

Pastor-teacher Don Hargrove  
Faith Bible Church  
Tuesday, February 01, 2011  
<http://fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

JEWISH APOLOGETICS (13)  
ANSWERING JEWISH OBJECTION #4  
(DDR #632)

**Objection #4: “Doesn’t belief in Jesus mean you’re no longer Jewish? As I understand it, belief in Jesus and Jewishness in any form are incompatible”**

Note Brown’s excellent comment on this objection:

You have unknowingly repeated one of the great lies of the Inquisition, namely, that one can be faithful to Jesus only by totally repudiating one’s Jewishness. To the contrary, everything about belief in Jesus was and is Jewish, in the purest and most biblical sense of the world.<sup>1</sup>

These first few questions are all variations of the same theme. In this objection, someone is thinking of Jewishness in terms of Judaism as a religion and not just ethnicity. Why would a Jew think that being a Jew is incompatible with Jesus? One reason is because of Roman Catholic church history where if one became a Christian, he had to renounce all forms of Judaism. Furthermore, how can a “religion” that goes around killing Jews in Jesus’ name be Jewish? If you were a biblical Jew following the Tanakh what would be some of the things important to God in terms of your lifestyle? They would include the Sabbath observance, circumcision, dietary laws, biblical calendar, respect for Jewish tradition and the rabbis. Unless you were a Jew, who was part of the Messianic Judaism, as a church going Jew you would worship on Sunday rather than Saturday, you would not keep the dietary laws, the biblical calendar has been

---

<sup>1</sup>Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: General and Historical Objections*, 1ST ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000), 7. In this work, Brown lists the objection, which is followed by his short response, which is followed by a more detailed response. This DDR series, for the most part, tracks the objection and his *short* response, after which you will find my comments. I highly recommend his book if you are interested in his detailed response (far too much material to include in the DDRs).

displaced with the church holy days and traditions—all of these changes certainly do not particularly seem Jewish.

There is quite a dichotomy in church history and in Jewish practice. Then there is the theology of Trinity that seems like there are “three gods.” There is also the problem with the concept that the Messiah would actually be God. I am just trying to get you to see where the Jew might have difficulty seeing Christianity as a fulfillment of Judaism given the history of the church, the setting aside of Jewish tradition, the different lifestyle (head not covered, work on Sabbath, beard) and the “new” theology (new at least from many Jewish perspectives). If all of these things are foreign, then one can understand how one would see Judaism and Christianity as different. Where is the connection? To many the idea of being Jewish and not keeping the Sabbath is incoherent. To be Jewish means that you keep the Sabbath and the various traditions. If you do not live out the “Jewish life,” then you can’t be Jewish. How would you feel if I recommended a website, *Jews for Allah*? How would you feel about a website, *Christians for Allah*? The movement *Jews for Jesus* (a prominent Messianic movement) has the same kind of ring to many. The only way to correct this problem is to show who Jesus/Yeshua really is and what it means to be a follower of Him. It is also helpful to show where some church traditions have deviated from biblical traditions, i.e. Christmas trees, and Easter bunnies. In many respects, the church has departed from its Jewish roots and replaced them with paganism, like the Easter bunny and eggs (a boiled egg is used by some Christians to teach the Trinity or the tomb of Christ—ugh!).

According to the book of Acts, how did the Jewish followers of Jesus live in terms of Jewish practice of the Law? They went to the Temple for prayer. Jesus went to the synagogues. The Jewish Christians continued to go to the synagogues until they were put out by Jews, who

did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah. Furthermore, just to challenge your thinking: why do we refer to it as the early church? Doesn't this terminology imply something foreign? Take the term for church—*ekklesia*. Guess how William Tyndale translated it—"congregation." As we have seen at FBC of late, the term means "assembly/congregation." The word "church" in our culture refers to a physical building and usually something that is "Christian." In sum, "church" is simply the wrong way of translating *ecclesia*. The reason that it was translated "church" was because one of the principles of the translators of the King James Bible was to use old ecclesiastical language like church instead of an assembly. *Ekklesia* refers to a people and not a building whereas *church* generally connotes a building. "Church" is a bad translation—it should not be in any English Bible. "Assembly/congregation" is what the term means and that is how it should have been translated! There is absolutely no excuse for this mistranslation!

The book of James really is the Book of Jacob ("Ἰακωβος/Iakobos" in 1:1) and in Jacob 5:14 it should read "He should call for the elders of the congregation [not the church]." Furthermore, in Jacob 2:2 where we have "for if any man comes into your assembly/*sunagoge*," "assembly" is the word for synagogue and yet hardly any English translation translates it as synagogue (one exception is the Complete Jewish Bible Translation). Jacob writes to the congregation of Jews, who met in a synagogues—why don't "our" English translations say that? The result is that we have a movement that sounds a lot less Jewish—and this will lead to horrendous problems throughout church history.

The book of Jude really is the book of Judas. Names have certain associations. There was a time when someone heard the name Tiger Woods he would think of excellence in golf, now the name brings in other scandalous associations. O.J. Simpson at one time brought in the idea of excellence in football and Hertz rental cars (as per commercials), but now his name brings in all

kinds of horrible stuff as he is seen as a murderer who beat the system. When the name Hitler is mentioned, connotations of a murdering "monster" comes to mind. By the way, the Swastika is not an anti-Semitic sign. They are all over India today as a religious symbol for good luck. The point of all of this is that names bring certain connotations and by stripping out the Jewish names and thus influence, Christianity has chopped itself away from its Jewish roots:

Romans 11:17-21 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree,<sup>18</sup> do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, *remember that* it is not you who supports the root, but the root *supports* you.<sup>19</sup> You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in."<sup>20</sup> Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear;<sup>21</sup> for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you.

Consider the ramifications of the Roman *Church* cutting itself off from its Jewish roots, namely its Inquisition. The Inquisition went on in a number of countries for centuries, in some cases into the 1800s, and brought about torture and death to untold tens of thousands of people. The best scholarship today has shown that the main catalyst for this persecution was the Catholic Church's rejection of all Jewish practices (which are found in the Old Testament). I recall a while back when I was doing some research on the legends of a Jewish pope, how many Catholics were frantic with their blogs and discussions writing to their Catholic apologists saying, in one way or another, "please tell me that this [a Jewish pope] is not true. . . This would be horrific!" Had they not heard that *their* first pope was the very Jewish apostle Peter?

There were also the Crusades which began at the end of the eleventh century, where many Jews were martyred rather than believe in Catholicism. They were exiled from their countries for refusal to be baptized. Some converted outwardly and continued to live privately as Jews. When it was discovered that some really did not mean it, Jews were made to "prove it" by violating Jewish laws.

Faith in Jesus/Yeshua is Jewish and as a matter of fact, many ethnic Jews, who were formerly atheists, after believing in Yeshua have returned to Israel where they returned to a Jewish lifestyle as saved believers. It was faith in Yeshua that has awakened the sense of identity with the Jewish people. It only happened because of faith in Yeshua.

What we will unpack throughout this series is how the fundamental facts of Judaism are in complete harmony with the New Testament. It is the “Christian” packaging that has made the Jewishness of Christianity seem alien and even contrary. What needs to be emphasized is this assembly, this new congregation which Christ promised to build (Matt. 16:18), has continuity with the old. It is grander in that it includes Jew and Gentile, and it is going to be indwelt with the Holy Spirit and be worldwide as a body of the Messiah. It is the discontinuity and then the adding of church traditions that have caused untold misunderstandings and problems.

After forty days of the resurrected Lord teaching the disciples, we have their question recorded in Acts 1:6-8:<sup>2</sup>

**Acts 1:6** And so when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" <sup>7</sup> He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; <sup>8</sup> but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

The way this is normally taken by many Christian commentators is that this is a rebuke to the disciples for being so “earthly minded.” To the contrary, their question reveals that He has been teaching them about the Millennium during forty days after His resurrection.

---

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Ryrie Study Bible notes on this passage, “There is no rebuke in Christ’s answer, for God is not through with Israel, and the kingdom will eventually come (Rom. 11:26). In the meantime, the gospel must be preached throughout the whole world (v. 8).”

By understanding the Jewish roots of Christianity, we can have a more accurate view of Christianity and avoid allowing church traditions to get in the way of more holistic view of Christianity and in the way of our attempts to reach Jews for Jesus.

Wishing you a blessed time with your family in this inclement weather,

Pastor Don

**Numbers 6:25** The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you; <sup>26</sup> The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.'