

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

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PART 17: THE JEWS AND THE MESSIAH

THE JEWS

On the Jews and Their Lies was written by Martin Luther in 1543, near the end of his life. It was a long, hostile anti-Jewish treatise filled with accusations, insults, and severe proposals against Jewish communities.

Luther had written more favorably about the Jewish people in *That Jesus Christ Was Born a Jew* in 1523. At that time, he argued that Jews had been mistreated by Roman Catholics and hoped that clearer preaching of Christ might persuade them to receive Jesus as the Messiah.

However, by 1543, Luther's tone had changed drastically. He was angry that Jews had not converted and accused Jewish teachers of blaspheming Christ and misleading their people. This frustration became the foundation for *On the Jews and Their Lies*.

Luther argued that the Jews were wrong to reject Jesus as the Messiah. He disputed their interpretations of the Old Testament and sought to prove that it pointed to Christ. He focused on messianic prophecy, the promise to Abraham, the Mosaic Law, circumcision, and the claim that Jews were still God's chosen people apart from Christ.

Passage	Reasoning
Genesis 49:10 — Shiloh / the ruler from Judah	"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come..." (Genesis 49:10) Judah's royal authority and messianic promise had reached fulfillment in Jesus. Since the old Jewish political order had passed away, Luther argued that the Messiah must already have come.
Deuteronomy 18:15 — the Prophet like Moses	"The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me..." (Deuteronomy 18:15) Moses pointed beyond himself to a greater Prophet who would speak God's final word. The New Testament itself applies this passage to Jesus in Acts 3:22–26.
Psalms 22 — the suffering of the Messiah	"They pierced my hands and my feet." (Psalm 22:16) "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." (Psalm 22:18)



	The Old Testament foretold the suffering of Christ. The language of mockery, piercing, and the dividing of garments pointed directly to the crucifixion.
Isaiah 53 — the suffering servant	“He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief...” (Isaiah 53:3) “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities...” (Isaiah 53:5) Isaiah described not merely Israel suffering in general, but the Messiah suffering for the sins of others.
Daniel 9 — the timing of the Messiah	“...unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks...” — Daniel 9:25 Luther used Daniel’s prophecy of the seventy weeks to argue that the Messiah had to come before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Since the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, Luther argued that the Messiah could not still be awaited as a future first coming.
Micah 5:2 — Bethlehem	“But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah... out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel...” (Micah 5:2) The New Testament says Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Micah was a witness that identified Jesus as Messiah.

Luther’s argument was not merely, “Judaism is wrong,” but that the Old Testament testified of Christ, and the Jewish teachers had rejected the plain testimony of their own prophets. That is why he disagreed with Jewish interpretation. He believed the rabbis were explaining away the passages that clearly pointed to Jesus. This connects with Jesus’ own words:

“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.” (John 5:39)

LUTHER’S BOOK

But *On the Jews and Their Lies* went far beyond theological argument. Luther used abusive language and made severe accusations against Jew as a whole, portraying them as enemies of Christ, deceivers, and a danger to Christian society.

The most damaging part of the book is that Luther called on Christian rulers to take harsh civil action against Jewish communities. He urged authorities to destroy or shut down synagogues and schools, seize religious books, forbid rabbis to teach, restrict Jewish travel, remove legal protections, and force Jews into labor.

This stained Luther’s legacy and papist critics used it against the Reformation, but more tragically, later anti-Jewish and antisemitic movements found material in Luther’s words.

Nazi propagandists would exploit his writings, even though Luther's own context was sixteenth-century religious anti-Judaism rather than modern racial anti-Semitism.

At the beginning of the Reformation, Luther urged Christians to treat the Jewish people with kindness, reminding them that Jesus Himself was born a Jew. He hoped that by removing Roman Catholic abuses and clearly preaching Christ from the Scriptures, Jews would come to recognize Jesus as their Messiah. During his years at Wittenberg, Luther also studied Hebrew, which helped him in his work of translating and explaining the Old Testament.

"I have also had this experience... Three learned Jews came to me in the hope of finding a new Jew in me, because here in Wittenberg we began to read Hebrew. They also pretended that things would soon improve because we Christians were reading their books. When I disputed with them, they acted according to their kind; gave me their interpretations. When I compelled them to remain with the text, they fell from the text and said they had to believe their Rabbis, as we had to believe the Bishops and Doctors, etc...

Then I had mercy on them, gave them a recommendation for safe-conduct to the guides, that they should permit them to pass for the sake of Christ. Later I was informed that they called Christ a "Tola," i. e., a hanged malefactor. Therefore, I do not care to have anything to do with any Jew.¹

JADED WORDS

I purchased a copy of *On The Jews and Their Lies* in the late 1970s and was not surprised when I read the jaded words published by Martin Luther because I was already familiar with the Talmud and the Kabbalah.²

Most Christians will never read Luther's work, but they will spout that it is an anti-Semitic treatise. I would encourage the reader to examine the Talmud first; it will open your understanding to Martin Luther's mindset and why he wrote so forcefully against the Jews toward the end of his life.³ Only then will the following chapter titles make sense amid Luther's attempt to warn Christians.

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| 1. No Use to Quarrel | 5. Exalt Themselves |
| 2. Victims of the Wrath of God | 6. Liars and Bloodhounds |
| 3. Their Self-Righteous Boasting | 7. Worse Than the Heathen |
| 4. Children of the Devil | |

¹ Luther, Martin, *On The Jews and Their Lies*, Our Saviour's Church, Gainesville, Missouri, USA 65655, p.25

² https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Jews_and_Their_Lies

³ The Talmud is a vast collection of Jewish rabbinic teaching. It discusses religious law, ethics, customs, civil matters, rituals, and rabbinic interpretation of the Old Testament. Though compiled after the New Testament era, it preserves traditions similar to the kind Jesus rebuked when He condemned those who made "the commandment of God of none effect" by tradition.

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| 8. They Mock the Ten Commandments-Make God a Fool | 18. Enslave Us with Our Own Wealth |
| 9. Their Schools- A Devil's Nest | 19. They Even Betrayed Moses |
| 10. Devil Possessed | 20. Charitable with Our Wealth |
| 11. Dishonest with Scriptures | 21. Advice to Rulers |
| 12. Gold and Silver Their Messiah | 22. Desire the Death of the Christians |
| 13. A Bitter, Poisonous Enemy | 23. Advice to Preachers |
| 14. In Secret They Curse Us | 24. They Blaspheme the New Testament |
| 15. Talmud Worse Than Heathen Philosophy | 25. Their Messiah Is False |
| 16. They Profane the Name of Jesus | 26. Beware of Their Blasphemy and Usury |
| 17. They Call the Virgin Mary a Whore | |

THE NEW TESTAMENT AND JEWS

The New Testament speaks about Israel's privilege in receiving the Gospel first, Jewish unbelief, Jewish believers, corrupt Jewish leadership, Gentile inclusion, and God's future mercy toward Israel.

Jesus and the apostles were Jews

The New Testament begins with the fact that Jesus came through Israel.

"The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." (Matthew 1:1)

Jesus was born into the Jewish people, descended from Abraham, Judah, and David according to the flesh. His apostles were Jews. The first church in the Book of Acts was Jewish. The gospel first went to Jerusalem before it went to the Gentiles.

"Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews." (John 4:22)

Spiritual privileges

Paul makes it clear that the Jews had great spiritual privileges.

"Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came..."
(Romans 9:4-5a)

The Jews had the covenants, the Mosaic law, the temple service, the promises, and the Messiah which came through them.

*"What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God."
(Romans 3:1-2)*

Many Jewish leaders rejected Jesus

The Bible also records that many of the Jewish religious leaders rejected Jesus.

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not." (John 1:11)

John the Baptist rebuked the Pharisees and Sadducees:

*"O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"
(Matthew 3:7)*

Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees:

*"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"
(Matthew 23:33)*

This was not a personal attack, but a condemnation of corrupt religious leaders who claimed to serve God while secretly worshiping the holy serpent of the Kabbalah.⁴

The first Christians were Jews

The church began in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost when Peter preached to Jews gathered in Jerusalem and three thousand were saved.

"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:41)

The apostles, Mary, the early disciples, and the first believers were Jewish. Paul himself was Jewish:

"I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." (Romans 11:1)

Gentiles were grafted into the church

In the Book of Acts, the gospel spread from Jews to Samaritans and to the Gentiles. Cornelius was a Roman centurion and Peter coming to share the Gospel with them was a major turning point.

"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons." (Acts 10:34)

Paul later wrote:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek... for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28)

⁴ Torell, John S., *The Kabbalah, Book 1: Sabbatai Sevi* (Sheridan, California: EAEC)

Jews and Gentiles are saved the same way: by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

The New Testament condemns unbelief

Any condemnation of the Jews in the Bible is not based on ethnicity, but solely predicated upon unbelief and rejection of Jesus as the Messiah.

“For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel.” (Romans 9:6)

The issue is not physical descent, but faith, repentance, and the new birth.

“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.” (Romans 2:28-29)

Paul loved the Jewish people deeply

Paul did not hate the Jews. He grieved over their unbelief.

“I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.” (Romans 9:2-3)

That should shape the Christian attitude. Paul did not respond to Jewish unbelief with hatred. He responded with sorrow, prayer, and evangelism.

“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.” (Romans 10:1)

God has not cast away Israel

Paul asks a poignant question in defense of the Jewish people.

“Hath God cast away his people? God forbid.” (Romans 11:1)

He teaches that Israel has experienced partial blindness, but not total rejection. Not every Jew would be saved, for Paul had proved a large portion would be rejected and lost. The restoration would come in the future when Israel – as a whole – would return to God.

“Blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved...” (Romans 11:25-26a)

There is no place for pride or derision concerning the broken branches from the tree. Gentile Christians need to pity the Jews and pray for their souls, that they might come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. The tree, even with a part of the branches removed, and others ingrafted, retains its identity, and is never regarded as a different tree.

“Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee.” (Romans 11:18)

As the Jewish rabbinic leadership continued to reject Jesus, the number of Gentile believers increased, and eventually they outnumbered Jews within the church.

SUMMARY

The history of Martin Luther’s conflict with the Jews shows how theological disagreement can become distorted when anger replaces biblical restraint. Luther was right to insist that the Old Testament points to Jesus Christ as the Messiah, but his later hostility toward the Jewish people went beyond the example set by the apostles.

The New Testament makes the issue clear: salvation is not determined by ethnicity, ancestry, or religious tradition, but by faith in Jesus Christ. The first believers were Jews, the Gospel went first to Israel, and Paul never stopped grieving for his Jewish brethren who rejected Christ. He warned Gentile believers not to become proud, because they had been grafted into the same tree.

God has not cast away Israel, and Scripture points to a future turning of Israel to the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Christians therefore should reject hatred, pray for the salvation of the Jewish people, and continue to faithfully proclaim that Jesus alone is the Messiah, Savior, and Lord.