

The Uniqueness of Christ in Jewish Evangelism in European Post-Holocaust Society

By Avi Snyder

© Avi Snyder, Jews for Jesus, 2010

Introduction:

In the early 1980s, I attended a missions conference that took place on the grounds of a Midwestern university in the United States. As the location might suggest, the conference directors presumably hoped to engage and excite Christian students about the field of overseas missions. So far, so good.

But when I arrived at the conference, and after sitting in on the first plenary session, I discovered that “mission” meant cross-cultural understanding and affirmation, while “ministry” meant medical aid, technological assistance and social involvement, but nothing more. In short, the gospel message wasn’t included in missions, because the gospel message wasn’t necessary to missions. Why not? The answer to that question was given by the keynote speaker who repeatedly stated throughout the weekend conference, “Jesus is certainly the supreme manifestation of God’s love, but not the sole manifestation of God’s love.” At one point during a break, I approached him coffee cup in hand, introduced myself, smiled, and then said, “You know, if Jesus isn’t necessary for everybody, I can’t help wondering – why did we Jews go to so much trouble to bring His message to *you*?”

Attacks against the uniqueness and sufficiency of Y’shua’s atoning work are nothing new, and all of us know that the debate rages very hotly in our own field of Jewish evangelism today. Ironically, perhaps the earliest challenge to the uniqueness of the Lord’s work didn’t center on the question of whether or not we *Jews* needed to believe in Jesus in order to be “saved,” but whether or not *gentiles* needed to do more than believe and repent in order to join our messianic club.

Today, the tables are reversed and the notion that “Y’shua’s work is not unique” is quite central to most argumentation against bringing His gospel to our people. Sadly, no lack of arguments abounds among those who otherwise identify themselves as evangelistically minded Christians. And so, in this paper, I would like to offer a survey of many of the arguments I’ve heard from Christians who take the position that Y’shua’s work on the cross is not unique and therefore not necessary for us Jews. Though I’ve been invited to address the subject in its relationship to Post-Holocaust Europe, I have to say that I’ve encountered the arguments wherever professing Christians are ashamed of the gospel and embarrassed over the Lord’s exclusive claims. It’s not really a European problem; it’s a church-wide problem.

But with that much said, I have to add that the horrors of the Holocaust, so often committed against a background of silence and non-protest from much of the European Church, have made many European Christians especially susceptible and agreeable to any false theological teaching that might minimize or take away the offence of the cross when dealing with the Jewish people whom they now hope to befriend. European Christians who are burdened not with a godly conviction but with an ungodly guilt find false penance in the various arguments that claim in one way or another that we Jews don’t need to hear the gospel and believe on the One who said “No one comes to the Father but by Me.”

What are these arguments that attack the uniqueness of Y’shua’s work by asserting that we Jews are exempt? Much of the information that I’m presenting in this paper appears in the manuscript of a forthcoming book that I’ve written entitled, “The New War against us Jews – How voices in the Church are attacking the People of God” (copyright Jews for Jesus 2010). In this paper, I’ll present some of the arguments I’ve encountered that focus specifically upon the uniqueness of the Lord’s atoning work. And since I’ve been invited to present this information in the context of a bible study, I’ll offer responses with a view toward

weighing the arguments against what the Scriptures have to say. I don't expect that any of you reading or hearing this paper will be dazzled by any new insights; I know you've heard the same arguments and have countered them in the course of your ministries to reach our people with the Good News. But I won't be disappointed if some of you find my articulation of the arguments and my responses in some way helpful in our mutual endeavor to introduce Y'shua to His own. Thank you in advance for giving me the opportunity to contribute my thoughts to our common cause of contending for the truth.

So, as it applies to Jewish evangelism, what are the arguments against the uniqueness and necessity of the Lord's atoning work? On what grounds do Christians say that we Jews don't need the gospel?

I've been told: "Jewish people don't need to be saved." If that's the case, then Y'shua's life and work are certainly not unique and indispensable.

But if that's the case, then at the risk of sounding glib, I have to say,

Somebody should have told the angel who appeared to Joseph in a dream

If we Jews don't need to be saved, then we ought to wonder why we read in the very first chapter of the New Testament:

"...behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him [Joseph] in a dream, saying, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Salvation, for it is He who will save His people from their sins'" (Matt. 1:20-21).

If we Jews don't need to be saved, then why did God give Him that name and send Him for the purpose of saving us, His people, from our sins?

Somebody should have told Jesus

If we Jews don't need to be saved, then why did Jesus travel throughout the Galilee, "teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom" (Matthew 4:23)? One of the most well known verses among believers throughout the world is John 14:6: "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Are those words true for Canadians? Yes, they are. Are they true for Germans? Yes. Are they true for Brazilians, and Koreans and Poles? Yes. But within historical context when Jesus uttered those words, to whom did He speak? Jews. In other words, Jesus the Jewish Messiah, said to an exclusively Jewish audience at the Jewish festival of Passover, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." If those words are true for gentiles – and they are – then they have to be true for the people to whom He spoke.

Somebody should have told the apostles and early disciples

If Y'shua's work is not unique, and if Jewish evangelism is therefore unnecessary, then we should wonder why Jesus not only practiced Jewish evangelism Himself but commanded His followers to do the same. In Matthew 10:6 and 7, we're told that when He first began to send the apostles out to proclaim the gospel message, He instructed them to go exclusively to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel, and as you go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" We should remember that Peter was not standing addressing

the Hague but standing before the Sanhedrin when he declared, “*there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we may be saved*” (Acts 4:12)

The Book of Acts makes it abundantly clear that the apostles and early disciples heeded His commandment and engaged in Jewish evangelism wherever they carried the Good News. It’s a bit ironic, isn’t it? Today, we’re “debating” whether or not it’s necessary and appropriate to bring the gospel to the Jews. But in the first century, the debate centered about whether or not we Jewish believers should bother to bring the gospel to the gentiles; or, whether gentiles who believed, needed to “become Jews” in order for their faith to be real. But as far as Jewish evangelism is concerned, that was taken for granted. It was the norm, and no one contested either the activity or the need.

Somebody should have told Paul

Paul was called to be the apostle to the gentiles. (Acts 22:21; Galatians 2:7). But even so, the record in Acts reveals that he always began his ministry in every new city by first evangelizing us Jews. In fact, while living among the disciples in Damascus, immediately after coming to faith and long before launching out on his very first missionary journey, Paul “began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, ‘He is the Son of God’” (Acts 9:20). And after returning to Jerusalem, not as an opponent but as an advocate of the faith, Paul spent his time “talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews” (Acts 9:29). What he practiced in Damascus and Jerusalem became his enduring pattern in every city that he visited throughout his entire missionary career (see for example, Acts 13:5; 13:38-39; 14:1; 17:2-3; 18:5). Even in the final chapter of the book of Acts, when Paul was brought to Rome as a prisoner, we’re told that “he called together those who were the leading men of the Jews...and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God, and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets” (Acts 28: 17, 23).

We can add that if Y’shua’s life and work are not unique and indispensable for us Jews, then...

Somebody should have told the prophets, John the Baptist, and John’s father, Zacharias.

Even before Y’shua came upon the scene, we know that Moses exhorted us to believe. In the Law, God both promised a coming Redeemer and warned us Jews about the consequences of failing to listen and believe: “I Myself will require it of Him” God said (Deuteronomy 18:18-19). If we Jews don’t need to believe in Jesus, then why did God warn us through Moses of the dire consequences if we failed to believe and heed Y’shua’s words?

Six centuries after Moses, the prophet Isaiah described to us, his fellow Jews, the reason for the Suffering Servant’s ordeal: “He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:5). If we Jews don’t need to trust in the sacrifice that Y’shua made for us, then why did Isaiah tell us the reason for the Messiah’s sufferings and death?

Jump ahead another seven centuries to the dawn of New Testament times, and we discover Zacharias describing the future ministry of his son, John the Baptist, by saying that John “will go on before the Lord to prepare His ways; to give to His people [i.e., us Jews] the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins” (Luke 1:76-77). If we Jews don’t need to be saved, then why did God send John the Baptist to give us “the knowledge of salvation” so that we may be saved from our sins?

Why didn't someone explain to Moses, the prophets, Zacharias, John the Baptist, Jesus and the Apostles that Y'shua's work was *not* unique? Why didn't someone explain to them that none of their Jewish evangelistic activity was necessary? Because Y'shua's work was and is unique, and because He *is* necessary for us Jews. In light of the biblical record, we needn't wonder whether the Scriptures advocate the "uniqueness of Christ" and therefore the necessity of Jewish evangelism. Rather, we should ask "What verses in Scripture teach that He is *not* unique, and that the need for and the practice of Jewish evangelism have therefore come to an end?" No such verses exist.

I've been told, "Jewish people don't need Jesus, because you're the Natural Branches"

Paul makes it very clear in his letter to the Romans that we Jews are indeed the natural branches (Romans 11:16-24). But does that mean that we don't need to be saved by the unique work of the Lord? No, he uses the imagery of the branches in order to explain that many of us have been broken off because of our unbelief. The analogy of the branches is not given as an assurance of automatic Jewish salvation or as an argument against the uniqueness of Y'shua's work, but rather, as a warning to gentile Christians of the dangers of unbelief: "They [us Jews] were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; for if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will He spare you."

I've been told, "Jews don't need Jesus because you're the Chosen People"

Are we chosen? Yes, we are. Then aren't we already saved? No, we're not. Then what does "chosen" mean in reference to us Jews? It means that we Jews were chosen to fulfill a task: to be a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:6), to declare God's praises to all people (Isaiah 43:21), to be God's witnesses to the world (Isaiah 43:10; Acts 1:8). But there's a problem. We can't proclaim the gospel until we believe the gospel, and we can't believe the gospel until we hear the gospel, and we can't hear the gospel until someone brings it to us first. Perhaps the best way to retard the cause of *world* evangelism is to keep the gospel message away from us Jews, the ones who have been called to be the vanguard of God's messengers to the nations.

I've been told, "Jesus is the way, but He is not the only way, at least, not for the Jews"

We've all encountered dual covenant theology – the assertion that we Jews have a sufficient "saving" relationship with God, apart from the work of Christ, because of the covenant that God made with Abraham. In other words, we're saved because we're descendants of his.

But what does the Scripture say?

John the Baptist contested the notion of possessing a correct relationship with God on the basis of the Abrahamic Covenant when he challenged certain scribes and Pharisees with the words, "bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance, and do not suppose that you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I say unto you, that God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (Matthew 3:8-9).

If merely being related to Abraham by birth constitutes sufficient grounds for a correct relationship with Abraham's God, then why did Paul address his evangelistic sermon in Acts 13 to the "sons of Abraham's family" (Acts 13:26)? Why did he (and the other apostles) call us to repent and believe in Jesus rather than just calling us to live faithfully as "Abraham's sons?"

Jesus Himself made it clear that Abraham was not saved because of the Abrahamic covenant, but by looking forward in faith and believing specifically in Y'shua the Lord. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56).

We need to ask ourselves precisely what God promised Abraham when He entered into the covenant with him as recorded in Genesis 12. We certainly know that He promised the patriarch a land (v. 1), a posterity (v. 2), a great name (v. 2), enduring protection (v. 3), and a blessing that would proceed from Abraham to all the families of the earth. But did He promise Abraham or his descendants an automatic, inherited pardon for sins in that covenant? Is there anything at all in the language of the Abrahamic covenant, in the "terms of the agreement," so to speak, that addresses the issue of salvation from the consequences of sin? As great as this covenant is, there is nothing in it that touches upon the manner by which we may be saved.

I've been told, "God will not judge the Jewish people for their sins if they haven't had the opportunity to hear the gospel message. God will only judge the Jewish people according to the light that they've received."

If we say that our people will only be judged according to the light that we've received, then we have to ask ourselves, "All right, then, what light have we Jews already received; or, by what standard will we be judged?" Jesus Himself answered that when He said to us, "Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope" (John 5:45). In other words, according to Y'shua, even if we Jews never hear the gospel, per se, we'll be held accountable for failing to find "Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote" (John 1:45).

I've been told, "Jewish evangelism is unnecessary because the Jewish people don't need to know the Savior's identity in order to be saved. Even if Y'shua's work is unique, it doesn't matter, because the Jewish people don't need to know that it's Jesus who is saving them. When they see Him face to face, then they'll know who He is"

"I have not spoken in secret..."

The notion that God is content to be an anonymous Savior runs contrary to everything that the Scriptures – both Old and New Testaments – teach us about the very character and conduct of God. He is the God who created us so that we might enjoy an intimate relationship with Him. He is the God who runs after us when we rebel. He is the God who cries out to us over and over again through the voices of the prophets, calling us to return. Ultimately, He is the God who sent His only begotten Son to reveal Himself explicitly and to bring us back to Himself.

We read recurrently a very tell-tale sentiment throughout the prophets. God tells us that He's acted, or that He's going to act specifically so that "you will know that I am the Lord" (see, for example, Ezekiel 6:10, 13, 14; 7:4, 9, 27). Are these the words of a God who's content to remain unknown? Even the word "revelation," reminds us that the God of the Bible is not a God who shrouds Himself in secrecy, but who discloses who He is, what He's done, and what we need to know in order to be saved.

Granted, we cannot know or understand everything about Him. He's infinite, and we're not. He's holy and perfect, while we're broken and corrupt. But that hardly alters the fact that He commands and even implores us to seek Him, to find Him and to know Him in an intimate way.

“I have not spoken in secret, in some dark land; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, ‘Seek Me in a waste place (Isaiah 45:19)...Seek the Lord while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near. (Isaiah 55:6)...And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. And I will be found by you (Jeremiah 29:13-14).”

Are these the words of a God who will settle for obscurity and anonymity? Are these the words of a God who’s content if we pray to “To Whom it may concern?”

The Anonymous Savior and the Greatest Commandment

In the Gospel of Mark, we read about an encounter between Y’shua and a scribe who asked the Lord this question: “What commandment is foremost of all?” (Mark 12:28). Y’shua answered by quoting and elaborating upon the very first prayer that many of us Jews learn as children, from Deuteronomy 6:4-5. “Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12:29-30). So the question has to be asked:

If the greatest commandment is to love the Lord whole-heartedly, how can we love Him if He’s an anonymous Entity to us? Can we Jews love an anonymous Savior with all our hearts, souls, minds and strength? Can we love a Lord whose name is a mystery, and whose deeds on our behalf have never been revealed?

The Anonymous Savior and the Prophet like Moses

In Deuteronomy 18, we read about a prophet like Moses whom God promises to send, and whom God commands us to heed:

“I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you [Moses], and I will put my words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which He shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him” (Deuteronomy 18:18-19).

A prophet like Moses would have to be a law-giver, and a redeemer, as well as an individual who exercised at least as much authority, if not more authority, than Moses exercised over us – the combined authority of prophet, priest and king (though Moses never served us officially as our king, he certainly held a power and authority even greater than any individual king who ever ruled over us in later years). As believers in Y’shua, we know that this “prophet like Moses” is Y’shua; the One who redeemed us not from Egypt, but from sin and death; the One who ushered in the promised New Covenant, not through the blood of lambs, but through the shedding of His own blood for the remission of our sins; the One who is greater than all the prophets, priests and kings combined, because He possesses all power and authority in heaven and on earth. This is the One whom God promised to send. This is the One whom God commanded us to heed. But how can we heed Him if we don’t know who He is? How can we listen to His words and obey His voice if we don’t know what He’s said?

The Anonymous Savior and “the Lord your Redeemer”

Y’shua is not just our Savior. He’s our Redeemer, King and Lord.

“Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts...I, the Lord, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob” (Isaiah 44:6; 60:16)

In our western culture, we’re comfortable enough with the notion of referring to Jesus only as our Savior; almost to the point of losing sight of what He saved us from. But we’re much less comfortable or acquainted with thinking of Jesus as our Redeemer and Lord, probably because the concepts are now foreign to our cultures, and probably because we don’t like the notion of being enslaved or subservient to anyone, even if that owner and master is God. But that’s what it means to be redeemed. And that’s what it means to have a lord. We have been purchased and made slaves of God; and now, we are to live and breathe for no other reason than to do His will.

Y’shua does not save us and then turn us loose. He sets us free from our slavery to sin and death, and He brings us into the bond – into the yoke -- of a new covenant with Him; a covenant in which we live to serve Him, to obey His will, and to fulfill His call upon our lives.

But how can we serve Him if He’s an anonymous master and lord? How can we obey His will if we don’t know what He wants? How can we fulfill His call upon our lives if we don’t know what He’s called us to do?

“To an unknown God”

In Acts 17, we read about the time when the Apostle Paul commented upon the Athenians’ deference to an unknown God.

“Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you” (Acts 17:22-23).

If God wanted to be known to the gentile nations, are we to understand that He doesn’t care if He remains anonymous to the Jewish nation that He called?

No, He cares. And He wants us to know precisely who He is.

“Then you will know that I, the Lord am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob” (Isaiah 60:16).

I’ve been told, “Jesus is not unique, because only Gentiles need to be saved. He is the light to the nations, but not the savior of the Jews.

So, go into all the world, but leave out the Jews?

I have to admit that the first time I heard this argument, I was surprised that anyone could offer it as a serious point of view. Those who put it forth make the claim that when Jesus gave the great commission, He was telling His disciples just to carry the gospel to the nations, because the relevant texts declare, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...” (Matthew 28:19), and “Go into all the *world* and preach the gospel to all creation” (Mark 16:15).

Apparently, “all the nations” and “all the world” excludes us Jews.

But then, we should wonder, if the message was just intended for the gentile nations, then why did Jesus bother saving so many of us Jews at the start, and then why did He

commission those same Jews to carry the message to the nations? Why didn't Jesus just preach the gospel in Oslo, die for our sins in Rome, rise from the dead in Athens, and then send the citizens of Peking out to preach the gospel along the silk road?

In Acts 1:8, the Lord says to his Jewish disciples,

“and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth”

Had Jesus intended to exclude us Jews, I imagine He would have said, “and you shall be My witnesses *to the gentiles* in Jerusalem, and *to the gentiles* in all Judea.” But that's not what He said. He certainly included “Jewish” Jerusalem and “Jewish” Judea in the target group that needed to receive the Good News.

Jesus, a light to the Nations, but a Diversion to us Jews

A more sophisticated argument, proposing that Jesus is just for the gentiles –that He is the “Christ of the nations” but not the Messiah of us Jews -- is easier to understand with the help of an illustration. The argument goes like this:

Imagine a vertical line with the following points from bottom to top. At the very bottom of the line is a point that bears the title “false gods” A little above this line is another point with the word “gentiles” written over it. If the point representing the gentiles had a face, then the face would be looking downward in the direction of the false gods. Now, a little further up the line, we come to another point, inscribed with the name “Jesus.” In His role as the Christ of the nations, Jesus beckons the gentiles to look to Him, and in so doing, to turn upward and away from looking downward toward their false gods.

Now, *above* Jesus on the vertical line is another point with the words “the Jewish People” written over it. If this point, representing us Jews, had a face, that face would be directed upward, *away* from Jesus, but in the direction toward the top of the line, in the direction of God. And finally, of course, at the very top of the line, we find one last point inscribed with the word “God.”

Now, according to the argument, when gentiles look up to Jesus, they're actually turning away from their idols and they're looking up in the direction of God. But we Jews are already looking to God. So if we should mistakenly turn our faces downward in the direction of Jesus, then we have actually averted our faces from the right upward direction in order to look down in the direction of Jesus and the false gods further down the line.

What does this argument imply about Jesus? It implies that He is...

The great and deliberate deceiver of us Jews

Jesus deliberately called us Jews to look to Him. For example, when He declared in the temple courts, “If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink” (John 7:38), He was calling out to us Jews. And when Jesus uttered the words, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling” (Matthew 23:37), He was lamenting over us Jews. And when Jesus warned, “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves” (John 6:53), He was warning us Jews. In these three instances (and in many more), Jesus specifically implored us Jews to turn to Him. So let me ask: Am I supposed to believe that Y'shua, the Holy One of God, deliberately sought to seduce my people into turning away from the Father by calling us to turn and look upon Him, the Son? Am I really supposed to believe that Y'shua would deliberately invite us Jews to look to Him if that “looking” caused us to forfeit

an already correct relationship with God? That makes Jesus a deliberate destroyer and deceiver of us Jews, just like the evil one. That's what this argument asks us to believe.

Jesus is the Christ of the nations only *because* He is the Messiah of us Jews. For as God explained in Isaiah, some seven hundred years before Y'shua walked the earth,

"It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make you a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6)

If Jesus is not the restorer of Israel, then neither is He the light of the world.

I've been told that when it comes to the Jewish people, the question of the uniqueness of Christ today is a moot point because of the Holocaust. In other words, Jewish evangelism is now impossible. "Because of the Holocaust, Jewish people cannot come to Y'shua, and believers cannot speak of Him to the Jewish people whom they know. As a result, God will not hold believers accountable for failing to witness, nor will He hold Jewish people accountable or failing to believe."

Has the Holocaust made it impossible for Jewish people to hear the Gospel and believe?

What about the thousands upon thousands of Jewish people who have come to faith in the 65 years since the Holocaust's end? What about the Jewish people who are coming to faith all over the world today?

Despite the horrors of the Holocaust, Jewish men and women are giving their hearts to the Lord. To say that the Holocaust has made it impossible for us Jews to receive the gospel and be saved is to deny the post-Holocaust fact that Jews have been coming to faith for the past seventy years. Wait, let me go a step further: to say that the Holocaust has made it impossible for us Jews to receive the gospel and be saved is to say that God has lost His ability to save. Clearly, that isn't true.

Does the Holocaust absolve Jewish people from believing in the gospel claims?

No. It does not.

The stories of Holocaust survivors who later came to faith stand as a remarkable testimony to the faithfulness of God who is mighty to save. But those stories also stand as a sober indictment against any of us who would use the horror of the Holocaust as an excuse for refusing to consider Y'shua's claims. We cannot stand before God and say, "Because of the Holocaust, I was unable to consider the gospel." Why? Because others did consider the gospel and did believe.

Has the Holocaust made it impossible for Christians to share their faith with Jewish people?

No, it hasn't. The Holocaust just makes the speaking more difficult. But where greater difficulty exists, greater grace abounds. We know that God has and does use gentiles to bring Jewish people to faith, even in light of the Holocaust. You and I may marvel over that fact, but we shouldn't deny that fact or doubt. And in light of that fact, we have to ask the final question:

Does the Holocaust, therefore, absolve Christians from testifying to Jewish people about the Lord today?

Just because the Church has compromised her testimony in the past, she is not, therefore, free from the responsibility of testifying correctly in the present. In fact, I would say that *because* the Church has failed so miserably to speak faithfully in the past, she is under an even greater obligation to speak properly and more clearly today. What a terrible thing it is if and when we use the sins of our past as a license and as an excuse to perform sins in the present. What a disgraceful thing it is when we justify new sins by arguing something like, “Well, my past transgressions have made it impossible for me to do the right thing now, so God won’t hold me accountable in the present.”

The Scriptures give an extremely grave admonition to believers who harbor a love for Israel and a burden for her well-being, but who refuse to express that love by declaring the message that God wants Israel to hear.

“Now as for you, son of man, I have appointed you a watchman for the house of Israel; so you will hear a message from My mouth, and give them a warning from Me. When I say to the wicked, ‘O wicked man, you shall surely die,’ and you do not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require from your hand” (Ezekiel 33:7-8, see also Ezekiel 3:17-18).

These words were spoken to Ezekiel, but Paul certainly understood that these words were a warning to believers in this present age. That’s why he paraphrased them when he spoke to some of my ancestors in Corinth who not only resisted the message but blasphemed the name of the Lord. The Scriptures explain that, “he shook out his garments and said to them, ‘Your blood be upon your own heads. I am clean’” (Acts 18:6). These words were not an imprecation or a curse; merely a declaration of a theological truth. It was not Paul’s responsibility to convince the people to believe; it was his responsibility to present the claims clearly, lovingly and consistently so that they may choose to receive or reject. Had he kept silent, their blood would have been on his head, just as the admonition in Ezekiel explains. But because he spoke, he was clean.

Clearly, Paul believed that the admonition in Ezekiel applied to himself. Clearly, Paul took the principle to heart. So should we.

God tells us that if we fail to pray for the salvation of Israel and speak as the Lord gives opportunity, we will not be held guiltless. The blood will be upon our heads. To be honest, I don’t know what that means. And I don’t ever want to find out.

In Conclusion -- Jewish Evangelism and the Uniqueness of Christ – the Broader Picture

The threat:

The attack against the uniqueness of Y’shua’s life and work raises at least three very serious threats: it is an attack against the cause of Jewish evangelism, it is an attack against the church; and in light of our people’s call to be a light to the nations, it is an attack against the cause of bringing the gospel to the world.

Concerning the threat to Jewish evangelism -- Obviously, if genuine Christians are persuaded that Y’shua’s unique life and work are irrelevant to us Jews, then Christians will neither pray for the salvation of Israel or for those of us who bring the Good News to Israel; nor will they speak of the Lord to the Jewish people whom God has brought into their lives.

Concerning the threat to the church -- It’s not incorrect to argue that Jewish evangelism is something of a litmus test for the whole question about the uniqueness of Christ. For if Christians believe that we Jews don’t need to be saved by trusting exclusively in Y’shua, then ultimately, they’re likely to believe that no one needs to be saved by trusting

exclusively in Y'shua. In truth, the whole matter is a slippery slope that ultimately leads to the abandonment of all vestiges of conservative faith. For, if Jesus isn't necessary for us Jews, then the words that He spoke in John 14:6 are either false or inaccurately recorded. If they're inaccurately recorded, then the Bible isn't inspired, and we have no authoritative rule for our lives. If His words are false, then Jesus is not the Almighty God but an impressive but imperfect guru, maybe as impressive as Buddha, Mohammed or Marx.

Concerning the cause of world evangelization – If we Jews are indeed called to be a gospel light to the nations, if God chose us Jews because of His love for the world and because of His passion to see His salvation extend to all the families of the earth, then clearly, one of the best ways to impede the cause of world evangelization is to blind the church's eyes to the strategic need of upholding the cause of the uniqueness of Y'shua's life and work *especially* as it relates to us Jews.

The cause:

What can cause portions of the church to abandon so crucial a teaching as the uniqueness of Y'shua's life and atoning work? It's easy to point accusing fingers at the erosion caused by scholarly pursuit that is detached from personal faith. We can easily dismiss some of the attacks with the convenient rationale, "Well, what do you expect from the nominal church?" But what about our brothers and sisters in the Lord whose faith is real, whose love for the Lord is genuine, and whose passion for the well-being of our Jewish people runs as deeply as our own? There is a sinister "force" (for lack of a better word) at work, especially among Christians in post-Holocaust Europe. Guilt. So much is embedded in a tell-tale statement issued in the 1980 synodical decision of the Rhineland Church ("About the Renewal of the Relationship between Christians and Jews"): "we are convinced that the Church cannot live out her witness to the Jews in the same way as her mission to the peoples of this world."

Our Response and Responsibility:

First and foremost, we must continue to proclaim the gospel to the Jew first and also to the gentile, knowing without equivocation that there is no name other than Y'shua's by which we may be saved. And we need to counter the false teaching with clear explanations of what the Scriptures have to say. But we need to do more. We need to contend for the hearts of those in the church who have embraced a false teaching to their own detriment as well as to the detriment of the lost, Jew and non-Jew alike. May God grant us the courage to stand unashamedly and without compromise for the gospel and for the uniqueness of the Lord's atoning work. For...

"there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we may be saved" (Acts 4:12)