

God's Everlasting Covenant

The Judea-Christian 800 Pound Gorilla

What is it?

While Israel is under increasing threat from Islamic fundamentalists seeking to destroy the Jewish state, there remains long standing challenges between Christians and Jews which continue to persist.

One of the more difficult issues is how to relate to each other while the proverbial 800 pound gorilla is in the room. What's the 800 pound gorilla? The desire on the part of Christians to evangelize Jews, and the sensitivity Jews have about uninvited conversion efforts.

Since the issue has been around for a long time with no sign of disappearing anytime soon, one might wonder how to at least find a way to reduce size of the "gorilla."

Since the Christians are driving the issue with their desire to evangelize Jews, it seems appropriate the responsibility of its reduction in size this lies with them. As one Jew eloquently stated several years ago, "Christians have to understand Jews did not volunteer to become participants in the final act of a play they didn't write."

Christian Repentance

Sincere Christians, many of whom have a genuine love of the Jewish people, might consider doing something important if they wish to increase the chances of relational breakthrough. They should consider repenting. Repenting for the centuries of misunderstanding, abuse, expulsions, and the Holocaust, would be an excellent starting point. Doing likewise for anti-Semitism and Replacement theology would be recommended as well.

Replacement theology is the belief God rejected the Jewish people as the covenant holders, and the 'Church' has "replaced" them, due to the rejection of Jesus as the 'Messiah.' Most Christians embrace this belief. However, when a Jew witnesses genuine repentance on the part of a Christian, it sends a strong message there is a desire to understand and empathize with the pain they feel from centuries of mistreatment. It becomes a much needed first step toward opening a door of reconciliation, which can lead to better understanding, and improved relations.

The Need for Understanding

There has been a growing movement in recent years by many well intentioned Christian pastors, churches and organizations toward reconciliation. While this is welcome, it's long overdue. I also believe Jews should embrace it. Although, it will take a larger effort over an extended period of time to erase history's scars, especially if Christians continue being more focused on evangelizing, than improving relations. Even though Christian evangelicals desire to share the "good news" with Jews may in many cases have the best of intentions, what they often fail to realize is an unsolicited effort will almost always have an unfruitful result. The optimum environment for sincere discussion is if *both* parties are willing to talk. If such an atmosphere doesn't exist, the Christian should respect it in a loving way without suggestions of dire consequences.

Something else Christians should consider is to stop looking at Jews through their own agenda based eyes. Jews should be accepted and loved for who they are, and the unique role they have in God's plan for humanity. They should not be looked upon merely as conversion targets. If a Jew senses this the 800 pound gorilla will immediately appear.

It's also important to recognize some Christians have genuinely loved the Jewish people without any agenda. In fact, many Christians risked their own lives to hide Jews during the Holocaust. In gratitude for their heroism Yad VaShem, the Holocaust memorial site in Jerusalem, has planted trees with their names on plaques along the "Path of Righteous Gentiles," forever honoring them.

Lest We Forget

Sadly, it seems too many Christians have forgotten, haven't been taught, or deny some important contributions from the Jews which have had great mutual significance. For example, it is the Jews God chose to reveal himself to through Avram who became Avraham, *[Genesis 12:1]*. It is the Jews whom God established the Sabbath through *[Exodus 16:29-30]*, which is Saturday rather than Sunday. A thorough search of both Bible's reveals it was never changed to Sunday. The Catholic Church instituted the change to Sunday in the fourth century, as part of a growing effort by the fledgling religion as it steadily moved away from its birth as a sect of Judaism. It is the Jews through whom God revealed the Ten Commandments *[Exodus 20]*, which continues to be the moral foundation of the Judeo-Christian world. Plus, contrary to what most Christians and many Jews have been taught, Jesus [a Jew, whose given name was Yeshua Ben Yosef] did not abolish Torah, or the 'Law,' as Christians call it *[Matthew 5:17-20]*.

Another noteworthy point is almost all of Christianity's doctrine is based on the writings of Paul, whose real name is Saul, who lived his entire life as a Jewish Pharisee. *[Acts 21:39, 22:3, 23:6, 26:4-5, Philippians 3:5]* He became 'Messianic' after his "road to Damascus" experience, yet he steadfastly considered himself a Jew, in spite of the Church's effort to portray him as a convert to Christianity. Given these facts, one could make a strong case that without the Jews Christianity wouldn't exist.

Understanding the Jewish Mind Set

It would be mutually beneficial if Christians developed a more objective and respectful understanding of what Jews have contributed to the world, rather than simply looking upon them as 'lost.' As part of this exercise it might also be helpful to understand the Jewish mindset. If an honest effort is made at this, one cannot overlook, nor overstate the impact of what has been done to the Jews throughout history, 'in the name of...'

Examples include:

- Remaking the image of Jesus from a Jewish Middle Eastern look to a pale skinned Anglo
- Early persecution, and blaming the Jews for his death, hence the term "Christ killers"
- Jews barred from being in the company of Christians [538 AD, Third Synod of Orleans]
- Pope Innocent III officially declaring the Jews responsible for the death of Jesus [1205]
- The Crusades [1095 - 1290]
- Jewish expulsion from England [1290]
- Inquisition of Spain, [1492]
- Hitler's Holocaust

With over 1800 years of persecution and death having been perpetrated against Jews by Christians, it should be understandable that Jews are skeptical, hesitant, or resistant, about entering into a relationship with a Christian, especially if they sense said Christian is singularly interested in converting them to the very religion responsible for the aforementioned persecutions against them.

In the final analysis, there may not be a cookie cutter solution to improved relations. However, if what's needed is an appropriate starting point, it seems Christian repentance would present a positive first step. If that is done with sincerity and received accordingly, the 800 pound gorilla will become the size of a pigmy.

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