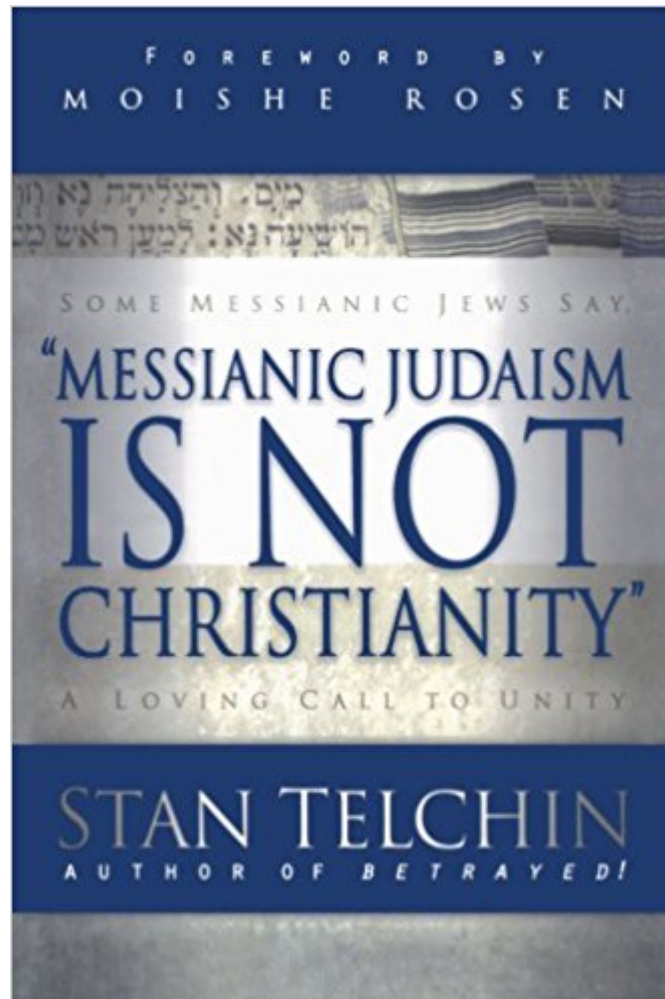


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Messianic Judaism Is Not Christianity: A Loving Call To Unity



Synopsis

The apostle Paul wrote that all believers--Jewish and Gentile--are to serve the Lord together as "one new man." But a growing movement today seeks to keep that from happening. As Stan Telchin explains, proponents of Messianic Judaism are confusing both Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus and dividing the church. Their insistence on following rabbinic form and their statements that Jewish believers need to be in Messianic synagogues in order to maintain their identities are unbiblical. Telchin discusses the growth of this movement, its unscriptural doctrines, and its ineffectiveness in Jewish evangelism. Those who have been swept up by the nostalgia and beauty of "Jewishness" or who have been hurt by division in the Body or who love Israel will find their hearts and minds freed by this firm but loving message.

Book Information

Paperback: 176 pages

Publisher: Chosen Books (September 1, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0800793722

ISBN-13: 978-0800793722

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.4 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 9.9 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (40 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #142,097 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #32 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Denominations & Sects > Messianic Judaism](#) #64 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Churches & Church Leadership > Ecclesiology](#) #260 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Ministry & Evangelism > Evangelism](#)

Customer Reviews

Stan Telchin provides an expose of sorts about the Messianic Movement. He provides a lot of interesting facts, but offers a conclusion that misses the mark. His book is pretty light reading, and his writing style easy to follow. Some of the book is supported by statistics (which are not explained, but references are given), but the bulk of the conclusions are derived from the author's personal experience (which is extensive, but hardly complete). As a point of reference, I am a Gentile believer in Yeshua (Jesus), I have attended Messianic Congregations since 1999, and I have helped lead one since 2003. Stan Telchin offers a valid Biblical analysis of how some people interpret Messianic Judaism. By Messianic Judaism, the author seems to refer to anyone who

practices Christianity in a Jewish way. The main critique he discusses, and one with which I agree, is that too many Messianic Jews/Gentiles try so hard to be accepted by mainstream Judaism that they begin to sacrifice the Gospel. As Telchin points out, some in Messianic Congregations emphasize Talmudic adherence to the Torah, which is something that even Yeshua Himself did not do. He points out how some groups divide based upon Jewish and Gentile heritage, and this is of course wrong, but just because in his experience some groups do this by no means characterizes the entire movement. He points out that some believers felt peer pressure to keep a kosher diet, but then again does this type of scenario happen in other groups as well? Messianic Congregations may not be for everyone, but just because a few people have had problems is no reason to conclude that all of them are unnecessary..Although Mr. Telchin does admit that there may be congregations that do not fit this profile (and yes there are), he seems to throw out the baby with the bathwater, as it were. What I found disturbing is how quickly Telchin turns his facts into his main thesis, that there is really no need for Messianic Congregations. One example of how he reaches this conclusion is that issues can be so divisive, lets get rid of them. I find this to be a very myopic conclusion. Should we should disband all Baptist and Charismatic Congregations because they cannot agree on Tongues? Of course not. He also cites as evidence that very few Jews today are in touch with their ancestral traditions, so why use these traditions to reach them?Telchin cites as a reason to disband Messianic Congregations that only 4% of Jewish people became believers because of Messianic Congregations. Again by this logic, why not close up all evangelistic outreaches to say the Muslim world because only a few percent convert? I sense the frustration in Telchin's words, but to close up Messianic Congregations based upon statistics seems to be following business models and not necessarily the Holy Spirit.In all, I think Mr. Telchin provides a very important analysis about some types of Messianic Congregations. His message, though harsh, was delivered in love, and in this manner I have great respect for his words. These groups, which over-emphasize Jewishness at the expense of the Gospel, should take note. But to conclude that Messianic groups are themselves therefore a divisive force is unfair, and un-Biblical. The book is important to read for some good facts, but be wary of the conclusion.For those who were angered at the conclusions, Telchin does provide a good message that we as the body of Messiah should not seek to be divisive. To those who have not been a part of Messianic groups, and might not want to based upon this book, rest assured that not all Messianic groups behave this way. Telchin's analysis represents a kind of "worst case scenario" that should be avoided at all costs. But at least the author defines the problem, which should contribute to the healing process.

I hear the feelings behind some of the reviews, where some were ruffled by some of Telchin's words. Let me address that first: YES he is plain spoken, and at 80-something, he has a right to be. Experience speaks louder than fancy degrees. I propose to respect the source, examine the evidence, and prayerfully seek the Spirit's guidance as I prove anything that strikes me as questionable. This author is a good communicator by definition: clear points, clear position on issues, based on clear examples, with logic easy to follow - prompting a response from the audience! (It needn't be a positive response.) The book is easily read, in layout and logical sequence. No flowery, tedious academic lingo. No overbearing religious verbiage. Yay! Of course, anyone deeply in love with their faith, race, or traditions will get upset when they feel threatened in those areas. Hopefully that will motivate them to challenge THEMSELVES about why they believe what they "always believed". Tradition does not translate into "truth". So, he is right that:

- 1) Messianic Jews are ethno-centric to a fault
- 2) Such congregations attract many "Gentiles"
- 3) Leadership tends to be kept among "Jewish" members
- 4) they express joyful praise, dance, and worship with an ethnic flavor
- 5) There is a tendency to keep all speakers on Jewish themes; all performers Messianic
- 6) Confusion exists over "the Law" and the New Covenant: how much tradition should be practiced?
- 7) Messianics do NOT want to be called "Christians"
- 8) Ethnic identity seems to be the primary defining point among the members, with Jesus second, and the wider Church absent
- 9) They can express an Us and Them attitude against the Church
- 10) They appeal to Christians because they embrace Jesus and the faith's Jewish roots

Adding to Telchin's points, I have observed in my own congregation:

- a) Some members stress out over things that "might offend" visiting unsaved Jews - nevermind that this can offend Gentiles "not under law"
- b) Many are "pro-Jewishly prejudiced" focusing all missions on Jewish causes, and the Israeli state
- c) They believe the Jews are ALL of Israel (nevermind the 10 lost tribes) so every non-Jewish person must therefore be a Gentile
- d) Christianity is seen as corrupted "too much" to become part of
- e) Selective blindness about the faults of Judaism that also corrupt it
- f) Religious and racial fears are still significant: fear of losing their "Jewishness"
- g) Passion "to reach Jews with the gospel" - and ONLY Jews!
- h) Refusal to stop separating Jew and Gentile in word and thought
- i) Pride in ethnic heritage that sets apart from other fellowships
- j) Insistence on consulting the oral laws and rabbinical teachings, regardless of their Biblical incorrectness

But note - it is young, as movements go. Change is going to keep happening, as God guides them towards maturity. He is also guiding the Church towards unity - and obedience to His word. Both Jew and Christian have false doctrines to shed. And traditions God has not commanded. And prejudices to overcome. Let's not throw rocks at other believers... Remember the woman taken in adultery. Intercede for them with prayer and fasting combined together. THAT

pleases God. Not "textbook perfectness". It is good for ethnic groups to celebrate their heritage, in Church, and at home. The problem is when it becomes the central reason for getting together, and makes division within the Church. Exclusiveness causes division. Pride, fear, and misunderstanding do too. The book notes these problems, which are present in varying degrees throughout the movement. Yes, we know ALL congregations are not on the same page. It's just like grade school: some As some Fs. Ethnic Jews will always be "Jewish", just as I will always be ethnic Yugoslavian. Being "saved" does not change my heritage. It DOES change my spiritual life completely, though. And as the author explains, a central error of Messianics, as of other Jews, is the feeling that "Christian = Gentile". I often point out that my brethren are "Children of God of Jewish descent", not Jews in faith any more. It is vitally true that Orthodox Jews don't accept Jesus, or his adherents - we are "Pagans" and such apostate Jews are "dead"! So, as Telchin wrote, "the Jews" will never accept such people and hear their witness - they are worse than Gentiles. Their continued existence is an offense to God. So they hate Messianics, and all the attempts at keeping Jewish appearances only upset them more. See the virulently anti-Christian, and anti-messianic-Jew book "Make Us a God - a Jewish Response to Hebrew Christianity" by Chaim Picker - a former Jew, then minister, then Orthodox cantor. Also written in an intellectual, clear perspective, it illuminates the scope of the religious schism. Chaim accuses missionaries of committing a "religious Holocaust" on the Jewish people, like the church tried to do in the past by burning them. (He is apparently ignorant of the difference between Catholic Church politics, which gave us the Inquisition, and real Christianity. His arguments are oddly like those of Wiccans, who attack Christians for the same reasons!) "Jews cannot be Christians, or they cease to be Jews" - is the mantra. Well, spiritually speaking, it is true. Ethnically, it's laughable. Go compare these two books, and you will have a volatile dunk into the controversy and challenges of the Messianic Movement. Look up Hebrew Christians, too. That was their former name. Remember debate is good - it forces you to examine your own logic.

Understanding is always valuable, and agreement with either "side" is not required.

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