



The mind of the prudent acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge. *Proverbs 18:15*

1e. What about the Jew?

Also asked as:

Does a Jew have to believe in Jesus to be saved?

Does a Jew get to Heaven by being a sincere observant Jew?

Could God be fair if He sends a Jew to Hell for worshipping Him but not His Son?

Are Jews saved because they are God's chosen people?

How could a Jew be saved in Old Testament times or today?

Why have Christians so mistreated and persecuted the Jews?

Why do Christians blame the Jews for killing Jesus?

General question: Is God fair in dealing with a Jew?

Similar questions answered separately on eSeeker:

Is Jesus the only way to God?

What happens to good people who do not believe in Jesus?

What about the hypocrites?

A caution: Many Jews have been offended by misguided, ignorant, and nominal Christians. To some Jews, many non-Jews in the Western world are mistakenly considered to be Christian (including Hitler). The Old Testament is not the *Old* Testament to a Jew since they do not recognize the *New* Testament. Their Bible is the Tanakh (the Old Testament in a somewhat different order). The Tanakh's first five books, in the same order as in the Old Testament, are called the Torah or Pentateuch. Christians are vastly ignorant of Judaism and the history of the Jewish people as recorded in the Old Testament. For an overview of Judaism see the eSeeker answer *8d. Judaism ... a world religion.*

The short answer:

God's chosen people are the Jews. He has made many promises to them ... giving them a people, a land, blessings, and an influence on the world. God has promised blessings to those who bless the Jews and curses to those who curse the Jews. However, that special favor from God is corporate and does not save a Jew individually. A Jew in Old Testament times was saved by faith and not by works (not even the works of the Law of Moses). In New Testament times, a Jew is also saved by faith ... faith in the Jewish Messiah Jesus.

The longer answer:

Christians persecuting Jews. Some people, calling themselves and their misguided plans *Christian*, have persecuted the Jews. They have hypocritically acted in contradiction to the Old and New Testaments. They and their plans are far from true Christianity and far from a true Biblical view of the Jews, Israel, and Jerusalem. There are others, mistakenly considered to be Christian by some Jews, who have greatly persecuted the Jews ... such as Hitler. A non-Jew in the Western world is not *by default* a Christian. A Christian is one who has by faith *believed in* Jesus as his or her Messiah/Savior. In the Old Testament, that kind of faith in the true God is referred to as being *circumcised of heart*, Jeremiah 4:4. True non-hypocritical Christians are, and have been, great friends and allies of the Jewish people, Israel, and Jerusalem.

How could a non-Jew be a Christian? That is a strange question today ... but was not a strange question in the days of the First Century Church. There are three general categorizations of people in the New Testament. Those three are the Jews, the Gentiles, and the Church. A person was either a Jew or a Gentile (non-Jew) by physical birth. Both Jews and Gentiles who believed in Jesus became part of the third categorization by spiritual rebirth ... the Church. In the days of the early Church, as recorded in the book of Acts, most Christians were Jewish. Jesus, Joseph, Mary, John the Baptist, the Apostles, most of the 3,000 converts at Pentecost, and all New Testament authors except Luke were Jewish. In general, Gentiles came into the church after it had been established by Jews. The question could be asked today, *How can a Jew be a Christian?* However, in New Testament days, the question was, *How can a Gentile be a Christian?* The early church struggled with this issue. Some Jews in the early Church even thought that Gentile converts to Christianity had to be circumcised to be saved. This issue was resolved at a council of the Apostles in Jerusalem, Acts 15, and addressed in passages such as Romans 11:27-24, Ephesians 2:11-13, and Ephesians 3:4-7.

God's view of the Jews ... as a people. Throughout the Old and New Testament, no other nation, city, or group of people (by lineage) has had a more special place in God's eyes than the Jews, Jerusalem, and the nation Israel.

The Jewish people are the apple (pupil/center) of His eye. *"For he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye,"* Zechariah 2:8.

They are His chosen people. *"For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth,"* Deuteronomy 7:6.

Jerusalem is His chosen city. *"But I have chosen Jerusalem that My name might be there, and I have chosen David to be over My people Israel,"* 2 Chronicles 6:6 and, *"In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever,"* 2 Chronicles 33:7.

Israel has been the source of a light to the nations. *"I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth,"* Isaiah 49:6. Jesus, a Jew by birth, said, *"I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life,"* John 8:12. In addition, *"They (the Jews) were entrusted with the oracles of God,"* Romans 3:2. The Old Testament prophets, the New Testament Apostles, the authors of the Old and New Testament were all Jewish ... except the Gentile doctor Luke who wrote the books of Luke and Acts.

God's promises to Israel. God has made many wonderful promises to Israel concerning their people, nation, name, influence, land, and His blessing and protection.

God promised that Israel would be a great nation, be blessed by God, have a great name, would be a blessing ... and promised that His blessing of other people would be conditioned on their treatment of Israel. *"And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed,"* Genesis 12:2-3.

God promised to give them a land. *"The Lord appeared to Abram (Abraham) and said, 'To your descendants I will give this land,'"* Genesis 12:7.

God promised to give a land to them ... and promised that their people would be great in number. *"The Lord said to Abram ... 'Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered,'"* Genesis 13:14-16.

God promised to give them many descendants. *"And He took him (Abraham) outside and said, 'Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be,'"* Genesis 15:5.

God promised to give them a land ... a land with specific boundaries. *"On that day, the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, 'To your descendants I have given this land, from the river of Egypt (the Nile) as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite,'"* Genesis 15:18-21. This is a landmass larger than has ever been occupied by Israel to this day.

The Apostle Paul wrote of God's promises to the Jews, *"From the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable,"* Romans 11:28-29.

God promised His faithfulness to them. *"Thus says the Lord, 'If the heavens above can be measured and the foundations of the earth searched out below, then I will also cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done,' declares the Lord,"* Jeremiah 31:37. *"Thus says the Lord, 'If My covenant for day and night stand not, and the fixed patterns of heaven and earth I have not established, then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, not taking from his descendants rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy on them,'"* Jeremiah 33:25-26.

God's view of the Jews ... as individuals.

A Remnant. The word *remnant* is used more than 50 times in the Old Testament, and also in the New Testament, referring to a subset of the Jewish people. That remnant is comprised of the spiritually saved Jews. The Jewish people are corporately as a people special to God. However, that does not spiritually save anyone as an individual. *"Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, 'Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved; for the Lord will execute his word on the earth, thoroughly and quickly,'"* Romans 9:27-28.

Salvation in the Old Testament ... by works or by faith? It is a false assumption made by many Christians and Jews that salvation in Old Testament times, and in Judaism as a whole, was based on being a sincere, observant, good follower of the Laws and rituals of Judaism. Abraham, the father of the Jews, was saved by faith and not by works. *"Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness,"* Genesis 15:6. *"What then shall we say that Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh, has found? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,"* Romans 4:1-5. A Jew, in Old Testament times, was saved by faith in the true God ... one who was circumcised of heart.

Circumcision of the heart? Circumcision was the outward sign of being Jewish. This is commanded in the Law of Moses in Leviticus 12:3 and is traced back to God's covenant with Abraham, Genesis 17:9-12. It was the outward symbolic sign in the flesh of being Jewish ... just as water baptism is symbolic of being a Christian. However, being physically circumcised did not save anyone spiritually. A Jew could be spiritually lost being *uncircumcised* of heart although he was circumcised in the flesh, Jeremiah 9:25. The clearest, and most graphic, statement of the need for a heart commitment to God is stated in the Old Testament as, *"Circumcise yourselves to the Lord and remove the foreskins of your heart, men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, or else My wrath will go forth like fire and burn with none to quench it, because of the evil of your deeds,"* Jeremiah 4:4. The Apostle Paul also wrote of this, *"For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God,"* Romans 2:28-29.

Is Jesus the Jewish Messiah?

Messiah Jesus, the Redeemer of Israel, is mentioned in the Old Testament in Isaiah 48:16-17, *"Come near to Me, listen to this: from the first I have not spoken in secret, from the time it took place, I was there. And now the Lord God has sent Me, and His Spirit.' Thus says the Lord, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, 'I am the Lord your God, who teaches you to profit, who leads you in the way you should go.'"*

The Messiah was predicted throughout the Old Testament in the books of the Law of Moses, in the books of the Major and Minor Prophets, and in the Psalms. The One who fulfilled all of these predictions would be the promised Messiah. Jesus boldly said, *"These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled,"* Luke 24:44. A comparison of the predictions of Psalm 22 and the circumstances of the crucifixion in Matthew 27 points to Jesus as that Redeemer (the one who paid for our sins). The first words of Psalm 22, *"My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?"* were spoken by Jesus from the cross. In total, there are more than 300 Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in the life and death of Jesus. Consider this partial list of Old Testament predictions and their fulfillments in the birth, life, and death of Jesus.

Born of a virgin, Isaiah 7:14 and Matthew 1:18-25.

Of the lineage of Abraham, Genesis 22:18 and Matthew 1:1.

Of the lineage of David, Jeremiah 23:5 and Luke 3:31.

Born in Bethlehem, Micah 5:2, and Matthew 2:1.

Preceded by a messenger, Isaiah 40:3 and Matthew 3:1-2.
He would teach in parables, Psalm 78:2 and Matthew 13:34.
The Triumphal entry, Zechariah 9:9 and Luke 19:35-37.
Betrayed by a friend, Psalm 41:9 and Matthew 10:4.
Betrayed for 30 silver pieces, Zechariah 11:12 and Matthew 26:15.
Forsaken by His followers, Zechariah 13:7 and Mark 14:50.
Silent before His accusers, Isaiah 53:7 and Matthew 27:12.
Crucified rather than stoned, Psalm 22:16 and Luke 23:33.
Crucified with thieves, Isaiah 53:12 and Matthew 27:38.
Specific disposal of His garments, Psalm 22:18 and John 19:23-24.
No bones broken, Psalm 34:20 and John 19:33.
Buried in a rich man's tomb, Isaiah 53:9 and Matthew 27:57-60.

Did the Jews kill the Christian's Jesus?

Jesus laid down His life voluntarily. Jesus said, *"I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd. For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father,"* John 10:14-18. Because of these words of Jesus stating that He laid His life down voluntarily, it is impossible to blame the Jews or Romans (the ones who actually carried out the execution of Jesus).

The saving message of the Gospel of Christ is that the death of Jesus, the shedding of His lifeblood, is that which paid for our sins and made eternal life with God possible. *"For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit,"* 1 Peter 3:18. *"Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ,"* 1 Peter 1:18-19. *"In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace,"* Ephesians 1:7. Without His death, we would all be separated from God for eternity because of our sins, 1 Thessalonians 1:8-9. His death was necessary.

Who actually killed Jesus? The Apostle Peter explained, *"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know – this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power,"* Acts 2:22-24. The death of Jesus was in the predetermined plan of God ... but carried out by the Romans at the strong appeal of some of the Jewish leaders and people. But consider this, each one of us whether Jew or non-Jew is responsible for the death of Jesus. It was because of our sin that He was executed. In that execution, He took God's wrath and punishment that was intended for each of us. Because of His death, we can be saved and made eternally right with God.

What does a Jew need to do to be saved?

The Old Testament Laws shows our failure. *"Whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin,"* Romans 3:19-20. The plumb line, the straightedge, of the Law of God shows us how crooked we are ... making it clear that we have failed to be holy. The Law saves no one. The Law of God shows us that we need to be saved.

It only takes one. One violation of the Law of God classifies us as lawbreakers. *"For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point, he has become guilty of all. For He who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not commit murder.' Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law,"* James 2:10-11. One crack in the window makes it broken. Broken is broken. One violation of the Law makes us imperfect and in need of a Redeemer Messiah. In reality, we have violated His Law not only once, or not even just a few times, but many times.

Salvation is outside of the Law. *"Apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith,"* Romans 2:21-25.

A simple and straightforward answer. Some Jews came to Jesus in Capernaum near the Sea of Galilee. Jesus had been teaching and performing miracles. They asked Him, *"What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"* Jesus answered, *"This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent,"* John 6:26-29. Believing in Jesus the Messiah is the answer for both Jew and non-Jew. There is no other answer ... believing in and not just about Jesus. Neither Jew nor Gentile comes to the Father except through Jesus the Messiah and His payment for their sins. He said, *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me,"* John 14:6. He also said, *"For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him,"* John 5:23.

The ultimate sacrificial Lamb. A lamb was used for sacrifice in Old Testament times, Exodus 12 and Numbers 28. The Old Testament predicted a lamb-like sacrifice. *"He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth,"* Isaiah 53:3-7. John the Baptist, in seeing Jesus, said, *"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"* John 1:29. Jesus is the ultimate sacrificial lamb who takes away our sin, once and for all, when we believe in Him, Hebrews 10:1-18.

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