

Dear Larry,

Thank you for writing us at Christian Questions Radio. You asked us several questions. We will try to answer them as precisely as possible.

Question #1: You wanted to know why God would test Abraham by asking him to sacrifice his son if He already knew that Abraham would comply with the request, since God knew the answer before he asked it.

Each experience that Abraham had since God told him to leave Ur with his family increased his faith and trust in God. By the time he was asked, many years later, to sacrifice the promised seed (Isaac), God knew that Abraham's faith in Him and in His ability to raise the dead had solidified to the point and where Abraham would be able to obey this seemingly strange request. So, why did God ask Abraham to do such a deed if He knew what the end result would be? We believe that it was not for God's sake, but for Abraham's. By obeying God's command, Abraham proved to himself that his faith was not just verbal, but was an active faith, even to the point of death. Next to Jesus, Abraham is probably the Christian's greatest example of faith.

Question #2: Your second question had two parts to it. The first part dealt with Gentiles being saved by grace and not the Law. You wanted to know from what laws the Gentiles are saved. Although the second part of your question re: blood, fornication, eating food offered to idols, and eating meat from strangled animals was not exactly clear to us, we will attempt to answer it.

Part 1: The Law of Moses never applied to the Gentiles. It was given to the Jews to keep them pure and separate from the nations around them. The Jews were God's special people from which Messiah was to come. The Law acted as a schoolmaster in order to bring the Jews to Christ. "So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the law." (Galatians 3:24-25) Once Jesus came and fulfilled the Law by his sacrifice unto death, the Law was no longer binding to the Jew providing he accepted Jesus. The Apostle Paul further explains this thought by commenting, "that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ." (Galatians 2:15) Christians, be they Jew or Gentile, are not required to follow the 300 plus laws stated in Leviticus, but are required to follow the Ten Commandments. In fact, these commandments should be taken to a highest level possible and be written on the heart. A Christian is not under the Law of Moses, but under the grace of Christ.

Part 2: We think the second part of your question refers to Acts 15:29, "You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality." You are probably wondering why the apostles sent this letter to the new Christian Gentile converts. Obviously,

the prohibition against sexual immorality is a universal moral law based on the Seventh Commandment. But, what of the other three items? The apostles told the new Gentile Christians not to eat food offered to idols because it might appear that they were sanctioning idol worship, which would greatly offend new Jewish converts. Also the eating of blood and animals that were strangled were practices that were strictly forbidden in the Law of Moses. That is why Gentile Christians were told to avoid them in the interest of love and Church unity. Were those dietary items mentioned in Acts 15:29 a directive or simply a suggestion? We find the answer in Romans 14:1-3. "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. One man's faith allows him to eat everything, but another man whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables. The man who eats everything must not look down on him who does not, and the man who does not eat everything must not condemn the man who does, for God has accepted him."

Question #3: You said that the word "Christian" is used five times in the scriptures and never by God or Jesus. You wanted to know if God or Jesus really started a religion called "Christian" in order to murder Jews.

The name "Christian" was coined in the First Century A.D.—about five years after Pentecost. The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch. See Acts 11:26. "Church" means "called out ones" while "disciple," means "learner or pupil" and/ or "adherent and follower of a teacher." Therefore, "Christians" are defined as ones "called out" from the world to be followers and pupils of Jesus Christ.

Did God or Jesus start a religion in order to murder Jews? Absolutely not. The law of love guides a true Christian's behavior. "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:43-45) The fact that Jews, Muslims, Protestants, Catholics and pagans have all been murdered in the name of Christendom is a travesty. Rather than follow in the footsteps of Jesus, Christendom was more concerned with power, politics and selfishness. Its history is shameful. We, however, must be careful not to make generalizations. The true Christian (one who has given up his will in order to follow the will of God) has always existed side by side with those who are Christians in name only, but choose to follow their own wills. During this Gospel age, Jesus is calling out a "little flock" to be his "bride" in heaven. The world (nations) and individuals, some of whom are professed Christians, will be judged for their sins when Messiah's Millennial kingdom is set up on earth.

Question #4: This question was in regard to Matthew 23:2-3, "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach." You asked if Jesus was telling the Jews to live by the laws, even though their leaders did not, and, in effect, Jesus was telling them to remain Jewish.

Jesus was telling the Jews to live by the laws, even though their instructors were self-righteous hypocrites. He told the scribes and Pharisees that they neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness while emphasizing the letter of it in order to look good on the outside (Matthew 23:23-28). Once Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice on the cross, the Law covenant was no longer in effect for the Jew who accepted Him. Jesus' sacrifice fulfilled the Law. He was the antitypical lamb that took away the sins of the world, once for all. No longer would the Atonement Day sacrifices of bulls and goats be needed to atone for sin. Did the Jews then need to stay Jewish and keep all aspects of the law? No they did not. The Old Law Covenant was fulfilled.

Question #5: You asked what Jesus meant when he said, "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." (Matthew 9:13) You wanted to know how the righteous that Jesus did not come for receive their salvation.

When Jesus said that he had not come to call the righteous, he meant the self-righteous, such as the scribes and Pharisees, as noted in the answer to Question #4 above. The "sinners" are all who recognize themselves as imperfect and in need of repentance. The Apostle Paul, quoting Psalm 14:3 says, "There is no one righteous, not even one." (Romans 3:10) All of us are sinners, even though our heart intentions may be good. All of us fall short of the glorious standard that God has set. Jesus was calling out a people for his heavenly class who recognized their short-comings and their need for repentance and mercy. How then do the "righteous" (actually the self-righteous) receive their salvation? They will have an opportunity to receive it when they are awakened from the sleep of death in Messiah's Millennial kingdom on earth. At that time all people will have an opportunity to learn what true righteousness is, practice it and write it in their hearts.

Questions #6: Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6) You wanted to know who was included in the "no one" and mentioned various ancient ones, such as Enoch, Noah and Abraham who died long before Jesus was born.

The ancient worthies, as we often call them, did not go to heaven to be with the Father, even though they are included in the Book of Hebrews (chapter 11) as great examples of faith. They could not enter heaven since the ransom for Adam and his race (the death and resurrection of Jesus) had not yet been paid. Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:13, "No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man." The "no one" includes everyone who ever lived prior to Jesus' death and everyone now who has not given up his will and accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior. But, as we have mentioned in other answers above, there is an earthly resurrection as well as a heavenly one. So, Enoch, Noah, Moses, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, etc. will not only have an earthly resurrection, but they will have a "better" resurrection in that they will be in positions of leadership on earth just as the heavenly class will be ruling from above. "These [the ancient faithful ones] were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised. God had planned

something better for us so that only together with us would they be made perfect.” (Hebrews 11:39)

Questions #7: You asked why followers of Jesus call themselves Christians or Messianic Jews and deny that they are converted Jews.

Whether we are converted Jewish Christians or Gentile Christians, we are all one in the Body of Christ and should not make distinctions. “You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:26-29)

Question #8: You asked who the lost sheep of Israel were.

Jesus’ ministry was to the Jewish people, not to the Gentiles. Had the Jewish nation as a whole accepted Jesus, Jews alone would have made up the entire heavenly class and there would have been no need for Gentiles to be grafted into the heavenly Body of Christ. Jesus told his disciples, “Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.” (Matthew 10:5-6) And again in Matthew 15:24, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.” The lost sheep were those Jews who were lost in the wilderness of sin and darkness, but who were aware of their sad spiritual condition and whose hearts were ready to follow Jesus and be participants in the Kingdom.

We hope we have answered your questions. You probably have many more. Please write us again.

Sincerely,

Christian Questions Radio