

## **A NEW PUBLICATION ABOUT JEWISH EVANGELISM**

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Evangelism is the proclamation of the salvation message of God to all people calling them to become disciples of Jesus Christ. When the Gospel message is proclaimed to the Jewish people, it is called Jewish evangelism. The gospel message is not inherently a "Jewish" message. Evangelism is "Jewish" when the good news is directed specifically to the Jewish people.

In their community, the Lord is known by his Hebrew name Y'shua (lit. "salvation" or "savior") and with the Hebrew title HaMashiach (lit. "the Messiah"). The missiological challenge of Jewish evangelism is in contextualizing the Gospel for an ethnically diverse and internationally dispersed people.

Mission to the Jewish people must take into consideration the ethnic uniqueness of a people who are Semites by origin, oriental in the core values, clannish yet residing in diverse communities from South Africa to Russia, Ethiopia and Miami. Jews are culturally eclectic, yet unified by common history and attitudes about the Christian religion.

It is important for Christians to keep Jewish evangelism as a priority. Theologically, Christians cannot afford to ignore evangelization of the Jewish people. If, as some have said, Jewish have an alternative means for salvation, then the power of God in the gospel for all people is undermined. Salvation in Christ came first to the Jews. If they are now exempt from the necessity of the saving grace in Jesus Christ, then so are others. Romans 1: 16-17 is a watershed statement regarding the universal necessity of salvation in and through Jesus for Jews and all other nations.

Jewish people need salvation in Jesus Christ as much as anyone else. When Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father, but through me" (John 14:6) he was addressing a crowd of Jewish people. When Simon Peter proclaimed, "There is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved" (Act 4:12) his audience was Jewish people. So there is no hope of eternal life, salvation from sin or reconciliation with God apart from faith in Christ. That applies for all people whether they are Jews or Gentiles. Jewish evangelism is therefore necessary theologically.

It is also strategically important for the Church today. Jewish evangelism preserves the missiological cutting edge of the Church. Christians must think hard about the purpose of the Church as a witnessing community when confronted with the spiritually vital religions like Judaism. Since there is no other salvific hope for Jewish people, other than in Christ, then the Christian Church must take on this needed and particularly difficult task of reaching Jewish people with the Gospel. Jewish evangelism is important for the missiological health of the Church.

A recently published and helpful document on the current issues in Jewish evangelism is, Jewish Evangelism: a Call to the Church, Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, 2005. It is one of the Lausanne Occasional Papers that came out of Issue Group #31 on Witness to the Jewish People, at the 2004 international Forum in Thailand. Seven members of the Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE) met during the week long Forum to explore current issues in specific areas of evangelism. The booklet is a guide to the main issues in Jewish evangelism, suggested resources and some "best case scenarios" for what is being done in the field. The purpose of the booklet is to call the Church to the task of Jewish Evangelism and to equip Christians to accomplish that purpose. The booklet, Jewish Evangelism: a Call to the Church, can be found in the entirety as a PDF document at [«www.lausanne.org/Brix?pageID=13890»](http://www.lausanne.org/Brix?pageID=13890).

In the effort of providing more resources for Christians who want to engage in the task of Jewish evangelism two new graduate level training programs are just now coming available. The Pasche Institute at Criswell College has launched a program in Jewish studies. Western Seminary is offering a Master of Arts degree Specializing in Jewish Ministry. The curriculum and course information is available at [«www.westernseminary.edu/AcademicPrograms/SJ/MASM.htm»](http://www.westernseminary.edu/AcademicPrograms/SJ/MASM.htm). Short term evangelism experience and training is offered by several agencies specializing in Jewish evangelism. Web links for some of those agencies are available among the members of the LCJE at [«http://www.lcje.org/»](http://www.lcje.org/)