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<http://fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

JEWISH APOLOGETICS (9)
Key Differences between Talmudic Judaism and Christianity
(DDR #628)

Although Talmudic Judaism and Christianity have the Tanakh (Old Testament) in common, and although Christianity was, in fact, a first-century Jewish sect, there are number of fundamental differences between the New Testament Messianic faith and the Talmudic rabbinic faith. The following is taken almost exclusively from Dr. Michael Brown's lectures through Southern Evangelical Seminary.

God— Judaism believes in God's absolute unity; Christianity believes in God's tri-unity. Judaism believes that it is acceptable for Gentiles to worship God as Trinity but states that for a Jew, it is idolatrous, especially since this includes the worship of Jesus. Judaism emphasizes God's complete incorporeality (i.e. that He has no bodily form of any kind); many in Christianity puts less emphasis on His incorporeal nature.

Messiah—Judaism believes that the Messiah, who will be fully human, is yet to come, although there are Jewish traditions that indicate that there is a potential Messiah in each generation. This Messiah will regather the Jewish exiles, fight the wars of the Lord, rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem and bring about universal peace and knowledge of God. Christianity believes that the Messiah, who was both fully human and fully divine—the Word incarnate, the Son of God—came two thousand years ago to die for our sins, rising from the dead and sending God's Spirit to the earth to continue His mission. He will return at the end of the age to establish His Kingdom on the earth, destroy God's enemies, and bring about universal peace and the knowledge of God.

Sin—Judaism believes that every human being has a battle between the good inclination and the evil inclination, but it does not believe in the doctrine of “original sin,” emphasizing instead that through the power of repentance, the evil inclination can be overcome. Christianity believes that Adam’s fall affected the entire human race, that the best of us fall infinitely short of God’s glory and perfection, and only through the blood of Jesus, the Messiah, can we be spiritually transformed.

Salvation—Judaism does not hold to the concept of individual salvation. Judaism thinks more corporately than does Christianity, and even though the concept of forgiveness of sins and atonement is important, there is no such concept of “being saved” or “getting saved” in Judaism, and there is much less emphasis on the afterlife.

Atonement—Although traditional Jews pray daily for the rebuilding of the Temple and the restoration of the animal sacrifices (Reform Jews have removed such petitions from their prayer book), Judaism does not believe blood atonement is essential for personal atonement. Rather, repentance, good deeds, prayer and personal suffering (seen, at times, as a payment for sin) take the place of sacrifices. Christianity teaches that atonement can only come through the substitutionary death of the Messiah.

Afterlife—While Judaism recognizes that this world is the vestibule to the world to come, and while there is daily prayer for the coming of the Messiah and the Messianic age, the primary emphasis in Judaism is on the present world, the here and now, in keeping with the emphasis in the Tanakh. Christianity sees the world to come—specifically, heaven and hell—as being of paramount importance, to the point that a way we are called to live in this world can only make complete sense in the light of eternity. While there is a wholesome appreciation of life in this world, it is not to be separated from the world to come.

Creed vs. Deed—Judaism has basic creeds. There are fundamental, essential beliefs in Judaism. The greater emphasis, however, is put on deeds—specifically, observing the commandments of the Torah, as understood and passed on through the traditions. Christianity also puts an emphasis on good works (cf. Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:14), but stresses the importance of a transformed life, but its *greater* emphasis is put on holding to the essentials of the faith, from which a transformed life and good works (divine production) will naturally emanate. Thus it is sometimes said that Judaism emphasizes orthopraxy; Christianity emphasizes orthodoxy. Christianity the religion of the creed, but Judaism is the religion of the deed. However, these statements are somewhat exaggerated.

Mission—Both Jews and Christians feel a calling to be a light to the world and to make God known, but that sense of mission is worked out very differently in Judaism and Christianity. The former places its emphasis on being faithful to the Jewish calling, meaning living according to Torah and rabbinic traditions, praying the communal prayers and studying the sacred text. In so doing, the example of the Jewish people will ultimately enlighten the world. Christianity feels a sacred calling to make the message of salvation through all available means, including the witness of the life, and sharing the Good News about Jesus to everyone. Thus, Christianity has always had “missionaries,” while that has not been the norm for more than 1,900 years in Judaism.

Calendar—Judaism is much more committed to a daily, weekly, and annual life cycle than is Christianity, and therefore Jewish life revolves around the calendar more than does Christianity, which puts a greater emphasis on individual relationship with God and life in the Spirit than on the ordered lifestyle of a religious community.

So Blessed to be So Safe and Sound In Him,

Pastor Don

Romans 8:38 For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.