

119

MINISTRIES

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Judaizers

Have you ever been called a Judaizer? Have you ever called someone a Judaizer?

This term is often quickly launched at those who subscribe to observing all of God’s instructions found in the Bible. Some examples include resting on the Sabbath, following the dietary instructions found in Leviticus 11, or observing God’s holidays found in Leviticus 23.

It is not uncommon for us, 119 Ministries, as well as other followers of the Torah and our Messiah, to be labeled as “Judaizers” or for it to be said that we are “Judaizing.” Yet how many know what they are saying? What does it mean to be a Judaizer? Are we Judaizers? Are you?

The term Judaizer, defined as living like the Jews, is not directly found in the New Testament, but the idea of it is derived from one specific verse.

Galatians 2:14

But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, “If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?”

Here, Paul was accusing Peter, not of following the Torah like some suggest, but instead he was accusing Peter of adhering to non-biblical Jewish traditions which restricted Jews and Gentiles from eating together. In fact, this is what Peter’s vision was all about in Acts 10, and we would encourage watching our related teaching ([Acts 10: Peter’s Vision](#)) for a more detailed study.

What we find is that subscribing to these extrabiblical Jewish traditions—that is, refusing table fellowship with Gentiles, among other things—was what defined Judaizing. Sadly, this is a fact that seems to have been missed by many Christians from the second century even to this day!

This is not anything new. Our Messiah accused the Pharisees, who were the learned Jewish religious leaders of his day, of the same thing: *“making the word of God of no effect through your traditions which you have handed down”* (Mark 7:15). Earlier he said, *“You reject the commandment of God, that*

you may keep your tradition” (Mark 7:9). If a tradition causes one to break a commandment of God, it is not from the heart of the Father and must be rejected. In the case of Peter, refusing table fellowship with a Gentile believer is a tradition in direct conflict with the very mission the Messiah gave His apostles—that is, to be a light to the nations.

In contrast to the Biblical definition of a Judaizer, in today’s Christian theology, anyone who follows all of YHWH’s commandments, some of which we have exemplified already, is supposedly deserving of being called a Judaizer.

Yet, many Christian definitions of Judaizer actually get it right, at least somewhat. It is the actual usage of the term that some abuse and misunderstand.

According to one article on NewAdvent.org, Judaizers are and were:

“A party of Jewish Christians in the Early Church, who either held that circumcision and the observance of the Mosaic law were necessary for salvation and in consequence wished to impose them on the Gentile converts, or who at least considered them as still obligatory on the Jewish Christians.”

Another article on biblestudytools.com defines the term “Judaizer” to be:

“Those who adopted Jewish religious practices or sought to influence others to do so” and “Septuagint not only uses ioudaizo to translate the Hebrew mityhadim (“to become a Jew”), but adds that these Gentiles were circumcised.”

These definitions hit spot on the context of Galatians.

The idea of “Judaizing” relates to a Gentile becoming a Jew, or one who follows all of the traditions and customs of those in Judaism in order to achieve salvation and inclusion into God’s people. It was believed by the Jewish sect that was influencing the Gentile believers at Galatia, that Gentiles needed to formally convert to Judaism before being considered saved. This idea of forced conversion is perhaps also found in Esther 8:17 where non-Jews were converting in order to avoid being slaughtered by the Jews of the time. Interestingly, in the Greek Septuagint, this passage from Esther is the only other place in the Bible that the Greek phrase translated in Galatians as “living like a Jew” is found—and the context of both passages are strikingly similar. In both cases, it’s a type of coerced conversion.

Again, we know from the context of Galatians that there was a group of people who were teaching that in order for a Gentile to obtain salvation they must convert to Judaism and be circumcised. If they did not formally convert and get circumcised, then they were not saved. This would appear to be what a “Judaizer” of that day was; you may know them by a different name, the Circumcision Party.

For more on Galatians 2:14, we would recommend our [Pauline Paradox Series: Part 5 – Galatians](#).

We see a related story also in Acts 15; for more on that, please see our video titled [Acts 15: Obedience or Legalism](#).

If a “Judaizer” is one that believes and teaches others that they need to follow all of the laws and customs of the Judaism faith in order to obtain salvation, then we certainly do not fit into the label of a “Judaizer.”

This is, in fact, the exact opposite of what we subscribe to and teach. The Word is clear that salvation

comes only through the Messiah Yeshua (also known as Jesus), not through any works of obedience that we may do.

The subject matter of the Book of Galatians is highly agreeable. We are not to keep the Law of God, the Torah, for salvation. But, be careful not to take that truth beyond what Paul intended. Just because we are not to keep the Torah for salvation does not mean we are not to keep the Torah at all. That is an important distinction.

Living a life with the understanding that one can be saved by works nullifies the work of the Messiah as a sacrifice for us and negates the Word of God as a whole. The Bible says we are saved by grace, only through grace, not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9). To state that one can be saved by works makes God a liar and His Word untrustworthy.

We believe and teach the Word of God is infallible (Psalm 33:4, John 17:17). We believe and teach that salvation comes by grace through faith in Messiah (Ephesians 2:8-9, Acts 16:31). We believe and teach that we obey all of Yahweh's commandments to the best of our ability to show our love for Him (1 John 5:2-3). We are not, by definition, Judaizers; but instead are more akin to followers of "the Way" (Acts 24:14-15).

The problem is that most incorrectly assume the only reason one might follow the whole Bible, such as resting on the Sabbath, or dietary instructions, is for the reason of salvation. Yes, some Pharisees believed that, and they were rebuked for it (i.e. Acts 15), but, we are to still uphold the Law of God in our faith.

As Paul said in Romans, which was written about the same time as Galatians:

Romans 2:13

For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law (the Torah) who will be declared righteous.

Romans 3:31

Do we, then, nullify the law (the Torah) by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law (the Torah).

In summary, what Paul was fighting against was not the Torah, which he advocates, defends and claims to follow himself in a number of places in his writings (i.e. Romans 3:31), but he correctly rejects the idea that one can be saved by their works including circumcision.

This issue was the focus of the debate of the first Jerusalem council in Acts 15. In combatting the false notion that circumcision, for example, must be a prerequisite to salvation.

Paul opposes this idea in grand and logical step-by-step fashion in the book of Romans, and again in the book of Galatians in a knock-out-the-opponent-quickly manner.

So if we're to apply the term Judaizer to anyone, it must be applied to those advocating a works-based salvation formula, not to those who teach that salvation is by grace alone through faith in Yeshua.

The spiritual fruits of such faith being love toward God and one's fellow man as defined by the Torah — something 119 Ministries strongly advocates.

Sadly, this fundamental truth of who a Judaizer really seems to have been missed by the majority of early “church fathers”. Modern mainstream church theologians who have continued to repeat the same anti-Semitic viewpoints handed down to them from the second century church fathers, fear rejection from their peers and supporters if they go against the millennia of church tradition.

Being called a Judaizer is intended to strike fear into the heart of the one being called a Judaizer, because now they are supposed to question their salvation. Never mind that our Messiah was and is a Jew and we are to follow him; and Messiah Yeshuah, he followed the Torah. The difference however, is that our Messiah did not advocate for the Jewish traditions of ritual conversion perpetuated by the Pharisees, but only followed the Torah, the Law of God. Yeshua taught us to follow the Law of God, not for our salvation, but because we are to love God back. That is what we believe and teach, because that is what our Messiah exemplified for us, as the way to walk out our faith.

So, no, we are not to be a Judaizer. We are not to follow Jewish traditions that nullify the Torah nor teach that following Torah in part or whole is the means to salvation. But just because one follows and practices the whole Word of God while recognizing grace as the means to salvation, well, that is not the Biblical definition of a Judaizer. We must use Biblical words in Biblical ways.

We hope that this teaching has blessed you, and remember, continue to test everything.

We pray you have been blessed by this teaching. Remember, continue to test everything. Shalom! For more on this and other teachings, please visit us at www.testeverything.net

Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.

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