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

JEWISH APOLOGETICS (2)
Introduction to the Five Jewish Objections to Jesus
(DDR #622)

Before we can intelligently defend Christianity against the attacks of Judaism that Jesus is a false prophet and that the New Testament and Christianity are untrue, we must understand the Jewish objections. Let me state at the outset that the first responsibility is to present the gospel, but if they reject and attack Christianity, we are commanded to be able to give *reasons* for the hope that is in us (1 Pet 3:15). In order for us to be able to give thoughtful and intelligent reasons—that goes beyond superficial pat answers—we must understand and even feel the full weight of their objections.

The objections of modern Judaism to Jesus and Christianity fall into five categories: 1) general objections, 2) historical objections, 3) theological objections, 4) messianic prophecy objections, and 5) New Testament objections.

Regarding *general objections*, Michael Brown notes,

These are in many ways the most common, least sophisticated, and often most emotional objections. They contain broad generalizations, making sweeping statements, and are based on the perception of what Jews “as a whole” believe and do. The heart of these objections is simply this: “Jesus is not for Jews! Our religion is Judaism, not Christianity. No true Jew would ever believe in Jesus.” To a great extent, answering these objections is a matter of correcting misconceptions as well as getting people to stop and think about the emotional—and sometimes irrational—nature of what they are saying.¹

These are the easiest objections to refute. However, to do so requires dispelling myths that are found in the *traditions* of Judaism as well as in *traditions* of Christianity. Before we expose the various myths in Judaism—primarily found in oral tradition, which purportedly dates from the time of Moses—let’s note a false concept prevalent in Christianity. This false view is that somehow the Old Testament is a faulty system which was replaced by something brand new, namely Christianity. The implication here is that everything in the OT was bad and so Christ came to start a new religion called Christianity.

Consider Saul of Tarsus. The common view is that Saul of Tarsus was a Jew, but after he became a believer his name was changed to the Paul because now he is a *Christian*. The implication here is that he was a Jew but upon faith in Jesus Christ, he left Judaism and became a Christian—as if Christianity is in stark contrast to the OT

¹Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: General and Historical Objections*, 1ST ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000), xvii.

Judaism. The truth of the matter is that Saul as a Jew was not really persecuting individuals who called themselves Christians. The name “Christian” did not even exist when he was persecuting fellow Jews who believed in Jesus, those Messianic Jews. Paul/Saul believed in Christ in Acts 9, and Messianic Jews were not called Christians until Acts 11. The name “Christian” was not created to start a new movement; rather, the term was used derisively by others. There were three groups: Gentiles, Jews, and Messianic Jews (later called Christians). It is critical to underscore the Jewishness of Christianity. Failure to do so leads to disqualification of Jesus as the Messiah.

Saul of Tarsus was a Jew persecuting fellow Jews, who believed that Jesus/Yeshua was the Messiah. He was not persecuting a Gentile entity called “Christians.” Saul could not care less what the Gentiles believed. After he believed in Jesus/Yeshua as the Messiah, he quit persecuting those fellow Messianic Jews.

Even so, didn’t he change his name from Saul to Paul after becoming a Christian? Not really. He is still called Saul after his salvation (cf. Acts 13) until it was clear that his ministry was to the Gentiles. As a Jew born in the Greek city of Tarsus, he would have had two or maybe even three names from birth. He was Saul and Paul, and in his ministry to the Gentiles, he used Paul to identify with them.

The point here is that we are often too quick to make a dichotomy: Saul = Jewish = bad, in contrast to Paul = Christian = good. It is just how we normally think of this. Both modern Judaism as well as Christianity tend to make a distinction between what is Jewish and Christian in the New Testament with the result that early Christianity is stripped from its Jewishness. This causes all kinds of misunderstandings. Let’s not forget that Jesus was a Jew, all the writers of the New Testament were Jews (with probably the exception of Luke). Let’s not forget that Christianity is a fulfillment of OT Judaism, and not something in contrast to the OT.

The general objections are the most common objections and easiest to refute.

In the next DDR we will look at an overview of the historical objections.

In Him,

Pastor Don

Ephesians 1:18 *I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,*¹⁹ *and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might.*