

# Only God Can Open the Eyes of the Blind

I love to engage in serious debate and dialogue. It helps to put real issues on the table, it exposes weak positions and faulty reasoning, and it enables onlookers to hear both sides of the topic under discussion. It's biblical too, as referenced several times in Acts (see 9:22; 17:1-3, 16-17; 18:4, 27-28). And these debates often bear real fruit.

A few days ago, I spotted this comment on our YouTube channel: "Hello Dr. Brown. I just wanted to say, I recently left Islam after watching some of your debates with Muslims about Muhammad being in the Bible or not." Thank God!

At the same time, it's very true that some people are not open to reason, and no amount of intellectual presentation will change their minds. The deception is that deep.

It is in this context that I was recently reminded of Paul's words to Timothy, "And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will" (2 Tim. 2:24-26).

This passage came to mind as I was reflecting on the degree to which some people are brainwashed, especially those in various cults. No matter how many verifiable facts you present to them, your words fall on deaf ears. They will believe that two plus two is seven, no matter what you show them because that's what they were told. Plus, they were taught to distrust you as an outsider.

To be sure, there are always obstacles to overcome in any

debate. There can be suspicion. Or hostility. Or misunderstanding. Or miscommunication. But when someone is incapable of dealing with your points rationally, you realize immediately that the battle you are fighting is more spiritual than intellectual.

For example, I have engaged in dialogue, discussion and debate with Jewish rabbis for more than 50 years, and almost all of our interaction has been quite rational. We deeply disagree with each other. We believe that each one is reading the biblical text through a particular, biased lens. But we can challenge one another's interpretation of the Hebrew or use of other sources in intellectually rational terms.

Of course, every debate about Jesus-Yeshua is ultimately spiritual, and in the end, only the Holy Spirit can open someone's eyes to see. But at least you know that you can get someone thinking with rational argument—unless, that is, they are trapped in a cult or so heavily indoctrinated that they have lost the ability to think for themselves.

This can be very frustrating for those of us who love to reason and weigh facts and information. We present historical evidence, but they reject historians. We present indisputable linguistic data, but that's just our interpretation. We present logical, calm arguments, but we're dismissed as being emotional. We speak with love and grace, but we're branded hateful. And on and on it goes.

Again, this is a reminder that our battle is ultimately more spiritual than intellectual and that it is only the Lord who can open the hearts and minds of those who are blinded and deceived. Thank God that He hears our prayers and reaches out to people in their lostness and blindness (He did that for me, for sure).

These days, I'm frequently reminded of all this in my interactions with the so-called Hebrew Israelites, especially

the more extreme factions among them. They bear all the elements of a race-based, hate-filled, religious cult, including the inability to interact rationally. They will also parrot what their leaders say, which is another characteristic of a cult. (This does *not* refer to all Hebrew Israelites. There is a lot of variety among them.)

So, for example, in the opening comments of my debate with the leader of the radical Sicarii sect, I quoted or referenced nine different biblical verses, putting several of them on the screen in both Hebrew and English. In fact, I started my formal arguments by reading a relevant verse which I posted in Hebrew and English. I also cited several academic studies and scholarly references, by name.

Yet I see comments like this all the time from those in the Hebrew Israelite camp: "Why Brown not quoting a single verse from the Bible?" Or this: "Dr. Brown is not giving us any references. He is just talking."

That is spiritual blindness.

I say, "Here's what the Bible says," and they reply, "Why don't you ever quote the Bible?"

I say, "Here's what history and archeology and linguistics and DNA say," and they reply, "Why are you just spouting your emotions?"

This reminds me of an interaction I had with a Hebrew Israelite on a New York City subway more than 30 years ago.

I saw him pouring through the Bible with an intense focus and assumed he was a fellow believer. When I began to interact with him, he told me that he was Yoseph ben Yisrael (or a name similar to that). Then he pointed to a paragraph in the introduction to his Bible.

It stated that in the New Testament, there are many allusions

to Old Testament verses. He looked at me with intensity in his eyes and said, "You see? It's all illusions!"

That's about as far as our discussion got. For him, an allusion was an illusion.

Others, in whatever group they're in, are simply lost in a world of fantasy, like this recent commenter who stated, "This Dr. is telling a Bold Face LIE. The only HEBREW was Abraham. There has never been a Hebrew people in history until as recent as 1800's. God never called His People Hebrew, Israelite or Jew. He called His people by His own name and I am not going to reveal to swine's that they may turn and rend me."

All of this can be refuted in a matter of seconds by searching your Bibles for the words Hebrew(s), Israelite(s) and Jew(s). Yet this individual is so deceived as to think I'm the one lying. How do you reason with someone like this?

One of my recent videos debunks the notion that the Lord's name in Hebrew (or Aramaic) was Yahshua. (Of course, it was Yeshua. The name Yahshua never existed in Hebrew.)

In response, someone posted: "How interesting that I have access to 84 different translations of Scripture that all use the name Yahuah and Yahusha. It is also recorded an ancient artifacts and temples throughout the world. Clearly Dr. Brown you don't know what you're talking about."

But of course.

These are 84 translations which no one on the planet has ever seen before, coupled with fictitious archeological finds "throughout the world." And, of course, I have no idea what I'm talking about, despite presenting factual, non-controversial evidence of the ancient Hebrew, Greek and Syriac texts in my video. Of course!

That's why we must remember the spiritual nature of our battle. Only God can open the eyes of the blind.

So, yes, apologetics is very important for many reasons, and by the Lord's grace, I will continue to engage in the defense of the faith on many fronts.

At the same time, I understand that the greatest battles will be won on our knees at the throne of God. Hear our cries, Father, and set the captives free! {eo}

**Dr. Michael Brown** () is the host of the nationally syndicated Line of Fire radio program. His latest book is "The Political Seduction of the Church: How Millions of American Christians Have Confused Politics with the Gospel." Connect with him on Facebook, Twitter or YouTube.