

PART 1 Typical Jewish Objections to the Gospel

If Jesus is the Messiah, why didn't the Jewish Prophets write of him?

We get many letters from our supporters about their personal contacts with Jewish people. There have been so many requests as to how to share the Gospel with their Jewish friends that we are going to provide you with a regular column with practical ways to share your faith and insights in dealing with some of the typical objections that your Jewish friends will bring up as you share with them. We suggest that you save these issues of our newsletter so they will be available for you when questions come up in your conversations.

We will begin with a simple outline for the essentials of the Gospel dealing with the objection, "If Jesus is the Messiah, why didn't the Jewish Prophets write of him?" The church calls one such outline the "Romans Road" because the essentials of the presentation come from the book of Romans. I like to call this outline the "Isaiah Trail" because it comes foundationally from the Book of Isaiah.

The Isaiah Trail

(All Older Covenant Scriptures are from the Jewish Publication DavkaWriter translation into English done in Israel by a team of translators under Yechezkel Shatz, New Covenant Scriptures from the NASB)

1. God's desire for us is to have joy. *"You will show me the path of life; in your presence is fulness of joy; at your right hand there are pleasures for evermore."* (Psalm 16:11) God wants us to experience peace as well. *"You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you; because he trusts in you."* (Isa 26:3)

God's desire for us is that we not only experience peace and enjoy fellowship in His presence but also that we be His friend. One example of such a relationship was the one enjoyed by Abraham. *"But you, Israel, are my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend."* (Isa 41:8) *"Are you not our God, who drove out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and gave it to the seed of Abraham your friend for ever?"* (2 Chr 20:7) If this is God's desire for us, what prevents us from experiencing this abundant and joyful relationship?

2. Man has separated himself from God. When we sin we separate ourselves from God. *"Your eyes are too pure to behold evil, you can not look on iniquity. Why do you look upon those who deal treacherously, and are silent when the wicked swallows the man more righteous than he?"* (Hab 1:13)

The Jewish Scriptures tell us that all of us have sinned before God. *"For there is not a just man upon earth, that does good, and does not sin."* (Eccl 7:20) *"He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with sickness; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not."* (Psalm 53:3)

3. God is a loving God. *"Who is a God like you, who pardons iniquity, and passes over the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He does not retain his anger for ever, because he delights in mercy."* (Micah 7:18) *"The Lord your God is in your midst; a mighty one who saves, he will rejoice over you with joy; he will be silent in his love, he will joy over you with singing."* (Zephaniah 3:17)

While clearly the Jewish Scriptures teach that God is a loving God, the same Scriptures teach that He is a just and righteous God and must punish sin. *"The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, to the third and to the fourth generation."* (Exodus 34:6-7) *"But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you, that he will not hear."* (Isaiah 59:2)

Man cannot make himself good enough for God. Most people believe that this sin and separation can be removed by our own efforts, such as prayer, repentance, and good deeds. Religion is man's effort to reach up to God and to cover or atone for his transgressions by his religious or kind and generous activities. Our good works cannot make us right with God. *"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteous actions are as filthy rags; and we all fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none who calls upon your name, who stirs up himself to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have consumed us, because of our iniquities."* (Isaiah 64:5-6) *"There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end are the ways of death."* (Proverbs 14:12)

It is not what we do that makes us right with God but rather what we believe that makes us right with God. This is what God loved about Abraham. *"And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness."* (Genesis 15:6) The Hebrew root of

righteous is “tsadik” which is the Jewish equivalent of “saint.” It was not what Abraham did that made Him a tsadik but rather that He first believed God’s word and then acted on His word. God declared Abraham righteous because he believed God’s word; so too must we. *“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on you; because he trusts in you.”* (Isaiah 26:3)

Man’s religion and his own effort or actions are not sufficient to remove our sin and the barrier that is the result. God must take the action, He must provide for us.

4. We need to place our faith in the atonement God provided. God who is a loving God and does not desire to punish man also is a Holy and just God and must punish sin; if there was no punishment then there would be no justice. God’s love and justice are met in the sacrificial system given by God to Moses.

The Tabernacle and later the Temple provided God’s appointed way to be brought back into fellowship with the Lord. The sacrificial system was given so that man might have atonement for his sins. *“For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul”.* (Leviticus 17:11 NIV) The innocent animal was a substitute dying in the place of the one who had sinned. God’s justice was met in that sin was punished, but mercy was found in the substitute of an animal. God did not delight in the death of the animals, but wanted man to understand the cost of his sin. When a person became unholy through his sins, God required him to kill an animal for atonement so that he would become aware of the penalty of His sin.

This offering could not be done anywhere, it had to be offered at the place and in the way that God designated. Initially it was in the Tabernacle in the wilderness after the Jewish people received the Law at Mt. Sinai. Later, under King Solomon, a Temple was built as a permanent sanctuary where God would accept our sacrifices as a covering for our sins. In 70 AD a great tragedy occurred, the Temple was destroyed. There now was no longer an acceptable place to offer our sacrifices.

5. God has provided an acceptable sacrifice for us today. The prophet Isaiah in vivid detail gave us a clear picture of One who would come to provide atonement for us today.

Behold, my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonished at you; saying His appearance is too marred to be that of a man, and his forms to be that of the sons of men; So shall he startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at him; for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they perceive.

Who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he

grew up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground; he had no form nor comeliness that we should look at him, there was no countenance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with sickness; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our sicknesses, and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, struck by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded because of our transgressions, he was bruised because of our iniquities; his sufferings were that we might have peace; and by his injury we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, but he humbled himself and opened not his mouth; he was brought like a lamb to the slaughter, and like a sheep, that is dumb before its shearers, he did not open his mouth. By oppression and false judgment was he taken away; and of his generation who considered? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people.

And they made his grave among the wicked, and his tomb among the rich; although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to crush him by sickness; if his soul shall consider it a reward for guilt, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the purpose of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.

He shall see the labor of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge did my servant justify the righteous One to the many, and did bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the plunder with the strong; because he has poured out his soul to death; and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 52:13-53:1-12)

The New Covenant declares that this promised Servant is Jesus.

6. We need to receive this sacrifice which was a gift to us. In the Older Covenant, God graciously gave us the gift of the priesthood to offer our sacrifices to God. *“And I, behold, I have taken your brothers the Levites from among the people of Israel; to you they are given as a gift for the Lord, to do the service of the Tent of Meeting”.* (Numbers 18:6) In much the same way God has given us once again the gift of a priest who would intercede for us. Jesus the Messiah, who is described in the New Covenant as our High Priest was given to us as a gift from God. In order for us to be reconciled to God, we must receive God’s gift to us and that is receiving His atonement for us.

7. This gift is received by faith and repentance. The kind of faith that makes us just before God is not just intellectual assent, or temporal trusting God for things in this life, such as health. It is transferring faith from our efforts to earn heaven, to the Person of the Messiah Jesus, who died for our sins. Repentance means two things. First acknowledgment of our sinful actions, which includes our thoughts, our words, and our deeds; and second turning from our own way to God's way by allowing Him to bear our sin.

God's provision for our sins both in Old and New Covenants was given to us by Him—not the result of our own efforts. We deserved judgment, but in His love He provided us a way to return to Him. Once we receive this gift he endows us with His presence by taking up residence in us through His Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit).

In the Older Covenant the Temple was the location where God's Ruach HaKodesh resided. His priests served in the Temple on behalf of His covenant people, Israel. When the New Covenant came, God placed His Spirit in His people. *"Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?"* (1 Corinthians 3:16) His Spirit enables us to serve His people in this day. All who have received God's gift of atonement and forgiveness are appointed as New Covenant priests. *"You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus the Messiah."* (1 Peter 2:5)

As we read the Scriptures we learn more of His ways and as we fellowship with His children we grow in our roles as priests. *"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!"* (Psalm 133:1) Once this gift has been received, God promises us in His word that we have received eternal life. *"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life".* (1 John 5:13)

Roy Schwarcz



Middle East Ministries PO Box 340 Marshall, VA 20116
Tel: 540/364-1103 Fax: 540/340-1509
e-mail: ljaffrey@MiddleEastMinistries.org web: MiddleEastMinistries.org