

# PART 15

## Typical Jewish Objections to the Gospel

### Why do Christians feel compelled to evangelize Jews?

The Jewish people have a valid covenant with God according to the scriptures.

The New Covenant mandates Christians and the church to bring the gospel to the Jewish people because "The gospel... is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (Romans 1:16).

This truth of God's Word is the foundation of why faithful Christians seek to bring the message of Jesus to the Jewish people. However, many Jews as well as Christians condemn the entire epistle of Romans on the grounds that it is a denial of the covenant relationship between God and the Jewish people.

In fact some of the strongest supporters of the idea that Jewish people don't need Jesus for salvation are those who claim to be Christian. They have embraced a "dual covenant" theology. This theology embraces a valid covenant for salvation for Israel by virtue of the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

A central issue in the debate is to have a balanced and theologically sound understanding of Judaism and the Jewish people. Our Messiah was a Jew — a fully observant Jew — and not a Christian. Consequently, Christianity, which began life as a "school" or "sect" of Judaism, is itself Jewish both in origin and in concept.

Paul taught, and Gentile converts came to believe, that it was not necessary to

be obedient to Torah (the "Law") in order to merit salvation. Initially they were not averse to Jews remaining faithful to Torah but gradually that changed, so that the message became, in effect: Jews must stop following Torah in order to be a faithful Christian. Eventually a line was drawn between Christians and Jews: you can be one or the other but not both. From the Christian side that meant Jews were excluded from the possibility of salvation. From the Jewish side it eventually raised the question as to whether or not Jews who became Christians would have a "portion in the world to come."

For centuries Christians knew themselves to be "not Jews." Jews were thought to be killers of Christ, killers of God Incarnate. Jews were everything Christians were not. They were considered avaricious, venomous idolaters. But, worst of all, they refused to agree that Jesus was the promised messiah as foretold by their own prophets and that Gentiles could enter into the covenant with God without obedience to the Law of God, the Torah.

The idea that the messiah could be the vehicle for abrogation of the Torah was not only offensive to Jews, it was totally beyond comprehension. In the face of that rejection, the preeminent Christian claim became that Christians were now the sole heirs to the covenant, that the church was the "new

## Why do Christians feel compelled to evangelize Jews? continued

Israel," and that the remnants of the "old Israel" were false and presumptuous in their stubborn insistence that God's covenant remained with them.

In the face of the atrocities that have occurred from those who claimed to be Christian, a major theological shift began. In the last century Vatican II affirmed and prominent protestant theologians embraced the idea that the Jewish people's covenant with God was valid. On the other hand, because most Christians and the church generally have forgotten the essential Jewishness of their faith, they tend to place the attempt to evangelize Jews in the same category as missionary efforts among people of other religions or of no religion.

Most Christians today do not think about the Jewish people in theological terms. Christians have viewed Jews as

(1) candidates for conversion and/or  
(2) persecuted people who, because they are human beings loved by God, should be defended. The second perspective has given pause to Christians in evangelizing Jewish people.

The Jewish community has characterized Jewish evangelism as a type of holocaust. Since anti-semitism is universally condemned by Christians, this is sometimes a reason for resistance to evangelize Jewish people. But the truth of the matter is that to not evangelize the Jewish

people would be even more anti-semitic. There is nothing more Jewish than the Good News, which proclaims the very hope of Israel.

So we need to ask and answer whether the Bible teaches that there is a different way of salvation for the Jewish people than for the Gentile. The answer is clearly no!

Genesis 12:1-3 is not only a covenant about the nation of Israel and the land of Israel but it is also foundationally about a descendant. In fact, the rabbis teach that all the Law and the Prophets were for nothing but the days of the Messiah. It is the descendant who would come from Abraham that would bless all nations! The argument of Galatians 3 which quotes this Genesis passage is clear — it is referring to the salvation which only the Messiah of Israel can bring.

The Jewish prophet in Isaiah 53 makes it quite clear that the promised descendant was the "servant of the Lord" and that He would be the One Who would save Israel and the nations from the consequences of their sins. The pronouns in this chapter are not plural — so they do not refer to the nation of Israel which is also described as the "servant of the LORD" but speak of the Messiah alone! Verse 6 of Isaiah 53 says "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all" which foundationally speaks of Israel and by extension, everyone who would put their faith in Him. In Isaiah 45:21ff.,

we are told to look to Him to find salvation. The Psalmist tells us in Psalm 2:12 that we must come to the Anointed One ("anointed" is literally Messiah in Hebrew) if we want to avoid perishing.

The Messiah came to fulfill Torah by becoming the Living Torah who died in our place so that everyone, Jew and Gentile, could obtain eternal life. In John 14:6, Yeshua said, "I am the Way - and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through me." Yeshua was speaking to the Jewish people when He said these words. The God of Israel promised the Jewish people that He would make a new covenant with them in Jeremiah 31:31 and the Messiah was the messenger of this new covenant (Mal. 3; Luke 22:20).

Part of the Jewish liturgy spoken every Shabbat (Sabbath) is that a day is coming that every knee will bow and every tongue will acknowledge that God is Lord of all. Yeshua is that Lord, He is Lord for Jew and for Gentile and there is no other name given among men by which they can experience atonement (Acts 4:12).

There has always been only one way to God — the way He provided. That's not politically correct, but it's true!

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