

Parasha "HaAzinu"

Deuteronomy 32:16-21

Joel 2:12-13

Romans 10:19 to 11:5

1. Children will come forward and put coins in the tzedakah box, and I say, when the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs." Background on this saying with the sale of indulgences by Johann Tetzel. This is what brought a little known German monk, named Martin Luther to fame. 2) Who remembers the PTL club from 70s and 80s? What does it stand for? "Pass the Loot." These two are very mild examples of religion perpetrating robbery. We need to be much more concerned with the robbery of people's souls. Going in, I want everyone to keep in mind- it is not just the other person's religion that is bad or false.

2. Most everyone know my background: I was raised in a Reform Jewish family, and accepted Yeshua (Jesus) as my Messiah and Savior at the age of 19. It all came together during my sophomore year in high school. I had already become fairly certain that Jesus was whom He claimed to be, the Messiah. Then one week in Sunday school the rabbi was going over scriptures, which he said, "Christians claim are messianic prophecies of Jesus." Someone read: Isaiah 53:1-7. I didn't know this then, but it would change my life, as my reaction was, "He really is the Messiah!" Three years later I accepted Him as my Savior when I could put off the yoke of my religion, but what I didn't realize was that this was taking up the yoke of another religion!

3. We certainly are not going to knock other religions today. Religions are equal, because they all involve man's attempt to reach God. **Let's take this little box. (have a child come forward to fit the bima in the little box.)** This is the purpose of religion to box god up for human understanding. Not because we are evil or stupid, but rather because we are human. (Isaiah 55:8.)

4. Religion is man's system or the "box" that we use to attempt reach God. **Our atheist friends muse that "religion is foolish, and has caused so much trouble among men, because of the foolish and evil things that are done in its name."** I agree with them wholeheartedly here; however, mankind tends to fail to realize that outside of that religious box, God exists according to what He laid out in His Holy Word.

5. If I had \$100 for every time I've heard things like: "how can you be both religions? Both Jewish and Christian, how does that work?, You can't be both a Jew and a Christian. Everyone has to have their own religion, or the best one "you're trying to steal my religion and call it your own." **REALLY? If I were going to steal something, the last thing it would be is a religion!** In reality, if we are believers in the Living God, "YHVH" through His chosen Mashiach Yeshua (Jesus), what difference does it make what label you put on it?

6. Another example is the late Romanian Jewish believer, Richard Wurmbrandt recounted going to priests in Romania to learn more about Jesus. He was told "no" because Jesus is not for the Jews and one was so angry that he struck him with a cane.

Religion says: a Jew can't believe in Jesus. He said that He came for the "lost house of Israel." (Matthew 15:22-24)

It also says that Jesus is not for Jews because they rejected Him. Look at the Messianic Writings portion in Romans 11:1 and Romans 1:16.

7. Look at a few other instances of what religion tells us versus what God's word tells us: honoring Sunday instead of shabbat, the "Old" Testament versus the New Testament, dual covenant theology, and holiday observance. These are but a very few examples that I chose because the consequences would be examples of eternal "robbery."

8. Look at our Torah portion from Deuteronomy and Romans. I believe that Jewish people who have come to faith in Jesus through Christianity (which is most all of us) that it is part of the fulfillment of what God told Moses. At this, our friends in the church would agree with me, but we must realize that this does not mean that "the true faith" lies in Christianity. It means that Judaism has strayed so far from what God intended that Christianity looks closer to it.

Remember, it's not just the other religion that is bad or false. We see examples everyday of the fulfillment of this: Jews referring to the "Old Testament," people looking to Christianity to learn more about the God of Israel, and centuries of persecution by those claiming that God had "chosen" them over the Jews. None of these are examples of God's favor on any people, but rather of His unfailing mercy. As we look at the text, it was not a favorable thing, but basically an example of divine vengeance. Paul tells us in Romans that He will use this tragedy to bring Yeshua (which is salvation) to the lost house of Israel. **The cost will have been very high, but how much higher the cost for those of the nations who cling to religion's heresies?**

9. We can also see that this provocation to jealousy was not God forsaking His people as we look at Zechariah 8:23. So, much for making the Jews jealous by our Christianity. More likely the faithfulness of the remnant from the nations will help draw Israel back to God, then they'll take hold of the tzitzit, and realize what we're meant to be: one people brought together under the One Shepherd.