

# Christianity Began as a Jewish Cult

We are so programmed by our Western Christianity that we fail to understand the roots of the church.

Christianity began as a Jewish cult. It was probably more a sect than a cult – like the Pharisees and Sadducees. They lived in the Jewish community and mingled with the Jewish people.

Their opposition came from the religious leaders who missed the Messiah's coming and who possibly saw the members of the first church as irreligious radicals.

To help understand our roots, Skip Moen writes<sup>1</sup>:

“Once again we find that our perception of what was actually transpiring in the accounts of Acts depends not so much on what the text says as it depends on what we already believe about the earliest Messianic community. And for most of us, what we believe about the earliest Messianic community is *not* a reflection of what actually happened but rather the importation of what we have experienced in our churches. We are convinced, and we have been taught, that the earliest community that followed the Messiah was *Christian*. That means the community looked like what we experience in the church. Therefore, we read *into* the text what we believe to be true of the church and the result is a complete misunderstanding of the record of Acts.

The communities in Jerusalem and all the other places Paul visited in the book of Acts *were not Christian!* They were Jewish communities made up of followers of YHWH. They were orthodox, proselytes, believers in Yeshua as the Messiah and recent Gentile additions. All four groups were in fellowship in the synagogue communities. All members of the fellowship followed Torah in some form or another. There was never any question about leaving the Jewish way of life. The only question was, “Is Yeshua the Messiah?” Virtually nothing that we experience in the practice of the church was part of the communities of Acts. Every time we read our Christian heritage into the text, we violate the context and culture of the original. If we want to understand Acts (or Paul), we must think like *first century Jews*, not Christians.

I realize that this claim stands in opposition to most Christians’ conceptions of Acts. I acknowledge that most Christians think of Acts as stories about the “church.” But that’s just not possible. The text is Jewish through and through. The context, practices, teachings and circumstances are Jewish. It’s time to recognize that what happened in the first century happened in Jewish circles. Christianity came later—about 150 years later, and when it came, it threw out as many Jewish things as it could. But James and John and Paul didn’t.”

This is quite eye-opening and brings an imperative that we must understand the Jewish basis of the church so we so correctly understand the teachings written in the epistles.

We are however, there is no requirement in the Gospel of the Kingdom that we become Jews.

Laurence  
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1 - Skip Moen (2014) “Who Translates What” [<http://skipmoen.com/2014/05/22/who-translates-what/>]

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