



EXCERPT



Finding Messiah

A Journey into the Jewishness of the Gospel

May 24, 2022 | \$17, 216 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0324-4

As a person raised in a Jewish home and who continues to live a Jewish life, scholar of Jewish-Christian relations Jennifer Rosner takes us on a personal and corporate journey into the Jewish roots of Christian practice and faith. Rediscover the Jewish Jesus, and in doing so, experience a deeper and richer faith than ever before.

Rediscover the Jewish Jesus

Jesus was indeed a Jewish rabbi whose life was patterned around the Jewish calendar, not the Christian calendar. As well as being the Savior of the world, he celebrated Passover with his disciples, taught in synagogues, and wore *tzitzit* (the traditional fringed garment commanded in Numbers 15).

So, what happened? How did the church forget that the incarnate God was an observant Jew? How has Jesus' identity as Israel's long promised Messiah become such a fuzzy concept in Christian thought? Why have the practices that inscribed Jesus' life—things like the Sabbath, pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and engaging the forces of ritual impurity—become sheer oddities in Christian faith and devotion? How have issues that deeply preoccupied the early church (things like table fellowship between Jews and Gentiles, the role of circumcision, and faithfulness to the commandments given in the Torah) become tabooed tangents in modern Christian life? How have the embodied practices of a living faith—which stand at the heart of Jewish life—become largely lost in contemporary Christian discipleship? How, in short, has Christianity wandered so very far away from Judaism?

This book is an attempt to dive into this set of issues and questions. My goal is to retrace the history that ultimately declared Judaism and Christianity to be two separate (and largely incompatible) religious traditions, and to challenge the conclusions that are often drawn as a result of that history.

I am primarily writing to Christians, perhaps especially Christian leaders, who find themselves deeply invested in their own church traditions but who feel intrigued by what a deeper knowledge of Judaism might add to Christian faith. In the end, my hope is that this book will enrich your spiritual practices and add to your understanding of the thoroughly Jewish foundation that Christianity has in many ways moved away from.

As we begin to ponder the utter separateness between Judaism and Christianity, Ignatius's words give us a clue to this puzzle whose pieces are hidden in the folds of history. As Messianic Jewish theologian Mark Kinzer points out, Ignatius's efforts to draw a thick black line between Christians and Jews are proof that such a line did not yet exist. Rather, Ignatius was among those who successfully sought to create a new religion called Christianity that would eventually unhitch itself from what they perceived to be the tired and heavy yoke of Judaism.

But for some of us, like myself, this parting of the ways is a great tragedy. It is the first and deepest church split. While one painful ramification of this split is that it leaves no room for Jewish followers of Jesus to live as Jews, an even greater problem is that it mars the true identity of the church itself. As Paul reminds us in Romans 11, Gentile (i.e., non-Jewish) followers of Jesus are "grafted in" to God's covenantal relationship with Israel. The church is joined together with God's existing covenant people, not a law-free, grace-based replacement of that people.

Fast forward almost twenty years from my first visit to St. John's. I now call myself a Messianic Jew, I am married to another Messianic Jew and we have two young children. The rhythm of our lives is decidedly Jewish. We observe the weekly Jewish *Shabbat* (Sabbath) that begins on Friday night and ends on Saturday night. I make *challah*, the traditional



Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media



EXCERPT



Finding Messiah

A Journey into the Jewishness of the Gospel

May 24, 2022 | \$17, 216 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0324-4

Jennifer M. Rosner is affiliate assistant professor of systematic theology at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, where she completed her PhD on the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. She is the author of *Healing the Schism* and coauthor of *At the Foot of the Mountain*. She and her family live in Northern California.

Jewish braided bread, which we eat after reciting *hamotzi*, the Jewish blessing over bread. In the darkest nights of winter, our home is illumined by the bright light of Hanukkah candles. Our stomachs growl and groan during the annual fast of Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement) and our home is cleared of all *chametz* (leaven) before Passover comes.

However, we also believe that Jesus (we call him by his Hebrew name, Yeshua) was God incarnate and took away the sins of the world. We read our children stories from the Gospels, and we recite with them both the Lord's Prayer and Judaism's central declaration of God's oneness, the Shema.

Like other Jewish followers of Jesus, our lives are spent trying to forge a way between two religions that have spent roughly sixteen centuries defining themselves in opposition to one another. Bending back the deeply entrenched patterns of history is not easy work. It's a lonely path, and we are often misunderstood.

But for us, there's no other authentic way to live out our faith. As my friend Ben Ehrenfeld once put it, "Asking me to choose between Jesus and Judaism is like asking me to choose between my heart and my lungs." For us, there is only the in-between path, the third way that history has erased.

In reinventing this path, in forging it once again, I am convinced that we will rediscover our Lord and Messiah. In the pages that follow, I invite you to join me on this journey.

—From the introduction



Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



ivpress.com/media