

Why Not Judaism for Jews and Christianity for Gentiles?

In the midst of the ongoing controversy concerning GOD TV's new Hebrew speaking channel in Israel, a larger question has emerged. Is it right for Christians to share their faith with Jews? After all, the Jewish people were chosen by God and have the Torah and their traditions. Why try to "convert" them to an alien faith, especially in light of centuries of "Christian" anti-Semitism? Why not leave the Jewish people with their faith and offer Jesus to the Gentiles?

As attractive and irenic as this sounds, it cannot work for one fundamental reason. If Jesus is who He and His followers claimed Him to be—the Messiah of Israel—then Jewish people around the world should follow Him. All Jews should be Jews for Jesus!

And if He wasn't who He and His followers claimed Him to be—if He was not the Messiah of Israel—then no one should follow Him. There should be no Gentiles for Jesus, no Christians on the planet.

It's either all or nothing at all. The words of Jesus and the words of the rest of the New Testament leave us with no other choice.

Some scholars and religious leaders suggest that, although Jesus was Jewish His mission was to make the God of Israel known to the nations. So, Jews would follow Judaism while Gentiles would follow Christianity, and Jews could express their appreciation for this beautiful faith for the nations.

Christians, for their part, would not try to convince Jews to believe in Jesus, since His message was for the Gentiles, not for His fellow Jews. Everyone could live happily ever after.

But again, that's not what the New Testament says in passage after passage. Instead, from beginning to end, it claims that Yeshua (Jesus) came as Israel's Messiah, because of which He was also the Savior of the world.

Consequently, if Yeshua was not the Messiah of Israel, then He was not the Savior of the world. He was a deceiver, not a prophet; a fraud, not a messenger sent by God. And if He did not fulfill the ancient prophecies of Moses and Isaiah and others, then His Jewish people were right in rejecting Him and the nations should not listen to Him. If He was not Israel's Messiah, then Christianity is a lie.

To summarize the evidence of the New Covenant (New Testament) writings:

–Yeshua was called “King of the Jews” at His birth and at His death (Matt. 2:2; 27:37).

–Matthew's Gospel introduced Him as “Yeshua the Messiah, son of David, son of Avraham” (Matt. 1:1, CJB).

–He was given the title “rabbi,” not “reverend” (John 9:2).

–He said He did not come to abolish the Torah or Prophets but to fulfill them (Matt. 5:17-20).

–He wore the fringes on His garments, as prescribed by the Torah (Luke 8:44, ESV, RSV, NASB, TLV).

–He said His first mission was to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 10:5-6, 15:24, MEV).

–He said His message should be declared to all nations, beginning in Jerusalem (Luke 24:45b-47).

–When His first followers discovered Him, they exclaimed, “We've found the One that Moses in the *Torah*, and also the prophets, wrote about—Yeshua of Natzeret, the son of Joseph!” (John 1:45, TLV).

–According to the writers of the Gospels, Yeshua’s birth, life, death and Resurrection were all predicted in the Tanakh (read Matthew).

–After His resurrection, Yeshua said to two of His followers (who had doubted that He would rise), “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” (Luke 24:25–26, NIV).

–Not long after that, Yeshua spoke to His 11 core disciples, saying, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you—everything written concerning Me in the Torah of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (Luke 24:44, TLV).

–Several weeks later, speaking to a large crowd in Jerusalem at Shavuot (Pentecost), Peter said, “And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days” (Acts 3:24, ESV).

This is just the small tip of a very large (Jewish) iceberg, leading to one inescapable conclusion: either Yeshua the Jew is the Messiah of Israel or He is the Savior of no one. You cannot have a Jesus for the Gentiles and another Messiah for the Jews. It simply will not work.

That doesn’t mean Christians should try to force their faith on their Jewish friends and co-workers. God forbid. Hopefully, we have learned something from centuries of church-sponsored persecution of the Jewish people.

There should always be respect and love as we share our faith, and we should be quick to listen and slow to speak. At the same time, we must not accept the false dichotomy that Jesus is for the Gentiles and not for the Jews. That would turn the entire New Testament on its head.

To the contrary, the gospel remains the power of God for

salvation for everyone who believes, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile (Rom. 1:16).

As a Jewish man myself, I am eternally grateful that Christians did not withhold the gospel from me in 1971. There was no greater gift they could have possibly given me in time and eternity.

Let the message go forth!

(Some of this chapter was adapted and excerpted from Michael L. Brown, Resurrection: Investigating a Rabbi from Brooklyn, a Preacher from Galilee and an Event that Changed the World.)