

Why Jews Don't Believe Jesus Is the Messiah

Understanding the Jewish Perspective on Messianic Prophecy

JEWISH MESSIANIC CRITERIA

Who the Messiah Must Be:

- Descendant of David through *father's* line
- From tribe of Judah
- Human being, NOT divine
- Observant of Torah
- Great military and political leader

What the Messiah Must Accomplish:

- Build the Third Temple (Ezekiel 37:26-28)
- Gather ALL Jews to Israel (Isaiah 43:5-6)
- Bring world peace (Isaiah 2:4)
- Spread universal knowledge of God
- End hatred, oppression, disease

Core Jewish Objection: The Messiah is supposed to fix the world. Jesus came. The world is not fixed. Therefore, Jesus is not the Messiah.

WHY JEWS SAY JESUS FAILED

1. Unfulfilled Prophecies

- No world peace — wars continue
- Jews still in diaspora
- Temple not rebuilt
- Universal knowledge of God? No

Conclusion: Whatever Jesus did, it wasn't the Messiah's job.

2. "Second Coming" Not Biblical

- Hebrew Bible never mentions Messiah coming twice
- Jews: "Invented to explain Jesus's failure"
- If you don't complete the mission, you're not the Messiah

3. Lineage Problem

- Tribal membership follows the *father*
- Virgin birth = no human father = no tribal identity
- Genealogies trace through Joseph (not biological father)

4. Divine Messiah = Polytheism

- "Hear O Israel, the LORD is ONE" (Deut 6:4)
- Jews: Worship of a person = idolatry
- No pre-Christian Jewish text suggests divine Messiah

KEY PROPHECY DISPUTES

Isaiah 7:14 — "Virgin" Birth

Christian: "A virgin shall conceive..."

Jewish: Hebrew *almah* = "young woman," NOT virgin. If Isaiah meant virgin, he'd use *betulah*. Plus, the sign was for King Ahaz in *his* time.

Isaiah 53 — Suffering Servant

Christian: Describes Jesus's suffering for sins

Jewish: The "servant" is ISRAEL. Isaiah 40-55 repeatedly calls Israel God's servant (41:8, 44:1, 44:21, 49:3). "They (plural) were stricken" (53:8).

Psalms 22 — "Pierced Hands/Feet"

Christian: Describes crucifixion

Jewish: Masoretic Text reads "like a lion" (לָאֵיִלִּים), not "pierced." About David's suffering, not future Messiah.

Zechariah 12:10 — "Look on Me... Pierced"

Christian: Israel looks on crucified Jesus

Jewish: "Me" and "him" are two different subjects. Refers to Jewish martyrs or Messiah ben Joseph. God cannot literally be pierced.

THE TWO MESSIAHS TRADITION

Ancient rabbis noticed contradictory prophecies: suffering vs. reigning. Solution: TWO messiahs.

Messiah ben Joseph	Messiah ben David
From tribe of Ephraim	From tribe of Judah
Suffering figure	Reigning king
Rejected by brothers	Accepted as ruler
Dies in battle	Brings world peace
Prepares the way	Final redeemer

Significance: This shows ancient Jews recognized the suffering/reigning tension. Christians say Jesus fulfills both in two comings; Jews said two different people.

CHRISTIAN RESPONSES

On unfulfilled prophecies: Jesus fulfills remaining ones at Second Coming. First = atone for sin; Second = political restoration.

On lineage: Jesus was legally Joseph's son through marriage; legal adoption transferred rights.

On divinity: Hebrew hints at plurality (Elohim, "Let us make man"); Angel of LORD sometimes = YHWH.

On Isaiah 53: Earliest Jewish sources (Targum) saw it as messianic; NT writers were Jews who understood it of Jesus.

LDS PERSPECTIVE

We affirm: Jesus is the Messiah — Book of Mormon, D&C, living prophets all testify.

We can acknowledge:

- Prophecies ARE complex — tension is real
- Translation matters — *almah/betulah* distinction is legitimate
- Context matters — Isaiah 53 comes after "servant = Israel" chapters
- Christian persecution of Jews makes their resistance understandable

LDS Clarifications:

- Jesus = Jehovah (God of OT), not Father — different from Trinitarianism
- Pre-mortals existence: mission always two-fold
- "Plain and precious truths" lost (1 Ne 13:26-29)
- Book of Mormon: explicit prophecies, not ambiguous

SUMMARY

Issue	Jewish View	Christian View
World peace?	Not accomplished	Second Coming
Davidic descent?	No father = no line	Legal adoption
Divine Messiah?	Idolatry	Trinity/plurality hints
Isaiah 53?	= Israel	= Jesus
Two comings?	Not biblical	Implied in OT

What We Can Learn:

- Take Jewish objections seriously — not stupid arguments
- Know the Hebrew — it matters
- Read context — don't proof-text
- Be humble — Christian history toward Jews is shameful
- Rely on revelation — personal witness through Spirit

LDS Approach: Rather than proof-text battles, we invite people to read the Book of Mormon, pray, and receive their own witness that Jesus is the Christ.