

Apples of Gold

Zvi Kalisher's life-changing spiritual conversations

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BOW DOWN BEFORE THE LORD

My watch stopped running recently, so I took it to a watchmaker in the ultra-Orthodox section of Jerusalem.

Two Hasidic men entered the watchmaker's shop with me and started to speak about their study of the Talmud in the yeshiva. One of the men told the watchmaker, "Even if you are on vacation, you must study the great rabbis' books."

I listened to them for a long time, and then I decided to enter the conversation. "If you are so faithful to God," I commented, "you should know that study alone will not get you into heaven. You must bow down on your knees and pray to God. If your prayer comes from your heart, God will not ask you why you did not study the Talmud during your vacation."

Even after such a brief statement, they all rose against me. "What are we, Christians, that we should bow down?" one asked.

I replied, "Was Daniel a Christian when he bowed down three times a day before God? Many times in the Bible our great prophets bowed down before the Lord. David wrote in Psalm 95:6, 'Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker.' Was David a Christian? What about his son Solomon? The Scripture says he 'knelt down on his knees before all the assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven; and he said: "LORD God of Israel, there is no God in heaven or on earth like You, who keep Your covenant and mercy with

Your servants” [2 Chr. 6:13–14]. And what about you? On Yom Kippur, you bow down many times and cry ‘Adonai, Adonai.’ If, as you say, only Christians bow down to pray, then you are just like them.”

“Never!” they shouted.

One of the men said, “Our rabbi would be able to answer you.”

I asked, “How is it that you have studied all your lives, and yet you cannot give correct answers about your faith? All of your study is, as King Solomon said, ‘Vanity of vanities...all is vanity’ [Eccl. 1:2].”

These men displayed all the outward signs of being religious, but they were empty inside.

Then they asked, “Why do you try to act so religious? We can tell you are not. You do not pray in the synagogue. You have never studied the Talmud, and you do not even cover your head, yet you want us to do what you say.”

I replied, “I have never said you should do as I say. Everything I have told you is from our own Jewish Scriptures. God has told us to obey the law of the Lord and not to follow other gods, but you are wasting your lives studying the writings and traditions of men.”

The watchmaker then said, “This reminds me of an occasion a few years ago when a man came into my shop and spoke just like you. He was a missionary. Are you one of them?” he asked.

I told him, “I believe in the living God, Messiah Ben-David. You sing about Him every Sabbath, but you do not believe in Him in your heart. Did you know the words Messiah and Christ mean the same thing?”

At this they all jumped around as if they had been bitten by a snake, and they said, "This can never be! We will ask our rabbi!"

I replied, "I will be waiting for his answer." Then I left the shop without getting my watch repaired.

You never know how the Lord will use such a situation, and He has said in Isaiah 55:11 that His Word will not return to Him void. I pray these men will remember our conversation and turn to the Bible, the true Word of God.