
KRAUTH**

d. March 22, 1998

*May you dwell under His wings
in complete SHALOM forever!*

In Loving Memory

**JOHN P.
GARGIULO**

d. March 13, 2015

*May you dwell under His wings
in complete SHALOM forever!*

In Loving Memory

**ROBERT
DEAN**

d. March 22, 1996

*May you dwell under His wings
in complete SHALOM forever!*

In Loving Memory

**JOHN W.
“JACK” NELSON**

b. October 25, 1932
d. March 21, 2008

*May you dwell under His wings
in complete SHALOM forever!*

*May their memories
continue to bless those
whose lives they touched.*

In Their Remembrance

*May their memories inspire us to seek those qualities of mind and heart,
which they shared when we walked life's journey together.
May we help to bring closer to fulfillment their highest ideals and noblest strivings.
May their memories deepen our loyalty to those things which we valued and shared -
faith, love, peace and devotion.
As long as we live, they too will live;
for they are now a part of us, as we remember them.*

(Inspired from prayers found in Yitzhor Reflections - The New Mahzor - The Prayer Book Press)

¹ <http://www.jewishmag.com/20mag/hebrew/hebrew.htm>