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Faith Bible Church
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<http://fbcweb.org/doctrines.html>

JEWISH APOLOGETICS (10)
ANSWERING JEWISH OBJECTION:
#1: JEWS DON'T BELIEVE IN JESUS
(DDR #629)

#1. Jews don't believe in Jesus.

Concerning this objection, Michael Brown writes:

This is a serious misconception as well as a gross overstatement. Jews have always believed in Jesus. In fact, in the beginning, it was *only* Jews who believed in him, and today, there are probably more Jewish believers in Jesus than ever before.

If someone told you that Jews don't believe in Jesus, you could begin by *informing* them that there are plenty of Jews who do believe in Jesus. Today there are as many as 150,000 to 200,000 Jewish believers in the world. These include American Jews, Russian Jews, South American Jews, and Israeli Jews. If you know any Jews who believe in Jesus, you could cite them. You could also give names of famous Jewish scholars, like Michael Brown, Arnold Fruchtenbaum, Barry Leventhal, David Stern, or the world famous philosopher and classical educator Mortimer Adler.¹

You could also point out that the first believers were Jews—*all* of Jesus' first followers were Jewish. You could ask them to define or unpack the term "Jew." On a simple level, plenty of Jews believe in Jesus. You could also start off with the fact that Jesus Himself was Jewish. His

¹You could cite Mortimer Adler. He was director of the Institute of Philosophical Research, chairman of the board of editors of the Encyclopedia Britannica, and enjoyed a distinguished seventy-years career in education. For his recounting of his journey from his Jewish orthodox home through classics to Christ, see Kelly Clark, ed., *Philosophers Who Believe: The Spiritual Journeys of 11 Leading Thinkers*, ed. Kelly James Clark (Downers Grove: ILL: IVP Academic, 1997), 203-21. You could also suggest reading Barry Leventhal's reasons he accepted Jesus as the Messiah, see Norman L. Geisler, ed., *Why I Am a Christian: Leading Thinkers Explain Why They Believe*, Rev Exp ed., ed. Paul K. Hoffman and Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2006), 221-38

name is Yeshua. The name “Jesus” is just the result of the name going from Hebrew to Greek and then to Latin and then to English. Christ is not His last name. It was a title given to Him. The term “Christ” is from *Christos* in the Greek which is just a translation of *Meshiach* from the Hebrew, which means “anointed one.” His mother’s name was Miriam. You could point out that Jesus Christ is simply Yeshua the Messiah the son of Mariam.

Another thing worth noting is that the controversy in Acts 15 was whether one can be *Gentile* and still be part of the church. The “church” began as a Jewish movement. For the most part, it began with the Jews and for the Jews. Jesus (Yeshua) was the Jewish Messiah who came to the house of Israel. Acts 15 was not about how Jews can fit into the church, but how do the Gentiles fit into this Jewish movement. Through the centuries things have changed from being a question of how Gentiles can fit in without becoming a Jew, to the question of how a Jew can fit into this movement. In church history, the Roman Catholic Church actually included in their baptismal formula the requirement of renouncement that one was a Jew. This included the demand that you renounce any connection with circumcision, Passover, Jewish traditions, and dietary laws. The Jew even had to pledge to eat pork. As a matter of fact, there were instances of Jews being offered ham sandwiches to see if they were really saved. Note just how messed up this is, i.e. ”prove that you are saved by acting like a Gentile by eating this pork.” Just look how Acts 15 has been turned on its head: it went from the question of how a Gentile can be admitted to Christ’s fold without becoming a Jew to later in church history where the question was how a Jew can come into the church.

The answer to this common objection is found in uncovering the Jewishness of biblical Christianity. This can be followed up by noting that many Jews today believe that Jesus is the Messiah. There are even Israelis who fight in the Israeli army who are believers in Jesus. Jews

who believed in Jesus were killed in the Holocaust and still considered as Jews. Pointing these things out can go a long way in dealing with what are, to some extent, emotional issues about their identity as Jews as distinction from some “alien group” known as Christians.

Actually, the mindset in the beginning of the early church was one of being sort of a “Jerusalem country club.” It was God who had to shake them up to get them to share the good news with the Gentiles. Take a look at Acts 11:19:

So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to **no one except to Jews alone** (emphasis mine).

This was not because they were uncomfortable in sharing the gospel with Gentiles, it was because *they understood* the Old Testament Jewish eschatological promises. They understood that the key to Israel’s deliverance was the Messiah. We, as the church, are the ones grafted in (Rom. 11:17, 19, 23, 24). The reason the Messianic Jews went to the house of Israel first, was because they understood that Jesus was the key to the world’s redemption. If they could get the nation of Israel to recognize this, then they could get the Gentiles in. If they could get the nation of Israel to accept Jesus as the Messiah, then the Messianic age could be ushered in, which would bring blessings of the fullness of the Gentiles. Note Acts 3:17-19,

"And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also. ¹⁸
"But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled. ¹⁹ "Repent therefore and return, that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;

Peter is saying here to the Jews that if they would believe then God would send the Messiah for the promised restoration of all things. So it was not so much of wanting to share it *only* with their

own Jewish people as much as it was the idea that the way they could reach the Gentiles was through the salvation of Israel.

Another way of demonstrating the Jewishness of the New Testament is to show them a translation of the New Testament from the *Complete Jewish Bible*:

Yeshua called his twelve *talmidim* and gave them authority to drive out unclean spirits and to heal every kind of disease and weakness.² These are the names of the twelve emissaries: First, Shim'on, called Kefa, and Andrew his brother, Ya'akov Ben-Zavdai and Yochanan his brother,³ Philip and Bar-Talmi, T'oma and Mattityahu the tax-collector, Ya'akov Bar-Halfai and Taddai,⁴ Shim'on the Zealot, and Y'udah from K'riot, who betrayed him.⁵ These twelve Yeshua sent out with the following instructions: "Don't go into the territory of the *Goyim*, and don't enter any town in Shomron (Matt. 10:1-5).

Let's note more on the background of the beginning of the early church. The only Bible was the Tanakh (Old Testament Scriptures), and there was no such thing as even the name "Christian." This name was added much later, and it was initially not chosen for self-description. It was used by the opponents of Christianity—not the early church (cf. Acts 26:28). The term "Christian" only occurs three times in Scripture: Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16 (I wonder if an "average" Christian was asked how many times he thinks "Christian" is found in the Bible, if he would be shocked to know that it only occurs three times). The point here is that the term Christian was not a major term used for the first believers in the Bible. Compare this with the fact that the term "believer" occurs over twenty-five times, and "disciple" occurs over two hundred fifty times. I bring this up because the idea of "Christianity" can be misunderstood as some newfangled religion, rather than the continuation of the Old Testament theology with developments and opportunities for God's matchless grace to open up to all the nations of the world.

Jesus was very Jewish. He was not called reverend. There was no such thing as Reverend Christ. He was called "Rabbi." Now to be sure, He was not called Rabbi in any formal way since

there was no formality to being a Rabbi until after the destruction of the Temple. In His time, the title “Rabbi” was an honorific title given to *Jewish* teachers. The name “Christ” only had meaning for the Jews. Once this term was separated from Judaism, ancient historians thought it was a last name and those who followed Him took His last name—in effect saying something like “Chrestos and the Chresteridians.”

In Union with Christ,

Pastor Don

A small taste of positional truth:

Eph 1:7 **In union with him**, through the shedding of his blood, we are set free- our sins are forgiven; this accords with the wealth of the grace

Eph 1:11 Also **in union with him** we were given an inheritance, we who were picked in advance according to the purpose of the One who effects everything in keeping with the decision of his will,

Eph 1:13, **in whom** also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

Eph 2:6 And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* **in union with Christ Jesus:**

Eph 2:21 **In union with him** the whole building is held together, and it is growing into a holy temple in union with the Lord.

Eph 2:22 Yes, **in union with him**, you yourselves are being built together into a spiritual dwelling-place for God!

Eph 3:6 that **in union with the Messiah** and through the Good News the Gentiles were to be joint heirs, a joint body and joint sharers with the Jews in what God has promised.

Eph 3:12 **In union with him**, through his faithfulness, we have boldness and confidence when we approach God.