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

JEWISH APOLOGETICS (3)

Overview of the Five Jewish Objections to Jesus: #2 Historical Objections & Understanding (DDR #623)

There are five categories of Jewish objections to Jesus: 1) general objections, 2) historical objections, 3) theological objections, 4) messianic prophecy objections, and 5) New Testament objections.

Concerning the historical objections, Michael Brown (world's premiere Jewish apologist for Christianity) notes,

Historical objections tend to be more substantial and deal with the very purpose of the Messiah (in other words, the claim that the Messiah was to bring peace to the world) or the alleged failure of the church ("Christian" anti-Semitism and the state of the church world-wide, including its divisions and scandals). The heart of these objections is this: "Jesus cannot be the Messiah because we are obviously not in the Messianic age." In answering these objections, we need to define clearly the purpose and mission of the Messiah; provide a biblical picture of the Messianic age; explain the difference between a New Testament, Messianic Jewish expression of faith versus a later, corrupted "Christian" form; admit to failures of the church while pointing to glorious and profound changes brought about by the gospel and giving shining examples of true Messianic faith.¹

There are two fundamental principles of doing apologetics, regardless of what kind of apologetics one is doing. First, you need to adequately understand the person's objections. A good way of seeing if you really understand the argument is your ability to repeat it back to the person, e.g. "if I am rightly understanding you, your objection is" If you can repeat it back to their satisfaction, then you probably understand it. This is not only good for apologetics, it is good for all kinds of relationships—especially marital relationships, e.g. "honey, do I really

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

understand that what is bothering you is . . . ?” If you can get that far, you are closer to the solution.

A second fundamental of apologetics is that you need to feel the weight of the objection. I have mentioned this before, but it bears repeating. You need to address, as precisely as possible, the heart of the objection or argument. This is true regardless of who you are dealing with. Failure here means that you will simply talk past each other, and “fill in” what you think the person means. Ergo, the argument goes nowhere. For instance, if a believer has been *really* struggling with some theological problem, even after taking ten years of formal Greek and Hebrew classes, reading fifty commentaries, studying thirty theological books, and tells you the problem, and you retort “Oh that’s easy, it’s . . . ,” you probably do not get it. You really need to understand the problem from the other person’s perspective, and not just throw a verse *at* him. Another instance, what if a neighbor across the street was not attentively watching her child, and the child wandered in the street, and was hit by a car? We all know that Romans 8:28-30 is eternally and absolutely true! God is in control and all things work out for good. A person who does not understand what the parent must be experiencing might just run over to the parent’s house, joyfully shouting out Romans 8:28-30 and other passages on the sovereignty of God (cf. Eph. 1:11, “who works all things after the counsel of His will”). A person who would do that really does not get it!

If someone collapsed in your arms because they had just heard the news that their whole family was killed in an automobile accident, and you proceeded to *preach* Ephesians 1:11, then you have no idea of the weight of what they are feeling. This is not to say that you should never use such passages to bring God’s grace to their lives. The point is that you may need to hold her and cry with her first. You need to connect with where they are, and then you can take them to

where God's wants them to be through prayer and Bible doctrine. When believers glibly give out pat answers, they really have not understood the problem. One has to care to be a good listener. If we glibly give "answers" regarding the church's anti-Semitism throughout history, we have not felt the problem. If we resort to pat answers regarding the atrocities of the Crusaders, then we really have not connected with them personally/psychologically.

To feel the weight of the problem, we need to do our best to put ourselves in the other person's shoes. Of course this does make us vulnerable. That is why we like our safe walled fence that nothing can get through, and which is guarded by our nice pat little answers to their *silly* objections. People have huge issues, even if they are rationally and biblically *wrong!* Failure to recognize this will only mean that our answers will be superficial at best. There is no place for flippancy in serious apologetics with the lost and confused. God loves all the lost, and so should we. There is no place for "Rambo" apologetics—note the gentleness and reverence in the key apologetic's passage of 1 Peter 3:15:

but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

For us to understand "the other side" we will have to do our homework. This is why we will spend a significant amount of time in this series on what modern Judaism believes. It is a tribute to Michael Brown, that although the Jewish community cannot find anyone who is able defeat him in a debate, they still say that he is virtually the only Christian who really understands them. This is one reason he can reach people on a much deeper level. He has taken the time to understand them before proceeding to show them the truth of Christianity. If you are hit with a serious objection, resist the temptation to give a superficial answer. Think about it first. The last thing Christians need to be known for is being superficial—i.e. non-intellectual.

In Him,

Pastor Don

Ephesians 3:20 For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, ¹⁵ from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, ¹⁶ that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; *and* that you, being rooted and grounded in love, ¹⁸ may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, ¹⁹ and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God. ²⁰ Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us,