

To the Jew First

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Are you aware that your Christian faith was built on a Jewish foundation? Think about it: Jews wrote the entire revelation of Scripture—both Old and New Testaments—except perhaps for the books of Luke and Acts. The Old Testament prophets all were Jewish. The apostles all were Jewish. And Jesus was not born a Christian—nor did He later convert. He was born a Jew and grew up to become a Jewish rabbi.

On Pentecost, it was Jewish men and women who first received Jesus as their long-awaited Messiah and who were endued with the power of the Holy Spirit. They went out to tell the things they had seen and heard, and when they were dispersed through persecution, they became witnesses to the gentiles.

We are greatly indebted to the Jewish people. If not for them, we would know nothing of God and His Son. Yet historically the church's treatment of Jews has been a cause for shame. Rather than reflecting our gratitude for their role in our faith, it has displayed our prejudice and resulted in abuse and murder.

In fact, much of the blame for the Jews' rejection of Jesus lies at our feet. Inflamed by church fathers who were virulently anti-Semitic, the Christian church became the No. 1 persecutor of the Jewish people. Atrocities committed by Christians against Jews during the Crusades and the pogroms of Europe and Nazi Germany served to harden their hearts to the revelation that Jesus, the Jewish rabbi, fulfilled all the Law and the Prophets.

No wonder so many Jews have rejected Jesus as Messiah. No wonder they avoid Christians who come to them wearing crosses, declaring, "Jesus loves you and so do I." They have no basis on which to trust us or to believe what we say.

So what can we do to repair the breach? Here are several suggestions.

1. Repent of any spirit of anti-Semitism that is in you or your family, and refuse to condone it.
2. Apologize to any Jewish people you know for atrocities committed against them or their ancestors by Christians.
3. Stand up for Israel and the Jewish people. Find ways to bless local Jewish communities and synagogues.
4. Encourage Jewish individuals who desire to immigrate to Israel to do so.
5. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Ask the Lord to reveal Himself to His people as He arises to defend them from those who seek to annihilate them.
6. Become a full-time volunteer in Israel, or sponsor one. (By law, no foreign workers in Israel can be paid.)
7. Connect directly with a ministry in Israel that demonstrates the unconditional love of the Lord. Support the ministry with prayers and finances.

We are living in a prophetic time, a season in which the word of the Lord to the Israelites spoken through Ezekiel is being fulfilled: "For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. ... I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them" (Ezek. 36:24-27, NKJV).

Our role during this season, more than anything else, is to pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Israel and the Jewish people that brings revelation and faith in God to their hearts. A vast number of Jewish people are secular, with no faith in the God of the Bible. Many lived for years under totalitarian regimes that squelched faith. Others endured unspeakable horrors during the Holocaust that gravely injured their faith.

My prayer for the body of Christ is that the blinders will be taken off our eyes, that we will come to understand our indebtedness to the Jewish people and that we will recognize that now is the time to reach out to them—so the God who loves them and came to save them might be revealed.

Melva Lea Beacham volunteers as director of international development for Christian Friends of Israel in Jerusalem and is spearheading a campaign titled 1,000 Churches for Israel. If your church is looking for a faithful ministry in Israel to connect with, e-mail Melva at melva@, call 214-432-0505 or go to www.cfi.org.