

How a Jew Found His Messiah

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I was born into a Jewish family in prosperous Vienna, Austria, on April 5, 1930. Although my parents did not strictly observe the Jewish religion, father took my brother and me to synagogue occasionally. Mother never went. We were also taught to repeat the ‘Shemah’ (see:

Deuteronomy 6:4-5) in Hebrew every night before we went to sleep. In my early years it meant nothing to me - I did not understand it.

Then came the ‘Anschluss’ (the forced annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany). It shattered our secure world. Our parents immediately explained the implications of this grave event, and warned us that because the Nazis were persecuting the Jews, we would be leaving Austria as soon as possible to escape their clutches. And so we did on December 22, 1938.

Move to Australia

We made our new home in Sydney, Australia. Our parents’ first concern was to find jobs. Father continued to take us to synagogue on most Saturdays. For the rest, we only observed the minimum of Jewish practices more out of tradition than out of conviction and faith.

God, however, had a different plan for me. Even as a child I tried to grapple with the big questions: “Who is the God that we are worshipping?” “Why were the Jewish people persecuted?” After all we are the chosen people of God. My parents, as most Jews, would reply cynically: “Chosen for what? Chosen to be persecuted!” I could not accept this. I had begun to believe in God as He has revealed himself in the Old Testament. Not that I read my OT; as I did not possess one, but the Rabbi taught us the usual Bible stories. In my childish mind I was convinced that God and the OT were true. This brought me into constant conflict with the family. Father was more reserved in his opposition. Mother and my older brother, however, scoffed at me for my faith.

Sad to say, as we grew older the conflict between my brother and myself became deeper and sharper, and we constantly argued about God, the Bible and religion. He persisted in his unbelief and I in my faith. To add to my difficulties he began to swallow the theory of evolution, and I held firmly to the Biblical revelation of Creation. I was constantly told that the Bible account of creation was only for a primitive people who did not know any better. It was then that I first tried to pray. We had begun to learn some of the horrors of the Concentration Camps and I knew that some of our family were incarcerated in them. I therefore prayed most earnestly that God would do a miracle and deliver the Jews from the Nazis as He did from Egypt by the hand of Moses. I was sure that God was well able to do so if it were his will. I did not tell anyone about this for fear of being ridiculed.

Loathing the Name of Jesus

The Rabbi visited us regularly to instruct us for our ‘Bar Mitzwah’ (i.e., the Jewish ceremony when a boy turns thirteen, and when according to rabbinic teaching he becomes an adult and responsible for his own sins). He carefully taught us the teaching of rabbinic Judaism (rather than the Bible) and tried to convince us that the Jewish religion, as taught by the rabbis in the Talmud, was the only right one, and that all other religions, particularly the Christian religion, were false. He taught us to despise Jesus Christ, and had no good word to speak of him. He insisted that the Hebrew letters of his Name meant “Let his name be accursed”. The Rabbi further insisted that all our troubles as Jews came from the Christians persecuting the Jews in the most cruel fashion imaginable over the past centuries because we were so-called “Christ-killers”. We were not taught that many Protestants and Evangelicals had a deep concern and love for the Jewish people and prayed and worked for their conversion. But his influence had the desired profound effect on me, and I began to loathe the Name that I now love so dearly. I assured my Rabbi that I would never become a Christian. I also had a growing desire to become a more observant and orthodox Jew and considered becoming a Rabbi. Not surprisingly, this brought me into further conflict with the family.

I cannot remember that it was ever impressed upon me that true religion was of the heart. I did not understand that God did not merely require the outward observance of certain rituals but rather a clean heart and a holy life. I therefore lived in ignorance of the Truth. However, God was working out his eternal purpose in me and for me, and by the secret working of the Holy Spirit, He taught me that all was not well between him and me. Whenever Psalm 24 was sung in the synagogue it was as though an arrow pierced my heart – I knew that ‘my hands were not clean and my heart not pure’. I managed, however, to put these thoughts out of my mind for the time being; but only for a short time.

Evil Habits

In my teenage years I practiced certain evil habits, of which I am too ashamed even to make mention. I knew that what I was doing was wrong in the sight of God and of man but I enjoyed the pleasures of sin and therefore had no intention to change my lifestyle. This gave me a bad reputation at school and was an additional reason for some of the bullying I received. I was also bullied because I was Jewish. Being very short I was their easy victim. In spite of this I was befriended by four boys, who professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. They tried to show me from Scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ was the very Messiah for whom I was waiting. I argued against them. They invited me to the ‘Crusader’ classes that were held every Monday during lunch hour. I reluctantly accepted their invitation for the one reason that by going I would get away from the bullies. Many of the speakers that spoke at the Crusader meetings also showed me the truth concerning Christ. I still remember some of the literature that they lent me. In my pride I kept on rejecting what they said, even though I knew that what they said rang true. My heart was hard. I often mocked them for their faith, but they persevered in their witness for Christ. They gave me a Bible and I began to read it but when I came to the New Testament I wrote blasphemous remarks in it. Even today my heart is sore that I should have written such remarks. I hardly need to mention that I did not tell my family that I attended these meetings or showed any interest in Christianity.

Learning a Trade

At age sixteen I left school and learned a trade. Sad to say I went deeper and deeper into sin. Thankfully the Lord restrained me from doing all that was in my heart. Often I was annoyed that I was frustrated in my endeavors to sin. Today I am thankful to the Lord for restraining me, for had He given me a free rein, it might have proved my utter ruin.

Strangely, I never lost my religious sentiments. Any convictions of sin were pushed aside, but they soon returned. I could not fool myself concerning my double life, and I knew that I could not fool God and that He saw and knew everything that I was doing. Every year on the ‘Day of Atonement’ I went to the synagogue; I kept the fast and joined in the general confession for sins. Secretly, I resolved to “turn over a new leaf” and live a clean life, but I found this impossible. For one thing I was too weak to keep my resolution, the power of sin being too strong for me. Secondly, I really loved my sin too much to give it up. Before many days had passed I was as bad as ever. So I went on further and further into sin. For all this I knew that I would be brought to face God’s Day of Judgment. The Lord, however, who is rich in mercy, was preparing me for his Day of Salvation.

Conviction of Sin

The crisis came on the Day of Atonement, September 1950. On leaving the synagogue at the end of the day, having dutifully fasted and made my usual resolutions, I suddenly realized that God was too holy to deal with sinners and their sins on a “let’s-forget-it” basis. Sin was evil in his sight. From that moment I knew that my sins were not forgiven. I knew that our holy God required something more than mere resolutions and vain attempts on my part to change myself. This alarmed me. The conviction of sin grew stronger and stronger and I cried to the Almighty to have mercy upon me. David’s experience in Psalm 32:3-4 became my own. Night after night I lay sleepless in my bed crying to God to have mercy upon me. In my great distress, I went to see my Rabbi and asked him for help to get rid of this burden of sin. He was rather surprised that this should trouble me and did not know what to say to me, except to do “good works” which God would accept to atone for my sins. I knew, however, that this was not sufficient. On reflecting upon the Lord’s dealings with me at this time, I recognize that He showed me particularly his own uncompromising holiness and my exceeding great sinfulness. For that reason He cannot deal lightly with sin – my sin.

Why were the Jews Persecuted?

Another problem began to demand my attention. “Why were the Jews persecuted? Why had we lost our Land for almost 2000 years? Why was the Temple destroyed, and why were we barred (at that time) from the Western Wall?” I reasoned with myself that we had tried to follow God, we had observed the Talmud. By that time, through reading the Old Testament, I became disaffected with the Talmud and began to think that there was really no authority for it. I had to reject the Rabbi’s teaching that the Talmud was given at Mount Sinai at the time of the giving of the Ten Commandments. I believed that the OT was the Word of God but I could no longer with my heart give the same consent to the Talmud. It came to me that the OT – particularly Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 28 – threatened such holocausts as we have experienced, and only for one sin – apostasy. I also knew that God cannot lie and therefore we must be guilty of departing from him. This frightened me and I began to ask myself, “How have we departed from him?” As I wrestled with this question I became very agitated. Then one night, struggling under the conviction of sin, it suddenly came to me: “What sin can be so great as rejecting the Messiah? Was Jesus the Messiah? Had we crucified the Messiah?” This was agonizing, and I knew that I must know the answer. Memories of the long-forgotten Crusader classes came flooding back to me. The conviction of the sin that we had rejected the Messiah, together with the conviction of my personal sins, became almost unbearable. I cried to God day and night to lift me out of my misery. I cried to the Lord to have mercy upon me. I desperately had to know the answer. I knew that I needed the forgiveness of my sin. But the question remained: To whom shall I turn, where shall I go? I almost despaired of crying to God and yet I could not stop.

Asking Ministers

My distress was great and in despair I walked through the streets of Sydney visiting first one Christian minister and then another, demanding that they tell me the Truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Lord’s strange dealings with me, the ministers I called on were all unbelieving men and ‘modernists’. I did not understand then that such men existed. I somehow thought that all ministers would have the answer and would try to help me. Well, I was disappointed. They all sent me away and could not understand what was troubling me. One minister was particularly rude to me and told me that as a Jew I had no right even to think about Christ and he chased me away. “No man cared for my soul” (Psalm 142:4). I was confused but I could not give up my search. I was driven on. The Lord graciously had a better purpose for me and the time of my deliverance drew near.

A Strange Encounter

In my confused and stressed state of mind I once more went into the City to do some shopping for myself. Though I did not know it, the Lord was guiding my footsteps. I made a ‘mistake’ and walked into the wrong building. As I went in by the door a Chinese ‘Salvation Army’ officer came out. I did not know him, for I had never seen him before and did not speak to him. He, however, put his hand upon my shoulder and, looking me straight in the eyes, said: “Young man, you are looking for Christ!” I was surprised and taken aback, and stammered, “No! I am a Jew!” He insisted, however, that I was looking for Christ and invited me to hear him out. So I went with him to his office and we talked together. I told him all my heart and from the Scriptures he pointed me to Christ as the only Savior from my sins and the only One who could relieve me from my burden. I listened to him and knew that he was right. On parting, he asked me to come back to him for further discussion. He pressed on me the urgency of the matter and that without Christ there is no forgiveness. I was in two minds whether to go back to see him or not, nevertheless, the Holy Spirit took me back to him. The more I spoke with him, the more my heart warmed to the Truth that he was telling me. The agony of my heart and spirit increased, and I could not cease to cry to God both in the day and night to have mercy on me and to show me the Truth. I could not sleep, I could not keep my mind on anything else. It affected my health but I did not tell anyone what was troubling me. I also knew that, should I be converted and believe on Christ, I would immediately be cut off from my family. This frightened me and I reasoned that this would be too high a price to pay, so I resisted God’s Spirit – but I had no rest. In his grace the Holy Spirit continued to strive with me and I became more and more convinced that this Jesus was my Messiah and only Savior, and that I had to follow him even at the cost of losing my family. Oh, how unbearable was the agony of my soul!

I went away for my annual holidays in February, 1951, with this question unresolved. I could not enjoy myself, for day and night I was troubled concerning my sins and the truth concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet, deliverance was now at hand. As the agony of my soul increased, the more I cried to the Lord to have mercy on me.

Peace and Joy

When I retired to bed on the night of February 27, I cried to the Lord that I must know the answer. I dared not go to sleep without knowing it. I had come to a complete end of myself. And the Lord, who is always pitiful, had mercy on me in the early hours of February 28, 1951. He powerfully revealed to my heart and mind the Lord Jesus Christ, bleeding for my sins on the cross and it was as though my heart melted. I could no longer resist the Holy Spirit and He drove me to my knees. The only words that I could say were: **“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!”** I cannot remember ever having heard or read these words before, which makes me realize that I was taught them by the Holy Spirit. ‘Flesh and blood did not reveal them to me but my Father who is in heaven’ (Matthew 16:16-17). The moment I uttered these words, my burden rolled off my back and I knew that I was free. Joy now flooded into my heart and I began to praise the Lord. He had taught me a new song.

The days that followed I was full of joy and could not stop praising God. Neither could I stop telling everyone whom I met what the Lord had done for my soul. People must have thought me strange, but the Lord Jesus had become my Savior! I had very little understanding concerning the Truth, but I knew him: **“Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will declare what He has done for my soul”** (Psalm 66:16)! I also found that the power of sin was broken. It was not a deliberate decision on my part that made me give up some of my sins but I lost interest in them: their pleasure had disappeared and I loathed them and knew that their power was broken.

Persecution

My return home from holiday was with mixed feelings. My worst fears came true; my family used all sorts of pressure – emotional, physical and even legal – to stop me from following Christ, and get me to return to Judaism. I found myself in very difficult circumstances. I vacillated. My secret and public worship was very intermittent. The result was that I soon lost my joy in the Lord. My friends, however, were praying for me, Christ, our great High Priest, was praying for me, and He who had begun the good work in me was to complete it. The struggle was great. I knew that I could not continue to waver between two opinions. I had to decide: either to serve the Lord or to forsake him forever.

By this time I had met an evangelical and godly pastor who was a great help and encouragement to me. Although I was in this undecided state of mind, I nevertheless asked for baptism, willing to take the consequences. After the baptismal service, when the pastor and I spent some time in prayer together, I realized that I had entered the way of no return, the way of total commitment to the Lord. He heard me and, by his grace, I was enabled to press on. He also sent me forth to preach the Gospel.

God has not cast away HIS People

My conversion is a clear proof that God has not cast away his people whom He foreknew. The Jewish people are still beloved for their fathers’ sake, and although today He is gathering them in **“one by one”** (Is. 27:12), the day will most certainly come when **“all Israel shall be saved, as it is written”** (Rom. 11). God’s Covenant with Abraham was an everlasting covenant and He will not leave off his working until all is fulfilled. I have no reason to boast, only to admire the Lord’s grace.

Thus the Lord has led me according to his eternal purpose, from the foundation of the world. He had planned my conversion to the very time and place. It was He who first began working in me. It was He who put the first thoughts concerning himself into my mind. It was He who enabled me to believe the truth of his Word in the Bible. It was He who had his eye upon me even when I strayed in all the paths of sin and He kept me from going too far. It was He who convicted me of my evil ways and the evil of my doings. It was He who revealed Christ to me. I will now raise up my ‘Ebenezer’ to him, so that all who read my testimony might praise the Name of the Lord and put their trust in him.

The Lord’s dealing with me is also an example of the truth of Psalm 76:10: **“Surely the wrath of man shall praise You.”** It was due to the wickedness of man’s wrath that we had to flee Austria. Had there been no Nazi threat, and had we continued under Austria’s Roman Catholicism, the chances of ever hearing the Gospel would have been extremely slim. Thus God brought me to a land where I did hear – and, hearing, I believed!
He always does all things well!

A Jewish Answer to a Jewish Question:

Question: *“I am Jewish, can I become a Christian?”*

Answer: “That is a wonderful question! Here is my story; the story of another Jew, like yourself, who asked this very same question many years ago.”

I grew up in an orthodox Jewish home in New York, but, years ago, I came to believe that Jesus is truly the Jewish Messiah. Believing that He is the Messiah wasn't easy. I had many, many questions, and I spent months examining the evidences and seeking God's answers. During my journey, I constantly reminded myself of a very important verse from the Jewish Scriptures (the Tanakh, or Old Testament). The Jewish prophet Jeremiah records these words of God, **“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart”** (Jer. 29:13). I recommend you seek him with **all** your heart.

The Torah, The Prophets, and The Writings, which make up the ‘Tanakh’, paint a very clear picture of who the Messiah would be when He eventually comes to the nation of Israel. In fact, there are over 300 prophecies in these Hebrew Scriptures, which detail many facts about the coming Messiah/King. Here is just a seven-fold sampling:

Messiah would be from the tribe of Judah: Genesis 49:10.

Messiah would be the ‘Son of David’, of the ‘root of Jesse’: Isaiah 9:6-7 & chapter 11.

Messiah was to be born at Bethlehem: Micah 5:1.

Messiah would present himself, entering Jerusalem on an ass: Zechariah 9:9.

Messiah would be crucified: Psalm 22; Israel will eventually look on the One they pierced: Zech. 12:10.

Messiah would be ‘cut off’ **before** the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple: Daniel 9:26.

Messiah's life, death and resurrection would match the particular descriptions of Isaiah 52:13–53:12.

Hebrew prophecy is remarkably specific. In detail as to lineage, birthplace, time and lifestyle, Jesus matched the Messianic expectations of the Hebrew Scriptures. The record of this fulfillment is to be found in the pages of the New Testament. As you review this list of Jewish Messianic prophecies, or a more extensive one, allow God to speak to your heart and your mind as you seek HIS truth.

Interestingly, the Jewish Scriptures paint seemingly two different pictures about the Messiah. For one, they talk about the Messiah who will come as the reigning King, who will usher in a period of unprecedented peace on earth. But many verses talk about the Messiah who will be a suffering servant, who will die for the sins of the people. For many hundreds of years the rabbis believed that possibly there would be two Messiahs, the King ‘Mashiach ben David’, and the suffering Servant ‘Mashiach ben Joseph’. The rabbis, unfortunately, were not able to see that one Messiah would accomplish both missions. The first page of the New Testament gives us the answer in Messiah's genealogy: He is both ‘son of David’ and ‘son of Joseph’.

Prophecy was supernaturally fulfilled in the Jewish Messiah. Jesus came to the “lost sheep of the house of Israel” - 2000 years ago. He came, as Isaiah chapter 53 so clearly states, to suffer and die for the sins of Israel. They rejected him. “He was in the world, and the world was made through him, and the world did not know him. **He came to his own, and his own did not receive him!**” (John 1:10-11). As a result, the Good News of God's Kingdom went forth to the Gentile world, and for 2000 years now, both individual Jews and individual Gentiles have come to acknowledge HIM as their Messiah and Savior. Together they look forward to his soon return, followed by his reign as KING of kings.

Although the nation of Jews rejected Jesus when He came, God has always, through the last 2000 years, kept a “remnant” of believing Jews for himself. I, and many thousands of Jews alive today, have received Jesus Christ as our Lord, and Savior, and Messiah. We have been blessed with “new life” in him, and we look forward to eternal life with him in God's Kingdom of Heaven.

This is a lot to digest, but if you are asking this question, it is God's Spirit (the Ruach HaKodesh) who has drawn you to this information. I pray that you will continue your examination of the evidences of who Jesus really is and of his claims to be the Jewish Messiah, in fulfillment of Hebrew prophecy. Remember his words, **“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me”** (Revelation 3:20). The Jewish Messiah could be standing at the door of your heart right now! Consider Him! Open the door and allow him to enter and reign in your life as the son of David on his throne!