

Unrecognized Mediation: *A False Hope*

Rabbi Michael Wolf
and
Rabbi Larry Feldman

*An Official Position Paper of the
International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues*



©2009 International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues

*Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture is quoted
from the New King James Translation (Thomas Nelson, inc.), 1982*

Unrecognized Mediation: *A False Hope*

Lately certain Messianic Jewish leaders have proposed theological answers to questions about the spiritual condition of traditional (non-Messianic) Jews. These answers have been extremely controversial within the Messianic Movement and beyond. Chief among these is a concept called **Unrecognized Mediation**. Is this concept Biblical? Are there dangers associated with this teaching, and if so what are they?

Unrecognized Mediation is a theological concept stating that some unspecified number of traditional Jewish people are saved by Yeshua and walking in that salvation without knowing it or having a conscious personal relationship with the Messiah. They have never consciously received Him by faith.

Though we do not believe this concept is consistent with scriptural teaching, there are a few reasons why in our view some people choose to believe this teaching. We will mention perhaps the key one here.

We in the Messianic Jewish movement believe in God's ongoing work in His people Israel. We recognize, along with Paul, that "God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew" (Romans 11:2). This certainly means that He is still dealing with Jewish hearts, preparing them to hear and respond to the Good News.

However, when we look at the distorted message the Jewish community has historically received from a Church that has taught it has replaced Israel, we might ask how such a community could be expected to respond to the Gospel message that is often preached from this anti-Jewish perspective. It is also important to note that the message has historically included an unscriptural obligation to abandon all things Jewish.

The Case for Unrecognized Mediation

Mark Kinzer uses Paul's teaching in verses like Romans 11:25 about the partial hardness or blindness of Israel (as well as other verses) to make the case that "Israel's no to Yeshua can properly be viewed as a form of participation in Yeshua".¹ In simplified terms, when commanded to reject the commandments and their Jewish identity by those who tried to convert them, the Jewish people chose instead to obey God as they understood Him. Therefore, in Mark's view, they were embracing an unrecognized Yeshua, the Messiah of Israel. Mark recognizes that Paul never clearly states this in the Biblical text. Instead, he sees in these verses "Paul's *hints* [emphasis ours] on the mysterious Christological significance of Israel's no to Yeshua in the light of the church's history of supersessionism, anti-Judaism, and violent persecution".² He builds his case throughout the book *Post Missionary Messianic Judaism*. Though all of the elements of his case are not listed here, the points above are sufficient to help explain the concept of Unrecognized Mediation (also called Implicit Faith). But is Mark actually saying that individual Jewish people who have not consciously embraced Yeshua are presently saved by Him implicitly? Or is he just presenting a picture of God's ongoing hand on the Jewish community? Though he does not state this outright in this book, his comments in other writings seem to point in the former direction.

In an editorial letter published in the Jews For Jesus Fall 2003 Havurah newsletter Kinzer states, "I do believe that the Abrahamic covenant offers Jewish people access to God in and through Yeshua. That does not mean that all Jews, by virtue of being Jews, have a right relationship with God. It does mean that God's favor still rests upon Israel, and *He makes a way for humble and faithful members of His people to enter His presence through the unrecognized mediation of Israel's Messiah*" (emphasis ours).³

Unrecognized Mediation Contradicts the Scriptural Need for New Birth

It may be tempting to embrace a teaching like this in order to answer difficult questions about those who have gone on (or are alive today) who may have never heard a clear gospel message or have had a negative experience with Christians. However, when we are dealing with an eternal God, finding an answer that contradicts His Word is unacceptable and causes

more problems than it supposedly solves. Does Kinzer's answer contradict God's Word to us? We believe it does.

One teaching that Unrecognized Mediation contradicts is the concept of the New Birth. Scripture teaches that a conscious encounter with and receiving of Messiah is necessary for salvation. Yeshua states, "Most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."⁴ We have known of cases where Jewish people have had this encounter in the last days, minutes, or even seconds of life. Sometimes someone is sharing with them and they receive. Other times there is a supernatural revelation which occurs while they are alone. Often God brings to memory something that was shared with the individual months or even years before. This underscores the importance of sharing our faith. The well known Biblical account of the thief who was executed next to Yeshua comes to mind. He had probably heard Yeshua's words and seen his acts. Now in the last minutes of life he responds.⁵ The Scripture also seems to indicate that if a person is walking in the light they have, God will then reveal more light for them to respond to. Psalm 50:23 states, "Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; And to him who orders *his* conduct *aright* I will show the salvation of God." In Mark 12:34, Yeshua tells a young man who agrees with Him about the two greatest commandments, "You are not far from the kingdom of God."

However, in every one of these examples there is or there is yet to be a conscious response to Yeshua as Messiah. Because God can reveal Himself to someone even as they leave this world, we cannot judge for sure whether someone who has died is in Heaven or not. But we do know that a person who does not believe in Yeshua or who denies Him at the present time has not experienced this rebirth and is not presently saved.

And so, the presence of *conscious faith* is crucial. Paul deals with this extensively in Romans and bases his whole argument for "salvation by faith" on Avram's conscious faith response to God in Genesis 15:6—"And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness." This concept is the very foundation of Paul's theology. In fact, Isaiah many years earlier agrees that volitional belief in this Messianic cornerstone is foundational—"Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: 'Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; *Whoever believes* (emphasis ours) will not act hastily."⁶

Unrecognized Mediation Contradicts the Scriptural Need for the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

A corollary to this need for a rebirth is the necessity for the indwelling *Ruach HaKodesh*, or Holy Spirit. Again in Romans, Paul declares, “But you, you do not identify with your old nature but with the Spirit—provided the Spirit of God is living inside you, *for anyone who doesn’t have the Spirit of the Messiah doesn’t belong to Him* (emphasis ours).”⁷ A person who does not believe in Yeshua cannot have the Spirit of God dwelling in their spirit. Acknowledgement of Yeshua’s reality and Lordship is directly connected with the presence of the indwelling Spirit. “Therefore, I want to make it clear to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says, ‘Yeshua is cursed!’ and no one can say, ‘Yeshua is Lord,’ except by the *Ruach Hakodesh*.”⁸ These texts together make it clear that the presence of the *Ruach Hakodesh* in one’s spirit is directly related to whether one is presently saved.

Belief in Yeshua and the Requirement of Personal Choice

To clarify our Biblical position further, two basic concepts relate to our discussion. The first is the issue of believing in Yeshua for salvation, and the second is the matter of whether or not a personal choice is required.

First, the Bible shows a person cannot believe in God the Father without believing in His Son. These two beliefs go together. When we use the word believe, Biblical belief means intimate personal knowledge. It is not possible to separate the two as many non-messianic Jewish people would say, “We believe in God but not the Son.” This is not possible.

In his writings, John makes this abundantly clear. In John 5:17 he says Yeshua and the Father are working until now, and the implication is they are working together. In chapter 5:22-23, he says all judgment has been given to the Son so all may honor the Son even as they honor the Father, and that those who do not honor the Son do not honor the Father Who sent Him. He continues this idea in 5:36-38 where he states that Yeshua came to do and accomplish the work God gave Him to do. He further states that the Father bears witness to Yeshua and that those who do not do the same have neither heard God’s voice nor have Him abiding in them. This is because they do not believe in Yeshua whom God sent. In John 8:18, 19, he states that God bears witness to the Son; and those who do not acknowledge Him neither know Yeshua nor the Father, for if they knew Yeshua they would know the

Father also. Once more, these two beliefs go together and cannot be separated. John goes further and says in 5:42 that if God was a person's Father, that person would love Yeshua.

The second concept, that one can be saved and be going to heaven without a personal choice in Yeshua in this lifetime, is also foreign to biblical teaching. Both sides of this discussion agree that to believe in Yeshua will give eternal life. The Scriptures also make this clear. John 1:12 states that all who receive Yeshua are given the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name. Also the much quoted John 3:16 states: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Indeed the Scriptures are filled with verses like these. But what about those who do not believe? Can they experience salvation and get to heaven? As much as we would like to say "yes" for many of our family and loved ones, the Scriptures do not give us that option. In John 6:28-29 the Jewish leaders posed a question to Yeshua. They asked Him what one must do to do the works of God. In reality they were asking what we need to do to please God, or what we must do to earn favor or merit with God, so that God will accept us into His presence now and in eternity. Yeshua answers this by saying the only work one can do to be saved and go to heaven is to believe on Himself whom God has sent. John says that this is God's commandment that we believe in His Son, Yeshua the Messiah (I John 3:23). In John 6:53, he states that in order to have life we must partake of Yeshua. In other words one must believe and receive Him as one's Messiah and Savior. I John 5:11-13 states:

"And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue to believe* in the name of the Son of God." (Emphasis ours)

Two last sections in the book of John seem to answer our question fully. They tell us that those who do not believe in Yeshua in this life are lost in their sins, and sin is what condemns us and separates us from God (Isa. 59:1-2; Rom. 3:23) for all eternity. John also goes further to say that before we believe, we already stand judged and condemned because we

have not believed in the Son of God. Not much has to be said about these passages. We will quote them and let them stand on their own.

“Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am *He*, you will die in your sins.” John 8:24

“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” John 3:17, 18

“He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.” John 3:36

It should be mentioned that God can certainly hear the prayers of a person who does not yet have the rebirth and the indwelling Spirit. He can act on that person's behalf. Yeshua can mediate or intercede for that person's salvation and welfare before the throne of God and apart from their knowledge. In addition, as Mark Kinzer himself has pointed out in a recent e-mail, “whatever God does in the world...[Including] whenever God blesses Israel, He does so through Yeshua and in the Spirit”. We would certainly agree with this. But that does not mean that a person can “enter into His presence through [an] unrecognized mediation”⁹ and stand in the place of the spiritually redeemed. There is only one way to do that, and Paul declares it in Romans 5:1-2. “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord [Yeshua HaMashiach], through whom also we have access *by faith* into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” (Emphasis ours)

Dangers of the Unrecognized Mediation Concept

So what dangers might accompany this concept of Unrecognized Mediation? For one thing, it gives us a false notion of spiritual safety concerning our brethren in the traditional Jewish community. According to this teaching, significant numbers of “good” Jews *may be* walking in such a way as to be under the protection of this Unrecognized Mediation. One possible consequence of this teaching is a lack of urgency in communicating the

Good News to them. Another consequence may be a certain prayerlessness for Jewish salvation. Paul's intercessory heart for this very result is expressed boldly in Romans 10:1. "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved." His prayer is based on the understanding that in their present state, non-Messianic Jews are indeed not in a spiritually safe place.

Finally, creating a theological concept that is not taught in Scripture, and is in fact *contrary* to the clear Biblical teaching of the importance of volitional faith, erodes the foundations of Messianic Jewish Theology. From passages in the Tanach like Isaiah 28:16 (quoted above) and 53:10 ("...When you make His soul an offering for sin") to passages in the New Covenant like Romans 10:9 ("...that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Yeshua and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."), the Biblical evidence for a conscious faith encounter as a key part of the individual's salvation experience is indeed foundational.

Endnotes

1. Mark S. Kinzer, *Post-Missionary Messianic Judaism; Redefining Christian Engagement with the Jewish People* (Brazos Press, 2005), 223
2. *Ibid.*, 225
3. Mark S. Kinzer, *Havurah Newsletter* 6:3 (Jews For Jesus, Fall 2003)
4. John 3:3
5. Luke 23:39-43
6. Isaiah 28:16
7. David Stern, *The Complete Jewish Bible* (Jewish New Testament Publications, inc., 1998), Romans 8:9
8. *Ibid.*, 1 Corinthians 12:3
9. Kinzer

IAMCS / MJAA Statement of Faith

WE BELIEVE:

- I. That the **BIBLE**, consisting of the Tenach (Holy Scriptures) and the later writings commonly known as the B'rit Hadasha (New Covenant), is the only infallible and authoritative word of God. We recognize its divine inspiration, and accept its teachings as our final authority in all matters of faith and practice (Deut. 6:4-9; Prov. 3:1-6; Ps. 119:89, 105; Isa. 48:12-16; Rom. 8:14-17; II Tim. 2:15, 3:16-17).
- II. **GOD** - We believe that the Shema, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deut. 6:4), teaches that God is Echad, as so declared: a united one, a composite unity, eternally existent in plural oneness [Gen. 1:1 (Elohim: God); Gen. 1:26 "Let us make man in our image"; Gen. 2:24 Adam & Eve were created to be as one flesh (basar echad)], that He is a personal God who created us (Gen. 1 & 2), and that He exists forever in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as mentioned in Romans 8:14-17 (Father, Spirit, and Messiah - Son) and Matt. 28:18-20 (immersing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).
 - A. **GOD THE FATHER** (Abba) - John 6:27b; I Cor 1:3; Gal. 1:1; Rev. 3:5, 21; Jer. 3:4, 19; 31:9; Mal. 1:6; Matt. 6:9, 32; Luke 10:21-22; John 1:14; 4:23; 5:17-26; 6:28-46; Rom. 8:14-15.
 - B. **GOD THE SON** (HaBen)
 1. God does have a Son [Ps. 2; Prov. 30:4-6 (cf. Heb. 1); Luke 12:35-37; John 1:29-34, 49; 3:14-18].
 2. The Son, called Yeshua (Jesus), meaning salvation, came to this world born of a virgin [Isa. 7:14 (cf. Luke 1:30-35)].
 3. The Son is God (Deity), and is worshipped as God, having existed eternally [Ps. 110:1 (cf. Heb. 1:13); Isa. 9:6-7; Matt. 28:18-20; Phil. 2:5-11; Col. 1:15-19; Rev. 3:21 (Heb. 1 - worshipped by angels); Rev. 4:8, 5:5-14].
 4. This One is the promised Mashiach (Messiah) of Israel [Is. 9:6-7; 11:1; Dan. 9 (esp. verses 20-26); Isa. 53; John 1:17, 40-41, 45, 49; Mark 8:29].
 5. He is the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star (Num. 24:17; Rev. 22:16).
 6. He is our Passover, the Lamb of God (I Cor. 5:7; Rev. 5; John 1:29).
 - C. **GOD THE HOLY SPIRIT** (Ruach HaKodesh)
 1. Introduced in Gen. 1:2b.
 2. In the Tenach, the Spirit of God came upon individuals during the times of our forefathers, like Moses, David (see II Sam. 23:1-3), and the Prophets, for the specific purposes.
 3. In the New Covenant, the Messiah, Yeshua, promised His disciples that "the Comforter" would come to them after He was gone, described as the Spirit of Truth (John 14:17, 26), who was with them and would be in them. Yeshua further declared that the Spirit of Truth, would guide us into all truth and would glorify Him - the Messiah - not Himself (John 16:13-15). He empowers us (Acts 1:8). He seals us [Eph. 1:13; 4:30 (see NIV and Jewish New Testament versions)]. If we have not the Spirit, we are not His (Rom. 8:9). He leads us and teaches us (Rom. 8:14-17). His indwelling enables us to live a godly life. Acts 2:38 says, "Repent, be immersed, and receive the Holy Spirit."

III. MAN

- A. Created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), but:
- B. through disobedience, man fell from his first state and became separated from God (Gen. 2:17; 3:22-24). Therefore, according to the Scriptures, all men are born with a sinful nature (Ps. 14:1-3; 49:7; 53:13; Isa. 64:6; Rom. 3:9-12, 23; 5:12).

- C. Man's only hope for redemption (salvation) is through the atonement made by the Messiah (Lev. 17:11; Isa. 53; Dan. 9:24-26; I Cor. 15:22; Heb. 9:11-14, 28; John 1:12, 3:36), resulting in regeneration by the Holy Spirit (Tit. 3:5), which is the new birth (John 3:3-8). For by grace we are saved through faith, it is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8-9).

IV. RESURRECTION AND JUDGMENT

We believe in the resurrection of both the redeemed and the lost: the former to everlasting life and the latter to eternal separation from God, a state of everlasting punishment (Job 14:14; 19:25-27; Dan. 12:2-3; John 3:36; 11:25-26; Rev. 20:5-6, 10-15; 21:7-8).

V. THE MESSIAH - The Redeemer.

The Scriptures promised two "comings" of the Messiah:

- A. First coming
 - 1. Promised in Dan. 9:24-26.
 - 2. Its purpose was to make an atonement for sin (Dan. 9:24-26; Isa. 53; Rom. 3:21-31; Heb. 9-10; John 3:16-17).
- B. Second coming
 - 1. Promised coming in the air to receive the believers to Himself (I Thess. 4:13-18; John 14:1-6; I Cor. 15:51-57).
 - 2. Messiah's return to the earth.
 - a. The Redeemer shall come to Zion (Isa. 59:20-21; Zech. 14:4).
 - b. Israel's spiritual redemption (Zech. 12:8-13:1; Rom. 11:25-27; Heb. 9:28; Jer. 31:31-40; the New Covenant).
 - c. Israel's national restoration is to recover the remnant of His people Israel from the four corners of the earth, and restore the Davidic Kingdom (Isa. 11 - to re-establish the throne and kingdom of David, which will last forever) [Isa. 9:6-7 (cf. Luke 1:30-33); Jer. 23:3-8].

VI. ISRAEL IN PROPHECY

We believe in God's end-time plan for the nation of Israel and for the world. A central part of Messianic Judaism is the belief in the physical and spiritual restoration of Israel, as taught in the Scriptures. The greatest miracle of our day has been the re-establishment or rebirth of the State of Israel according to prophecy (Ezek. 34:11-31; 36-39; Hos. 3; Amos 9:11-15; Zech. 12-14; Isa. 11; 43; 54; 60-62; 66; Rom. 11:1-34) (see also Scriptures under V. THE MESSIAH).

VII. MESSIANIC JUDAISM

- A. We recognize that Jewish people (physical descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob, whether through the mother's or the father's blood-line) who place their faith in Israel's Messiah, Yeshua, continue to be Jewish according to the Scriptures (Rom. 2:28-29). Gentiles who place their faith in Yeshua, are "grafted into" the Jewish olive tree of faith (Rom. 11:17-25) becoming spiritual sons and daughters of Abraham (Gal. 3:28-29).
- B. We observe and celebrate the Jewish Holy Days given by God to Israel, with their fulfillment in and through the Messiah Yeshua. We believe that true "Biblical Judaism," the faith of first century believers, which we seek to practice, acknowledges the continuity of faith in the one true God, revealed throughout the Scriptures, and ultimately manifested in God's Son, Yeshua the Messiah. We believe that salvation has always been "by faith," and that works of law, or righteous acts, have never saved anyone (Gen. 15:6; Rom. 2-6; Eph. 2:8-9; Heb. 11:6, 39).
- C. We acknowledge that the New Covenant body of believers is composed of both Jews and Gentiles who have received Yeshua the Messiah as the Promised Redeemer. The "middle wall of partition" has been broken down and now we worship the God of Israel together (I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 2:13-14).

Published by the
International Alliance of Messianic Congregations and Synagogues

www.iamcs.org • 1-866-IAMCS-NOW