

Apologetics Course

Lesson Six

Jewish Evangelism

- Three Layers of Resistance
- Modern vs Ancient Judaism
- Two Portraits of the Messiah & the Jewish Feasts
- Isaiah 53 & Psalm 22 – Fulfilled Prophecies
- Objections
- Conclusion & Key Scholars – References



PART 1: THREE LAYERS OF RESISTANCE

Before making any arguments, your students must understand that Jewish resistance to Jesus operates on three distinct levels. Addressing a cultural objection with a theological argument — or vice versa — will always miss the mark.

Layer 1: Cultural / Social Objections

Most Jewish people grow up being told that Jesus is simply not for them — that Christianity is a religion for Gentiles. The social cost of following Jesus is enormous:

- Family estrangement and community rejection
- Loss of Jewish identity in the eyes of the community
- Prohibition from synagogue membership, religious marriage, or aliyah
- Being labeled a 'traitor to your people'

PASTORAL NOTE

This is primarily a tribal loyalty objection, not an intellectual one. Never open with arguments here. Express genuine love for the Jewish people, acknowledge the real social cost, and let that establish trust before anything else.

Layer 2: Historical Objections – Anti-Semitism

The Church's track record toward the Jewish people is deeply painful and must be acknowledged honestly before any apologetic dialogue can begin.

- Ignatius of Antioch (~105-108 AD): 'It is wrong to talk about Jesus Christ and live like Jews' (Letter to the Magnesians, Ch. 10). Note: Ignatius was addressing Judaizing behavior among Gentile Christians — but the effect over centuries was to drive a wedge between Christianity and its Jewish roots.

- Council of Nicaea (325 AD): Constantine — 'Let us have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd'
- Augustine (5th century) taught a supersessionist theology in which Jewish people were scattered as punishment and covenantal blessings had passed to the Church — a position used for centuries to justify hostility toward Jews.
- Ambrose of Milan (388 AD) intervened to prevent a bishop from being punished for burning a synagogue, arguing it was 'a home of unbelief, a house of impiety.' His stance emboldened synagogue destruction across the empire.
- The Crusades, Inquisition, and pogroms were experienced as Christian violence against Jews
- The Holocaust — Hitler cited Martin Luther's anti-Semitic writings to justify genocide

APPROACH

Do not deflect or minimize. Say plainly: 'What was done to the Jewish people in the name of Jesus was evil, and it grieves God's heart.' This honest acknowledgment is not weakness — it is the essential first step that opens the door for real conversation.

Layer 3: Theological / Religious Objections

These are the objections most accessible to apologetics reasoning. There are five major categories, addressed in Part 2 below.



Section 1: Modern Judaism vs. Ancient Judaism

Before presenting any evidence for Jesus as Messiah, a Christian must understand that the Judaism practiced today is not the Judaism of Jesus' time. This foundational distinction changes everything.

1.1 The Two Phases of Judaism

- Second Temple Judaism (c. 516 BCE – 70 CE): The Judaism of Jesus, the apostles, and the early church. The Temple was the center of worship. Animal sacrifice was the means of atonement. A rich expectation of a coming Messiah permeated the culture.
- Rabbinic Judaism (70 CE – present): After Rome destroyed the Temple, Jewish scholars restructured Judaism around Torah study, prayer, and synagogue life. Animal sacrifice ended. Many theological interpretations shifted—including interpretations of key Messianic prophecies.

1.2 The Isaiah 53 Shift: A Key Example

One of the most striking illustrations of this theological drift is Isaiah 53. One for Israel Ministry documents this clearly:

"Up until 1,000 years ago, all the wise men of Israel—the sages—understood that Isaiah 53 was about the Messiah. The claim of present day rabbis that the chapter speaks about the people of Israel and not about the Messiah is relatively new."

— One for Israel Ministry

Implication: When a Jewish person says "Isaiah 53 is not about the Messiah," they are not representing the oldest Jewish tradition. They are repeating a post-Temple reinterpretation.

1.3 The Problem of Replacement Theology

One reason Jewish people resist Christian claims is that they have historically encountered Replacement Theology—the idea that God permanently rejected Israel and replaced her with the Church. This view is biblically false, and saying so clearly builds trust.

- Paul explicitly rejects replacement theology:

Romans 11:1–2a (ESV)

I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.

- God's covenantal purposes for Israel remain. Zechariah 12–14 describes a future national restoration of Israel in connection with the Messiah's return.
- Christians who treat the Old Testament as obsolete undermine their own credibility with Jewish audiences.

Practical tip: Before presenting the gospel, affirm God's love for the Jewish people and His continued purposes for Israel. This opens doors.

Section 2: The Two-Coming Messiah Framework

One of the most common Jewish objections to Jesus is: “He didn’t fulfill the Messianic requirements.” Specifically, Jesus did not establish world peace, rebuild the Temple, or reign as the Davidic king. This is a legitimate observation—but it misses a critical element of ancient Jewish Messianic expectation.

2.1 Two Portraits of the Messiah in the Hebrew Scriptures

The Old Testament presents two seemingly contradictory pictures of the coming Messiah:

- A suffering servant who is rejected, wounded, and killed (Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, Zechariah 12:10)
- A conquering king who reigns on David's throne, gathers Israel, and establishes world peace (Isaiah 11, Zechariah 14, Daniel 7)

Ancient Jewish tradition recognized this tension. Here is the key Zechariah text:

Zechariah 12:10 (ESV)

And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.

Daniel 7:13–14 (ESV)

I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

2.2 Messiah ben Joseph and Messiah ben David

“In response to these two seemingly opposite pictures of Messiah, some rabbis decided that there must be two messiahs, the Messiah ben Joseph, who would come and suffer, and the Messiah ben David, who would come as a conquering king.”

— Jews for Jesus

- Messiah ben Joseph (Son of Joseph): The suffering Messiah. His role: to come humbly, suffer, and die for his people. Connected to the spring feasts.
- Messiah ben David (Son of David): The reigning Messiah. His role: to come in power, defeat Israel’s enemies, and establish the Kingdom. Connected to the fall feasts.

Talmudic source: Babylonian Talmud, Sukkah 52a describes Messiah ben Joseph as one who suffers and dies, whose death brings great mourning in Israel—citing Zechariah 12:12.

The Christian claim: These are not two different Messiahs—they are two comings of the same Messiah. Jesus fulfilled the Messiah ben Joseph role at His first coming (suffering, death, resurrection). He will fulfill the Messiah ben David role at His second coming (reign, restoration, kingdom). This is not a Christian invention; it is embedded in the Old Testament itself.

2.3 The Two Powers in Heaven — Alan Segal’s Contribution

Dr. Alan Segal (Columbia University / Barnard College), in his landmark work *Two Powers in Heaven*, documents that ancient Judaism—well before Christianity—held a concept of a divine second figure alongside God (a “binatarian” theology). This figure appears as:

- The Angel of the Lord, who speaks as God and receives worship (Genesis 22, Exodus 3)
- The Memra (Word) of God in the Aramaic Targums
- The Son of Man in Daniel 7 (quoted above)

Here is the foundational Old Testament passage from Exodus:

Exodus 3:2–6 (ESV)

And the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush. He looked, and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, ‘I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.’ When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, ‘Moses, Moses!’ And he said, ‘Here I am.’ Then he said, ‘Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.’ And he said, ‘I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’

Note: The text says the ‘Angel of the LORD’ appeared—yet the one speaking identifies Himself as God. This binatarian pattern is consistent throughout the Hebrew Scriptures and shows that a divine second figure was not a pagan Christian import but was embedded in Israel’s own Scriptures.

Section 3: The Jewish Feasts as Apologetic Evidence

The seven feasts of the Lord (Leviticus 23) are one of the most powerful and underused apologetic tools in Jewish evangelism. They are explicitly Jewish—given to Israel—and they encode the entire Messianic story across both comings.

Leviticus 23:1–2 (ESV)

The LORD spoke to Moses, saying, ‘Speak to the people of Israel and say to them, These are the appointed feasts of the LORD that you shall proclaim as holy convocations; they are my appointed feasts.’

3.1 The Spring Feasts — First Coming (Messiah ben Joseph)

- Passover (Pesach): Jesus was crucified on Passover as “our Passover lamb.”

1 Corinthians 5:7 (ESV)

Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

Exodus 12:12–13 (ESV)

For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

- Feast of First Fruits (Bikkurim): Jesus rose from the dead on First Fruits as the firstfruits of the resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:20–23 (ESV)

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.

- Shavuot (Pentecost): The giving of the Torah at Sinai. Fulfilled by the giving of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:1–4 (ESV)

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

3.2 The Fall Feasts — Second Coming (Messiah ben David)

- Feast of Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah): The trumpet blast announces the return of the King.

1 Thessalonians 4:16–17 (ESV)

For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.

- Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur): Israel's national atonement. Dr. Brown connects this to Zechariah 12–14 and the second coming: when Israel looks upon the one they pierced, mourns, and receives cleansing.

Zechariah 13:1 (ESV)

On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.

Leviticus 16:30 (ESV)

For on this day shall atonement be made for you to cleanse you. You shall be clean before the LORD from all your sins.

- Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot): God dwelling with His people. Points to the Millennial Kingdom.

Zechariah 14:16 (ESV)

Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths.

Section 4: Core Biblical Evidence — Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22

These two passages are arguably the most powerful Messianic texts in the Hebrew Bible for Jewish evangelism. Many Jewish people have simply never encountered them in context. Read them carefully—they speak for themselves.

4.1 Isaiah 53 — The Full Text (ESV)

Isaiah 53 has been called ‘the forbidden chapter’ because it is omitted from the synagogue Haftarah reading cycle. Many Jewish people have literally never heard it read in a religious context. Here it is in full:

Isaiah 53:1–12 (ESV)

Key Observations in Isaiah 53

- v.3 — Despised and rejected: Jesus was rejected by the religious leaders and crucified.
- v.5 — Pierced for our transgressions: Crucifixion. Substitutionary atonement.
- v.7 — Silent before his accusers: Jesus remained silent before Pilate (Matthew 27:13–14).
- v.9 — Buried with a rich man: Jesus was buried in Joseph of Arimathea’s tomb (Matthew 27:57–60).
- v.10 — He shall see his offspring after death: Points to the resurrection.

The Anti-Missionary Objection: “The servant is Israel, not an individual”

“Up until 1,000 years ago, all the wise men of Israel—the sages—understood that Isaiah 53 was about the Messiah. The claim of present day rabbis that the chapter speaks about the people of Israel and not about the Messiah is relatively new.”

— One for Israel Ministry

- The text uses singular masculine pronouns throughout (‘he,’ ‘him’)—not the plural expected if referring to a nation.
- The servant suffers on behalf of ‘my people’ (v.8)—distinguishing the servant from Israel.
- A nation cannot be buried (v.9), or see offspring after death (v.10).
- Even Maimonides referenced Isaiah’s suffering servant language when describing how the Messiah would first appear.

4.2 Psalm 22 — Crucifixion Written 1,000 Years Before Crucifixion

Psalm 22 was written by David approximately 1,000 years before Jesus, and over 700 years before crucifixion was invented by Rome. Read these verses and consider whether they describe David's personal experience—or something far greater:

Psalm 22:1, 6–8, 14–18 (ESV)

New Testament Fulfillments of Psalm 22

- v.1: Jesus cried from the cross, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Matthew 27:46)—invoking the whole psalm, which ends in triumph.
- v.7–8: The crowds mocked Jesus with these exact words at the crucifixion (Matthew 27:39–43).
- v.16: 'They have pierced my hands and feet'—fulfilled at the crucifixion. Rome did not invent crucifixion until centuries after this psalm was written.
- v.18: 'They divide my garments... and for my clothing they cast lots'—fulfilled literally (John 19:24).

4.3 The 300+ Fulfilled Prophecies with Scripture

The following are a selection of key Old Testament prophecies and their New Testament fulfillments. These were written centuries before Jesus was born.

- Born in Bethlehem: Micah 5:2
- Born of a virgin: Isaiah 7:14
- Entry into Jerusalem on a donkey: Zech 9:9
- Betrayed for 30 pieces of silver: Zech 11:12-13
- No bones broken: Psalm 34:20
- Buried with the rich: Isaiah 53:9

PART 2: THE FIVE MAJOR THEOLOGICAL OBJECTIONS

Objection 1: The Trinity — 'God Cannot Have a Son'

The Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4) — 'Hear O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one' — is the heart of Jewish theology. The Trinity appears to violate God's oneness.

Biblical Response

- The Hebrew word for 'one' in the Shema is echad — a composite unity (as in Genesis 2:24, 'one flesh'). The absolute singular form would be yachid, which is not used.
- Isaiah 9:6 — a child is born who is called 'Mighty God' and 'Everlasting Father.' This is in the Jewish Scriptures.
- Micah 5:2 — the Messiah's 'goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.' This implies pre-existence.
- Psalm 110:1 — 'The LORD said to my Lord...' David's Lord is distinct from YHWH, yet addressed as Lord.
- Dr. Eitan Bar (OneForIsrael) documents that early medieval Jewish scholars largely accepted the Messiah would be divine — this view was abandoned reactively against Christianity, not on exegetical grounds.

COLUMBO QUESTIONS

1. In Isaiah 9:6, a child is called 'Mighty God' and 'Everlasting Father' — who do you think that is referring to?

2. *The word for 'one' in the Shema is echad — the same word used in Genesis 2:24 for 'one flesh.' Does that change how you understand it?*
3. *If the Messiah was supposed to be divine, what would you expect that to look like?*

Objection 2: Jesus Did Not Fulfill the Messianic Prophecies

Rabbinic tradition identifies a list of things the Messiah was supposed to accomplish: bring worldwide peace (Isaiah 2:4), rebuild the Temple, reunite the twelve tribes, and return all Jews to Israel. Jesus did none of these.

Biblical Response: The Two-Stage Messiah

- The Qumran community (2nd century BCE) preserved traditions expecting the Messiah to suffer first, then conquer — reflected in community texts and the related fragment 4Q541. This two-stage expectation is not a Christian invention.
- Rabbinic Judaism itself developed the concept of Mashiach ben Yosef (a suffering Messiah) and Mashiach ben David (a conquering Messiah) — Jesus fulfills both in two comings.
- The prophecies that Jesus did fulfill at the First Coming are the most specific and dateable: Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, and Daniel 9:24-26 (which places the Messiah's death before the Temple's destruction in 70 AD).
- The peace prophecies, tribal reunion, and return of all Jews are reserved for the Second Coming — a view with legitimate precedent in Jewish thought itself.

COLUMBO QUESTIONS

4. *What would have to be true about the Messiah that Jesus was not?*
5. *Are you aware that pre-Christian Jewish communities expected a suffering Messiah before a conquering one? What do you make of that?*
6. *Daniel 9:24-26 says the Messiah will be 'cut off' before the destruction of the city and the sanctuary. The Temple was destroyed in 70 AD. If Jesus died before 70 AD, does that fit the timeline?*

Objection 3: Isaiah 53 Refers to Israel, Not an Individual

This is the most strategically important single passage in Jewish evangelism. Rabbinic tradition teaches the Suffering Servant is the nation of Israel, not a person.

Biblical Response — Four Textual Arguments

- The servant is sinless (v. 9: 'no violence... no deceit'). Israel throughout Isaiah is described as sinful and needing atonement. A sinful nation cannot bear the sins of a sinful nation.
- The text has a 'we' speaking about a 'him' in the third person. In verses 4-6, a group says 'he bore our griefs, he carried our sorrows.' If the servant is Israel, who is the 'we' distinct from Israel?
- Isaiah 53:8 — 'he was cut off from the land of the living for the transgression of my people.' If the servant is Israel, 'my people' must refer to someone else — but who?
- The Dead Sea Scrolls (pre-Christian) preserve Isaiah 53 without any corporate 'Israel' interpretation. Notably, fragment 4Q541 describes an individual who atones for his generation — language scholars connect to the Servant Songs. The Qumran community left the text open in a way consistent with individual messianic application.

COLUMBO QUESTIONS

7. *In Isaiah 53:9, the servant is described as sinless — 'he had done no violence, nor was there deceit in his mouth.' Can Israel be described as sinless?*

8. *In verses 4-6, there is a 'we' speaking about a 'him.' If Israel is the servant, who is the 'we' that is distinct from Israel?*
9. *Who does your rabbi say the servant is in Isaiah 53?*

Objection 4: Christianity is Idolatry — Three Gods and Images

Many Jewish people believe Christians worship three gods, and point to images of Jesus, crucifixes, and statues as idol worship forbidden by the Torah.

Biblical Response

- Christianity is monotheistic — there is one God who exists in three persons. The Trinity is not three separate gods; it is one divine Being with three personal distinctions.
- The New Testament never teaches that a human became God. It teaches the reverse: that God — eternal, pre-existent — took on human form (John 1:1, 14).
- Jesus (Yeshua) was a Torah-observant, Sabbath-keeping, Temple-attending Jewish rabbi from Galilee. His movement began entirely within Judaism.
- The original question in Acts 15 was not 'Can Jews follow Jesus?' but 'Can Gentiles follow the Jewish Messiah?' The movement was Jewish at its roots.
- Reintroduce Jesus by his Hebrew name: Yeshua — a first-century Jew whose mother was Miriam, whose disciples were all Jews, and who fulfilled the Passover, Yom Kippur, and other Jewish festivals in his person.

COLUMBO QUESTIONS

10. *Did you know that for the first several decades, all followers of Jesus were Jewish? What do you think changed?*
11. *Jesus — Yeshua — was born into a Jewish family, taught in synagogues, kept the Torah, and observed Passover. Does that change how you picture him?*
12. *If God truly became human, what would you expect that to look like?*

Objection 5: Accepting Jesus Means Abandoning Jewish Identity

Perhaps the most emotionally powerful objection: 'I can't be Jewish and Christian — I would be betraying my people.'

Biblical Response

- Jeremiah 31:31-33 — The New Covenant was made explicitly 'with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.' It is a Jewish covenant.
- Peter, James, John, Matthew, Paul — all Jewish. The first church was a Jewish body meeting in Jewish homes, celebrating Jewish festivals, reading Jewish Scripture.
- Messianic Judaism demonstrates that Jewish cultural identity — Shabbat, High Holy Days, Hebrew heritage, cultural practices — is fully compatible with faith in Yeshua.
- Following Yeshua is not abandoning Judaism; it is completing it. The New Covenant is the fulfillment of the covenants God made with Abraham, Moses, and David.

PART 3: THE MESSIANIC JEWISH BRIDGE

Why Messianic Judaism Disarms Resistance

- It removes the 'betraying your people' objection — Messianic Jews demonstrate you can follow Yeshua as a Jew
- It reframes the invitation — not 'convert to Christianity' but 'enter the fulfillment of what God promised Israel'
- It demonstrates that Jewish identity and Messianic faith are not in conflict
- It honors the Jewish people's heritage rather than replacing it

Key Messianic Jewish Resources and Scholars

Resource / Scholar	Focus Area
ONE FOR ISRAEL Ministry (oneforisrael.org)	Israeli-native Messianic scholars; video testimonies and objection-response library
Jews for Jesus (jewsforjesus.org)	Street-level evangelism; culturally-informed engagement methods
Dr. Michael Brown — Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus (5 vols.)	The gold standard academic treatment of every major Jewish objection
Mitch Glaser — Chosen People Ministries	Church-based Jewish outreach strategy
Dr. Eitan Bar — OneForIsrael	Trinity in Jewish theology; recovering Jewish divine fluidity concepts
Moshe Rosen (founder, Jews for Jesus)	Missiology of Jewish evangelism; chutzpah-with-love method
Benjamin Sommer — The Bodies of God (Yale)	Jewish divine fluidity; pre-Christian concept of God's multiple forms

PART 6: ROLE-PLAY SCENARIOS

Scenario A: The Culturally Jewish but Secular Friend

Setup

Your Jewish friend says: 'I'm not really religious, but I'm definitely not Christian. Jesus just isn't for Jewish people — that's a Gentile thing.' How do you respond?

Suggested approach:

- Don't argue yet — ask: 'That's interesting. Where did you learn that?' (Columbo — gather information)
- Then: 'Did you know that Jesus and all his first disciples were Jewish, and for the first several decades, the movement was entirely Jewish?'
- Then: 'What would it take for you to be open to looking at this with fresh eyes — just historically, setting aside the religious label?'

Scenario B: The Theologically Objecting Friend

Setup

Your Jewish friend says: 'The Messiah was supposed to bring peace and rebuild the Temple. Jesus didn't do any of that, so he clearly wasn't the Messiah.' How do you respond?

Suggested approach:

- Affirm the legitimacy of the question: 'Those are real expectations from the Tanakh, and that's a fair challenge.'
- Then introduce Daniel 9: 'Before we get there — did you know Daniel 9 gives a timeline placing the Messiah's death before the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD? Can we start there?'
- Move to Isaiah 53: 'Let me ask you about Isaiah 53 first — who do you think the Suffering Servant is?'

Scenario C: The Holocaust Objection

Setup

Your Jewish friend says: 'Christianity brought the Holocaust. How can you ask me to believe in a religion that killed six million of my people?' How do you respond?

Suggested approach:

- Do not defend — grieve first. 'You're right. What was done to the Jewish people by people claiming to act in Christ's name was evil. I am deeply sorry.'
- Then, after a pause: 'Can I ask — do you hold Jesus himself responsible for what those who claimed to follow him did? Or is it possible they were betraying his teaching?'
- Then: 'Jesus was himself a Jew who loved his people. The Sermon on the Mount, his care for the poor — do those teachings look like something that leads to genocide?'

APPENDIX

The Scarlet Thread That Stopped Turning White

During the Second Temple period, the rabbis instituted a custom tied to the Yom Kippur service: a scarlet (crimson) thread of wool was fastened to the door of the Temple court. After the High Priest completed the Yom Kippur sacrificial ritual and the scapegoat was sent into the wilderness, the thread would miraculously turn white — a visible sign to all Israel that God had accepted the sacrifice and forgiven the nation's sins. The people would rejoice when it turned white, and mourn when it did not.

This sign was based on Isaiah 1:18 — "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."

Then something remarkable happened. The Babylonian Talmud records that for forty consecutive years before the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD — the scarlet thread stopped turning white:

"Our Rabbis taught: During the last forty years before the destruction of the Temple the lot ['For the Lord'] did not come up in the right hand; nor did the crimson-colored strap become white; nor did the westernmost light shine; and the doors of the Hekal [the Temple] would open by themselves..."

— Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Yoma 39b (Soncino Edition)

"For forty years before the destruction of the Temple the thread of scarlet never turned white but it remained red."

— Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Rosh Hashanah 31b (Soncino Edition)

Forty years before 70 AD places this exactly at approximately 30 AD — the year of Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection.

Recommended Resources

- One for Israel Ministry (oneforisrael.org) — Israeli Messianic Jewish scholars engaging Jewish objections in Hebrew
- Dr. Michael Brown — Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus (5 volumes); The Line of Fire podcast; askdrbrown.org

- Alan Segal — Two Powers in Heaven (Columbia University Press)
- Jews for Jesus (jewsforjesus.org) — Testimonies and evangelistic resources
- Michael Heiser — The Unseen Realm (divine council and two-powers background)
- Arnold Fruchtenbaum — Messianic Christology (Ariel Ministries)—excellent on Messianic prophecy from a Jewish Christian scholar

Resource Follow Up: www.onecalling.com (Pastor Mark Fineman)

OBJECTION 1

“Jesus didn’t fulfill the Messianic requirements—no peace, no Temple, no Davidic reign.”

GOAL

Help them discover that their objection assumes a one-coming Messiah—a position even ancient Judaism didn’t hold.

PHASE 1 — CLARIFY

“When you say Jesus didn’t fulfill the Messianic requirements—which requirements are you referring to specifically?”

► Let them list them. Most people conflate all Messianic expectations into one event.

PHASE 2 — CHALLENGE

“Where did you learn that all of these requirements had to be fulfilled in a single coming?”

► They will likely say ‘that’s just what the Messiah is supposed to do.’ That opens the next door.

PHASE 2 — CHALLENGE

“Are you aware that the Talmud itself—specifically Sukkah 52a—refers to two Messianic figures, one who suffers and one who reigns? How do you account for that in your reading of the requirements?”

► You are not making a Christian claim. You are asking them to reckon with their own tradition.

PHASE 3 — CORNER

“If the ancient rabbis recognized a suffering Messiah and a reigning Messiah as two distinct roles, is it possible the problem isn’t that Jesus failed—but that we’re looking at the first coming when the second is still ahead?”

► This reframes the whole conversation. You’re not defending a failure—you’re opening a timeline.

PHASE 3 — CORNER

“If Jesus fulfilled every requirement assigned to the first coming—suffering, rejection, death for sin, resurrection—what would it take for you to take seriously that the kingdom requirements belong to His second coming?”

► This is the invitation. Don’t press. Plant the seed.

PART 1 — BELIEFS & ORIGINS COMPARISON CHART

RELIGION	ORIGIN & FOUNDER	VIEW OF GOD	VIEW OF JESUS	SALVATION	SCRIPTURE / AUTHORITY
Christianity	~30 AD. Founded on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Rooted in Judaism; grew from the apostolic witness recorded in the New Testament.	One God in three co-equal, co-eternal persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Personal, all-knowing, all-powerful, holy. Distinct from and sovereign over creation.	Jesus is fully God and fully man (hypostatic union). Born of a virgin, sinless, crucified as substitutionary atonement for sin, bodily resurrected, ascended, and returning.	By grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Not of <u>works</u> . Christ's atoning sacrifice is completely sufficient. Eternal life is a <u>free gift</u> (Eph. 2:8-9).	The 66-book Bible — Old and New Testaments — is the inspired, inerrant, and sufficient Word of God. Final authority for faith and practice (2 Tim. 3:16-17).
Judaism	~2000 BC. Rooted in God's covenant with Abraham and the giving of the Torah to Moses at Sinai. No single human founder; a covenantal religion of the Jewish people.	Strict monotheism — one God (Yahweh), indivisible and unique (Deut. 6:4). Rejects the Trinity as incompatible with God's absolute unity. God is personal and relational.	Jesus was a moral teacher but not the Messiah or Son of God. Worshipping a human as divine is considered idolatry. The true Messiah has not yet come.	No equivalent to Christian salvation. Standing with God is through Torah observance, repentance (teshuva), prayer, and good deeds. Salvation is collective and national, not individual.	The Tanakh (Hebrew Bible: Torah, Prophets, Writings). The New Testament is rejected. The Talmud (oral law) is also authoritative in rabbinic Judaism.
Islam	~610 AD. Founded by Muhammad in Arabia following claimed revelation from the angel Gabriel. Islam means 'submission' (to Allah). Muhammad is the final and greatest prophet.	Strict monotheism (tawhid) — Allah alone. No Trinity (Surah 5:73). Allah is sovereign, all-knowing, all-powerful. Allah is not a <u>Father</u> and does not have a <u>Son</u> .	Jesus ('Isa) was a great prophet but not the Son of God, not divine. He was not crucified — Allah took him up (Surah 4:157). Muhammad supersedes Jesus.	Works + faith + Allah's will. The Five Pillars must be kept. Good works weighed against bad on Judgment Day. Only guaranteed path to Paradise is dying in jihad.	The Quran is Allah's eternal, perfect, final word — superseding all prior scriptures. The Hadith (sayings of Muhammad) are also authoritative. The Bible is considered corrupted.
Hinduism	~2000–1500 BC in the Indian subcontinent. No single founder — a collection of diverse traditions and philosophies. One of the world's oldest religions.	Polytheistic / pantheistic. Millions of gods and goddesses. The ultimate reality is impersonal Brahman. Major deities include Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva (the Trimurti) — not equivalent to the Trinity).	Jesus is not part of Hindu doctrine. Some Hindus accept Jesus as one avatar (divine manifestation) among many. He is not recognized as the unique, incarnate Son of the one God.	Moksha: liberation from the endless cycle of rebirth (samsara) through karma and dharma. Paths include devotion (bhakti), knowledge (jnana), and righteous action (karma yoga). No grace or substitutionary atonement.	The four Vedas are primary. <u>Also</u> the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, and Mahabharata. No single binding canon; authority varies widely across traditions.
Buddhism	~500 BC. Founded by Siddhartha Gautama ('the Buddha' = Enlightened One) in India after his rejection of Hinduism's caste system and search for an end to suffering.	No personal creator God. Buddhism is functionally non-theistic. Buddha accepted the existence of Hindu gods but viewed them as mortal, within samsara, and not ultimate. No eternal, transcendent Creator.	Jesus is not part of Buddhist teaching. Some modern Western Buddhists admire Jesus as a moral teacher, but his claims to exclusive divinity and divine sonship are incompatible with Buddhist worldview.	Nirvana: the extinguishing of self and desire through the Four Noble Truths and Eightfold Path. Individual effort only — no grace, no atonement, no personal God to save. Liberation is <u>self</u> -achieved.	The Tripitaka ('Three Baskets'): the Sutras (Buddha's teachings), the Vinaya (rules of discipline), and the Abhidharma (commentary/doctrine). No scripture is considered the word of a personal God.

PART 2 — BIBLICAL RESPONSE PER RELIGION (Source: MF)

WHAT CHRISTIANITY AFFIRMS & THE BIBLICAL RESPONSE	
RELIGION	
Judaism	SHARED FOUNDATION, DIFFERENT CONCLUSION: Christianity and Judaism share the same God, the Hebrew Bible, and the promises of the Messiah. Christianity affirms that Jesus IS that Messiah — the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets (Matt. 5:17). The Messiah question: Jesus fulfilled over 300 messianic prophecies — including being born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2), riding on a donkey (Zech. 9:9), sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 11:13), hands and feet pierced (Psalm 22:16), no bones broken (Psalm 34:20), and rising from the dead (Psalm 16:10). The statistical probability of one man fulfilling even eight of these prophecies by chance is astronomically small. Without the Temple, how is sin atoned? Since 70 AD, Judaism has had no temple, no priesthood, and no sacrificial system. Hebrews 9:22 says 'without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.' Jesus is 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' (John 1:29) — the atonement Judaism's own system pointed toward. Key Verses: Isaiah 53:5 — 'He was pierced for our <u>transgressions</u>, he was crushed for our iniquities.' Isaiah 9:6 — 'For to us a child is born... and he will be called... Mighty God, Everlasting Father.'
Islam	THE FIVE KEY CONTRASTS (MF): (1) Christianity affirms the Trinity; Islam calls it shirk (associating partners with God). (2) Christianity affirms Christ was crucified and rose; Islam denies the crucifixion (Surah 4:157) — despite being confirmed by Josephus, Tacitus, and all first-century historians. (3) Christianity teaches grace alone; Islam teaches works + Allah's uncertain will. (4) The Bible is not corrupted — the Quran itself says God's words cannot be changed (Surah 6:34; 10:94). (5) Muhammad arrived 600 years after Christ and contradicts eyewitness testimony. On Jesus: To say Jesus was merely a prophet but not crucified is to make him a failed prophet — since Jesus explicitly predicted and embraced his death and resurrection (John 10:17-18; Mark 10:33-34). A prophet who is wrong about the central event of his ministry is not a great prophet. On Allah's character: The God of the Bible demonstrates the highest act of love by dying for his people (John 15:13; Rom. 5:8). The Quran describes Allah as 'the best of deceivers' (Surah 3:54) — incompatible with a holy God who cannot lie (Titus 1:2). Key Verses: Galatians 1:8-9 — 'Even if we or an angel from heaven preach a different gospel, let them be accursed.' 1 Corinthians 15:17 — 'If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile.'
Hinduism	THE CORE CONTRASTS (MF): (1) Christianity affirms one personal, transcendent, eternal Creator God distinct from creation; Hinduism teaches an impersonal Brahman that IS the universe (pantheism/panentheism). (2) The God of the Bible is not Brahman — CARM states: 'There is no meaningful correlation between the God of the Bible and any of the millions of Hindu gods.' (3) Christianity offers definitive atonement for sin; Hinduism offers an endless, uncertain cycle of reincarnation (samsara) with no guarantee of moksha. On Jesus as one avatar among many: Jesus explicitly claimed exclusive divine identity: 'Before Abraham was, I AM' (John 8:58). He accepted worship (Matt. 28:9; John 20:28) and declared 'I and the Father are one' (John 10:30). These are not the claims of one avatar among many. Either they are true — and Jesus is the unique incarnate God — or they are blasphemy. On karma vs. grace: Hinduism has no mechanism for grace — karma is inexorable and impersonal. Christianity uniquely offers a God who absorbs the debt himself. As CARM notes: 'It is basically impossible for a person to get out of samsara since they are continually sinning. Christianity has a notion of grace, but Hinduism does not.' Key Verses: Isaiah 43:10 — 'Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.' Colossians 2:9 — 'In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form.'
Buddhism	THE CORE CONTRASTS (MF): (1) Buddhism is non-theistic — it cannot account for the existence of a personal, eternal, creative God. CARM: 'Buddhism is not compatible with belief in a personal God that is distinct from His creation, has a sovereign will and plan for mankind, or whose grace can deliver one from guilt and suffering.' (2) Buddhism seeks the extinction of self (anatta / no-self); Christianity affirms that every person is made in God's image and has eternal worth. (3) Buddha himself never claimed to be God, to forgive sins, or to offer eternal life. The Four Noble Truths vs. the Gospel: Buddhism identifies suffering as arising from desire and prescribes the elimination of desire as the solution. Christianity identifies suffering as arising from sin and prescribes a Savior. CARM: 'The word gospel means good news — the true end of human suffering in light of an eternal, unchanging God. It is a truth greater than enlightenment.' The gospel offers not the extinction of self but the resurrection and eternal renewal of persons. On Buddha vs. Jesus: Buddha was a moral philosopher who offered an 8-fold path. Jesus claimed to BE the way (John 14:6), raised the dead, rose from the dead himself, and is attested by eyewitness testimony. CARM notes that the Christian gospel, proclaimed through Isaiah centuries before the Buddha, is more ancient wisdom than Buddhism. Key Verses: John 11:25 — 'I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he <u>dies</u>, yet shall he live.' Romans 6:23 — 'The <u>wages</u> of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.'