

World Religions and False Cults

Part 4 - Judaism

The History of Judaism

Judaism has its roots going back to when God called Abraham to leave Mesopotamia and go to the land of Canaan (around 2,000 BC). God made several covenant promises with Abraham, telling him that a great nation would come from him, as well as blessing to the world (Gen. 12:1-3; 17:1-8). Through his descendants, his family expanded and the nation of Israel was born. God continually directed His people through various leaders, kings and prophets. Conflict with other nations, especially the Romans in the first century, caused the Israelites (called “Jews”) to be dispersed from their homeland. Despite attempts to eliminate the Jewish people, such as the Holocaust, the State of Israel was formed in 1948, allowing Jews to return home. Today there are approximately 14 million Jews, with 5 million living in the US.

Core Beliefs of Judaism

The Hebrew Bible (Tanakh) is made up of the Torah (first five books of the Bible), as well as the “Writings” and “Prophets” of the Old Testament. Oral tradition plays a significant role as well, much of which is recording in the Talmud. A major theme in their Scriptures is the coming Messiah, who would bring righteousness, justice and peace on earth. Failing to recognize Jesus Christ has left some still awaiting their Messiah. Key views:

- God: There is one God, Yahweh, who is the Creator of all things. He is a personal God, though not always viewed in a relational way. He works through history to fulfill His will.
- Mankind: Overall, there is a high view of mankind. Being in God’s image is emphasized over the fall into sin. Following the Law and living in harmony with one another is key.
- Salvation: Keeping God’s law will earn God’s favor. Many find their hope simply in the fact they are Jewish, and look for God’s compassion because of their history of suffering.

Keys for Evangelism

- Use key O.T and N.T texts (such as Hebrews, which was written to Jews) to point to the true identity of Jesus Christ.
- A Jew embracing Christianity is viewed by Jewish people as betraying their national and family roots. Show them that they are not abandoning their roots, but that Christ is, in fact, their Messiah through whom the world is blessed!

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