

# Identity and Expression of Faith

by Robert Wurtz II

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*The sermon explores the impact of Hellenistic influences on Jewish identity and faith expression in Christianity, emphasizing the need for authentic witness and understanding of traditions.*

**Topics:** "Jewish Christian Relations", "Spirit Led Faith"

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## Description

Robert Wurtz II addresses the challenges in witnessing to Jews due to the Hellenistic influences in the Church since the 2nd century, leading to misunderstandings and barriers for Jewish acceptance of Christ. He emphasizes the importance of not requiring Jews to abandon their identity to follow Jesus, highlighting the need for Gentile Christians to respect Jewish customs and traditions. Wurtz explores the errors of interpreting the Old and New Testaments through a Greek context, stressing the spiritual discernment over intellectual knowledge in understanding God's wisdom. He warns against prioritizing doctrines over genuine fellowship and expression of faith, urging for a revival of true, Spirit-led Christianity focused on living out God's Word.

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## Transcript

One of the major problems associated with trying to witness to a Jew is the presence of so much Hellenistic influence that has existed in the Church since the 2nd century. As the Church began moving west the Gentile Christians began interpreting Paul's writings in an Anti-Semitic light and adopting many pagan influences into the Church. The Church over the next 1000 years would be filled with all manor of graven images and pagan concepts of "mother-son" worship, etc. etc. Many of these things a Jew absolutely could not accept. On top of that there is still a concept that exists that if a Jew is going to "get saved" they have to become a Gentile to do it. In other words they have to cast-off their Jewish heritage and stop practicing those things that gave them a Jewish IDENTITY. If a Jew desired to continue to honor the Sabbath day Gentiles would view this as being "under the law." Or is they kept Passover or Yom Kippur or any of the other festivals they would be viewed as being "under the law. " What the Gentile Church essentially did was cast off the Jewish holy days as being legalism and then created a whole new bunch of Christian holidays that were in many cases a carry over or redefinition of pagan holidays they celebrated before they were born again. Herein lies the great inconsistency that has plagued the Church since the 2nd century and is a major cause of many Jews being unable to accept Christ. It was not long until artwork depicted Jesus as a westerner and not as Jewish. The last Supper was painted as though the people were sitting at a table and this was in no wise how the last supper (Passover) was conducted. In fact, many Christians do not realize what a Passover service is and how it so points to Jesus Christ. We

think of it as the simple communion services we conduct.

In I Corinthians 7 we read... 18 Is any man called being circumcised? Let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised. 19 Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God. 20 Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.

God does not expect a Gentile to become a Jew in order to be saved. This was laid to rest at the first Church counsel meeting in Acts 15. In like manor it is up surd to think that a Jew should be compelled to cast off their identity as Jews and become Hellenized Gentiles to become a follower in a Jewish Messiah. The first century believers lived as Jews and conducted themselves as Jews in the Temple and in Synagogue. The issue for the reformist is that there is a tendency to think these things are being done as "works" for salvation, when in reality it is their way of expressing their faith in light of the fullness of the understanding of all these feasts and festivals that POINTED to their Messiah that they now accept by faith (sola feday). I personally have been in these services in Messianic Meetings and have seen what Passover was like in the First Century. I only celebrated Passover once, but it an awesome thing to experience and it gave a whole new appreciation to the Christ that I had cast in my own image.

To try and set the Old Testament and New Testament into a Greek context is serious error. The Greek aspect of the Gospel is the language of the manuscripts (cedex) that were in the common Greek tongue that was spread throughout the world after the conquests of Alexander the Great. Greek was a common language with which the Gospel could be communicated and is not the same as taking on the Hellenistic influences and the full embodiment of the sorely Pagan ways of the Greeks. Greek logic and philosophy has been the lens that the Bible was viewed through now for some 1900 years (+ -). Greek logic compartmentalizes truths of scripture and boxes them in to try to make them subservient to Greek logic. But hear what Paul said concerning those things... I Corinthians 1:22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom 23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; 24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: 27 But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; 28 And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: 29 That no flesh should glory in his presence. 30 But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

The key to this is verse 21 ... For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God. Yet the very tools of Greek logic are used to try to interpret scripture (?). I'm not saying that we should abandon systematic Theology... I have written over 700 pages of materials teaching this very thing for several years; however, we must understand that the "meat" of God's word is Spiritually discerned. Intellect is not nearly as important as a pure heart when it comes to knowing God. It is sad that (As Leonard Ravinhill put it) that graduates of Seminary know the word of God, but not the God of the word. The wisdom of man exegetes God's word to form more man made theologies and doctrines and ignores the very reason the word exists. Men then began to express their faith by arguing doctrines rather than fellowshiping concerning the things of God. They identify themselves in terms of "What" they believe as opposed to "what they believe about the who they believe in." Soon the doctrines themselves become

their God. I am sorely guilty of doing this and it always would happen when I was growing cold and needed revival. When revival is present. I have a low tolerance for doing such vain things. I have expressed my faith by making apologetically arguments, etc. That is NOT walking in the Spirit and I knew it! It would get me by though until I was ready to repent again. Where is the balance in this? Is God more concerned with how well we understand the things that have been revealed to us in part as He is us walking in those things that are plainly understood. There are some strong rebukes and warnings in scripture against such behavior. This is NOT how Christianity was expressed in the first century. I never read in Act's "oh how they knew their doctrines." Paul said he came knowing nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified? We will find out in time how God feels about the wasted energies and pretense while a lost world is dying and going to Hell and were going to be ashamed.

The Jews will be won to Christ - not when they see Jesus through the eyes of systematic theology; but when they see the glory of God in our lives that provokes them to jealousy and makes the question the very things they believe. When the glory returns the elect will see it and recognize it.

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