

PRAY FOR JEWS



Christians are often unable to point out the differences between their beliefs and the beliefs of someone with a different religion. A Christian's understanding of God and a Jew's understanding of God are similar, but there are also crucial differences. Christianity and Judaism are both Abrahamic religions; they have the same origins but varying beliefs, practices and teachings. We will look at how these beliefs differ. Our hope is that you will be better able to share your faith in Jesus as Messiah with Jews, understanding their beliefs and having great compassion in your heart.

Before you pray, prepare your heart

- When you pray for anyone from a different religion, ask the Lord to stir your heart with a passion to intercede for them so none would perish (2 Peter 3:9).
- Pray that God will give you the gift of intercession and compassion to pray for those who are still in desperate need of the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Pray for the Church to be awakened to the urgency of the times and seasons, and that many would go into the harvest fields of the world, giving their lives for the sake of Christ to those living in darkness.

Origin and history

FOUNDER

Christian faith: Jesus Christ. Founded about AD 30–33, in the Judean province of Palestine (today Israel), under the Roman Empire. Followers of Jesus Christ became known as 'Christians'.

Judaism: God, through Abram and later through Moses, about 2000 BC. There are three main branches of Judaism that are practised: Orthodox Judaism, Conservative Judaism and Reform Judaism. Each has its own beliefs.

WRITINGS

Christian faith: The Bible, written originally in Hebrew and Aramaic (Old Testament), and Greek (New Testament). The five books of Moses form part of the Christian Old Testament as well.

Judaism: Jewish people follow the Torah, the whole of the law. The Ten Commandments and some other laws were given to Moses at Sinai. The remaining laws were given to Moses after the erection of the Tabernacle, when the Israelites had been commanded to leave Sinai. The whole of the law is to be found in the first five books of the Bible, which Jews refer to as the 'Torah'

(Genesis-Deuteronomy). The remaining books of the Tenach (the Old Testament or Covenant) are the Prophets, and the Writings (such as Psalms and Proverbs). However, Judaism does not accept the inspiration of the New Testament or its account of the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies regarding Jesus Christ being the Messiah. The Jews also pay account to rabbinic writings, contained in the Talmud, as well as historical and scholarly writings, such as Josephus, as an explanation of the Tenach and how it applies to everyday life.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of Jews to have a revelation of the Lord Jesus as Messiah in the Old Testament. Also, pray for many to be curious about the New Testament and take the time to read it and come to an understanding that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah.

Central beliefs

GOD

Christian faith: Christians believe that God is one, and God is Triune (one God in three Persons; not three gods): Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Often the title 'God' designates the first Person, God the Father. God is a spiritual being without a physical body. He is personal and is intimately involved with all people. He created the universe out of nothing. He is eternal, changeless, holy, loving and perfect.

Judaism: Jewish beliefs centre on the conviction that there is only one God. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

Pray for a personal revelation of the Trinity to all traditional Jews. Ask that they will come to know God as a heavenly Father (Luke 11:2), the Lord Jesus as Messiah and Friend (John 15:15), and the Holy Spirit as Comforter (John 14:16).

JESUS

Christian faith: Jesus is God, the second Person of the Trinity. As God the Son, He has always existed and was never created. He is fully God and fully man (the two natures joined; not mixed). As the second Person of the Trinity, He is equal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. In becoming man, He was begotten through the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus is the only way to the Father, salvation and eternal life. He died on a cross, according to God's plan, as the sacrifice and full payment for our sins. He rose from the dead on the third day, and is spiritually and physically immortal. Jesus will come again visibly and physically at the end of the world to establish God's kingdom and judge the world.

Judaism: A very important concept in Judaism is that of the Messiah. Originally the Jews believed that God would send a powerful messenger (the Messiah) who would deliver Israel from her oppressors and usher in a reign of peace and prosperity. Today, many Jews no longer hold to a personal Messiah but hope for a messianic age of justice and truth. For the Jews, the coming of the Messiah or the messianic age still lies in the future. Most Jews who practise Judaism often recognise Jesus as a good teacher, and perhaps even a prophet of God, but not the Messiah.

Pray for Jews to have a personal revelation of the Lord Jesus as Saviour/Messiah, to associate with His death on the Cross and that He was the Lamb slain for their transgressions. Pray also for the revelation that Jesus is fully God (Colossians 1:15).

HOLY SPIRIT

Christian faith: The Holy Spirit is God, the third Person of the Trinity. The Holy Spirit is a Person, not a force or an energy field. He comforts, grieves, reproves, convicts, guides, teaches and fills Christians. He is not the Father nor is He the Son, Jesus Christ.

Judaism: Some Jews believe that the Holy Spirit is another name for God's activity on earth. Others say it is God's love or power.

Pray for traditional Jews to experience the work of the Holy Spirit in them as a Person, as a very present and living Comforter, Counsellor, Helper, Advocate, Intercessor, Strengthener and Standby (John 16:7, AMPC). Pray for a greater understanding of the Person of the Holy Spirit from Isaiah 11:2.

SALVATION

Christian faith: Salvation is by God's grace, not through an individual's good works. Salvation must be received by faith. People must believe in their hearts that Jesus died for their sins and rose again physically, which is the assurance of forgiveness and resurrection of the body. This is God's loving plan to forgive sinful people.

Judaism: Some Jews believe that prayer, repentance and obeying the Law are necessary for salvation. Others believe that salvation is the improvement of society.

Pray for traditional Jews to understand that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Way, Truth and the Life, and that no one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). Ask that they will have a revelation of John 3:16-18, God's love for them poured out on the Cross through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, whose blood, as the sacrificial Lamb, washes away their sin and purifies them so that they may stand before God.

DEATH

Christian faith: After death, believers go to heaven. All people await the final Judgment at the end of the age. Both saved and lost people will be resurrected. Those who were saved will live with God in a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:1-2). Those who did not choose Christ are lost and will suffer the torment of eternal separation from God (in hell). Jesus' bodily resurrection guarantees believers that they, too, will be resurrected and receive new immortal bodies.

Judaism: They believe that there will be a physical resurrection. The obedient will live forever with God, and the unrighteous will suffer. Some Jews do not believe in a conscious life after death. Modern day followers of Judaism do not all share the same views on heaven, hell and the afterlife.

Pray for traditional Jews to begin asking questions about life, death and hell and do a personal study on these subjects. Also, pray for them to have a curiosity to study what Jesus said on these subjects and for the Holy Spirit to speak to them and reveal the truth.

HELL

Christian faith: After death, non-believers go to hell (a literal place, without any presence of God). After judgment (Revelation 20:12), all whose names are not found in the Book of Life will be cast in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15). This is the second death (Revelation 21:8).

Judaism: According to Jewish teachings, hell is not entirely physical; rather, it can be compared to a very intense feeling of shame. People are ashamed of their misdeeds and this constitutes suffering which makes up for the bad deeds. When one has so deviated from the will of God, one is said to be in Gehinnom (Matthew 10:28).

Pray for Jews to read the New Testament and to search for themselves the true biblical meaning of the words 'death' and 'hell'. Continue to pray for the Holy Spirit to convict them of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8-11).

OTHER BELIEFS

Christian faith: Group worship, usually in churches. No secret rites. Baptism and Lord's Supper (Communion). Active voluntary missionary efforts. Aid to those in need: the poor, widows, orphans, and downtrodden. Christians believe that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah promised to Israel in the Old Testament (also called the Tenach). Jesus taught that His followers would be known by their love for one another.

Judaism: The Jewish house of worship is a synagogue. In the Jewish religion, the recitation of prayers is the central characteristic of worship. These prayers, often with instructions and commentary, are found in the Siddur, the traditional Jewish prayer book. Observant Jews are expected to recite three prayers daily and more on the Sabbath and Jewish holidays. While solitary prayer is valid, attending synagogue to pray with a minyan (quorum of 10 adult males) is considered ideal. Each week throughout the year, Jewish people around the world read a designated Scripture passage from the Torah, which comprises the first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures. This weekly Torah portion is read in synagogues and congregations and meditated upon by individuals.

Pray for God to send Christians to reach out to Jews with great wisdom, kindness and in the love of the Lord, sharing the gospel of Jesus, His love and His divinity with them. Ask for the truth of everlasting life to become a reality to them, and for their hearts to consider Christ as Messiah, their Saviour, who has already come in the flesh, and who died and also rose from the dead (Ephesians 1:20; Galatians 1:1).

MAIN FESTIVALS

Christian faith: Christians celebrate Christmas (birth of Jesus), Passover (crucifixion of Jesus), the Resurrection of Christ and Pentecost (the Holy Spirit imparted to believers).

Judaism: All Jewish holy days begin and end at sundown. The Shabbat begins at sundown each Friday and lasts until dark on Saturday. There is a Sabbath meal which includes special food, songs, readings and prayers. Families hold this ceremony together, beginning with the blessing of Shabbat candles, wine and bread (challah). Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year festival, which usually takes place in September or October. Yom Kippur is the Day of Atonement during which Jews fast, pray, and atone for their sins, asking God for forgiveness. This happens ten days after Rosh Hashanah.

Passover or Pesach is in the Spring and marks the liberation of the Jews from slavery in Egypt, the giving of the Ten Commandments and the journey to Israel. The Hagaddah, which is the story of the exodus from Egypt, is read at this celebration, which takes the form of a ritual meal. There are

many ritual objects which enable the family to experience the exodus as they sit around the dinner table. Hanukkah is the festival of lights. It is held in late November or December. When the temple was rededicated after a period of persecution, the eternal light was rekindled but there was only enough oil for a few days. Miraculously, the oil lasted for eight days until more oil could be found. The Hanukkah Menorah, with eight candles representing the eight days, plus an additional candle to light the others, is a central focus for prayers said during the nights of Hanukkah. Important passages in Jewish life are marked by special observances.

There are specific traditions for the birth of a child and for when someone dies. *Bar mitzvah* and *Bat mitzvah* ceremonies mark a child's thirteenth birthday (in some traditions this is at a girl's twelfth birthday). The first act of adulthood is reading from the Torah scroll during services.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal to Jews salvation brought to them through Father, Son and Holy Spirit through all these different festivals and rituals. Ask for a deep hunger and thirst to learn more about salvation through the now resurrected Lord Jesus as the Hope of glory. (Colossians 1:27).