

The Common Roots And Destiny Of The Church And Israel

It is a sad yet undeniable fact that most Christians today seem to be totally and willingly ignorant of the fact that the church of Jesus Christ has a truly Jewish origin and that it also has a common destiny with Israel in the manifest Kingdom of God as foretold by the Jewish prophets Isaiah and Micah as well as the majority of all the other Biblical prophets. This is despite the fact, that Jesus Himself, according to the flesh, is undeniably Jewish. Too many Christians will wonder, "Why is this important?" The fact is that as truly as the church was Jewish in its origins, it will also be Jewish in its ultimate destiny. The land of Israel which was the birthplace of Messiah will also be the site of His return to rule the world in righteousness and to bring lasting peace and harmony to planet earth.

It is highly significant that the New Covenant church was unveiled on the occasion of one of Israel's major feasts, Shavuoth or the Feast of Pentecost. The wording of Luke is so precise with regard to the timing of the event.

Acts 2:1 Now when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them.(NKJ)

The phrase "fully come" concerning the Day of Pentecost alludes to the fact that a Jewish day began at sunset the previous day and was fully come with the arrival of the new dawn. The audience, although from many parts of the world, were all Jewish gathered in the city of Jerusalem to celebrate the giving of the Law of Moses at Mount Horeb. I have purposefully used the phrase "unveiling" rather than birthing of the church at Pentecost, because the first apostles recognized that "Old Covenant Saints" who had been justified by faith by Jehovah also constituted an ecclesia of God. Peter addressed his Jewish audience as "men and brethren." (Acts 2:29)

Acts 2:5

5 And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven.

6 And when this sound occurred, the multitude came together, and were confused, because everyone heard them speak in his own language. (NKJ)

Peter, the spokesman on this auspicious occasion was obviously Jewish and for his message, he used the scriptures from the Tanakh quoting the Prophet Joel and making further reference to David, King of Israel.

Acts 2:14

14 *But Peter, standing up with the eleven, raised his voice and said to them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and heed my words.*

15 *"For these are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.*

16 *"But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:*

17 *'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams.*

18 *And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; and they shall prophesy. (NKJ)*

Peter pointed out the prophetic connection between David and the promised Messiah. In doing so he linked the unveiling of the church to the lineage of the royal house of Israel.

Acts 2:29

29 *"Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.*

30 *"Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, (NKJ)*

Peter boldly presented his address to "All the house of Israel." And it was from this wholly Jewish audience that the first 3,000 men and women repented and received Christ as their Lord and Messiah. The early church for the first three centuries continued to consist mainly of Jews.

Acts 2:36

36 *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."*

37 *Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"*

38 *Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (NKJ)*

As a direct result of Peter's anointed preaching, the early church of the New Testament was unveiled. This new congregation began to flourish and multiply and for the earliest years of church history the church in Jerusalem was the center of Christian activity. The church continued to be wholly Jewish until Peter was sent to the household of Cornelius (Acts 10) where the first gentile believers were brought into the church. Sometime later (Acts 13) the church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, dispatched missionaries to Cyprus. During the first three hundred years of church history the church remained mainly Jewish until the emergence of Constantine who realized the benefits of aligning himself with the church mainly for

political purposes. It was he that introduced Greek thought and philosophy into the church and successfully weaned the church from its Jewish roots. Sadly the church also began to separate itself from all Hebraic connotations and connections and even began to persecute the Jewish elements of the church. Gentile believers, including many of the so called church fathers, began to spread the false doctrine that God had now forsaken the Jews and replaced them with the Gentile church. Such ideas became solidified into what became known as replacement theology.

The decision by Paul to “go unto the Gentiles” seems to be a decision of expedience rather than planned strategy or Divine guidance. It was obviously made under considerable pressure from certain of the Jews who opposed his message. Paul had actually been “compelled” by the Spirit to preach to the Jews but under the adverse pressure of opposition made perhaps an emotional decision to go to the Gentiles.

Acts 18:5 Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.

6 But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

7 And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. NKJV

(Justus was evidently a Corinthian proselyte whose house adjoined the synagogue and who received Paul when the Jews opposed him. Acts 18:7).

The fact that Peter based his inaugural message on passages from the Tanakh and linked it decisively to Joel and King David clearly reveals that the Messiah he proclaimed was the very one that the prophets had predicted would come. He thus clearly linked the “Old” Covenant to the “New”. The work of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was a continuation of His work throughout the Tanakh. Peter affirms that what transpired on the Day of Pentecost was a partial fulfillment of what God had predicted through Joel. The immediate preceding context of Joel 2, makes clear that this was a promise that God made originally with Israel. The total fulfillment is also obviously linked with Israel and the Last Days, but also with the church in the Last Days.

Joel 2:28. "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.

29 And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

30 "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth: blood and fire and pillars of smoke.

31 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.

32 And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be

saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the remnant whom the LORD calls. (NKJ)

Were Old Testaments Saints “Born Again?”

It is generally surmised in Christian theology that Old Testament “saints” were not born again. It is evidently presumed that the Born Again experience is solely a New Covenant phenomenon that was not available prior to the death and resurrection of Jesus. In this sense it is therefore presumed only to be experienced by post crucifixion “New Covenant Believers.” However, Paul makes it clear that the “blessing” we receive as Christians was firstly given to Abraham.

Galatians 3:14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

The clearest message and explanation of the New Birth was originally given to an audience of one person namely Nicodemus a “ruler” of the Jews and a doctor of the Law of Moses. Jesus obviously invited and urged him to be born again (V.7) giving a clear explanation of what was entailed. Jesus also referred to the promise of the Spirit. (John 3:8)

John 3:1-8

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, (who was) a ruler (Archon: – first in rank and power) of the Jews.

2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." NKJV

Nicodemus was an acknowledged ruler and teacher in Israel. He was obviously a “Chief Rabbi.” He was addressed by Jesus as a Rabbi - teacher (Gk. Didaskalos, i.e. Rabbi, Doctor, Master, Teacher in Israel). Nicodemus also addressed Jesus as “Rabbi.” Could not a ruler of the Jews recognize another Rabbi?

Nicodemus, a chief Rabbi recognized Jesus as

- a. A bone fide (genuine, orthodox) Rabbi
- b. A Teacher specifically sent by God

c. A worker of convincing signs and miracles

Rabbi literally means “my teacher” thus Nicodemus recognized Jesus as one with the ability to teach him. Rabbi was a title of honor and respect given by the Jews to an acknowledged and recognized teacher of the Law. In our day rabbi means a Jew trained for professional religious leadership. The ordained spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation, the rabbi is an official formally authorized to interpret Jewish law. In Jesus' day, however, the term had not yet become a formal title. Instead, it was a term of dignity given by the Jews to their distinguished teachers.

Jesus appears to express surprise that as a teacher of such standing Nicodemus did not know about being born again. (V.10) This implies that it should have been common knowledge to teachers. It is also clear that Jesus was encouraging Nicodemus to “be Born Again.” This was of course prior to the death and resurrection of Jesus clearly indicating that it was possible to be born again by faith even before the actual death and resurrection of Christ occurred.

Israel Was The “Church” (Ecclesia) In The Wilderness

There is clear intimation in the New Testament that the Children of Israel were actually the church of that era.

Acts 7:37-38

37 *This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear.*

38 *This is he that was in the church (Ecclesia) in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai, and with our fathers: who received the lively oracles to give unto us: (KJV)*

The word for church in the O.T.Septuagint is “ecclesia” just as in the New Testament. It obviously has the same meaning in both.

Their Rock was Christ

1 Corinthians 10:1-4

1 *Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea,*

2 *all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,*

3 *all ate the same spiritual food,*

4 *and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. (NKJ)*

There is of course an element of mystery in this verse which infers that Christ was actually with the Children of Israel during their exodus wanderings. Nevertheless that inference is clear. These were peculiar circumstances in the Jewish history and are typical of the greatest mysteries of the Gospel; particularly their passing through the Red Sea, and being overshadowed with the miraculous cloud, 1Corinthians 10:1, 2. The manna with which they were fed, (1Corinthians 10:3) And rock out of which they drank, (1Corinthians 10:4) was said to be Christ.

It is also clearly stated in v.9 that the Israelites tempted Christ whilst they were in the wilderness. There was obviously inter-action between the Israelites and Christ Himself in the wilderness. The psalmist, recalling Israel's journey through the wilderness said,

Psalm 78:19 Yes, they spoke against God. They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?"

Psalm 78:20 Behold, he struck the rock, so that waters gushed out, and streams overflowed. Can he give bread also? Will he provide flesh for his people?"

Psalm 78:35

And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer.

The Hebrew word for redeemer (גֹּאֵל goel) answers to the Greek σωτηρ, - a saviour; and is given to the Lord Jesus Christ, the strong God, the Most High, the Redeemer of a lost world.

1 Corinthians 10:9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.

God's Covenant With Israel Is Eternal

Ps 105:7-10

7 He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth.

8 He remembers His covenant forever, the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations,

9 The covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac,

10 And confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant,
(NKJ)

All the major covenants, including the New Covenant, were made with Israel. These include the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic and the New Covenant. All these covenants predicted and prefigured the redemptive ministry of Messiah. They were types and shadows of the ministry He would fulfill.

Lev 26:44-45

44 And yet for all that, when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the LORD their God.

45 But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God: I am the LORD. (KJV)

Living By Faith

Justification by faith is also widely seen as a New Covenant phenomena even though several Old Testament characters obviously experienced and enjoyed this blessing, for example Habakkuk speaks of the just(ified) living by his faith.

Habakkuk 2:4 "Behold the proud, his soul is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith. (NKJ)

This verse clearly shows that some people in the Old Testament lived by the faith by which they were also justified by God.

Abraham's Faith and Righteousness

Gen 15:6

6 *And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.*
(NKJ)

John 8:56

56 *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.*
(KJV)

Abraham was justified by (his) faith and because of that faith, God declared him righteous. When reference to this is made in the New Testament, exactly the same word is used for Abraham's faith (Greek: *diakaiosune*) as is used for the righteousness of New Testament believers. Abraham was justified by faith, and not by the works of the law; for his faith was imputed to him for righteousness, Romans 4:1-5. David also bears testimony to the same doctrine, Romans 4:6-8. Abraham, the father of the Jewish race, was justified by faith, even before he was circumcised; and certainly before the Law came through Moses. Therefore salvation must be of the Jews as well as the Gentiles.

The covenant that God made with Abraham was to be applicable to his seed after him.

Genesis 17:7

7 *And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.* (KJV)

Both Moses and Elijah were translated into heaven

II Kings 2:11

11 *Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.* (NKJ)

Moses obviously had a prophetic perception of the Lamb of God who was to come.

John 3:14

14 *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:* (KJV)

Luke 9:30-31

30 *And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias:*

31 *Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.* (KJV)

Job obviously knew God as his redeemer and Saviour and also knew that his redeemer would stand upon the earth in the Last Days.

Job 19:25

25 *For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: (KJV)*

Ps 19:14

14 *Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer. (KJV)*

God's Love For Israel Is Everlasting

Jeremiah 31:1-3

1 *"At the same time," says the LORD, "I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be My people."*

2 *Thus says the LORD: "The people who survived the sword found grace in the wilderness-- Israel, when I went to give him rest."*

3 *The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness I have drawn you. (NKJ)*

We Christian believers rejoice and revel in the knowledge that we are loved by God with an everlasting love. However, the only place that this phrase occurs in the Bible is spoken directly to Israel in this verse. (Jeremiah 31:3) This clearly shows that Israel is certainly loved with the very same quality and duration of love that also applies to the church.

Salvation In The Old Testament

The Hebrew words used most frequently for salvation are various derivatives of yeshua or yeshua. This is obviously the word from which the name Yeshua or Jesus comes. Therefore in Genesis we have the statement, "I have waited for your Yeshua."

Genesis 49:18

I have waited for thy salvation, (Heb: Yeshua) O LORD. (KJV)

Moses and company sang this song of redemption following their deliverance from Egypt. "The LORD (Jehovah) has become my Yeshua!"

Exodus 15:2

2 *The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation (Yeshua) he is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him. (KJV)*

1 Samuel 2:1

1 *And Hannah prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the LORD, mine horn is exalted in the LORD: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. (Yeshua) (KJV)*

David Also Sang About His Salvation

2 Samuel 22:47

47 *The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; and exalted be the God of the rock of my salvation. (Yesha) (KJV)*

1 Chronicles 16:23

23 *Sing unto the LORD, all the earth; shew forth from day to day his Yeshua. (KJV)*

Psalms 9:14

14 *That I may shew forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy Yeshua. (KJV)*

Psalms 14:7

7 *Oh that the salvation (Yeshua) of Israel were come out of Zion! when the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad. (KJV)*

Psalms 13:5-6

5 *But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.*
6 *I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me. (KJV)*

Psalms 18:2

2 *The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, (Yeshua) and my high tower. (KJV)*

Old Testament Saints

Saints are people who have been separated from the world and consecrated to the worship and service of God. Followers of the Lord are referred to by this phrase throughout the Bible, although its meaning is developed more fully in the New Testament. Consecration (setting apart) and purity are the basic meanings of the term. Believers are called "saints" (Rom. 1:7) and "saints in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 1:1) because they belong to the One who provided their sanctification.

There Is Abundant Evidence Of Saints In The Old Testament

Deuteronomy 33:2-3

2 *And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them.*

3 *Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words. (KJV)*

2 Chronicles 6:41

41 *Now therefore arise, O LORD God, into thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness. (KJV)*

Enoch's Walk With Jehovah

Gen 5:22 And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: (KJV)

Amos affirms that two persons may only "walk together" if they are agreed.

Amos 3:3.Can two walk together, unless they are agreed? (NKJ)

One of the meanings of the Hebrew word *ya' ad* is to become engaged to marry. Certainly there is a strong implication of a deep understanding, agreement and harmony inherent within this word. How could God have walked thus with Enoch a member of the fallen race of mankind unless there had been some redemptive and restorative action with respect to Enoch?

The Mystery Of The Olive Tree

In Romans 11, Paul speaks about a mystery. There are several other places in the Bible that mention mysteries and I believe that when the Bible speaks of a mystery we should determine to discover what that mystery is. A mystery in the Bible is not something that God does not wish us to know and understand but something that He wants us to earnestly search out. The Bible word is *mysterion* from which we get the idea of a maze. A maze is not something which is impossible to find one's way through. There is actually a clear path through the maze if you will diligently and patiently search for it. So with the mysteries of God. Diligent searching out will discover the truth hidden within the mystery. God does not desire us to be ignorant.

Rom 11:25 For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

26 And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: "The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; (NKJ)

This mystery is unfolded in the analogy of the Olive tree.

Rom 11:17 And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree,

18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in."

20 Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear.

21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either.

22 Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off.

23 And they also, if they do not continue in unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again.

24 For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted

contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these, who are natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? (NKJ)

Throughout Scriptures the Olive tree is consistently used as a symbol for Israel.

Primarily, the Olive tree also symbolizes faithfulness and steadfastness. No matter what the conditions may be, whether hot, dry, cold, wet, rocky, or sandy, the evergreen Olive tree will live and produce fruit. It is said that you can never kill an Olive tree. Even when cut down or burned, new shoots will emerge from its roots. This Scripture passage reminds us that no matter the conditions of life, we should remain steadfast as the Olive tree in the presence of God - evergreen (faithful) and bearing fruit.

Psalms 128:3 says, "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house; Your children like Olive plants all around your table."

The analogy of your children being "like Olive plants all around your table" would tell the ancient Bible reader that his offspring would be plentiful, hearty, and even dutifully responsive to the parents. All you have to do is look at almost any Olive tree and you will see as many as ten or more new tree shoots growing up out of the root system around the tree. Psalms 128:3 would have been a comforting and faithful promise from the Lord!

The Olive Tree, Israel and The Church

The most striking use of the image of the Olive tree in the Bible is in Romans 11 where Paul describes the relationship between Israel (the Jewish people and God's ancient and ongoing covenantal relationship) and the Church. In fact, the entire three chapters of Romans 9-11 are focused on this topic and culminate with the Olive tree image. Paul shows us that the Olive tree represents the covenants and promises made with Israel, growing from its holy Root, the Word of God. The natural branches are the people of Israel. Those who turned away from that relationship were broken off. Christians are simply the wild branches grafted in among the natural branches to "became a partaker with them of the root and fatness of the Olive tree," which God established (Rom. 11:17).

It is very evident from Scripture, as well as from nature, that the root and trunk support the branches, and not vice versa (11:18). In this position, there is no room for pride or the notion that we Christians have replaced Israel (the Jewish people), or that God rejected His own covenants and promises in the Hebrew Scriptures (the Old Testament). There is no room for boasting and arrogance, as the Church has been prone to do, as both the natural branches and the engrafted wild branches only remain by faith (Rom. 11:18-21). The Church is an extension of a plan that pre-existed it. Therefore, there should only be Godly fear (11:20) and thankfulness for the Lord's great mercies to us (11:33-36), as well as an attitude of love and mercy towards the Jewish people who are beloved for the sakes of the fathers (Rom. 11:28). After all, it is through Israel and His covenant people that God gave us

everything we Christians hold spiritually dear! There is only one tree, not two, and we “wild branches” have been privileged to drink in new life from the cultivated, established tree.

Historically, the Church has not honored these passages as it not only boasted against the Jewish people (the natural branches), but severely persecuted them to the point of death.

Often, the Church has lacked even the most basic understanding of our Hebrew roots. Also, it has not recognized that we cannot fully grasp who we are, without acknowledging these roots.

As a result, the historical Church has sadly perpetrated outrageous acts towards the “natural branches” (the Jewish people) during the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Pogroms, and even in the formulations of the teachings that became a religious justification for Hitler's Final Solution of the so-called “Jewish problem” in the Holocaust. Instead of mercy, Christianity showed contempt.

Recognising Our Origins

The prophet Isaiah said, “Look to the rock from which you were cut and to the quarry from which you were hewn; look to Abraham, your father, and to Sarah, who gave you birth” (Isa. 51:1-2).

Christianity did not spring forth from a vacuum. It sprang from the highly developed religious tradition and culture of ancient Israel. It is all too easy for us Gentiles to forget this all-important fact.

For instance, if Yeshua were presented to us today, His “Jewishness” would probably shock most Christians. Yet, we know from Scripture that a woman once came to Him and touched the tzit- or fringes, of His garment (Luke 8:44). He wore the garments of Jewish tradition, just as many orthodox Jews do today, fulfilling the commands of the Law (Dt. 22:12).

Likewise, the earliest church was a Jewish church. It was headquartered in the Jewish capital, Jerusalem, and was presided over by a Jewish leader. In a technical sense the church does not have any “roots.” Paul makes it clear that the church was actually grafted into the trunk and roots of Israel. It is Israel that has the root system, not the church. The church has no standing without Israel.

Rom 11:17. And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree,

18 do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.

19 You will say then, "Branches were broken off that I might be grafted in." (NKJ)

Many Christians refer to the Scriptures as “Old Testament” and “New Testament” as though the term “old” means it is superseded and of little value when compared with the “new.” Yet, without the “old,” the “new” loses much of its meaning and it is often misinterpreted or not fully interpreted. When we do this, we are missing out on much God has for us in His Word.

It was from this “Jewish/Hebrew” perspective that the Church began to reach out to the world of the Gentiles. It was as if Judaism had been uniquely tailored by Yeshua and the apostles to be made “attractive” to Gentiles. Gentiles would now be able to receive the Jewish Scriptures, to heed the Jewish prophets, and to sing the Jewish Psalms. As Paul went out with the Gospel message, he was careful to stress that the message was emanating from Jerusalem and Israel. He encouraged Gentile saints to collect funds for the needy in Jerusalem (I Cor. 16:2-4); he referred difficult doctrinal decisions to Jerusalem and to the Jewish elders there (Acts 15:2); his Gospel journeys usually began or ended in Jerusalem. He even gave the Gentile church an example of keeping Jewish feasts in Jerusalem (Acts 20:16).

Acts 20:16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.(NKJ)

The Apostle Paul did something else as he ministered among Gentiles. He stressed the importance of keeping the right attitude toward Israel and the Jewish people. That attitude was to be one of humility (Rom. 11:20),

Rom 11:20-21 Well said. Because of unbelief they were broken off, and you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear.

21 For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either. (NKJ)

He also called for mercy (Rom. 11:31) and kindness, even to the point of stressing an obligation in sharing material gifts with the people of Israel (Rom. 15:27). It was a wonderful ideal. But, in time, Paul's exhortations began to go unheeded.

There were many factors which brought about the vast chasm which exists today between Israel and the Church. The two unsuccessful wars fought by the Jews against the Romans in AD 70 and in AD 133-135 undoubtedly did much to strain relations, since the early Church refused to help their Jewish brothers in these wars. Instead, in AD 70, the Church fled to Pella, across the Jordan River, following the warning of Matthew 24:16, believing the end of the world was at hand.

The very vulnerability and isolation of the early Church also might have contributed to their sense of separation from those who began to persecute them.

Finally, the early Church Fathers certainly did not help the situation, since many were openly anti-Semitic. The young Church fought for its life against Roman persecution from without and heresies from within. All this led the Church toward exclusivity and into taking a stand against its Jewish roots.

With the conversion of Emperor Constantine in the early fourth century, and the subsequent “Christianization” of the whole Roman Empire, this anti-Semitic trend became crystallized. The Church moved rapidly to rid itself of all Jewish trappings. For example, the Christian holiday of Easter was divorced from its Jewish origins in the Passover; Saturday (Sabbath), the biblically prescribed day of rest and worship, was changed to Sunday; Pentecost was disassociated from Shavuot, and became Easter. The Feast of Hannukah became Christmas etc., as the Church attempted to cast off the influence of “this odious people” (as the Jews were described by some Church leaders).

A theology generally termed as Triumphalism began to be in vogue. The same theology has persisted to this day, occasionally finding renewal under different names, including Replacement Theology. Basically, this belief proclaims that God is finished with the Jews: that Christianity has completely replaced Judaism and that the Church is the true Israel. This theology universally applies all the scriptural blessings to the Church, and all the curses to Israel.

To show the fallacy of this teaching, read Romans 9-11 and everywhere it reads “Israel,” replace it with the words, “the Church.” You will quickly see how erroneous this theology is. Israel is Israel, even in the New Testament. And, when the Gentile Church is included in that concept, we are given that position by virtue of “grafting in,” “adoption,” “partakers,” and being “made near:” never by “replacing.”

Of course, the almost immediate result of such a theology was the outright persecution of Israel by the Church. This malady has persisted through most of the 2,000 years of Christian history, contributing even to the Nazi Holocaust. It is surprising for most Christians to learn that Hitler only put into practice what the Church in Europe had believed and taught for centuries.

Even today, after this awful disaster, anti-Semitism abounds in the Church. An example of this is seen in the fact that many otherwise loving Christians are suspicious of “those Jews.” Perhaps this is an expression of the ultimate in anti-Semitism, the denial that the Jewish people have any place in God's plan today.

Reviewing Our Origins

What we see prescribed in the Bible is a far cry from what we see in the Church today. We see that God had purposed from the outset that Gentiles are to be a part of His plan, but not the whole plan. We receive glimpses of this program of God as far back as Father Abraham. God promised the patriarch Abraham that he would be the father of multitudes of goyim (peoples, nations, Gentiles) (Gen. 17:4), and that all nations would be blessed in him (Gen. 12:3). This theme is carried on in the descendants of Abraham. We see it particularly in Joseph, who was married to a Gentile woman in Egypt.

One of his children, Ephraim, was destined to become one of the most numerous and powerful tribes in the Northern Kingdom. The blessing upon the head of this

little Jewish lad was this, that he would be the father of multitudes of Gentiles (Gen. 48:19). Much later, Ephraim was dispersed into the nations, along with the other nine "lost tribes." The dispersion of these Jews among the nations, their effect upon nations, and their recovery and restoration to their land, still remains a mystery too great for us to fathom.

We see the theme picked up again in the woman Rahab, who was saved from the doomed city of Jericho and allowed to join with the people of Israel; and again as the prophet Isaiah describes the Messiah of Israel, called the "Root of Jesse." It is said that this Messiah would "stand as a banner for the peoples (Gentiles); the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious" (Isa. 11:10). But perhaps we see the theme of Gentiles being joined to Israel most clearly in Ruth the Moabite, who was not only allowed access into Israel, but who became the great-grandmother of King David.

The beautiful story of Ruth expresses for us most clearly what a proper attitude toward Israel should be. In fact, this woman seems to illustrate, in her life, most of the fruits of the Spirit mentioned by Paul in Galatians 5:22-23. She was truly devoted to her Israelite mother-in-law. She loved her with a deep love and commitment which led her to forsake her own heritage, and even her country, in order to be with Naomi. When Ruth arrived in Israel it was not with a feeling of superiority as many Christians have today. Instead, "she bowed down with her face to the ground..." (Ruth 2:10). She was willing to abase herself to a position lower than a servant girl's (2:13). Her attitude was one of continual mercy and generosity as she shared her meager gleanings with Naomi (2:18).

The life of Ruth was also marked with obedience (3:5), kindness (3:10), holiness (3:10), discretion (3:14), true love, faithfulness and commitment to Israel (4:15). Ruth said to Naomi, "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God" (Ruth 1:16).

Perhaps in Ruth's life we get a visual example of what the engrafting into the Olive tree of Romans 11 is all about. It is time that we, the Church, put aside our arrogance and, in humility, understand what it means to be that wild Olive branch graciously grafted in by God to receive from Israel those everlasting covenants, promises and hopes that we have been "made near" (Eph. 2:11-13) -- lest we be broken off for our arrogance and boasting. Let us honor our roots and show love and mercy to God's natural branches!

Throughout Scripture the olive tree is consistently used as a symbol for Israel. Primarily, the olive tree also symbolizes faithfulness and steadfastness.

No matter what the conditions: hot, dry, cold, wet, rocky, or sandy, the evergreen olive tree will live and produce fruit. It is said that you can never kill an olive tree. Even when cut down or burned, new shoots will emerge from its roots. This Scripture passage reminds us that no matter the conditions of life, we should remain steadfast as the olive tree in the presence of God - evergreen (faithful) and bearing fruit.

Psalms 128:3 says, "Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house; Your children like olive plants all around your table."

The analogy of your children being "like olive plants all around your table" would tell the ancient Bible reader that his offspring would be plentiful, hearty, and even dutifully responsive to the parents. All you have to do is look at almost any olive tree and you will see as many as ten or more new tree shoots growing up out of the root system around the tree. Psalms 128:3 would have been a comforting and faithful promise from the Lord!

Another Symbol Deciphered - The Fig Tree

The fig tree is also one of the more frequently mentioned trees in the Scriptures. It was from its leaves that Adam and Eve made their first covering (Gen. 3:7). The fig tree was valued first of all for its delicious, sweet fruit (Judges 9:11). It was also a symbol of prosperity and security: "and Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree" (1 Kings 4:25). It was an enjoyable thing to rest, meditate on God's word, and pray in the shade of the fig tree. (John 1:48)

Figs are considered characteristic fruit for the land of Palestine. The best loved and most nutritious were the spring fruits, which ripened in May and referred to as figs in the fig tree of the first time (Hosea 9:10). The main harvesting of figs occurred in the later months of the summer and in the fall. Those figs were called late figs. They were inferior in their quality. The poorest ones were even fed to cattle.

The Fig Tree As A Symbol

The Prophet Joel uses the vine and the fig tree as symbols of Israel and the church to predict first of all a withering drought and afterwards a glorious restoration when the Former and Latter rain fall in the same month.

Joel 1:12 The vine has dried up, and the fig tree has withered; The pomegranate tree, The palm tree also, And the apple tree — All the trees of the field are withered; Surely joy has withered away from the sons of men. NKJV

Joel 2:21 Fear not, O land; Be glad and rejoice, For the LORD has done marvelous things!

22 Do not be afraid, you beasts of the field; For the open pastures are springing up, And the tree bears its fruit; The fig tree and the vine yield their strength.

23 Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the LORD your God; For He has given you the former rain faithfully, and He will cause the rain to come down for you The former rain, And the latter rain in the first month. NKJV

Some other places in the Bible indicate that the fig tree also has a symbolic meaning. One of the Lord's miracles is most intriguing when his cursing of the fig tree caused it to wither. This seems to have been the only miracle in which Jesus used his power to destroy, to annihilate something. It also is the only miracle which was of no benefit to anyone. All others were done for men. The Lord multiplied bread, healed diseases, raised the dead. This miracle was as if in conflict with our Master's disposition, who

to the suggestion of destroying the wicked, answered back to his disciples: "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of". (Luke 9:55). All these facts imply an exceptional character of that miracle and its symbolic meaning. But to understand this symbolism, the miracle must be considered in the light of our Lord's parable of the barren fig tree.

In Matthew 24 : 32; Jesus used the descriptive analogy of a "fig tree", to instruct his disciples about how we could discern the timeliness of his return to Israel.

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is nigh:"

The fig trees of the Middle East region are a fruit- producing tree or shrub. The size of the tree, and the capacity to produce figs depends mainly on the soil that the tree is rooted in.

Typically, the fig tree blooms before sprouting forth its leaves in the spring, and normally would produce, not one, but two crops of figs each year.

In Mark 11:13 Jesus, after leaving Bethany, which is just to the east of Jerusalem; saw a fig tree off in the distance, and noticed the leaves that were thereon; and eagerly looked forward to partaking of the fruit of it as he neared it; yet when finally arriving at the tree, he found there was no fruit upon it; for the time for figs was not yet in season. Upon seeing that the fig tree produced no fruit, Jesus cursed the tree, with the disciples standing by observing.

He then proceeded on down to the city of Jerusalem, and into the Temple, whereupon he flew into a rage, chasing out the moneychangers, and calling the holy place nothing more than a den of thieves.

The disciples must have thought these actions were the actions of a madman. After all, what sane person talks to a tree and pronounces a curse upon it? I believe that everything in the Bible and in the entire life of Jesus has a divinely intended purpose or message. I don't think God wastes his words, nor would Jesus have behaved in such a manner without it having some significant meaning.

But, try to imagine the disciples' astonishment, when out on the same road back to Bethany, they pass right by that very same fig tree, and lo and behold, it has already withered up and dried. Why would Jesus curse a fig tree?

During the first dispersion of Israel, God sent a vision to the old prophet Jeremiah, of two baskets full of figs. One of the baskets had good figs while the other basket contained bad figs.

Jeremiah 24:5-7: Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans, for their good.

For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this

land: and I will build them, and not pull them down, and I will plant them, and not pluck them up. And I will give them an heart to know me, that "I AM" the Lord: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.

Here, in these verses, God likens the captive exiles of Israel to the those good figs in the basket. The Jewish remnant which was still left in Jerusalem, God likens to the bad, or evil figs retained in the second basket.

I should point out that Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon rose up against Israel and took captive all the children of Israel except those princes who were left as mere puppet rulers in the holy city. The year of Israel's defeat by Babylon was 606 B.C. Then nineteen years later in 587 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar returned back to Jerusalem and destroyed the city and executed King Zedekiah.

Anyway, God promised through Jeremiah that he would return Israel once again into the land, and afterwards that Israel shall no more be uprooted from the promised land; and that He would write his law in their hearts.

This promised dream has never been fulfilled during the long history of Israel. It is still a future eventuality. But the fact has been historically established that Israel has forever become prophetically typecast, in a figurative sense, as a fig tree.

When Jesus came strolling down Bethany Road to the city of Jerusalem on that day, he wasn't simply looking for something to eat off the fig tree to satisfy his bodily appetite; but rather, He was looking for "Good Figs". It is national Israel that God has planted in the midst of the garden of nations to portray himself to all the rest of the nations of this world. God has historically longed for Israel to bear fruit (figs), but unfortunately, Israel has never acknowledged the true "Branch"; for which she has been a vehicle to bring fruit from the world.

In Jeremiah 23:5; God says: *"Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise to David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and also prosper, and shall execute judgement and justice in the earth.*

This scripture continues on to say that in the days of the rule of the righteous Branch, that Judah itself shall be saved, and Israel will dwell safely in their land.

Of course Jesus was the righteous Branch that was born from out of the stem of Jesse; as Isaiah 11:1 foretold. In the strictest definition, God is in reality the fig tree; with the righteous branch being Jesus; while the figs are the fruit of the tree. Israel is symbolically represented as the early blooms on the fig tree, while the church is typified by the leaves that are on the branch. Later in Romans chapter 11 we find that the Gentiles have been grafted into the branch.

So, when Jesus found no figs upon the fig tree, on that afternoon, and cursed the tree; He was displaying to the openly disciples in a figurative way, that national Israel still as yet had not bore any fruit from the branch; by the mere fact that their

immediate generation still simply did not recognize the epic "time of visitation" by their Messiah.

In Luke 18:31-33; Jesus had already instructed the disciples that he was going down into Jerusalem, and while there all the things prophesied concerning the Son of Man will be accomplished. He informed them that he would be mocked, scourged, and put to death; and yet rise up again on the third day.

The symbolic paradigm acted out at the roadside fig tree was simply a public display of the rejection of Israel's king, and that "ISRAEL", would suffer the a historical curse in like manner as the fig tree that the disciples saw.

I recall in Luke 12:56, that Jesus took to task the Scribes and Pharisees for not being able to discern the signs of the times. Israel should have anticipated that the season for the Messiahs appearance was at hand, and that the time for the harvest of good figs was nigh at hand.

In Daniel 9:25-26; the prophet Daniel had foretold that the Messiah would make an appearance in the rebuilt city of Jerusalem exactly 483 years of the Hebrew calendar; after the commandment went forth from the Persian King Artaxerxes Longimangus, which was issued on March 14, in the year of 445 B.C. This commandment is recorded within the Bible in the book of Ezra 7:12-13, and again in most of the book of Nehemiah.

So then, on Palm Sunday, in the year of 32 A.D., every single Jewish believer should have been down at the Eastern Gate in anxious anticipation of giving a rousing welcome to the expected King of the Jews.

Although there was a moderate crowd assembled to welcome Jesus into the city, spreading some palm branches before him; by and large, Israel was very unimpressed with Jesus appearance.

Even the disciples were not altogether sure as to who Jesus was. In Luke 10:23-24, Jesus said to them: "For I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye have seen, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

Many people throughout Israel's history had desired to see the Deliverer, or the Messiah King; but to no avail. They were never been afforded that wonderful opportunity. However, a particular generation was providentially destined to be witnesses of the Kings timely presentation.

Even today, there is a generation that has a divine destiny to not see death, but to be transported away by the returning King; much in the same manner that Old Testament Enoch was ushered up into Heaven.

The Bible is accurate, right down to the very minutest detail. God expresses everything in a carefully designed pattern. Every single word, phrase, jot or tittle, has

purpose. It is absolutely foolhardy to alter any of it, or to not consider any portion as intensely significant.

Consider Galatians 4 : 4, for example:

But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

Notice the phrase, ("The fullness of The Time"). It is an indication that Jesus' birth was synchronised to occur at a definite and prearranged point in human history, an event which God foretold (prophecy), so that there would be absolutely no confusion about who the son of God, the seed of the woman, really and truly was.

All of Israel should have been on hand that Palm Sunday to thank God for being faithful to his word.

There indeed was a very devout man, who had discerned that the Messiah would come during his lifetime, and he had been individually promised via the Holy Spirit that he would see Jesus arrival before his death.

Luke 2:25; And, behold there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

Simeon had a direct promise from God of seeing the Messiah before he ever passed away. Simeon was not simply lucky, or rewarded for good behavior; Simeon was an old man by the time of the affixed timely event of the Virgin Birth; and he recognized fully that the anticipated date of the Messiah's mission was only 3 short decades away; and therefore, he was afforded the opportunity to live to see the time of Israel's promised visitation by God.

Simeon probably believed that Israel would accept their long awaited King. He had no idea that Israel would kill the very one that was the lifeblood of the kingdom of Israel. He most likely died comforted in the notion that Israel was rejoined to their King. He did apparently know that sorrow would be associated with his life, because he informed Mary about a future heartbreak for her.

The generation that immediately followed Simeon should have expected Jesus. Jesus very own generation should have had great expectation from among its own ranks that someone special from God would emerge.

Alas, that generation would fail to recognize him; and would cut him off, and then endure later in life to see the total destruction of the beloved rebuilt city of Jerusalem.

In Luke 19:41-44; Jesus approached the city, and on a high overlook, viewed out upon the city, and wept over it.

Luke 19 : 42: Jesus said, If you had known, even you at least in this your day, the things which belong unto your peace! but now they are hid from your eyes.

Even at this late date, Jerusalem could have received its King, and enjoyed the promised Kingdom of God, but still their eyes were not opened to the reality of his imminent visit.

Saddened because of Israel's ignorance, Jesus went on to proclaim that Jerusalem would undergo the loss of its national homeland, including the Holy City, and Temple.

Luke 19:44; And they shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave in you one stone upon another; because "thou knewest not the TIME OF THY VISITATION!"

The season for Israel's blossoming had arrived, and good figs were anticipated, but although the fig tree had blossomed forth, the time for figs was premature.

Mark 11:13 expresses thusly: *And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything on it, and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet.*

Jesus knew there were no figs on the tree even at a great distance away, and indeed every one of the disciples knew that the season for figs was still early a little early. So, in essence Jesus was exposing the disciples to the fact that their nation of Israel was not yet ready to produce fruit for the Lord either. But remember, a fig tree produces not one harvest, but two harvests in a growing season. The fig tree normally produces a crop of figs in late June, and then again another crop comes along in early September. That first crop is produced on the branch grown the previous season. With regard to typology, Israel was the first harvest, the Gentiles were the second.

The first crop produced by the Branch is symbolic of the harvest of the Church. It was to the Gentile world that Jesus turned his attention, after Israel had bypassed its time of visitation.

Acts 15:19 says: Simeon hath declared how God at first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

Israel did indeed produce the righteous Branch, but the first crop of good figs has been cultivated from the nations of the rest of the world, instead of Israel.

Israel, by failing to acknowledge the timely visit of their Messiah, was thus subjected to the soil (world) of the earth, and became dried up and dispersed from its originally planted spot, to await yet another visitation, or season of harvest.

Make no mistake about it though, Gods promises to the prophet Jeremiah concerning the good basket of figs still remains intact. God still intends to glean a

second harvest from the fig tree of Israel, but only after that fig tree (Israel) has again put forth its leaves; and produces another budding of the fig tree later on in the growing season.

Why has this taken place, and when will the rebudding season of the fig tree take place? It would seem obvious that Israel, after 2,500 years of Diaspora, has been planted again in her God given land and the desert is becoming a glorious garden as predicted by Isaiah.

Gentile Domination Ceased in 1967

Romans 11:25, For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, till the "Fullness of the Gentiles" be come in.

Isaiah 35:1 speaks of The Future Glory of Zion

The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose;

2 It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, The excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, The excellency of our God. NKJV

The church is grafted onto the righteous "Branch" (Jesus) of Israel, and Israel is indeed our tree of heritage, with the God of Israel being the root of it all.

For nearly 2000 years, Israel had lain dormant, like that old barren fig tree that Jesus cursed. Like the old fig tree, Israel was uprooted from the land, and left in desolation, while the Gentile nations have trodden across the land of Israel. Jesus said this condition would persist until the Times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. (Luke 21:24)

Jeremiah prophesied that Israel would be fruitless at the time of their initial visitation, and would lose their land at the first seasonal opportunity.

Jeremiah 8:13, I will surely consume them, saith the Lord: there shall be no grapes on the vine, nor "figs on the fig tree" and leaf shall fade; and the things that I have given them shall pass away from them.

The fading leaf of the fig tree is a prophetic glimpse of the apostate condition of the church in the Last Days when the fig tree of Israel shall indeed begin to rebud for its season of finally producing good figs.

The word "Gentile", is a translation of the Hebrew word, "Goy", with "Goyim" being the plural form of the word for Gentile Nations. The phrase that Jesus used, "Times of the Gentiles", is a term which is synonymous with the Biblical concept of Gentile history; based on the two-fold relationship of the nations of the world with God, and his relationship with his selected nation, Israel. It could more aptly be termed as "the Times of the Nations".

The times of the Nations historically and Biblically commenced with Israel's demise at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, as has already been pointed out, and those times of the Gentiles have continued right on up to the present day.

Thence, we come to the specific point of the usage by Jesus of the analogy he used in comparing Israel with his parable of the fig tree. Again he said:

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:"

The command to "learn" is invoked in this usage. What have we learned from the fig tree? We know that Israel was the good figs that God promised to restore a kingdom to; and that when God sent forth HIS Branch, (Jesus) that while it was still yet "tender", that the branch ? (Jesus) would be "cut off"; (killed) but not to worry, the Branch would sprout forth "leaves", (the church) and that those leaves would be a grafting addition to the branch; and then afterward, that fig tree (Israel) would rebud, or blossom, and then the second crop of good figs would be harvested. (This refers to Israel's salvation)

Israel is the natural branch of the fig tree, while the church, or Christians, are the previously wild grafted on branches.

The Church does not replace Israel, it was simply included into the productivity or fruitfulness of the tree.

Romans 11:21: For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee.

This is a point of emphasis to the Gentile world, that if the nations-church does not heed the lesson of the fig tree, then likewise; the curse of death will overtake all who reject Christ.

Paul's prayer in Romans 1:1; was that Israel might be saved and it is Gods desire that ALL be saved; Jew and Gentile alike.

During Jesus first visitation to Jerusalem, he was questioned by the Pharisees and Sadducees, desiring that Jesus would simply show them a sign, so as to verify that Jesus was indeed the anticipated Messiah.

Now Jesus could have given them any sign that they might have required of him, or performed some tantalizing miracle, but he chose not do so. Why not? God does not play games, or seek to entertain men with mindboggling magical wonders. He does not need the approval or popularity of mankind. The Lord does not bend to temptation, nor to the confidence of public opinion. Ironically, Satan does entertain men with such exploits, performing seemingly miraculous things, all for the express purpose of self-glorification and deceit.

Matthew 16:4: A wicked and adulterous generation seeks after a sign; and no sign shall be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah.

Jesus didn't need to give the Sadducees any more signs than those already that were already foretold of his coming. They had the prophetic information of the Old Testament detailing fully his visitation. God does not repeat himself, just to hear himself be doubted by the agnostic. The problem here was not verification, it was simply unbelief.

What was the sign of Jonah that Jesus referred to?

Just as Jonah had spent 3 days and 3 nights within the belly of the great fish; Jesus also would spend three days and nights in the belly of the earth, rising out on the third, just as Jonah came out of the belly of the fish on the third day. Jesus was here predicting that he would arise the third day after they had destroyed the temple which he himself embodied.

John 2:19: Destroy this temple, and in three days, I will raise it up.

This is the only sign that Israel would get. They already had rejected numerous other signs.

Jesus used the parable of fig tree to display to the disciples, and then to whole house of Israel that although they would reject their Messiah, still he would come back unto them a second time, but only after they had learned to cry out to for him, as one mourns for his only son. (Zechariah 12)

The Old Testament prophet Hosea had hit upon this very delay in Israel's restorative seasonal rebudding:

Hosea 6:1-2; Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn, and He will heal us; He hath smitten. and He will bind us up.

After two days will He revive us: in the third day He will raise us (Israel) up, and we shall live in his sight.

The fig tree of Israel was destined to be scattered among all the nations of the world for two complete days of God's timetable, (1000 years/ one day) but on the third day, Israel would be providentially returned to its land, and begin the rebirth process.

So then, Jesus' very death and resurrection served as a paradigm for the restoration, and the rebudding of the fig tree which is national Israel.

What a tremendous SIGN that is! What could God have done any better to prove his love and genuine desire for Israel, and indeed the whole world?

Have you ever thought about Satan preserving a nation unto himself with such a precise prophetic analogy? It would be preposterous to think of. Satan can't do such

a thing, because he is not alpha and omega. He can only destroy nations. The miracle of Israel is the divine proof of the supremacy of the God of Israel.

The reemergence of the state of Israel has always been a prerequisite for the fulfillment of prophetic destiny for all nations. The nations of this world are afflicted with a demonic disease that ultimately points to the acute peculiarity of the peculiar people, Israel.

The leaves that sprouted forth from the Branch of the fig tree could have been for the healing process to be instilled in the souls of all the nations of this world. Had the church so conquered the nations in total, as did the preaching of Jonah to the Ninevites, Israel may have been spared the onslaught of Anti-Semitism.

But alas, the church has not brought peace, but it has brought separation. The nations are all at enmity with the God of Israel, and its grafted Christians!

Perhaps this is the basis for the nations' healing in the Post Millennial Kingdom of Israel.

Revelation 22:2: In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river of life, which bare twelve manner of Fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and "The Leaves" of the Tree were for the healing of the Nations.

God says in Ezekiel 28:25-26, that when He has gathered the house of Israel from among all those nations to where they were scattered, that He will execute His judgments upon all those nations that despised Israel; and that they will know that the "I AM" of Israel is indeed God.

From Isaiah 4:2 In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the Fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.

Without question, the rebudding of national Israel 60 odd years ago now, is the most powerful message that God has sent to the nations in the last 20 centuries, since the first visitation of the Branch. In restoring Israel once again in their homeland, God is raising up an ensign, or banner, which the nations of the world cannot ignore.

To the nations, God says from Ezekiel 36:23:

And I will sanctify My great name, which was profaned among all the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them, and the heathen shall know that I AM the Lord, when I shall be sanctified in you (Israel) before their (nations) eyes.

God is about to undertake a great shaking in the land of Israel. The Fig Tree has been planted, but just as in the vision of the "Valley of Dry Bones", Israel still is not spiritually alive; but that blossoming will take place upon the return visit of Jesus Christ to ISRAEL.

The second crop of good figs is already budding on the Branch. The Satanic hosts which are staged to pursue Israel will lead the nations to their fates; when God shakes the Fig Tree.

The parable of the fig tree carries with it a like promise as the one which was made to Simeon. As Simeon was promised to not see death until he had seen the Messiah, also the rebudded generation of regathered Israel will see all things fulfilled before it passes. (Matt 24:34)

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh:"

The Fig Tree is planted once again in its natural homeland, it is ALIVE, and the blossoms are budding forth, and it signifies that the Branch shall returneth soon!

How soon was Christ's prophecy fulfilled about the withering of the symbolic fig tree to be fulfilled? In the year 70 A.D. the temple was destroyed. No longer was there a place to offer sacrifices, the opportunity to serve the Lord according to the precepts of the Law thus ended. Jerusalem fell into ruin, and the whole nation was expelled from their own land and dispersed throughout the world. Speaking about the time of his Kingdom approaching, Christ again turns his disciples' attention to the fig tree.

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree: When his branch is yet tender, and puts forth his leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the door". (Matt. 24:32, 33)

It should be observed that this parable was uttered on the same day that the barren fig tree was cursed. Therefore it would be difficult to assume that when Christ told them to watch for signs taking place on that very kind of a tree, it was merely accidental. These two events constitute one whole. As a result of the rejection of the Messiah on the part of the Jews, during his first advent, God's favor was turned away from them, as shown in the withered tree. Whereas, the softening of the branches and the bringing forth of leaves represents the return of favor to this nation during the time of the establishment of the Kingdom in Christ's second advent. Let us, then, carefully observe this symbolic fig tree.

Our world is rapidly moving towards a gigantic military confrontation between Jehovah, the God of Israel, and massive anti Jehovah armies that will attack Israel and Jerusalem. (Joel 3:1-3) This gigantic clash will result in a tremendous and crushing defeat for Jehovah's enemies that will powerfully convince the whole human race that there is a ruler in the heavens who created, sustains and rules the universe. Obviously Israel is going to bear the brunt of this attack but the church should also be involved, not using military weapons but the spiritual weapons that are mighty through God to the destruction of spiritual strongholds. It is surely a prophetic time when Almighty God wants His church to recognize her common roots and destiny with the people of Israel, God's covenant people. In order to do this we need to thoroughly understand the religious and cultural background to our

Christian Faith. Perhaps we can begin with a fresh, unbiased look at the life of Yeshua the Messiah and at the life of the early (original) church.

To understand the nature and mission of the life of Christ, one must first understand the lineage, traditions and the religion into which He was born. History has accurately confirmed His birth, childhood, and adult life in a Jewish society. He honoured Jewish laws, He taught in Jewish synagogues, and eventually became a Jewish Rabbi. His life's mission was dedicated and foreordained to be a part of the Jewish society, and events of His life were ultimately fulfilled according to the prophecies of the ancient Jewish prophets.

The Holy Scriptures clearly teach that the historic roots of Christianity are firmly embedded in the soil of Judaism and that it is because of Abraham's faith that we enjoy the blessings of salvation.

Galatians 3:8-9

*8 What's more, the Scriptures looked forward to this time when God would accept the Gentiles, too, on the basis of their faith. God promised this good news to Abraham long ago when he said, "All nations will be blessed through you."
9 And so it is: All who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing Abraham received because of his faith. NLT*

This scripture confirms three vital truths

1. The Tanach (Jewish Scriptures) foretold that God would one day accept the Gentiles on the basis of their faith.
2. This prediction was based upon God's promise to Abraham long ago. (Gen 12:1-3)
3. All who put their faith in Christ share the same blessing that Abraham received because of his faith. Galatians 3:14 *That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. (KJV)*

In seeking to review the historic beginnings of the Christian Faith we must of necessity examine the origins of its founder.

Jesus Was Born A Jew

His birth was predicted in the Tanakh

Genesis 3:15

And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." (NKJ)

The term "seed of woman" is a unique phrase because offspring are always known as the seed of the male. This phrase predicted the virgin birth of the Messiah.

Isaiah 7:14

14 *Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (KJV)*

Isaiah 9:6-7

6 *For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

7 *Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (NKJ)*

Psalm 2:7

7 *"I will declare the decree: the LORD has said to Me, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You. (NKJ)*

His Birth Recorded

The Jewishness of Jesus is plainly emphasized at the very beginning of the New Testament.

Matthew 1:1

1:1 *This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of King David and of Abraham: NLT*

Luke 1:30-37

30 *Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.*

31 *And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS.*

32 *He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.*

33 *And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."*

34 *Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"*

35 *And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.*

36 *Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren.*

37 *For with God nothing will be impossible." NKJV*

Luke 2:4-7

4 *Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David,*

5 *to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child.*

6 *So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be*

delivered.

7 And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. NKJV

Luke 2:15-21

15 So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us."

16 And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.

17 Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child.

18 And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.

20 Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them.

The Circumcision of Jesus

And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called JESUS, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.

NKJV

It is also emphasized at the close of the New Testament.

Revelation 22:16

16 "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star." (NKJ)

Hebrews 2:16 For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. KJV

He took not on him the nature of angels - The word used here Gk: epilambanetai - means, to take hold upon; to seize; i.e. "He takes not hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham he takes hold."

God did not choose to visit earth as an angel but rather as a true human, in fact as a direct descendant of Abraham.

He Was Descended From The Tribe Of Judah

Genesis 49:10

10 The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be. (KJV)

Judah was the fourth son of Jacob by his wife Leah and the founder of the tribal family out of which the Messianic line came (Gen. 29:35; Num. 26:19-21; Matt. 1:2).

Judah was one of the most prominent of the 12 sons of Jacob. He saved Joseph's life by suggesting that his brothers sell Joseph to Ishmaelite merchants rather than kill him (Gen. 37:26-28). Later, in Egypt, it was Judah who begged Joseph to detain him (Judah) rather than Benjamin, Jacob's beloved son. In an eloquent speech Judah confessed what he and his brothers had done to Joseph; shortly thereafter, Joseph identified himself to his brothers (Gen. 44:14--45:1).

It appears that Judah was the leader of Jacob's sons who remained at home. Even though he was not the oldest son, Judah was sent by Jacob to precede him to Egypt (Gen. 46:28). Also Judah, rather than his older brothers, received Jacob's blessing (Gen. 49:3-10). In that blessing, Jacob foretold the rise of Judah: "Your father's children shall bow down before you.... the scepter shall not depart from Judah... until Shiloh comes" (Gen. 49:8,10).

Revelation 5:4-5

5 But one of the twenty-four elders said to me, "Stop weeping! Look, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the heir to David's throne, has conquered. He is worthy to open the scroll and break its seven seals." NLT

He Is The Lion Of Judah. The strong and mighty One

Genesis 49:8-12

8 "Judah, your brothers will praise you. You will defeat your enemies. All your relatives will bow before you.

9 Judah is a young lion that has finished eating its prey. Like a lion he crouches and lies down; like a lioness — who will dare to rouse him?

10 The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from his descendants, until the coming of the one to whom it belongs, the one whom all nations will obey.

11 He ties his foal to a grapevine, the colt of his donkey to a choice vine. He washes his clothes in wine because his harvest is so plentiful.

12 His eyes are darker than wine, and his teeth are whiter than milk. NLT

He Lived As A Jew

Jesus was brought up in the culture of Judaism. He was born into an ordinary Jewish family. Eight days after His birth, He was taken to the Temple in Jerusalem, where he was presented to God. As a child, and later as an adult, Jesus kept the Shabbat and all the other Jewish festivals. The only Bible story about Jesus as a boy tells the story of His family's yearly trip to the Temple in Jerusalem. In fact the story outlined is most probably the occasion when Jesus was Bar Mitzvahed and became a Son of the Commandments.

From around the age of 6, Jesus would have gone to school at his local synagogue where he would have learnt to study the Torah. As an adult, Jesus would have worn Tephilin. He would have known at least two languages: Hebrew and Aramaic. Hebrew was the language of the Torah. Aramaic was the everyday language Jesus spoke. He may also have known Greek and Latin.

As a child, Jesus would have worked alongside his father, Joseph, who was a carpenter or a builder. Before He began preaching, Jesus probably worked as a carpenter too. Jesus had many 'half' brothers and sisters, who were the children of Mary and Joseph. As the eldest son, Jesus would have been responsible for the family if Joseph died.

Luke 2:21-22

21 *And when eight days were completed for the circumcision of the Child, His name was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb.*

22 *Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (NKJ)*

Jesus Received A Jewish Education

It is often assumed that because Jesus is God, though manifest in human flesh, He must have been innately omniscient. However, it is clear that His humanity was so genuine that His life developed through many processes of learning, one of which was undoubtedly in a yeshiva. (Jewish school)

Hebrews 5:8

Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; (KJV)

Luke 2:52

And Jesus increased (developed) in wisdom (Sophia: can mean natural or spiritual wisdom) and stature, and in favour with God and man. (KJV)

He Fulfilled His Bar Mitzvah In Jerusalem

He became a “son of the commandments”

Luke 2:41-42

41 *Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover.*

42 *And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. (KJV)*

Luke 2:45-47

45 *And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him.*

46 *And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.*

47 *And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.*

John 7:14-15

14 *Now about the midst of the feast Jesus went up into the temple, and taught.*

15 *And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knows this man (his) letters, having never learned? (KJV)*

At the age of twelve he was competent to teach the Torah even to the Rabbis who marveled at his knowledge wondering how he could appear to have earned his "letters" at such a tender age. They even referred to him as a "man."

A Perspective on the Jewish Rabbi Jesus

We shall look at the importance of the Jewish people who are God's witness to the world. Through them all mankind has been blessed, pre-eminently because the Messiah was born a Jew. That brings me to the point of this article. I want to look at Jesus the Jewish Rabbi. People seem to forget that Jesus was a Jew. Beyond that they seem to forget or ignore the fact that He was a Rabbi. You might be wondering, why it matters that Jesus was a Jew or that He was a Rabbi and those are the questions I hope to answer in this article.

He Was Recognized As A Rabbi

The title Rabbi, is a respectful term applied by the Jews to their teachers and spiritual instructors (Matt. 23:7-8; John 1:38; 3:26; 6:25). The terms rabbi and rabboni both mean simply "master" (John 1:38; 20:16). In Jesus' day, however, the term had not yet become a formal title. Instead, it was a term of dignity given by the Jews to their distinguished teachers. The Pharisees loved to be called "Rabbi," but Jesus told his disciples, "Do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren" (Matt. 23:7-8). (In this scripture Jesus was actually encouraging His disciples to call Him Rabbi. V.8)

The word rabbi comes from a Semitic root word meaning "great" or "head." It is only used in the gospels, usually of Jesus.

Contrary to popular belief, a Rabbi is not a minister of religion or the Jewish equivalent of a pastor. He is essentially an ardent scholar of teacher of Judaism. He is obviously schooled in the study of the Torah, Tanakh and Mishnah and well able to teach on any and all of these subjects. He was obviously recognized by His Jewish disciples as a Rabbi as he was also by the common people.

When Jesus was about thirty, he gave up being a carpenter and became a Rabbi. Rabbi is the Hebrew word for 'teacher'. Jesus was a Rabbi for three years. In that time, he taught in many different places. He taught in houses, in synagogues and, often, in the Temple in Jerusalem.

As Israel is a hot country, Jesus could also teach outside. He taught in towns and in the countryside, on hillsides and lakesides. A few times, he taught from a boat. He taught huge crowds of people; men, women and children. He also taught people on their own. But the people whom he taught most were twelve men. These twelve men are called the Apostles.

Jesus taught in many different ways. Often, he taught using stories about people's every day lives and the news of the day. Sometimes, he told parables. Sometimes, he taught using questions which other Rabbis put to Him. Sometimes, He acted things

out. Once, he wrote on the ground. Although Jesus taught many new things, most of his teaching came from the Torah. For many people, Jesus is the greatest teacher who ever lived.

By the time Jesus began his public ministry, he had not only received the thorough religious training typical of the average Jewish man of his day, he had probably spent years studying with one of the outstanding rabbis in the Galilee. Jesus thus appeared on the scene as a respected rabbi himself. He was recognized as such by his contemporaries, as passages in the New Testament illustrate:

And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he said, "Rabbi, what is it?" (Luke 7:40)

• *A lawyer (Doctor of the Law) asked him a question to test him: "Rabbi, what is the greatest commandment in the Torah?" (Matthew 22:35-36)*

• *And behold, a [rich] man came up to him and said, "Rabbi, what good thing must I do to have eternal life?" (Matthew 19:16)*

• *And someone in the crowd said to him, "Rabbi, order my brother to divide the inheritance with me." (Luke 12:13)*

• *And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, "Rabbi, rebuke your disciples."*

*John 1:38 Jesus looked around and saw them following. "What do you want?" he asked them. They replied, "Rabbi" (which means Teacher), "where are you staying?"
39 "Come and see," he said. NLT*

John 1:47-2:1

47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"

48 Nathanael said to Him, "How do You know me?"

Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

49 Nathanael answered and said to Him, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"

50 Jesus answered and said to him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these."

51 And He said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man." NKJV

Nicodemus, who was a ruler, (governor) of the Jews, obviously recognized and acknowledged Jesus as a Rabbi.

John 3:2

2 *This man (Nicodemus) came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him." (NKJ)*

His Disciples Referred To Him As Rabbi

John 6:24-25

24 *when the people therefore saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they also got into boats and came to Capernaum, seeking Jesus.*

25 *And when they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You come here?" NKJV*

Jesus never rebuked or corrected anyone who called Him Rabbi.

Jesus Observed The Feasts Of Israel

John 10:22-23

22 *And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter.*

23 *And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon's porch. (KJV)*

Luke 22:15-16

15 *Then He said to them, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer;*

16 *"for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." (NKJ)*

He Taught In The Style And Method Of The Rabbis

Psalms 40:9-10

9 *I have proclaimed the good news of righteousness in the great assembly; indeed, I do not restrain my lips, O LORD, You Yourself know.*

10 *I have not hidden Your righteousness within my heart; I have declared Your faithfulness and Your salvation; I have not concealed Your lovingkindness and Your truth from the great assembly. (NKJ)*

Luke 24:27

27 *And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. (NKJ)*

Luke 24:44-45

44 *Then He said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me."*

45 *And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. (NKJ)*

He Taught The Torah In The Manner Of The Rabbis

The word Torah has an interesting history. The root of the word is Yarah, meaning "to shoot at a target." The basic meaning of Torah therefore is to indicate the correct direction. Hence, the word implies teaching or doctrine. However, the popular

understanding is that it refers more specifically the five books of Moses, from Genesis to Deuteronomy. It comes as a great surprise to many Christians to realize that Jesus never taught from the New Testament.

He Chose And Taught Twelve Disciples

This procedure was typically a Rabbinic one followed by Jesus.

Matthew 10:1-6

1 *And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease.*

2 *Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;*

3 *Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;*

4 *Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.*

5 *These twelve Jesus sent out and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans.*

6 *"But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. (NKJ)*

He Taught In Parables

According to the psalmist, teaching in parables was an accepted practice in his day.

Psalms 78:2-4

2 *I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old,*

3 *Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.*

4 *We will not hide them from their children, telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.*

Matthew 13:33-35

33 *Another parable He spoke to them: "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."*

34 *All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them,*

35 *that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: "I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things kept secret from the foundation of the world." (NKJ)*

Jesus Taught The Law

He did not come to destroy or nullify the Law, but rather to fulfill, i.e. complete, carry out, comply with the Law.

Matthew 5:17-19

17 *"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.*

18 *"For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.*

19 *"Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. (NKJ)*

Matt 22:36-40

36 *Master, which is the great commandment in the law?*

37 *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.*

38 *This is the first and great commandment.*

39 *And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

40 *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (KJV)*

Psalm 119:142

142 *Your righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Your law is truth. (NKJ)*

The Torah Is A Light

Proverbs 6:23

23 *For the commandment is a lamp, and the law (Torah) a light; reproofs of instruction are the way of life, (NKJ)*

Isaiah 8:20

20 *To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them. (NKJ)*

Isaiah 51:4-5

4 *"Listen to Me, My people; and give ear to Me, O My nation: for law will proceed from Me, and I will make My justice rest as a light of the peoples.*

5 *My righteousness is near, my salvation has gone forth, and My arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands will wait upon Me, and on My arm they will trust. (NKJ)*

Yeshua is the Living Torah

John 8:12

Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." (NKJ)

John 6:41-42

41 *Then the people began to murmur in disagreement because he had said, "I am the bread from heaven."*

42 *They said, "This is Jesus, the son of Joseph. We know his father and mother. How can he say, 'I came down from heaven'?" NLT*

John 6:47-51

47 *"I assure you, anyone who believes in me already has eternal life.*

48 *Yes, I am the bread of life!*

*49 Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness, but they all died.
50 However, the bread from heaven gives eternal life to everyone who eats it.
51 I am the living bread that came down out of heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; this bread is my flesh, offered so the world may live." NLT*

In using the name I AM, as Jesus frequently did, He identified Himself as God, for this is the name by which Jehovah introduced Himself to Moses. Exodus 3:14

14 And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" NKJV

He Died as a Jew

John 19:3 Then they said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck Him with their hands. (NKJ)

John 19:19

19 Now Pilate wrote a title and put it on the cross. And the writing was: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. (NKJ)

He Was Buried As A Jew

John 19:40

Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. (NKJ)

In Jewish culture there were numerous very specific laws relating to death. Although crucifixion was a Roman method of execution, following Christ's death, largely due to the good favour of Nicodemus, all the Jewish rituals were fulfilled.

One Day He will Return as a Jew To His Own people

Although many Christians tend to ignore the Jewishness of Jesus, deeming it to be irrelevant, when He returns it will be to Jerusalem and to the House of David that He will make His initial appearance. It will be to the "Jew first" that He will reveal Himself, very much as when Joseph revealed himself to his brethren. (Genesis 45)

Zechariah 12:10

"And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. (NKJ)

Zechariah 14:4

4 And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south. (NKJ)

Until we are willing to understand these facts about Jesus we cannot fully understand some of the things He said. I believe God has made the Scriptures living and able to be understood by anyone who happens to pick them up and read them, with the help of the Holy Spirit. So what I mean by not fully understanding the things Jesus said until we understand that He was a Jew and a Rabbi, is that there are implications to what He said that can only be understood through the framework of who He was as a human, a Jew and a Rabbi.

Let me give an example. Have you noticed that Jesus seldom answered a question directly, but rather would answer with a question of His own? For example, in

Matt 22:17- "Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?"

18 But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test Me, you hypocrites?"

19 "Show Me the tax money." So they brought Him a denarius.

20 And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription is this?"

21 They said to Him, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

22 When they had heard these words, they marveled, and left Him and went their way. (NKJ)

This was not Jesus being rude, it was a very common way for a Rabbi to teach and how they debated things. This is an example of His attitude. He was a Jew and talked and debated like a Jew.

But even more important are some of the things He said that don't really make sense to our 21st century minds, but would have made perfect sense to a Jew in Jesus' day. Jesus often referred to Himself as the Bridegroom and we (the church) as the Bride. Now look at this passage:

John 14:1 "Don't be troubled. You trust God, now trust in me.

2 There are many rooms in my Father's home, and I am going to prepare a place for you. If this were not so, I would tell you plainly.

3 When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am.

4 And you know where I am going and how to get there." NLT

What does that have to do with a bride and bridegroom? Well to us, today, probably not much, but to a Jew in the first century it would have made perfect sense. For us to understand it we need to understand the Jewish marriage custom.

In the Jewish wedding of the first century, the Bridegroom paid the Bride price. Jesus paid the Bride price at Calvary. Afterwards he offered the cup of wine signifying the covenant he was making with his bride, then he would go to his father's house and build on a room or rooms for himself and his bride to live in. During the time the

bridegroom was preparing this home for his bride the bride would still be at her father's home waiting and watching for her bridegroom to come get her.

She had to be ever vigilant because she did not know how long it would be before her bridegroom would return for her. When he left to go to prepare the room, the bridegroom could not tell his bride how long it would be before he came back for her. He would have been anxious to come back, but it was not up to him. It was up to his father. The son would build the room and prepare a place for his bride, but it was his father who would finally say, it is time to go get your bride, the room is finished. It could be in the morning that the father said that, or it could be during the night, the bridegroom did not know when it would happen, and neither did the bride, who was waiting for him to come back for her.

Now go back and re-read that passage where Jesus explains that He is going to prepare a place for us and that even He does not know when He will return. This would have instantly been understood by His listeners as a bridegroom going to prepare a place for his bride and his father having the say as to when it was finished.

Does this understanding make any doctrinal differences? No, but it opens up the Scriptures in a way that is rich with passion. Jesus is showing His love for us and His relationship to us. Now remember that Jesus had not yet died or rose from the dead when He made this statement. But just a couple of days later during the Passover meal He offered the cup of wine as His covenant to us all as His bride. Then the next day He paid the bride price for us, with His life. He then rose from the dead and has gone to prepare our eternal home for us and is coming back to take us home. We don't know when. It might be at midnight it might be at noon, or anytime in between, but He is coming back and we, as His bride, need to be ever vigilant, waiting in great anticipation for His return.

Look at how Jesus explained the cup, which we call communion:

Matthew 26:28 NIV This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Now again, think back to the wedding ceremony, when the bridegroom offers the cup of wine as a covenant to his bride. I know for me this opens up Scripture in a way that not knowing the Jewish traditions can't do.

Now look at the following passage of Scripture:

*John 7:37-38 NIV On the last and greatest day of the Feast, Jesus stood and said in a loud voice, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.
38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him."*

Have you ever wondered about that passage? The Feast mentioned is the Feast of Tabernacles, this was a seven day celebration. When we view what Jesus said in hindsight, we know He was speaking spiritually about the Holy Spirit. But have you

ever wondered why He just stood up in the middle of this ceremony in the Temple and proclaimed this about those who were thirsty? What would the Jews who were there have thought? Would they have thought He was out of His mind for disturbing the ceremony? Well that is what we might think if we don't find out what was going on in the Temple that day.

The passage tells us that this was the last day of the Feast. From the Jewish Rabbinic writings we can find out what was happening in the Temple that day. On the last day the Priest would pour out water and wine into bowls which had funnels which led to the base of the altar. Here is a description of what happened.

The priestly ritual of pouring water and wine down the silver bowls which funnels led to the base of the altar of burnt offering, was symbolic - symbolic of their thanksgiving for the rain which produced the harvests of the year. Prayers for more rain were offered for the next spring harvest.

I believe it was during this ritual pouring of water and wine that Jesus stood up and made that proclamation. With this ritual in view, doesn't Jesus' statement make much more sense? It does to me. But I want to take this thought a little bit further.

John 19:31-37 NIV

31 Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down.

32 The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other.

33 But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.

34 Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.

35 The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe.

36 These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken,"

37 and, as another scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced."

Think about what this passage says. It says that water and blood came out from where Jesus was pierced. Now I have heard doctors talk about the fluids (water) which can accumulate in the pericardium (which is the sac that surrounds the human heart) when a person dies like Jesus died. Then they speculate that what happened was that the Roman soldier pierced Jesus' heart and this caused the flow of blood and water. Okay, medically I have no arguments about that, it probably is exactly what happened, but it does not convey anything meaningful spiritually. However, if you look at that flow of blood and water and remember the ritual pouring out of water and wine in the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles, it starts to really bring this all to life. Jesus was publicly crucified, so there would have been people who walked by and some who stopped and watched. I am sure there were those there who had

also been in the Temple when Jesus made His proclamation about living water. Now what do you think would have come to their mind when the soldier pierced Jesus and the flow of water and blood took place?

Jesus' proclamation at the Temple was not just some random thought that He decided to share. If nothing else all of this shows just a little of the enormous amount of God's testimony about Jesus that the Jews had to ignore in order not to believe in Him as their Messiah.

I am often told that Jesus never claimed to be God. Of course that is silly, He claimed to be God often, but I want to address how He did it. How He proclaimed Himself God, also shows His Jewish roots and those of the people who heard Him.

John 8:52-59 NIV

52 At this the Jews exclaimed, "Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that if anyone keeps your word, he will never taste death.

53 Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?"

54 Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me.

55 Though you do not know him, I know him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and keep his word.

56 Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad."

57 "You are not yet fifty years old," the Jews said to him, "and you have seen Abraham!"

58 "I tell you the truth," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"

59 At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

Look at verse 58. Jesus says 'before Abraham was born, I am!' The word am should really be capitalized because this is where Jesus is claiming to be God. Not that He existed before Abraham, although that is also true, but He was saying He is the great I Am.

Exodus 3:13-14 NIV

13 Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

Now go back and look at what Jesus said and it starts to make perfect sense why they picked up stones to kill Him, they understood He was saying He was God.

Without understanding anything about Jesus' Jewish roots, we can still understand that we are sinners in need of a savior, under a death sentence by a Holy God, unable to do anything to help ourselves. We can understand that God is loving and merciful and sent His only Son to die in our place and raised Him back to life on the third day. All that can be understood without even knowing that Jesus was a Jew, but to come to a better understanding of His words and actions we must understand His culture and customs.

Let me show you one more custom from the Passover meal. Matzah is bread without leaven. It is much like a large saltine cracker. It has small holes like a saltine cracker and dark spots where the heat has darkened parts of it while baking. Those dark spots tend to form lines or stripes the length of the piece. Now look at the ritual of the Passover concerning the matzah.

The Jews have a ceremony they perform with the matzah bread. There are three pieces of matzah, two for the blessing and one to be broken. There is a special cloth holder with three sections called matzah tash. The three pieces of matzah are inside, one in each compartment. The leader takes the middle piece of matzah and lifts it for everyone to see. He then breaks the bread in two. Next he takes one piece and places it back in the matzah tash. Then he takes the other piece and wraps it in a linen cloth. This linen-wrapped matzah is called the Afikoman. The leader "hides" the Afikoman.

Remember this is a Jewish ritual not a Christian ritual. Think about this for a moment. Three pieces of matzah. Could that represent the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? Which one is broken? The middle one, the Son. Then what happens to the broken piece? It is wrapped in linen, which was also the material used for burial clothes. It is then hidden. Later the children at the feast go and find the broken piece and bring it back to the table and get a reward for finding it. Sounds like a perfect picture of the death and resurrection of Christ doesn't it?

Isaiah 53:5 NIV But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.

Remember I said the matzah had holes pierced in it and what look like stripes or lines on it? Jesus was beaten and pierced and broken for our sins. Again by knowing the Jewish customs you can get a better and much more beautiful picture of Jesus and the things He taught. Just before He was arrested Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples. He took bread (matzah) and broke it and told them that this represented His body broken for them. Could it be that this bread He broke was this middle piece of matzah? We can't know for sure, but it would make sense.

So far we have only scratched the surface of this fascinating subject. I would encourage you to study the Jewish feasts, they were instituted by God and they were celebrated by Jesus. They are rich with symbolism and meaning which will help the Scriptures come alive for you.

Our Bridegroom is preparing a place for us and is coming back to take us home. We don't know when, but I believe it will be soon. We need to encourage each other to wait and watch, and not get tired, so that we don't miss His coming.

Unlike any other nation, the tribe of Judah was distinct in its moral and physical laws. The purpose of cleansing or purifying the body and soul was for a dedication and preparation for the Messiah, who would be born through that sacred lineage. Eating habits were restricted by spiritual laws to purify the blood, and marriage laws were jealously observed by the Jewish community to prevent introduction or contamination by any "gentile" strain of blood. Every Jewish woman lived with the hope and desire of being honoured to bear the chosen Messiah and Saviour of the world.

From the fall of Adam, a Redeemer became a necessity and an expectation. Prophecy depicted the event, the time, the location, and the events of the life of this blessed Redeemer. It was the grand patriarch, Jacob, who bestowed a patriarchal blessing upon the heads of his twelve sons, and Judah was given the distinction of receiving the promised lineage of this predicted Redeemer. Said Jacob:

The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes and the obedience of the nations is His (Genesis 49:16, NIV).

So the faith and desire of the House of Judah cherished this coming event. They consecrated with an amiable protective care on this sacred trust, and the noble examples of heroism and valour were scrawled throughout the pages of ecclesiastical antiquity.

Upon the lips of all Judah was the consolation of the prophetic promise that "His Name shall be called Immanuel -- God with us;" and for nearly 1700 years that promise continued to be repeated. The expected "Immanuel" became a part of every sacrificial rite, prophecy, prayer, and was even fused into their songs and psalms. The promised coming of their Messiah compelled them to a strict observance of all the laws of God.

When Moses led Israel out of bondage, giving them God's revelations and laws, he pointed ahead to the time when a great "Prophet" would come among them, "like unto me (Moses)" (Deuteronomy 18:15). This grand event was to be heralded by heaven itself -- the guiding star, the night as day, and messages delivered by angels; thus confirming and fulfilling these ancient prophecies upon the child Jesus.

Among the Jews the twelfth year was the time which separated a boy from his childhood. Then a Hebrew boy was called "Bar Mitzvah", which is a "Son of the Law" or "Child of the Commandment". This is a period in which he was to study and be taught by the wisest teachers in Israel, learning and studying the law and the testament. There were annual gatherings, like conferences, in which many of these wise teachers gave instructions. Three special annual feasts were particularly set

apart from the instruction of young men. These feasts were the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. The Passover was the most zealously attended, and worshippers came from all parts of the land to commemorate the deliverance of the Israelites from bondage, by the judgments of God upon the Egyptians (Exodus 12).

At the age of 12 Jesus ventured inside the great Jewish Temple and, perhaps, for the first time, He saw the paschal sacrifice of the lamb, robed men acting in the office of High Priests, while hearing the sacred prayers of His nation and smelling the consecrated Temple incense. But more important than this, Jesus came into contact with the learned Rabbis of Israel. It is supposed at this time that Jesus spoke with Rabbi Hillel, whose teachings are recorded with high esteem in the Talmud. However, Jesus was not taught by any Rabbi -- it was He who was teaching and answering the questions of the councils, and they "were astonished at His understanding and answers" (Luke 2:47, AV).

Jesus spent three days in the Temple conversing with the learned Elders of Zion. After the third day His mother had become aware of His absence and found Him still in the Temple speaking to the priests and teachers. She then proceeded to chastise Him for the way He had "treated" her. In reply, He said: "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" (Luke 2:49, New King James Version (NKJV)). But "they did not understand what He was saying to them" (Ibid, v.50, NIV). His Father's business was teaching and instructing -- not doing carpenter's work, as modern tradition teaches. His wisdom and understanding superceded all the learning of the councils; but He could not reveal all that he knew, not could He expose all of the existing evils within the empire.

There was another reason which delayed the full ministry of Jesus. We read that it was not until He was "about thirty years of age" that He began His ministry. This indicates that He was complying with one of the laws required to fulfill the office and calling of a Rabbi or priest.

It was not until Jesus was 30 years of age that He was baptised, fasted for 40 days, and gathered disciples into the ministry. By this time He had complied with all of the requirements of Jewish law as a Rabbi. Compliance to the rules and regulations of Jewish law were essential in the work of the ministry, lest the High Priests and Councils use legitimate reason to condemn or reject Him. Jesus knew this, and warned His disciples to obey carefully the requirements of their laws, because "they sit in Moses' seat; therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do" (Matthew 23:2-3, NKJV).

The chief priests and councils sought with lawyers to trap Jesus for violating even the most minute laws. Jesus, however, could recite the law in His own defense, and by the same law condemn the Pharisees for their disobedience. He could condemn the hierarchy of Judah for their hypocrisy by their own law; and also condemn them according to the laws of God.

It should be carefully noted that Jesus was often called "Rabbi" which "is to say, being interpreted, Master" (John 1:38). This was an office, title, or position of "teacher", which was highly honoured by the Jews -- so much so, that it became a title of prestige and social respect. If a man was a "Rabbi" he was entitled to the choice seats in social gatherings and praises of the multitudes. Jesus warned His disciples to avoid the social prestige, the public honours, and the praiseworthy titles that came with the title "Rabbi" (Matthew 23:5-8).

Jesus was often called Rabbi which He did not deny. It was justly applied, both as to office and honour. If Jesus was not a Rabbi according to that Jewish office, He would have immediately renounced the title. His chief Apostle, Peter, often called Him "Rabbi" (Mark 9:5; 11:21) but received no word of correction from Jesus, indicating that the title was properly applied. When Jesus was called "Rabbi" by Judas (Matthew 26:25,49), and by Nathanael (John 1:49), and the other disciples (John 1:38; 4:31; 9:2; 11:8), He acknowledged the title without dispute. Great masses of the people also called Him "Rabbi" (John 6:25); and when Nicodemus, a Pharisee, and a ruler of the Jews acknowledged Jesus as "Rabbi", it was conclusive evidence that Jesus was a Jewish Rabbi (John 3:1-2).

The office of Rabbi required a person to be particularly well versed in the scriptures and the Talmud, whereas the office of Priest required certain sacrificial and temple ordinance ceremonies; yet both were especially commissioned:

To be recognised as a Rabbi, however, a talmudic student has to be ordained. The custom of ordination is very old. Joshua was ordained by Moses...The practice of ordination in its Mosaic form ceased in Palestine in the second half of the 4th century (A.D.) when the Judaeen academies were closed. In the 16th century an attempt was made in Palestine to revive the ancient ordination, as well as the Sanhedrin, with all the power and authority that it possessed, but this attempt resulted in failure (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Vol.18, p.978).

With the ordination to this official calling of Rabbi, Jesus could teach the gospel principles wherever he was led to do so. As a Rabbi He taught thousands upon the mountainside, in the synagogues, and even resorted to using a whip to teach a special lesson to the money changers in the Temple. The councils, lawyers, Pharisees and Priests of Judah tried by every means to prove Jesus unfit for that office, but to no avail. Jesus acknowledged the title, office, the position of Rabbi by precept and example. He was destined to be the most honoured of rabbis, priests and even kings!

The "Christian God" Is The Holy One Of Israel

"Come near to Me, hear this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning. From its being, I was there; and now the Lord Jehovah, and His Spirit, has sent Me. So says Jehovah, your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel, I am Jehovah your God."
(Isaiah 48:16-17)

Isaiah 48:16-17 names the *Sent One* as Jehovah, Redeemer, and the **Holy One of Israel**. We have established that Jesus Christ is the *Sent One*. Since Jesus is the Holy One of Israel, Isa 48:16-17 names Him *Jehovah*, Redeemer, and God.

Here are a few more verses, from the Bible, concerning the **Holy One of Israel**
-- "*Woe, sinful nation, a people heavy with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, sons who corrupt! They have forsaken Jehovah; they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger; they have gone away backward.*" (Isa 1:4)

-- "*So, as the fire devours the stubble, and the flame burns up the chaff; their root shall be like rottenness, and their blossoms shall go up like dust, because they have cast away the Law of Jehovah of Hosts, and despised the Word of the Holy One of Israel.*" (Isa 5:24)

-- "*For so says the Lord Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel,-*" (Isa 30:15)

-- "*For I am Jehovah your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior;-*" (Isa 43:3)

-- "*For thy Maker is thy husband, Jehovah of Hosts is His name, And thy Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel, 'God of all the earth,' He is called.*"
(Isa 54:5 - Literal Translation)

-- "*For neither Israel nor Judah has been forsaken by his God, by Jehovah of Hosts, though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel.*" (Jer 51:5)

-- "*And the nations shall know that I am Jehovah, the Holy One in Israel.*" (Eze 39:7)

-- "*God comes from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His glory covers the heavens, and His praise fills the earth.*" (Habbakuk 3:3)

We can see that some of the above verses name the Holy One of Israel (Jesus Christ) as God, while several make a distinction between the two. Since ALL Holy Scripture pertaining to doctrine and our knowledge of God is Spiritually inspired and there can be no significant conflicts in the Holy Bible, it is clear that these verses along with the ones cited on *Jesus, the Creator* show that God has a multi-faceted nature.

The prophet Isaiah throughout his writings entitles the coming Messiah--our Lord Jesus Christ--the "Holy One" although he uses this significant name interchangeably for God the Father. This title, Isaiah's favorite, is used a total of twenty-nine times beginning in the very first chapter of his most significant prophecy, most significant because of its intense focus on our Lord Jesus. This attribute of the character of God is in fact more than just an attribute, for holiness is the primary word used to describe the very essence of our God.

"Saint Paul" was a Lifelong Jew

The man known as "St. Paul" was first called Saul (pronounced Sha'ul in Hebrew), and that is the name used in this article. He was called Saul in Acts 7:58, Acts 8:1, and Acts 9:1. His first encounter with Yeshua ("Jesus") was in Acts 9:3-6, where the Lord addressed him as Saul. This episode is also told in Acts 22:7 and Acts 26:14, and in both of those the Lord also addressed him as Saul. When speaking about him to Ananias in a vision, the Lord said he was called "Saul of Tarsus" (Acts 9:11). It was not until Acts 13:9 that he was referred to as "Saul who was also known as Paul." To this day, it is not unusual for Jews in the diaspora to have two names. One is used by family or other Jews, the second is how they are known by the larger society around them. Unlike the case of Jacob who became Israel, Saul's name was never changed by God.

"St. Paul" was born a Jew

Philippians 3:3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,
4 though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so:
5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;
6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. NKJV

In 2 Cor 11:22 Saul wrote that he was descended from Abraham and Israel. Who were Abraham and Israel?

Abraham was the first Hebrew. God changed his name from Abram (Gen. 17:5). In Gen. 14:13 he is called Abram the Hebrew. Abraham is the father of the Jews (Acts 3:12-25). So we can see that Saul is descended from "Abram the Hebrew," the father of the Jews. Even to this day, Jews are also called "Hebrews", and the language of the Jews is "Hebrew."

Israel was originally called Jacob (Gen. 35:10-12) and he was Abraham's grandson (Matt. 1:2). He had twelve sons (Gen. 35:23-26) from whom come the Twelve Tribes of Israel. All of their descendants are known collectively throughout the Bible as the Children of Israel (Ex. 1:6-7). One of those twelve sons was Judah (Gen. 35:23, Matt. 1:2) and it is from his name that we get the word 'Jew'. Although *Yehudah* (Judah) was only one of the twelve, by 700 BCE, because of the course of Israel's history, the word *Yehudee* (Jew) came to mean any person descended from Israel (Jer. 34:9). When Saul wrote that he was descended from Abraham and Israel, he was saying he was born a Jew.

Saint Paul Grew Up As A Jew

In Phil 3:5 Saul called himself a "Hebrew of Hebrews," probably meaning "I speak Hebrew and I came from Hebrew-speaking parents." His father was a Pharisee (Acts 23:6). In his letter to the believers in Philippi, Saul described himself as having been circumcised as an infant on the eighth day (Phil 3:5). Obviously his Jewish parents did this in observance of the Torah commandment (Lev 12:2-3). He further confirmed this by stating that he is of the people Israel and he went on to cite his tribal descent (Benjamin), which is something few Jews can do today. We see the same in Romans 11:1, where Saul wrote that he was, "an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin."

Saul lived during the time of Rome's military occupation of Israel. Although born in Tarsus (Acts 22:3), he grew up among the Jews of Jerusalem, as a Pharisee (Acts 26:4-5). Again, the importance of the Torah in his family's life can be demonstrated. They made the considerable commitment of having him taught by Gamli'el (Acts 22:3), the foremost Jewish educator of the time (Acts 5:34). To achieve this, Saul must have been an excellent student and deeply committed to the Hebrew scriptures.

Recounting this as an adult, he described himself as "thoroughly trained in the Torah of our fathers" (Acts 22:3), he self-identified as a Jew (Acts 22:3), and he described the Jews as "my own nation" (Acts 26:4). Saul was raised as a Jew.

Saint Paul Lived As A Jew

As a believer in Yeshua, Saul continued to be a Jew. When he first came to faith he took a mikvah (Acts 9:18) and taught in the Synagogues of Damascus (Acts 9:20). Indeed, he initially argued with the Hellenists (Acts 9:29). Saul continued to worship with other Jews. The book of Acts contains at least ten other references to his ongoing Synagogue attendance (13:5, 13:14, 13:44, 14:1, 17:1-2, 17:10, 17:17, 18:4, 18:19, 19:8). Saul self-identified as a Jew (Gal 2:15), and he considered other Jewish believers to be Jewish (Gal 2:13). For instance, he considered Kefa (Peter) to be Jewish (Gal 2:14).

Not only was "the Apostle Paul" Jewish, as a believer in Yeshua he continued to self-identify as a Pharisee ("the strictest sect of our religion"), both in person (Acts 23:6) and in his writing (Phil 3:5).

"Saint Paul" was Torah observant (Acts 21:24). He taught that whether one is Jewish or Gentile, the important thing is to keep the commandments (1 Cor 7:19*), and that Yeshua gave His life to redeem us from Torah-lessness (Titus 2:14, Strong's #458). Scripture specifically points out that Saul did NOT teach Jews to abandon even tradition (Acts 21:20-24). In fact, he urged *all believers* to keep the Jewish traditions he passed on to them! (1Cor 11:2, 2Thes 2:15, Strongs# 3862)

*1 Corinthians 7:19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters. NKJV

Saul taught that faith in Yeshua grafts a Gentile into Israel. Prior to their faith, non-Jews "were aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the Covenants of Promise..." (Eph 2:12). But having come to faith they "who were once far off have been brought near..." (Eph 2:12-13). They are "no longer strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens..." (Eph 2:19). Having become a part of Israel, believers "should no longer walk as the Gentiles walk..." (Eph 4:17).

The Macedonians recognized that Saul was Jewish (Acts 16:20-21) and the Ephesians recognized his fellow believers to be Jews (Acts 19:34). He called the people Israel his brethren and countrymen (Rom 9:3-4). His travelling companions, friends, and hosts were Jewish (Acts 4:36, 15:22, 16:1, 18:2-3, 18:24, 19:34, 22:12).

Saul spoke Hebrew, the language of the Jews (Acts 21:40-22:2, 26:14). He taught from the Hebrew scripture (Acts 13:22, 13:33, 13:34, 13:35, 13:41, 13:47, 28:26-27, Rom 2:6, 2:24, 3:4) and wrote, "the doers of Torah will be justified," (Rom 2:13). He also wrote that the Torah is holy (Rom 7:12) and that the Torah is good (1Tim 1:8). Saul believed everything in the Torah and the Prophets (Acts 24:14, 26:22). When faced with a matter too hard to judge, he went up to Jerusalem in obedience to Torah (Acts 15:2).

Not only was Saul circumcised (Phil 3:5), soon after the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 he circumcised Timothy as well (Acts 16:3). So in addition to being a Rabbi, "Saint Paul" was a Mohel! He wrote that before they believed, Gentiles had been dead in "...the uncircumcision of their flesh" (Col 2:13), that it is beneficial to be circumcised (Rom 3:1-2), and that even Jews who don't believe in Yeshua are holy (Rom 11:16). Quoting the Jewish prophet Isaiah, he wrote that "all Israel will be saved" (Rom 11:26), and he instructed believers who weren't born Jewish not to be arrogant toward unbelieving Jews, but rather to fear God (Rom 11:20).

Saul went up to Jerusalem to worship (Acts 24:11). He wrote that he worshipped as his forefathers did (2Tim 1:3). When in Jerusalem, he would worship at the Temple (Acts 21:26, 22:17, 24:17-18). Saul, who did not become a believer until well after Yeshua's death and resurrection, continued to participate in Temple sacrifice in his worship (Acts 21:26, Acts 24:17). He also described himself as a Hebrew (2 Cor 11:22) and included himself among the people Israel (Acts 13:17). Saul unequivocally self-identified as a Jew.

Paul Was Imprisoned As A Jew

Little is known about Saul's death except that after having been imprisoned by the Romans for about two years (Acts 24:27), he was taken under guard to Italy for trial (Acts 27:1). While in Rome he was also kept under guard (Acts 28:16). The Romans put him to death, probably between 64-68 C.E.

The Jewish community in Rome had recently been reestablished following forcible expulsion in 49 C.E. (Acts 18:2). When Saul arrived in Rome, one of his first requests was to speak with the local Jewish leaders (Acts 28:17). He addressed them as

"brethren," and assured them he had done nothing in opposition to "the customs of our fathers" (Acts 28:17). Saul went on to tell them he was in chains because of the Hope of Israel (Acts 28:20). A few days later, a much larger group of Jewish leaders visited for a whole day (Acts 28:23). Saul talked with them about the Malchut haShamayim (Kingdom of God) and showed them Yeshua in the Tanakh (Acts 28:23). Of this large group of Jewish leaders, quite a few left believing that Yeshua is the Messiah (Acts 28:24). Saul's last recorded words were a 'drash on the Jewish prophet Isaiah (Acts 28:25). He remained imprisoned (at his own expense!) while awaiting trial for at least another two years, teaching all who came to him. Near to his death, as for his whole life, "Saul who was also known as Paul" was a Jew.

Paul's Burden for Israel

The Roman epistle is regarded as supreme in respect of Christian theology for its exposition on Divine Grace. Yet it has three main parts.

1. Salvation through Grace. Chs 1-8. Gentiles.
2. Salvation according to race. Chs 9-11. Jews.
3. The practical outworking of Salvation. Chs 12-16. Jew/Gentile

Paul is uniquely qualified to write on these issues being a "Jewish/Christian" a prototype of the ONE NEW MAN who is neither Jew nor Gentile but a NEW Creation.

Rom 9:1-5

- 9:1. I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit,*
- 2. that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. (Empathy)*
- 3. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, (Substitutionary)*
- 4. who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises;*
- 5. of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen. NKJV*

Rom 9:4-5 (Living Bible)

He took you as his own special, chosen people and led you along with a bright cloud of glory and told you how very much he wanted to bless you. He gave you his rules for daily life so you would know what he wanted you to do. He let you worship him and gave you mighty promises. Great men of God were your fathers, and Christ himself was one of you, a Jew so far as his human nature is concerned, he who now rules over all things. Praise God forever! TLB

1. Paul's Great Burden For Israel

He speaks not as a Jew, but as a New Covenant theologian.

A revered exemplary Christian Apostle/Leader.

A Christian theologian without peer. (Revelation, Exposition, Example)

As a proto type of the ONE NEW MAN IN Christ. Ephesians 2.

Not speaking from emotional bias but as one now deeply established in New Testament truth and revelation.

He Is Reminiscent Of Moses.

Ex 32:31-32

31. So Moses went back to the LORD and said, "Oh, what a great sin these people have committed! They have made themselves gods of gold.

32. But now, please forgive their sin--but if not, then blot me out of the book you have written." NIV

2. Who Are Israelites.

Rom 9:4. "for you have striven with God and with men and have prevailed." Jacob's great transformation into Israel at Peniel. Gen 32:28

Israelites, i.e., the whole people of Israel, the twelve tribes; called all Israel (Josh 3:17; 7:25; Judg 8:27) the sons of Israel (Jer 3:21); the house of Israel.

Israelites were considered to be "the children of the COVENANT," faithful servants of the Lord, and heirs to the promises made to Abraham (Rom 9:4; 11:1).

Their very name of Israelites implied their very high dignity; they were a royal nation; princes of the Most High God. the seed of Abraham, God's friend, and of Jacob his chosen, taken into the covenant of peculiarity, dignified and distinguished by visible privileges, many of which are here mentioned:-

3. To Whom Belongs The Adoption

Rom 9:4 huiiothesia (hwee-oth-es-ee'-ah - the placing as a son, i.e. adoption)

There are two distinct concepts in the matter of adoption.

- a. The adoption of children into one's family. (The Israelites were all taken into the family of God, and were called His sons and firstborn, Ex 4:22; Deut 14:1; Jer 31:9; Hos 11:1; and this adoption took place when God made the covenant with them at Horeb.)
- b. The acknowledgement of a son (huios) as a legitimate, legal representative of one's father. Matt 3:16,17. "My beloved huios in whom I am eminently satisfied.

1 John 2. 1. Little children, Teknon, 2. Children, Teknion.3. Sons, Huios. Fathers.

4. The Glory.

The manifest presence of Jehovah God. The magnificent aura, -shining forth of God. And Acts whereby He glorifies His name and attributes. The manifestation of God's presence and glory among them; principally by the cloud and pillar, and the Shekinah, or divine presence, appearing between the cherubim over the mercy-seat. These were unique to the Jews; no other nation was ever thus favoured.

Beauty, power, or honour; a quality of God's character that emphasizes His greatness and authority. The word is used in three senses in the Bible:

1. God's moral beauty and perfection of character. This divine quality is beyond man's understanding (Ps 113:4). All people "fall short" of it (Rom 3:23).

2. God's visible presence. While God's glory is not a substance, at times God does reveal His perfection to man in a visible way. Such a display of the presence of God is often seen as fire or dazzling light, but sometimes as an act of power. Some examples from the Old Testament are the pillar of cloud and fire (Ex 13:21), the Lord's deliverance of the Israelites at the Red Sea (Ex 14), and especially His glory in the tabernacle (Lev 9:23-24) and Temple (1 Kings 8:11).

Since the close of the Old Testament, the glory of God has been shown mainly in Christ (Luke 9:29-32; John 2:11) and in the members of His church. Christ now shares His divine glory with His followers (John 17:5-6,22), so that in their lives Christians are being transformed into the glorious image of God (2 Cor 3:18). Believers will be fully glorified at the end of time in God's heavenly presence (Rom 5:2; Col 3:4). There the glory of God will be seen everywhere (Rev 21:23).

3. Praise. At times God's glory may mean the honour and audible praise which His creatures ascribe to Him (Ps 115:1; Rev 5:12-13).

“SHEKINAH” a visible manifestation of the presence of God . It refers to the instances when God showed Himself visibly, as, for example, on Mount Sinai (Ex 24:9-18) and in the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle and in Solomon's Temple. The Shekinah was a luminous cloud which rested above the altar in the place of worship and lit up the room. When the Babylonians destroyed the Temple, the Shekinah glory vanished. There was no Shekinah in the temples rebuilt later under Zerubbabel and Herod.

5. The Covenants

Covenant = Solemn agreement, commitment and oath between two or more parties. With respect to God and man, it requires gratuitous condescension, i.e. “Chesed”, thus Covenant and Mercy. Deut 7:9. (God keepeth Cov and Mercy (Chesed) to 1000 gens)

Forms the skeletal system of relationships. Gives shape, holds together, enables proportionate growth.

God's Covenants will eventually determine finale of human history.

Most of the major Biblical covenants were made directly with Israel, e.g

(Exceptions. Solaric, Edenic, Adamic, Noahic)

- a. Abrahamic
- b. Promised Land covenant.
- c. Hagar and Ishmael. Gen 17:20
- d. Mosaic.
- e. Davidic. (Prophetic of Eternal Messianic Kingdom)
- f. New Covenant. Jeremiah 31:31. etc.

Jeremiah 31:33-34

33 *"But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel on that day," says the LORD. "I will put my laws in their minds, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.*

34 *And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their family, saying, 'You should know the LORD.' For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will already know me," says the LORD. "And I will forgive their wickedness and will never again remember their sins." NLT*

Biblical Covenants are:

- a. Divinely Initiated.
- b. Sovereignly declared
- c. Literal in application
- d. Irrevocable. "Without repentance." Rom 11:29.
- e. Eternal. "Brit Ha Olam"

Jeremiah 31:35-37

35 *It is the LORD who provides the sun to light the day and the moon and stars to light the night. It is he who stirs the sea into roaring waves. His name is the LORD Almighty, and this is what he says:*

36 *"I am as likely to reject my people Israel as I am to do away with the laws of nature!*

37 *Just as the heavens cannot be measured and the foundation of the earth cannot be explored, so I will not consider casting them away forever for their sins. I, the LORD, have spoken! NLT*

Only because of our grafting into Israel's Olive tree, are we Christians are privileged to share in the covenant promises.

6. The Giving Of The Law.

God reveals to man His character, nature, values and philosophy of life through the Decalogue. He also makes it possible for man to harmoniously relate to Him. Not through the slavish, legalistic self effort of human obedience but through the embodiment of the principles into the heart by the Spirit of God. (Jer 31:31-33)

This was originally unique to the Jews; for to no other nation had He ever given a revelation of His will. It was to them that the ceremonial and judicial laws were given, and the moral law in writing pertained to them. It is a great privilege to have the law of God among us, and it is to be accounted so, Ps 147:19-20. This was the grandeur of Israel, Deut 4:7-8.

The Law given to Moses is the foundation of the civilised world.

7. The Service Of God (Priesthood) "He let you worship him."

Rom 9:4

The service of the sanctuary, meaning the whole divinely instituted religious service, in the celebration of which they were brought so nigh to God.

And the service of God. They had the ordinances of God's worship among them-the temple, the altars, the priests, the sacrifices, the feasts, and the institutions relating to them. They were in this respect greatly honoured, that, while other nations were worshipping and serving stocks, and stones, and devils, and they knew not what other idols of their own invention, the Israelites were serving the true God in the way of his own appointment.

The Levitical priesthood were God appointed to offer sacrifices. If they had been responsible for Christ's death it would have been in keeping with Divine appointment.

8. And The Promises.

Rom 9:4. *epaggelia* (ep-ang-el-ee'-ah); (an announcement, assent or pledge; especially a divine assurance of good)

Such promises were in addition to those intrinsic to keeping the commandments. They were promises relating to healing, deliverance, protection, guidance, and concerning the Messiah and the Gospel. Isaiah 2:1-4. Micah 4 1-5. etc

9. Of Whom Are The Fathers.

Rom 9:5 Our spiritual ancestors. The family line of The Faith.

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, the twelve patriarchs, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, etc., without controversy, the greatest and most eminent men that ever lived under heaven. From these, in an uninterrupted line the Jewish people have descended; and it was no small glory to be able to reckon, in their genealogy, persons of such incomparable merit and excellence.

10. From Whom, According To The Flesh, Christ Came

Who is over all, the eternally blessed God. Amen. Rom 9:5

These ancestors were renowned, as being the progenitors of the human nature of the MESSIAH. Christ, the Messiah, according to the flesh, sprang from them. But this Messiah was more than man, he is God over all; the very Being who gave them being, though he appeared to receive a being from them.

But the greatest honour of all was that concerning the flesh (that is, as to his human nature) Christ came; for he took on him the seed of Abraham, Heb 2:16. As to his divine nature, he is the Lord from heaven; but, as to his human nature, he is of the seed of Abraham. This was the great privilege of the Jews, that Christ was of kin to them.

Concerning Christ, he interposes a very great word concerning him, that he is over all, God blessed for ever. Lest the Jews should think meanly of him, because he was of their lineage, he here speaks honourably concerning him: and it is a very full proof of the Godhead of Christ; he is not only over all, as Mediator, but he is God blessed for ever. Therefore, how much sorer punishment were they worthy of that rejected him!

A Refutation of Replacement Theology

1 Peter 1

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

Read through 1 Peter 1. Exactly what does that really mean though? Most Christians have been taught that the Old Testament is Jewish and the New Testament is Christian. There's a sharp dividing line between what's Christian and what's Jewish. In the beginning of the church, the dividing line was not so sharp however, because the early Christian church **was Jewish**. - Acts 2.

Not only do most churches fail to recognize the Jewishness of the gospel, and the Jewishness of the New Testament, but some churches even teach that Jews no longer have a place in God's plan of salvation. Their theology is that before Christ, the Jews were God's chosen people; after Christ, the church replaced them.

Read 1 Peter 2:1-10. Verses 9 and 10 read, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

These verses are often used to support something called "Replacement Theology". Replacement theology is the belief that the church has replaced Israel in God's plan of salvation. It's the belief that Israel is no longer God's chosen people, because the church now is. It's the belief that God is no longer with Israel, because they rejected Christ as their messiah.

However, if we look back at verses 1:1 - 2, then ahead to verse 2:12, we can see that Peter was writing primarily to messianic Jews. First, let's compare various translations of 1 Peter 1:1 - 1.

RSV Translation

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the exiles of the **Dispersion** in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who have been **chosen and destined** by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus Christ and to be sprinkled with his blood: May grace and peace be yours in abundance.*

NAS Translation

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, **scattered** throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are **chosen according to the foreknowledge** of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with his blood: My grace and peace be yours in fullest measure.*

NKJ Translation

*1 Peter, an apostle of Christ, to the pilgrims of the **dispersion** in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 **elect according to the foreknowledge** of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.*

The Jewish New Testament

*From: Kefa, an emissary of Yeshua the Messiah. To: **God's chosen people, living as aliens** in the Diaspora - in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, the province of Asia, and Bithynia - **chosen according to the foreknowledge** of God the Father and set apart by the Spirit for obeying Yeshua the Messiah and for sprinkling with his blood: Grace and shalom be yours in full measure.*

Notice that Peter is writing to members of the **Diaspora**, or **Dispersion**, described in Acts 8:1 - 4. This group consisted of the new Christians who found themselves persecuted for their belief in Jesus as the messiah. Since the church originally consisted of mostly Jews, this means that Peter's audience was mostly a Jewish one. However, since Gentiles were coming to believe in Jesus as well, they were also part of the **Diaspora**, and so are intended to be part of Peter's audience as well.

That said, Peter then used the word **eklektos** (meaning select, chosen, or elect, implying favorite) to describe his audience. Since **eklektos** implies selected we can infer that Peter is referring to Jews. It is true that the Gentiles are now "chosen" as well, but the Jews are God's first love (Jer. 31:31-34, Rom. 1:16, 2:9, 2:10 - "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek"), hence Peter's choice of word.

Please understand that Peter is not excluding the Gentiles by using **eklektos**, but he is acknowledging the makeup of his audience as being primarily Jewish. It must now be clear that Peter is certainly not excluding the Jews. Not only is he writing to Jews, but by using **eklektos**, Peter is reaffirming the place of the Jews as God's chosen race.

Now go back to 2:9 - 10, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

Now look at 2:12: "Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God when he comes to judge."

Given that the church was mostly Jewish, Peter wouldn't have used words to identify them as Jews unless he wanted them think of themselves as Jews. Instead, he would have thought of them as "the church", and instead of contrasting his audience with "Gentiles" (the vast majority of the unbelieving world), he would have simply

contrasted them with "unbelievers".

Reading the audience as Jewish makes for a much more straight forward reading of the scripture, and better acknowledges the true history of the church.

Another stumbling block of many churches is that they only read from the New Testament. When they read verses that quote the Old Testament, they just let it stand. They don't mention that the quote is from the Old Testament or they mention it without turning to it. Either way, they're losing out.

For example, consider 1 Peter 1:3-9 (NAS), "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ; and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls."

Most Christians would simply let these verses stand as they are. However they constantly beg the question, "When?":

- v. 3 - When will my hope be fulfilled?
- v. 4 - When will I get my inheritance?
- v. 5 - When is "the last time"?
- v. 6 - When will my trials end?
- v. 7 - When is the revelation of Jesus Christ?
- v. 8 - When will I see Jesus?
- v. 9 - When will I be in Heaven?

Notice Peter's response in verses 10-12, "As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven things into which angles long to look."

Notice that these questions are questions that all Christians have. Notice that Old Testament prophets had exactly the same questions. As they were prophets, we know that their diligence was rewarded. We can see proof of this when we read Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and others. Yet look again at what verse 12 says. It says

that they were seeking and writing to **us**, and that what is being presented to us as the gospel is the same as what they wrote. The prophets were writing the gospel to us! Since the prophets were writing the gospel, and they were writing it to us, we must read it!

This conclusion begs one more question. Exactly who was Peter saying the prophets were writing to? They were writing to Peter's audience. But I just got finished saying that Peter's audience was Jewish, didn't I? Not exactly. What I said is that he was writing to the Diaspora, and that his language acknowledges that the Diaspora consisted mostly of Jews at that time. However, Peter was writing to everyone in the Diaspora, and the Diaspora did include gentiles. Therefore, the prophets, too, were writing to gentiles.

Paul sums up everything we've talked about in Romans 11:11 - 24 (Stern),

In that case, I say, isn't it that they [the Jews] have stumbled with the result that they have permanently fallen away? Heaven forbid! Quite the contrary, it is by means of their stumbling that the deliverance has come to the Gentiles, in order to provoke them to jealousy. Moreover, if their stumbling is bringing riches to the world - that is, if Israel's being placed temporarily in a condition less favored than that of the Gentiles is riches to the latter - how much greater will Israel in its fullness bring them!

However, to those of you who are Gentiles I say this: since I myself am an emissary sent to the Gentiles, I make known the importance of my work in the hope that somehow I may provoke some of my own people to jealousy and save some of them! For if their casting Jesus aside means reconciliation for the world, what will their accepting him mean? It will be life from the dead!

Now if the bread offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole loaf. And if the root is holy, so are the branches. But if some of the branches were broken off, and you - a wild Olive tree - were grafted in among them and have become equal sharers in the rich root of the Olive tree, then don't boast as if you were better than the branches! However, if you do boast, remember that you are not supporting the root, the root is supporting you. So you will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." True, but so what? They were broken off because of their lack of trust. However, you keep your place only because of your trust. So don't be arrogant; on the contrary, be terrified! For if God did not spare the natural branches, he certainly won't spare you! So take a good look at God's kindness and his severity: on the one hand, severity toward those who fell off; but, on the other hand, God's kindness toward you - provided you maintain yourself in that kindness! Otherwise, you too will be cut off! Moreover, the others, if they do not persist in their lack of trust, will be grafted in; because God is able to graft them back in. For if you were cut out of what is by nature a wild Olive tree and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated Olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own live tree!

In the preceding document, we talked about Replacement Theology, its flaws, and why it's wrong. We discussed the truth of the matter, that the Jews still have a place in God's plan today, and that Jews are still to be distinguished from Gentiles. We closed by reading Romans 11:11-24. We're going to close with that scripture again. Last time we read it, the emphasis was on the fact that the Jew's are still God's chosen people. This scripture reinforced this fact by introducing the notion of the Olive tree, and the grafted branches. If Gentiles are grafted into the natural tree, and the natural tree is the Jewish people, then obviously replacement theology is wrong. Rather than replacing Israel with the Church, God's focus has always been the Olive tree itself.

In this study, our focus will be different, but will also build on what we discussed before. Our focus will be on God's actual plan. God's plan was to use the stumbling of the Jews to save the world. That plan is still being carried out. God knew they would stumble, and they did, so God used it, and is still using it. The proof of it is in your own salvation. To discount the involvement of the Chosen People in your life is to discount your own salvation.

Israel And The Nations

Multitudes In Confusion and Consternation

Joel 3:14

14. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision (consternation) For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. NKJV

Humanistic society is headed for disintegration and destruction. The world wide problems of economic inflation, political unrest, international terrorism, starvation and AIDS will never be solved by politics, religion or diplomacy. Mankind is confronted with a myriad of problems for which there is no human solution. It is a situation that demands the intervention of Almighty God.

The Shaking Of ALL Things

"For thus saith the Lord of Hosts; yet once, for just a brief period, I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land. And I will shake all nations and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts." (Haggai 2:6,7).

Here God speaks prophetically of His intention to shake all nations in the last days, before the coming of His Son. The phrase "yet once" signifies the uniqueness of this period in that its intensity will only occur once in history on such a large scale. "For a little while" indicates that it will happen for a relatively short, not a prolonged period. Yet the intensity of it will be so great that it will affect all the nations on earth. It is a period of time that will culminate in the earthly advent of God's Messiah. So great will be the shaking that entire earthly kingdoms will be

overthrown to clear the world stage for the establishment of God's great Kingdom. (Rev 11:15) The great shaking will be the necessary step to clear the stage entirely prior to the unveiling of God's visible presence and rule over the earth.

This predicted "shaking" has already begun and will spread and intensify progressively before the return of the Lord Messiah. The shaking will encompass every area of life throughout the whole earth. Every nation on our planet will experience the impact and intensity of it. The political structures, philosophies and false religious ideologies of men are about to be overthrown in preparation for the manifestation of God's Sovereign rule. This gigantic transition will not be accomplished without enormous stress. All the humanistic ideologies and societies of mankind will be broken in pieces and swept aside to clear the world stage for the appearance and presence of God's Messiah, as King of kings and Lord of lords. Every nation on earth will feel the after shockwaves of this unprecedented event. So, when we witness sweeping changes and the sudden overthrow of humanistic structures of politics and religions, those who are in Christ have no need to fear for all these things must happen before the return Christ's return to earth.

The Desire of All Nations

Many different interpretations have been given to this statement but careful reading of the Biblical prophecies will convince an open mind that it clearly refers to the Messiah. The events surrounding this verse are obviously a prelude to Messiah's Coming. When God speaks of "The Desire of all nations," (Haggai 2:7) we Christians know to whom He refers. He is obviously speaking of Christ the Messiah. But can we honestly say at this point in time, that Christ IS the desire of all nations?

Is He truly the desire of the Communist nations?

Is He the desire of the Islamic nations?

Is He truly the desire of the materialistic capitalistic Western World?

The honest answer to these questions is NO. Christ is not presently the desire of these nations. They are not looking for Him and longing for His appearance. This title, the "Desire of all Nations," must be understood in its context.

Let me try to paraphrase what I believe God is saying. "I am going to so thoroughly shake all the nations on earth, and when I get through with shaking them, they will be crying out for a deliverer and Christ will become the desire of those nations." For God will shake their confidence, their pride and resources. They will be broken, and helpless. God will bring them face to face with reality of their ultimate inability to run this world without Him. The pride of the United Nations Organisation will be in the dust. The strength of Godless Communism will be smashed. The fervency of militant Islam will be exhausted. The wealth of Babylon will be bankrupted. Every humanistic institution will be dissolved. From the smouldering ruins of humanism, the Kingdom of God will arise with great authority and glory. God says,

"I will overthrow the thrones of Kingdoms and I will destroy the strength of the Kingdoms of the Heathen" (Haggai 2:22)

God says ***"Yet once more will I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word 'yet once more' signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a Kingdom which cannot be moved (shaken) let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear."*** (Heb.12:26-28).

This is a direct reference to Haggai 2:6,7. It refers to the shaking of the kingdoms (nations). God is predicting a time when He will shake the earth so violently that every man-made thing (Heb.12:27) - as of things that are made will be smashed. The only things that will survive this testing are those things that are the "established by the Lord." Earthly kings, rulers, dictators, presidents and governments will be brought to the ground. All earthly rule will be smashed. Law and order will disintegrate. Anarchy will prevail. So fearful will be the result that men everywhere, will begin to cry out fervently for the government of God to come.

"And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth. To go into the cleft of the rocks, and into the tops of the ragged rocks, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of His majesty, when He ariseth to shake terribly the earth." (Isaiah 2:19,21)

Christ, as the true King of the Universe, will become the Desire of ALL Nations (Haggai 2:7).

Phil.2:10,11 ***"Every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"***

Zech.2:11 ***"Many nations shall be joined unto the Lord in that day and shall be my people and I will dwell in the midst of them."***

"Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of Hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord" (Zech.8:22).

Psa.113:4 ***"The Lord is high above all nations, and His glory above the heavens"***

Jer.10:7A,10 ***"Who shall not fear Thee, O King of the nations? The Lord is the true God, He is the living God, and an everlasting King: at His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation."***

Psa.72:17***"And all men shall be blessed in Him: and all nations shall call Him blessed."***

The Kingdom Emerges In Much Tribulation

Acts 14:22 ***"That we must, through much tribulation enter the Kingdom of God."***

In this statement Paul shares a principle of the Kingdom, that it is through much "testing" that we 'enter' the Kingdom. The implication of this statement is consistent throughout the Scriptures. The word that is most frequently translated tribulation is the Greek word "*thlipsis*." It occurs frequently in the Bible and is variously translated, testing, trial, tribulation. It usually refers to a time or condition of trial that becomes a test for God's people to reveal how they will act and respond under such adverse circumstances. It also refers to times of tribulation that serve to refine and purify God's people as they are pushed to seek Him more diligently and more fervently because of the difficult times in which they find themselves.

We Christians should not imagine that we shall escape the effects of this shaking. As God shakes the world, its institutions, politics, and the economy, millions of lives will be affected, including those of many Christians. The Church itself will experience many severe shakings too. It will seem as though everything in life is being shaken and tested. Our faith in God will be tested. Our perception of the Church will be tested. Our belief system, the doctrines we hold so dear, everything will be subjected to trial and testing. God is seeking to show us what is really in our hearts.

God would like His people to enter the Kingdom in the easy way. ***"Fear not,"*** He says, ***"it is the Father's good pleasure to 'give' you the Kingdom."*** (Luke 12:32) But the perversity of human nature usually refuses the opportunity to come the easy way and chooses instead to come the hard way, entering the Kingdom through much tribulation.

God wants to make the Kingdom a gift to His people. He wishes for them to receive it simply and easily by surrendering completely to His Will. Unfortunately we often make it difficult for Him to do so. I have often observed that we can come into the purposes of God in either of two ways:

Firstly, God seeks to bring us in the easy way. He seeks to DRAW us into His purpose. But if we will not allow Him to draw us into His plans, then He will allow circumstances to develop, that will DRIVE us into them. This is so often the case, that He says ***"You will enter the Kingdom through times of great tribulation and testing."*** (Acts 14:22). This is true of us individually and it is true of the Church collectively. This principle also pertains to the nations, that will ultimately come under His rule (Rev. 11:15). They elect to come the hard way.

The Battle Of The Kingdoms

In Revelation. 11:15 we read a very exciting statement, great voices in heaven saying ***"The Kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdoms of our Lord and His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever."***

In contrast to this, in Rev.13:7 is a chilling statement concerning Anti-Christ, "**and power was given him over all kindreds and tongues, and nations.**"

Throughout the book of Revelation we witness the two greatest spiritual forces in the universe battling for control of the nations. On one hand, Satan gives power and authority to the Anti-Christ, that he might rule the world. On the other hand the statement of God's eternal purpose is again declared, that all the earthly Kingdoms are ultimately to become the Kingdoms of the Lord. These two great opposing forces are confronting each other today. The demonic forces of Satan are battling against the Army of the Lord.

Happily the outcome is already known. John saw it prophetically and wrote, "**These, (the earthly rulers) have one mind and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for He is the Lord of lords and the King of kings, and they that are with Him are called, and chosen and faithful.**" (Rev.17:13,14)

We are witnesses of this great battle today. The struggle for power, in evidence throughout the earth, is really the result of a gigantic battle that is being fought in the heavenlies. We are witnessing the effects of that battle here on earth. The real conflict today is not Communism versus Capitalism. It is not Black versus White. It is not ultimately political, social, economic or religious. Unregenerate man is merely a pawn or puppet in the hands of a greater, diabolical power. The wicked principalities that occupy strongholds in the heavens are waging their fiercest battle in order to delay the manifestation of God's righteous rule over the earth. A tremendous battle is being waged in the heavenly realms that is having fearful repercussions here on planet earth.

Isaac And Ishmael

The great spiritual battle that is presently taking place in the heavenly realms is the culmination of the family feud that began in Genesis 16, the animosity between Ishmael and Isaac. Down through the centuries an invisible, spiritual battle has manifested itself in the prejudice incited against the Jews, Isaac's descendants, by the offspring of Ishmael. The book of Genesis holds the keys to all human history. Within its pages God pre-writes a prediction of history. As part of this scenario we discover clues in Gen 25 about the eventual climax of this family feud. After long years of acrimony and animosity Isaac and Ishmael eventually came together at the death of their mutual father Abraham.

Gen 25:7-11

8. Then Abraham breathed his last and died at a good old age, an old man and full of years; and he was gathered to his people.

9. His sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah near Mamre, in the field of Ephron son of Zohar the Hittite,

10. the field Abraham had bought from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried with his wife Sarah.

11. After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, who then lived near Beer Lahai Roi. NIV

Isaac and Ishmael were evidently reconciled at the death of their father standing together to bury him. Following the funeral Isaac dwelt in Israel where God blessed and increased him. Ishmael returned to the land of his own people. Gen 25:17.

A Modern Anti-Christ

About fourteen centuries ago (approximately 622 AD) a new religion which became known as Islam, sprang up in Arabia. It began in Mecca when Allah (the Muslim concept of God) is said to have revealed himself to a young man named Ubu'l Kassim who came to be known as Muhammad. Muslims believe that Allah revealed to Muhammad the sayings that were recorded in the Koran, which became the Muslim equivalent of the Holy Bible. The Koran proclaims that Islam is the same religion practised by Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus in their respective periods of history. Muhammad who was born in 570 A.D. is said to be a descendant of Abraham and Ishmael. Muslims are descendants of Ishmael and a major difference between the Koran and the Bible is that Ishmael is exalted and preferred above Isaac. Also, many of its stories about Jesus are said to have taken place in Arabia.

Belief in the prophets, an aspect of Islamic theology, involves all the prophets in the Koran and identifies them thus,

- a. Adam, was the chosen one of God
- b. Noah, was the prophet of God
- c. Abraham, was the friend of God.
- d. Ishmael, was the sacrifice of God.
- e. Moses, the converser with God.
- f. Jesus, was the word of God.
- g. Muhammad, is the final and greatest messenger of God.

The Koran claims that its message is none other than a repetition of the one contained in the "previous scriptures." (a Muslim euphemism for the Holy Bible) It therefore claims that Islam is a new facet of Judaism and Christianity, but a later, superior, final revelation of God. It further claims that Muhammad and the Koran superseded Judaism and Christianity the followers of which are now infidels worthy only of conversion (to Islam) or death.

The Arab world into which Muhammad was born was polytheistic, having some 360 shrines used to worship stone idols and spirits. (jinn's) Although they acknowledged a deity whom they called Al-Ilah or Allah, as the supreme being, they did not worship him as such. They worshipped some 360 hand-made idols as Allah's daughters. It was amongst these conditions that Muhammad is said to have been called by Allah to warn the Arabs around Mecca that they should worship Allah and his prophet Muhammad.

The city of Mecca, birth-place of Muhammad, became the main centre for Islamic pilgrimage and worship. The ka'bah (black stone) which is also called Beit Ullah (the house of God) is said to have been built by Abraham and Isaac. The Arabs used to worship this stone and even modern Muslims venerate it as a mark of respect to their ancestor Abraham.

From childhood Muhammad devoted much of his time to quiet meditation in pursuit of truth and guidance. At such times he often devoted himself so deeply to prayer and meditation that at times he would go into a trance and even into convulsions. He was initially reticent to accept the call to be Allah's prophet, fearing that he may become mad or become possessed by an evil spirit. In such times of pressure he frequently considered committing suicide. The essence of the "revelations" he received was a strange combination of Jewish and Christian beliefs altered to serve Muhammad's purpose. Muhammad regarded and proclaimed himself as the final and greatest of all the prophets. Some of his relatives, especially his wife Khadijah reassured him and convinced him to accept the task before him. Muhammad's keen sense of vocation constantly drove him to spread his message far and wide throughout his homeland. He eventually died in 632 A.D. at the age of 62 by which time he had conquered most of Arabia. The small army of followers he had amassed continued his mission after his death and Islam began to spread throughout the earth. Today there are more than 1,000 million Muslims around the world and they constitute one of the world's fastest growing religions.

Throughout the history of Islam, since the death of Muhammad, eleven Imams have reigned over Islam. According to common Sunni tradition, when the 11th Imam died at a young age he is said to have left no heir. This dilemma threw Islam into great confusion and caused his followers to divide into numerous sects one of which was the Shi'ite tradition which today comprises the majority of the citizens of Iran. This sect claimed that the 11th Imam actually did have a son named Muhammad born in 869 A.D. who was hidden by his father. He is believed to still be somewhere on earth and will one day reappear to take his place at the head of Islam. Belief in the existence of the hidden twelfth imam and his future return became one of the distinguishing features of the Shi'ite sect. It is significant that his name was Muhammad because his prophetic task is to fulfil the work begun by his forefather of the same name.

The title of the hidden one is "Al-Mahdi" or the "rightly guided one." He is the Islamic equivalent of our Messiah, an anti-Christ, usurping the place of Christ and His coming Kingdom. According to a statement by the fifth Imam it is known what Al-Mahdi will look like. "He is a young man of medium stature, with a handsome face and beautiful hair which flows to his shoulders. The hair of his beard and head are black. A light rises on his face." (The similarities between he and Jesus Christ are obviously intentional.)

The present government of Iran is seen to be only temporary until the emergence of Al Mahdi who is recognised as the only legitimate ruler of all Muslims. He will one day return to "fill the earth with justice and establish universal Islamic rule over the

nations." His kingdom of justice is described as "paradise on earth." "In his time injustice will be completely removed from the earth. No person of any religion other than Islam will remain without being shown the truth of Islam and confessing belief in it." The concept that Muhammad al Mahdi will soon appear as the universal saviour and renewer of Islam is held throughout the entire Islamic world though it is the Shi'ites that have grasped this concept with the greatest fervour. They believe in the inevitable conquest of the world by Islam, largely through Jihad (holy war) and the return of al-Mahdi.

We can readily see that Muhammad al Mahdi is actually an anti-Christ, i.e. a substitute or replacement for the true Christ. One meaning of anti-Christ is "in place of Christ." The Islamic rule that Mahdi is supposed to establish on earth would be an Islamic world rulership, usurping the role of the Kingdom of Jehovah God. It is also clear that the spiritual war raging today in heavenly places and causing the great fear and unrest that fills our world, is actually a battle between the spiritual armies of Jehovah God and the principalities and powers of darkness. In this great battle Jerusalem is the major prize and ultimately only Jehovah will be capable defending it and securing it for His people Israel.

Isa 31:4-6

4. This is what the LORD says to me: "As a lion growls, a great lion over his prey-- and though a whole band of shepherds is called together against him, he is not frightened by their shouts or disturbed by their clamour--so the LORD Almighty will come down to do battle on Mount Zion and on its heights. 5. Like birds hovering overhead, the LORD Almighty will shield Jerusalem; he will shield it and deliver it, he will pass over it and will rescue it." NIV

The Shi'ite Muslims today constantly attract the attention of the world media because they are the most virulently anti-Western of all Muslims. They are also a particularly savage, brutal, war-like people. In addition to observing the five pillars of Islam, they add a sixth, -jihad or holy war. Their utmost purpose is to spread the Koran and Islamic law throughout the whole world whether through the tongue, the pen or the sword. Anything that opposes or threatens to hinder this purpose is fit only for destruction and annihilation. This includes Judaism and Christianity and all who hold those beliefs. The power of the Ayatollah's today is such that one might wonder whether an Ayatollah may not be a future anti-Christ, especially since his rise to power is said to be from a nation adjacent to Israel. Daniel 8:9.

The Emergence Of The Anti-Christ

1 John 2:18

18. Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour. NIV

John makes a distinction between "antichrist" and "antichrists" (1 John 2:18), for he declares that "even now many antichrists have arisen," but that "THE antichrist is coming." An antichrist is one who opposes Christ and seeks to replace Him, i.e. to

usurp His authority and reign. In a general sense an antichrist is a person who is opposed to the authority of Christ as head of the church and of all creation.

Both Daniel and the Apostle John clearly identify the geographic region from which the beast alliance will arise. (Daniel 7:1-10, Revelation 13:1-7) The Anti-Jehovah beasts mentioned here are easily identified as Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Russia. It is certainly not a coincidence nor by chance that these very nations are presently in alliance with the clear objective of annihilating Israel. It seems equally as clear that the Anti Jehovah trinity that is predicted will arise from out of this alliance.

Early Christians looked for Antichrist as a person and not a political power or system. The general opinion of those who closely followed the Scriptures was that he would be a man in whom Satan would dwell utterly and bodily, and who would be armed with satanic and demonic powers. In the Old Testament he is prefigured under the "king of Babylon" (Isaiah 14:4); the little "horn" (Daniel 7:8; 8:9); the king "insolent and skilled in intrigue" (8:23); "the prince who is to come" (9:26); the willful king (11:36). In the NT he is called "the man of lawlessness," "the son of destruction" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-8); "antichrist" (1 John 2:18); and "the beast" (Revelation 13:1-10).

This sinister, demon-inspired leader will rise to dominate the world in the end-time, persecute the saints, seek to destroy the Jew and banish the name of God and His Christ from the earth, and thus take over. This would mean the thwarting of God's plan for the messianic millennial kingdom, which involves the restoration of Israel (Acts 1:6) and universal peace. He is destroyed by the second advent of Christ (Revelation 19:11-16), who sets up the earthly kingdom (Rev 20:1-3).

In the ongoing search for a peaceful resolution regarding Israel and Jerusalem, many persons, nations and organisations will emerge with proposals and plans. Amongst these attempts to organise and administer a peaceful solution an Anti-Christ will undoubtedly appear. His proposal will be accepted by the majority of nations and therefore implemented. The implementation of this peace plan, possibly under the auspices of the UNO, will usher in the beginning of the Great Tribulation.

The Battle For Jerusalem

Although the spiritual battle is being manifested today in many places on earth such as Sudan, Kosovo, Chechnya, Ireland, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq etc, the fiercest and most prolonged aspect of this gigantic spiritual war is being played out in Israel and particularly with regard to Jerusalem. The city of Jerusalem will become the seat of God's government on earth. God's Messiah, Jesus, will be enthroned in Jerusalem upon the historic throne of David from where He will rule all the nations on earth. Jerusalem symbolises God's earthly eternal rule over the nations and Satan is making a final attempt to thwart God's prophetic plan by destroying Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. The Bible predicts a final concerted attempt to conquer Jerusalem and destroy the Jewish nation of Israel. This attempt, strategised and initiated by the descendants of Ishmael and the various nations who will espouse their cause for a variety of reasons, will eventually mount a frontal attack upon Jerusalem.

Psalm 83:1-4

*1 Do not keep silent, O God! Do not hold Your peace, And do not be still, O God!
2 For behold, Your enemies make a tumult; And those who hate You have lifted up their head.
3 They have taken crafty counsel against Your people, And consulted together against Your sheltered ones.
4 They have said, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, That the name of Israel may be remembered no more."
5 For they have consulted together with one consent; They form a confederacy against You:
6 The tents of Edom and the Ishmaelites; Moab and the Hagrites;
7 Gebal, Ammon, and Amalek; Philistia (Palestine) with the inhabitants of Tyre;
8 Assyria also has joined with them; They have helped the children of Lot. NKJV*

At this point, Almighty God, Jehovah, will personally intervene to rescue Jerusalem and utterly destroy those that sought to destroy her.

Psalm 83:15-18

*15. So pursue them with Your tempest, And frighten them with Your storm.
16. Fill their faces with shame, That they may seek Your name, O LORD.
17. Let them be confounded and dismayed forever; Yes, let them be put to shame and perish,
18. That they may know that You, whose name alone is the LORD, Are the Most High over all the earth. NKJV*

So spectacular and dramatic will be the defeat that all mankind will suddenly recognise that only the Lord, Jehovah, could have accomplished so powerful an outcome. They will recognise that He IS the Most High over ALL the earth.

It is not simply the physical city of Jerusalem that is the point of contention, it is what that site represents, -the location of the coming "New Jerusalem." And the earthly throne of God. The New Jerusalem will be situated directly above the present Jerusalem. Hence the awesome battle in the heavenly realms, concerning this city and its site.

Revelation 21:1-4

*2. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.
3. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.
4. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."*

This is precisely why every Christian should pray continually for the peace of Jerusalem. Because when a permanent state of peace is established in Jerusalem it will also prevail throughout the remainder of the world.

Psalm 122:6-123:1

6. *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: "May those who love you be secure.*
7. *May there be peace within your walls and security within your citadels."*
8. *For the sake of my brothers and friends, I will say, "Peace be within you."*
9. *For the sake of the house of the LORD our God, I will seek your prosperity.*

This great spiritual battle is already engaged and no solution will be found for it until the emergence of the Messiah who will personally and physically intervene. The repercussions of this powerful battle will impact upon the whole world. Zechariah predicts that Jerusalem will become THE centre of world attention as all the Gentile nations eventually combine against her.

Zechariah 12:3

And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it. NKJV

When all the nations, probably by lateral agreement through the United Nations Organisation, unite their efforts against Israel and her capital city, Jerusalem, the Messiah will suddenly return to earth to defend and rescue her.

Zechariah 12:8-9

8. *In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of the LORD before them.*
9. *It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. NKJV*

The Lord Himself will defend and deliver the inhabitants of Jerusalem after which He will reveal Himself to the House of Israel as their long awaited Messiah Deliverer. This promised intervention obviously has a supernatural quality. God is not going to intervene through political measures using human agencies like the United Nations or European Union. He will intervene in a similar manner to the way in which He delivered the children of Israel from Egypt. However, this intervention will greatly exceed and eclipse the exodus from Egypt.

Zechariah 12:10

10. And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. NKJV

Immediately after the tremendous victory that God will give His people in Israel, He will reveal Himself to them as the One who was pierced, i.e. the suffering servant of Isaiah 53, who was wounded and died for the sins of the whole world. He will then make that cleansing available to His Beloved people Israel.

Zechariah 13:1

13:1 In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. NKJV

The Conflict of the Ages is now upon us. Satan is making his final desperate bid to keep control of the world. God is about to overthrow him, and establish His own government once again.

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation and strength, and the Kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him, by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony and they loved not their lives unto the death." (Rev.12:10,11).

Zechariah 14:4, 5 And His feet shall stand in that day on the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives shall divide from its middle, from the east even to the west, a very great valley. And half of the mountain shall move toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And you shall flee to the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal. And you shall flee as you fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah. And Jehovah my God shall come, and all the saints with You.

Zechariah 14:9 And Jehovah shall be King over all the earth. In that day there shall be one Jehovah, and His name one.

Zechariah 14:16 And it shall be, everyone who is left from all the nations which came up against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, Jehovah of Hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

How we long for the ultimate conclusion, when the voice of the great multitude, as the voice of many waters, and mighty thunderings will announce, **"ALLELUIA, FOR THE LORD GOD OMNIPOTENT REIGNETH!"**