

TZEDAKAH MINISTRIES
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Jesus and Hanukkah...



When I was studying for my MA in Theology degree at Southwestern Seminary, I was known as the “Jewish Chick” because I was the go-to source for all sorts of Jewish questions on campus — from queries about Jewish/Christian intermarriage to how to utilize the Talmud as a source. One day a religion professor came to where I was working and asked me whether Jesus celebrated the Jewish holiday of Hanukkah. **And ... he was seriously asking!**

I directed the professor to John 10:22-31 and then walked him through how this passage was not only set during the season of Hanukkah but that the setting was one of the keys to understanding WHY

Jesus decided to declare — “I and my Father are ONE” (verse 30). Therefore, and because Hanukkah and the day we have set aside to celebrate the birth of Jesus begin on the same day this year, **Tzedakah Ministries** decided it was a good time to equip you to use these two holidays as a synergistic evangelistic opportunity!

In John 10:22, we find these words: “And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter..” In the next verses, Jesus is walking around in the porch of Solomon’s Temple and the people are asking him a simple question loaded with deeper meaning — **“Are You the Messiah?” (v. 24)**

Given that Hanukkah in Hebrew is the word “dedication” and the season of the year is winter, we know that Jesus is in Jerusalem during Hanukkah when He is being asked this question. For while we today who believe in Jesus might consider this question as being based around Isaiah 53 and the Suffering Messiah, the Jewish people are asking the question based on the hope of first Hanukkah

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Jesus and Hanukkah...

which occurred around 160 years before the birth of Jesus. For in 165/164 BC, the Maccabean Revolt led by a priestly family drove out the Greek Empire and the pagan king Antiochus who had desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem. The miracle of Hanukkah is that the tiny bottle of oil that could light the Temple menorah for one night last for eight nights (or long enough to blend enough consecrated oil for the Temple). Therefore, the people who were suffering under Roman oppression were asking Jesus not about spiritual freedom but whether he was coming to set them from the Romans like the Maccabees had set them from the Greeks.

Jesus' answer from John 10:25 forward was to tell them not only about his actions but also to tell them about the eternal life that He could provide because "I and My Father are ONE." Jesus was telling them in this one simple but even more profound answer that not only was He the Messiah but that He was also God the Son. Consider this for a moment ... the people were looking for a sequel to the Maccabees and they were given God Incarnate ... at Hanukkah! You can almost not blame them for picking up rocks to stone Jesus because this was not an answer they were expecting ... but it was the answer they needed most at the most spiritual level of their souls.

It is still the answer the Jewish people need most at the most spiritual level of their souls. It is still the answer they need to hear. However, today it is not the Jewish people who are putting out stone walls to block out this message. It is often Christians because many churches do not even realize Jesus celebrated Hanukkah when He declared that He was ONE with the Father. It is often churches because many Christians are unaware of the Jewish roots of their faith or that even we have a heritage that connects to the Jewish people. We do not need to go overboard (see page 3) but we do need to find our common linkage — which is the Jewish Jesus!

Acts 20:24,

Dr. Amy Downey (Director/President)

Theology and Jewish Evangelism

I love the study of theology. I have a passionate calling and heart devotion to Jewish evangelism. I do not think the combination of these two factors in my life is an accident or happenstance. I truly believe God designed these two links in my life because one cannot properly do the work of Jewish evangelism without a solid theological foundation.

Perhaps on a first reading that last sentence might sound a bit strong or even a bit melodramatic; however, I hope you will give me a few more sentences to explain what I mean. For good evangelism cannot happen in a world of bad theology and bad theology will create weak evangelism. This is especially true in the world/environ of Jewish missions.

For example, there is a growing movement within the world of Messianic Judaism to compel Christians and churches to go back to the Jewish roots. Now on the surface, this sounds like a good idea. For indeed many churches have lost the essence of the Jewishness of Jesus as was mentioned in the article about Jesus and Hanukkah (pages 1-2). However, this “Hebrew Roots” idea seeks to make Gentile Christians convert to a form of Judaism that both Jesus and Acts 15 rejected. Additionally, the “Hebrew Roots” idea makes evangelism more difficult as Jewish people looks at this movement as sociologically illogical. Non-Jewish people cannot understand the historical and emotional baggage of 2,000 years of being Jewish by wearing Tefillin and eating Kosher. If you want to



be an effective Christian witness to the Jewish people — be a Christian who loves the Jewish people and knows the whole Jewish Bible (Old and New)!

Another example, is the tendency to avoid some difficult issues. I only have time to mention two in this article: the Trinity and the exclusivity of the Gospel meaning that Jesus is the ONLY WAY to heaven and there is no second chance to believe after death. Yes, the Trinity is a difficult term to explain and understand; but, the truth that Jesus is God the Son is a non-negotiable. And while I would love to wish for another chance after death for the lost, Hebrews 9:27 literally tells me otherwise.

Tzedakah Ministries fights the battle for theological truth to the every day. Why? Because the souls of the Jewish people need Jesus and theological truth is the only way to Him.

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Scheduling Tzedakah Ministries

Tzedakah Ministries exists “To Equip His Church to Reach His People.” This is the purpose and vision of the ministry. The vision of equipping individual Christians and churches to share in the work of Jewish evangelism is the focus and primary reason why **Tzedakah Ministries** operates.

For I am telling you right now that no ministry of Jewish evangelism can operate without the help of churches and Christians. **WE NEED YOU!** You know Jewish people. You are friends with Jewish people. You have a burden for the salvation of the Jewish people. **AND YOU NEED US** to help you with the tools and insights into how to witness to the Jewish community. **Let’s help each other!**

Schedule **Tzedakah Ministries** in 2017 by contacting us (972-977-2389/214-356-6080) today!

Just What Will Be CAFÉ Kehillah?

Over the last few weeks and months, I have been engaged in an interesting conversation with a group of eight fascinating, intelligent and searching Christian Millennials. I consider these eight young but wise men and women to be beacons of hope for the future of the Christian faith. They are profoundly honest about faith questions. They are brutal in their analysis and humorous about themselves and their Millennial generation. And ultimately, they have been beyond helpful as a beta-group to **Tzedakah Ministries** as we have asked them questions to test and bounce ideas as we prepare the website of **Explore Messiah...?** in early 2017.

One of the best ideas to come out of the beta-group is the concept of CAFÉ Kehillah. For the group told me that Millennials often need a place to “just talk about spiritual questions.” Therefore, CAFÉ Kehillah will be a discussion board within the **Explore Messiah...?** website and visible after each question section. Jewish Millennials will be allowed and encouraged to ask the spiritual questions about the Messiah in a safe environment that will then direct them to Jesus. By the way, our first volunteers to help lead CAFÉ Kehillah are the beta-group members! Millennial Mentors!

