

The Only Way to Break Down the Wall Between Jews and Christians

One of the most difficult issues for Christians and Jews to navigate is how to relate to each other while the proverbial 800-pound gorilla is in the room.

What's the 800-pound gorilla? The desire on the part of Christians to evangelize Jews, and the sensitivity Jews have about uninvited conversion efforts. As one Jew stated several years ago, "Christians have to understand Jews did not volunteer to become participants in the final act of a play they didn't write."

As a suggestion to certain Christians, it might be helpful to reconsider looking at Jews with tunnel vision, singularly focused on "converting" them. Rather, Jews should be accepted and loved for who they are and the unique role they have in the Lord's plan for our redemption. If a Jewish person senses he or she is the focus of an overt conversion attempt, the 800-pound gorilla will immediately dominate the picture, keeping the wall between them firmly intact. Such efforts do more to divide rather than unite us.

It seems many Christians have forgotten or haven't been taught very much about the Jews or their contributions that have had great significance, which includes being foundational to Christianity.

Lest We Forget

After the Lord created the world, He made two important decisions:

1. He chose to establish a relationship with humanity.

2. The Jewish people are the ones to whom He chose to reveal himself and with whom He chose to enter into covenant.

Yet, many Christians believe, the Lord has broken that covenant and replaced the Jews with Christians and the church. This belief is known as supercessionism, or “replacement theology.” Here’s a news flash for those who adhere to this: It’s not true! Confirmation that the Jews haven’t been rejected is in Romans 11:1-2. Moreover nothing in Scripture supports the Jews being replaced. It’s “replacement theology” itself which should be replaced.

Sabbath/Shabbat

It is the Jews with whom the Lord established the Shabbat (Sabbath), which is the seventh day-Saturday. Scripture has no reference to it being changed to Sunday. That was introduced by the Roman Catholic Church in the fourth century, as part of an intentional effort by the fledgling (now official) religion to rid itself of any association with its Jewish birth. Could it be the most powerful empire in the world needed to ensure it did not adopt religious traditions of the people whom they conquered? Heaven forbid! Thus, in 336 Council of Laodicea officially made the change from Saturday to Sunday, which many refer to as the “Lord’s Day.”

Don’t get me wrong, it’s perfectly fine to worship on Sunday, or any day for that matter, however we should not lose sight that in Exodus 20 the fourth Commandment says “remember the day, *Shabbat* (Sabbath), to set it apart for God. This is the seventh day following the six days the Lord created the world. He then rested on the seventh day.” The seventh day is Saturday.

Torah

Contrary to what many have been taught, Jesus did not abolish Torah. In Matthew 5. He says twice He did not come to abolish

it. Many think when He says He came to “fulfill” this means it then became null and void. The very next verse confirms this is not what He meant. He says “Yes indeed, I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a letter or stroke will pass from the Torah—not until everything that must happen has happened” (Matt. 5:18, CJB). Does that sound like it’s done away with it? In plain language He is saying the Torah remains with us and unchanged in any way.

I am not suggesting that Christians must obey Torah, although many do. While Torah observance alone does not save you, it can bring tremendous richness to one’s life. However, being critical of those who obey Torah seems inappropriate given what Jesus/Yeshua actually said. Plus if a Christian in his or her effort to evangelize a Jewish person suggests the Torah has been done away with, that will likely be the end of the conversation. The Torah has played a central role in Jewish life for centuries, and continues to this day.

Paul/Saul

Also noteworthy is most of Christianity’s doctrine is based on the writings of Paul, whose actual name is Saul. In spite of the effort to portray him as a convert to Christianity, he was a Jewish Pharisee. His so-called “conversion” in Act 9 reflects his coming to faith in Jesus/Yeshua. In other words, he became a Jewish believer or a “Messianic Jew.” He did not cease being a Jew, or “convert” away from Judaism to Christianity. He confirms his Jewish pedigree in Romans 11:1. Moreover, he remained a Torah pursuant Pharisee until the day he was martyred.

Given all these facts, one could make a strong case that without the Jews Christianity might not exist.

Walk a Mile in My Shoes

With more than 1,800 years of persecution and death having been perpetrated against Jews by Christians, it should be

understandable that Jews are skeptical, hesitant, even resistant about entering into a relationship with a Christian, especially if they sense said Christian is singularly interested in converting them to the very religion responsible for hundreds of years of persecution against them.

Put yourself in the shoes of Jew for a moment and ask yourself how you would feel if a Christian who you didn't know said, "You need to accept Jesus or guess where you'll end up?" That's not exactly the way to start a relationship. Sadly this is not an atypical scenario.

Love the Jewish people first and foremost for who they are and what they have been stewards of. Understand what they have been through for centuries. Look how Christians have treated them. For almost 2,000 years, Jews have been taught Jesus in the Messiah of their enemy. Can you blame them for how they feel? Then ask yourself is it any wonder why they might not be eager to listen when a Christian says they need to accept that very Messiah?

Messianic Religion

It may surprise some Christians to realize Judaism is a messianic religion. They long for Messiah. In fact, thousands of Jews accepted Jesus/Yeshua as Messiah during His ministry. However, He was subsequently stripped of His Jewish context and given a complete makeover by the church. The removal from his Jewish context is a major reason why most Jews since then have not accepted Jesus/Yeshua as Messiah.

Jews are just as eager for Messiah to appear as Christians and Messianic Jews are for His Second Coming.

In the final analysis, while there may not be a cookie-cutter solution to improved relations. However, it seems an appropriate starting point is Christian repentance for what has been done to the Jews for two millennia. I have personally witnessed Christians doing this and the results are wonderful.

Love the Jews for who they are, and with true repentance a meaningful, respectful relationship is possible. If it is done with sincerity and received accordingly, the 800-pound gorilla will become the size of a pigmy, and the wall will start coming down. Once the wall has come down, the Lord can do wonderful things, including revealing Messiah to the Jews.
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