

## HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 4/28/2023

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

“Why don’t Jews believe in JESUS?” I’m asked this question periodically and it’s a good question. Since there are many Jews who do recognize JESUS as a historical figure, perhaps a better way to ask it is, “Why don’t Jews believe JESUS is the MESSIAH?”

There’s an underlying assumption to these questions that Jews hate JESUS. This idea of hostility toward JESUS has been encouraged by the New Testament that primarily identifies the Jews as the ones who put JESUS to death. While the Jewish leadership certainly bears culpability in this, many Jews in JESUS’ time believed in HIM or at least accepted HIM as a great rabbi. However, by the time the writings of the New Testament were being penned, great animosity had developed between Christians and their Jewish forerunners. When you read Acts, you can see how Saul, who became Paul, persecuted the early Christians to either put them in prison or to death on behalf of the Jewish leadership. Yet, Paul, after becoming a Christian, spent great energy trying to help the Jews he encountered in during missionary trips to see that JESUS was the MESSIAH. Often, he was met with resistance, but many Jews did become believers because of him. It’s worth noting that Luke, who was raised a Gentile and received Grecian training as a physician, leans in both his gospel and Acts on placing fault for the death of JESUS on the Jews who conned the Romans into the crucifixion. This blaming of the Jews has continued through the centuries. Martin Luther was very anti-Semitic, blaming all Jews for the death of his Savior.

Still, the answer to, “Why don’t Jews believe JESUS is the MESSIAH?” might actually have some good Jewish reasoning behind it. We Christians make some clear connections between Jewish prophecy about the MESSIAH and JESUS. We believe that there are many ways in which JESUS fulfilled the prophecies, thereby confirming our beliefs that HE is the MESSIAH (Hebrew), or the CHRIST (Greek), or the SAVIOR (English). The Jews, however, understand some of these prophecies differently than we do. They have their own list of scriptures about what the MESSIAH will do when HE comes, and JESUS didn’t do those things.

JESUS didn’t restore Jerusalem.

JESUS didn’t rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.

JESUS didn’t establish a kingdom of peace on earth where lions will lie down with lambs and people will participate in war no more.

We believe that JESUS will do these things when HE comes again at the end of time. The Jews believe the MESSIAH will do these things the first time HE comes. The way I like to put it is this: Jews and Christians are both waiting for the MESSIAH to come. Christians just believe that HE has already been here.

In CHRIST'S love,  
Pastor Jeffrey