

Notes: November 29, 2014

Start: 10 AM

**Order of service:**

1. Meet and Greet
2. Introduction (if new people)
3. Ma Tovv
4. Open in Prayer for service
5. Liturgy – Sh'ma +
6. Announcements
7. Praise and Worship Songs
8. Message
9. Aaronic Blessing
10. Kiddush
11. Oneg

Children's Blessing:

Transliteration: *Ye'simcha Elohim ke-Ephraim ve hee-Menashe*

English: *May God make you like Ephraim and Menashe*

Transliteration: *Ye'simech Elohim ke-Sarah, Rivka, Rachel ve-Leah.*

English: *May God make you like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah.*

Introduction: What About The Message of Messiah?

For the last several weeks I have been focusing on:

- The expectations for Messiah
- The character of Messiah
- The identity of Messiah
- Being able to identify Messiah

So, what about the message of Messiah?

How do we convey it?

Such a simple question, if only the answer were as simple as the question.

The what isn't the complex part of the question. The what is rather simple and has been seen throughout the New Covenant writings:

A few weeks ago when I was addressing the concept of the rapture on Tuesday evenings, we looked at 1 Corinthians 15. Within this passage, Sha'ul was addressing the relationship between the Gospel and Resurrection. He conveys the message in a rather uncomplicated and direct manner:

**1Co 15:3** For among the first things I passed on to you was what I also received, namely this: the Messiah died for our sins, in accordance with what the Tanakh says;

**1Co 15:4** and he was buried; and he was raised on the third day, in accordance with what the Tanakh says;

**1Co 15:5** and he was seen by Kefa, then by the Twelve;

**1Co 15:6** and afterwards he was seen by more than five hundred brothers at one time, the majority of whom are still alive, though some have died.

This message that Sha'ul conveyed is strikingly similar to the message that Yeshua gave to His talmadim:

**Luk 24:44** Yeshua said to them, "This is what I meant when I was still with you and told you that everything written about me in the Torah of Moshe, the Prophets and the Psalms had to be fulfilled."

**Luk 24:45** Then he opened their minds, so that they could understand the Tanakh,

**Luk 24:46** telling them, "Here is what it says: the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day;

**Luk 24:47** and in his name repentance leading to forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed to people from all nations, starting with Yerushalayim.

So, the message is rather straightforward.

Yet the complications arise when you factor in people, their cultural differences and personal affinities.

One would think, conveying the message of the Jewish Messiah to the Jewish people would be a "no brainer". You show them the scriptures that they have known since their youth and no problem, you have a follower.

Even when Messiah was walking the earth, conveying His message there were people who did not receive His message.

When we go through the book of Acts and witness the travels of many of the talmadim, including Sha'ul, we see challenges, even within the Jewish community

**Act 17:1** After passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, Sha'ul and Sila came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue.

**Act 17:2** According to his usual practice, Sha'ul went in; and on three Shabbats he gave them drashes from the Tanakh,

**Act 17:3** explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and that "this Yeshua whom I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah."

As was standard operating procedure for Sha'ul, where ever he traveled, he went to the synagogue first.

One would think, where else would one go? The Scriptures are read there every Shabbat. Yeshua opened their eyes regarding everything that was written in the Tanakh.

**Act 17:4** Some of the Jews were persuaded and threw in their lot with Sha'ul and Sila, as did a great many of the Greek men who were "God-fearers," and not a few of the leading women.

**Act 17:5** But the unbelieving Jews grew jealous; so they got together some vicious men from the riffraff hanging around in the market square, collected a crowd and started a riot in the city. They attacked Jason's house, hoping to bring Sha'ul and Sila out to the mob.

Some were persuaded, while others were not.

**Act 17:10** But as soon as night fell, the brothers sent Sha'ul and Sila off to Berea. As soon as they arrived, they went to the synagogue.

**Act 17:11** Now the people here were of nobler character than the ones in Thessalonica; they eagerly welcomed the message, checking the Tanakh every day to see if the things Sha'ul was saying were true.

**Act 17:12** Many of them came to trust, as did a number of prominent Greek women and not a few Greek men.

By contrast of what occurred in Thessalonica, we see a people that were open to receiving the message of Messiah as conveyed by Sha'ul and Sila.

Today such open mindedness is similarly welcomed by Messianic Jews and is praiseworthy. We are confident that when the Good News is given this sort of a fair hearing, and the hearers rely on the facts, including **the Tanakh**, to verify the message, the response today will often be like that in Berea, where many Jewish people came to trust in Yeshua—a clear success for Sha'ul's Jewish evangelism.

Unfortunately, the message is not always given a fair hearing.

In many cases, you mention Yeshua or Jesus to a Jewish person and they immediately tune you out.

Why,

Just as those in Thessalonica who were jealous of those who became believers, likely had a preconceived doctrine where the message of Messiah didn't fit, so today, there are preconceived ideas and understanding that don't allow Messiah into their views.

Whether objections that are:

- Historical
- Theological
- Interpretation of Messianic Prophecy

There is usually a bias attached to those who object to the message of Messiah.

However, in Berea, they were open to the message. However, notice that they just didn't take them at their word but “checking the Tanakh every day to see if the things Sha'ul was saying were true.”

So, it is important to know:

- Who you are talking with
- What is their background
- What are their beliefs

These first steps are like testing the water before you go in by dipping your toe in first.

Continuing on with this idea, we next see Sha'ul going off to Athens:

Notice first that Sha'ul makes notice of his surroundings:

**Act 17:16** While Sha'ul was waiting for them in Athens, his spirit within him was disturbed at the sight of the city full of idols.

The Ruach likely caused him to pay attention to what was in the city.

**Act 17:17** So he began holding discussions in the synagogue with the Jews and the "God-fearers," and in the market square every day with the people who happened to be there.

**Act 17:18** Also a group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers started meeting with him. Some asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others, because he proclaimed the Good News about Yeshua and the resurrection, said, "He sounds like a propagandist for foreign gods."

**Epicurean and Stoic philosophers.** The followers of Epicurus (341-270 B.C.E.) denied the existence of a purposeful God and believed the universe originated by chance from a falling rain of atoms.

They mocked the popular (pagan) gods and mythology.

Their view of the soul was materialistic: it dissolved and dissipated at death.

Thus the aim of life was gratification, not pursuit of higher or externally given moral and spiritual interests.

Gratification could be gross and sordid if one was so inclined, or esthetic and refined.

Today's successors to the Epicureans speak of "doing your own thing," "so long as it doesn't hurt anybody else."

Stoics were pantheists - is the belief that the universe (or nature as the totality of everything) is identical with divinity, or that everything composes an all-encompassing, immanent God.

They believe for whom "God" was merely a word standing for some vague spirit of reason in the universe. They understood the soul to be corporeal and at death somehow absorbed into this blurry "God."

All the major Eastern religions and certain seemingly Western offshoots have at bottom a similar theology, that there is no transcendent God who created and rules the universe independently of human beings and their imaginings.

The Stoic moral code was in some ways higher than that of the Epicureans, but for them the highest morality was an austere apathy and unconcern which regarded itself as superior to passion as well as circumstance.

Many alienated people today repress the genuine hurt and guilt they ought to feel and attempt to elevate their alienation into philosophy, thus ending up with a version of Stoicism.

In this philosophy pleasure is not good and pain is not evil, for nothing really matters. "Reason" becomes a guide, but when "reason" finds nothing left to live for, suicide becomes the "reasonable" action-the first two leaders of Stoicism died by their own hand.

Both Stoicism and Epicureanism (and their successors) oppose biblical religion. In the present verses we see how Sha'ul, expressing God's love, dealt with people-sinners like everyone else-whose primary channel of life-expression was intellectual.

This was the mindset Sha'ul had encountered so in looking at verse 19,

**Act 17:19** They took and brought him before the High Council, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting?"

They were intrigued by this "new teaching" he was sharing.

**Act 17:21** (All the Athenians and the foreigners living there used to spend their spare time talking or hearing about the latest intellectual fads.)

In verses 22 – 31 Sha'ul responds to these men, not in his customary manner of sharing Scriptures with them. Based on the background I provided you with, these men would not have cared about the writings of the Jews.

Instead, Sha'ul does the following:

[Act 17:23](#) For as I was walking around, looking at your shrines, I even found an altar which had been inscribed, 'To An Unknown God.' So, the one whom you are already worshipping in ignorance – this is the one I proclaim to you.

[Act 17:24](#) "The God who made the universe and everything in it, and who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in man-made temples;

[Act 17:25](#) nor is he served by human hands, as if he lacked something; since it is he himself who gives life and breath and everything to everyone.

[Act 17:26](#) "From one man he made every nation living on the entire surface of the earth, and he fixed the limits of their territories and the periods when they would flourish.

[Act 17:27](#) God did this so that people would look for him and perhaps reach out and find him although in fact, he is not far from each one of us,

[Act 17:28](#) 'for in him we live and move and exist.' Indeed, as some of the poets among you have said, 'We are actually his children.'

[Act 17:29](#) So, since we are children of God, we shouldn't suppose that God's essence resembles gold, silver or stone shaped by human technique and imagination.

[Act 17:30](#) "In the past, God overlooked such ignorance; but now he is commanding all people everywhere to turn to him from their sins.

[Act 17:31](#) For he has set a Day when he will judge the inhabited world, and do it justly, by means of a man whom he has designated. And he has given public proof of it by resurrecting this man from the dead."

Sha'ul offers knowledge in lieu of **ignorance** ([Act 17:23](#)).

He does not use the Scriptures at all, since these would carry no weight with these highly educated pagans (contrast [Act 17:2-3](#) [Act 17:10-12](#)). But makes mention of the altar dedicated to “the Unknown God” Sha'ul states to them you are already worshipping Him, yet due to your ignorance, don't actually know Him. You recognize He exists, yet know nothing about Him.

In order to speak their language, Sha'ul quotes from Greek poets in [Act 17:28](#) (first Epimenides, then Aratus or Cleanthes); Elsewhere, in his other letters, Sha'ul quotes Menander ([1Co 15:33](#)) and Epimenides of Crete ([Tit 1:12](#)).

He presents God as Creator, Giver of all, and Ruler of nations and history ([Act 17:24-26](#)), and as One who seeks our love ([Act 17:27-28](#)), which consists not in idol-worship ([Act 17:24-25](#), [Act 17:29](#)) but in turning from sins ([Act 17:30](#)), because a day is coming when everyone will be judged by God through the resurrected Yeshua ([Act 17:31](#)). His resurrection gives public proof that the Gospel is true and therefore objectively demands belief

In conveying a different approach to the same message, Sha'ul receives a similar response:

[Act 17:32](#) At the mention of a resurrection of dead people, some began to scoff; while others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject."

[Act 17:33](#) So Sha'ul left the meeting.

[Act 17:34](#) But some men stayed with him and came to trust, including the High Council member Dionysius; there was also a woman named Damaris; and others came to trust along with them.

In each case:

- Some were open minded while some were not.
- Some were persuaded while some were not

In each case where we see those who were open minded and became believers an element of Adonai needed to be present.

The message of Messiah was presented in different ways to different people.

Some had a full knowledge and understanding of scripture, while others were hungry to search and verify the truth being conveyed, while a third group had no experience with Scripture.

There must have been something, or someone bridging the gap between cultures.

**Mat 16:15** "But you," he said to them, "who do you say I am?"

**Mat 16:16** Shim`on Kefa answered, "You are the Mashiach, the Son of the living God."

**Mat 16:17** "Shim`on Bar-Yochanan," Yeshua said to him, "how blessed you are! For no human being revealed this to you, no, it was my Father in heaven.

What is seen in the New Covenant writings are individual verses from the Tanakh, used with restraint to express the writers' underlying confidence that Yeshua the Messiah's coming is central to fulfilling God's purposes for Israel and the world.