

Review of the purpose - "This is not evangelism of a proselytizing, triumphalist sort that plots to destroy [Islam]. Rather it sets forth Jesus as the fulfillment of the hearts of all of us longing for peace with [Allah]. It is an expression of hospitality in which one wants to give only one's best to one's companion at the common meal. And the best we can offer is Jesus, the seal of the prophets. It is one beggar saying to another beggar, 'We have found bread; come, eat with us.'" - Harvie Conn

Whose Judaism? Which Religion?

American Judaism - Reform (most liberal), Reconstructionist, Conservative

- **Values**
 - Community and family - once a Jew, always a Jew (to some)
 - Strong work ethic, prizing worldly advancements and influence
 - Philanthropy
- **Ethos**
 - Sense of persecution which breeds a close-knit community
 - "We are the other, and have been for 5000 years, and so we have to stay close to each other."
 - Privileged - "Chosen people"
 - Not always clear what this looks like or how this gets fleshed out. This also gets fleshed out in their sense of family and community - take care of their own, make a Jew a good Jew.
- **Beliefs** - great variety depending upon the person/family/synagogue - everything from an "atheist Jew" to Orthodox and Hasidic
- **Practices**
 - **Holidays** - these are central since a Jew is often seen as one who participates in the community, performing the rituals that Jews have always done
 - *High Holidays* -
 - Rosh Hashanah - Jewish New Year - celebrated often with apples and honey (that your year may be "sweet")
 - Yom Kippur - Day of atonement - most solemn and holiest day of the year, concerned with forgiveness of sin and getting into the "book of life". Even most Reform Jews fast the whole day, and then have a celebratory break-the-fast meal.
 - Passover - celebrating Israelites' redemption from Egypt in the Exodus. A special meal with a scripted prayer service (*Haggadah*) and ritual eatings that recount the Exodus.
 - Sukkot - ("Tabernacles" or "Feast of Booths") - celebrating the wanderings through the wilderness by making temporary booths ("Sukkot" or tabernacles) to eat inside

- Shavuot ("Pentecost or Feast of Weeks") - celebrating the revelation of the Torah
- Hanukkah - celebrates the Maccabean war against Rome when the candle in the temple miraculously remained lit beyond the amount of oil they had [not in the Bible]
- Purim - almost a Jewish Halloween, where you wear costumes and recount the story of the book of Esther, denouncing Haman
- Bar (male) & Bat (fm) Mitzvah - at age 13, an entrance rite into adulthood, where they are now considered accountable individually to the law, not unlike a Catholic confirmation process. Orthodox only males, others both.
- Weekly Shabbat Services on Friday night and Saturday morning - attended with varying frequency

Orthodox Judaism (Hasidic and Sephardic Jews are ultra-Orthodox, in some ways comparable to Amish communities)

• Common Practices

- Strict Sabbath observance - beginning Friday night at sundown, to Saturday night sundown, no car driving, no work to varying extremes. Begun by a Sabbath meal and service.
- Study of Torah (Old Testament, specifically 5 Books of Moses, and the interpretive traditions)
 - Discerning strict interpretation and application of every minute law into today's society
- Keeping Kosher - no pork, no meat and cheese at the same meal, etc.
- Tefillin - Deut. 4 - even as a *mitzvah*, or act of fulfilling the law when you perform it with another Jew. This involves boxes with the Shema inside, wrapped together on your forehead, heart and hand

How can a Christian interact with all of the above beliefs and practices? Jesus fulfills every OT holiday, belief and practice properly understood.

Common questions from a Jewish perspective: Why do you believe Jesus is the Messiah? There is no kingdom, no world peace, and many Jews even of his era didn't believe him. Isn't he just another false Messiah?

1. Old Testament

1. It is very clearly unfinished, so a Jew should always be looking for fulfillment in the future.
2. Prophecies throughout the entire OT, both in the Prophets as well as the entire canon.

2. Sin and the Kingdom of God- What is the kingdom of God and when are the "last days" or "Judgment Day"?

1. Kingdom of God is at hand! How?!

2. The grace of Jesus' first coming as much better than prevalent Jewish expectations (i.e. Peter)
 1. Jesus' resurrection transformed expectations! Instead of the final resurrection coming to all people - all the righteous and unrighteous - all at once, it happened first to Christ as a foretaste or trailer of a movie yet to come out. We are simply one step behind, and we experience it now by faith as we await to experience it by sight.
 3. Read Acts 2 - Christ has been crowned as King of the world, and now is the time for preaching and repentance! God's patience is an aspect of his grace now, because he is giving us a chance to react to his saving work.
3. **Sacrifices and the New Temple**
4. **"We are Abraham's children"**
 1. But, the purpose of the promise to Abraham was to reach all nations from the beginning (Gen. 12:1-3)!
 2. Paul's main argument in Romans and Galatians is that Christians too are now sons of Abraham, heirs of the promise, and receive that inheritance.

Being a Sympathetic Insider:

1. **On Beliefs**
 1. Monotheism
 2. Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) - although most treat it very differently from Christians. There is a longstanding rabbinical, interpretive tradition that is often consulted first, before Scripture, not unlike a Catholic view of tradition. Christianity is obviously Jewish (see below for contrast).
 3. Chosenness of Israel
 4. Importance of the Law
 5. Importance of family, a sense of community, social justice, doing good, strong work ethic
 6. *NB: Christians cannot take for granted that what we believe from the OT - such as Creation, the Fall, the purpose of the Exodus, etc. - is what Jews believe, and that should be what we expect because Jesus changes everything!*
2. **On Practices** - we can love, affirm and even participate to some extent in their holidays, always knowing that Jesus fulfills and/or abolishes them.

Being Critical Outsiders: how can we take the above common ground to lead people to consider the necessity of what's below?

1. **The basic gospel of grace**
 1. Works are not enough and that's good news! God is much holier and we are more sinful than we realize, and yet God comes down to us, we don't work our way up to God.

2. Many Jews have a vague sense of justice, and while they don't think too much about heaven, the little they do assumes that as long as we can tip the scales toward good in our account, then God is reasonable and will accept us. Obviously there's no hope here for the "real" sinner like a murderer, let alone the rest of us!
2. **Beliefs are important** - I grew up thinking that beliefs were *not* important, and especially beliefs about God and doctrines. This was implicitly considered a Christian thing, whereas Jews are more practical and communal-minded. Consider ways to help them know that beliefs matter and can even make us better at being practical and communal-minded.
3. **Christianity is Jewish!** We are the heirs of Abraham, the new and true Israel. Jews need Jesus just as much as anyone else (Rom. 1-4), even as Jesus fulfills the purpose of the Jewish people. Consider ways in which the fulfillment of Judaism is actually good news to a Jew! It should seem better than what they thought Judaism could offer, as it should for anyone of any religion.
4. **Search for Truth** - as opposed to capitulating to the world's relativism and pluralism. In their appreciation of worldly achievements, it can become easy to assimilate to and trust the world. The distinctiveness of Judaism can often get lost here, where being a good Jew can become being a good/successful person.
 1. Community and persecution does not define Truth.
5. **Global and "Inclusive"** - God is no longer confined to space and place - traveling to Israel is not really a big deal! This also highlights the inherent elitism in Judaism which is either appreciated by some or hidden by others. We have to remember that Christianity is meant to be universal in the biggest sense. There are NO worldly boundaries now to God because of Christ (Eph. 2), so Judaism actually becomes more exclusive.
6. **Sacrifice** needed for the forgiveness of sin. In Jesus, we don't need any more. In Judaism, they're in exile or they forget/reinterpret this so that they don't need a Temple anymore since it hasn't been rebuilt since 70 AD. This is a HUGE problem in my mind, and one in which often gets explained in a vague way such that Judaism became a religion of the book led by rabbis after the destruction of the Temple, rather than of priests and sacrifices.
7. **Love them!** Christians can often be seen as weird, exclusive, and a little too serious about religion. (I could hardly say the name 'Jesus' after I converted.) Nothing breaks down barriers better than good ol' fashioned love.