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The Jewish Roots of our Faith

“What advantage then hath the Jew? ... Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.” Romans 3:1-2

By Mike Wingfield

Very soon, people in many nations around the world will celebrate Christmas. Sadly, most people who celebrate Christmas view it as a holiday that focuses on secular traditions. Christmas has become a part of a growing trend that captures the world's attention in a way that is far away from God. Only a small remnant of true believers will wake up quietly on Christmas morning and give reverence to its true meaning. We know that Jesus Christ was not born on December 25th. From a Biblical perspective, we should celebrate Christ's birth every day of the year.

The finite mind of man continues to struggle with grasping the fact that God Almighty became flesh in Bethlehem more than 2,000 years ago! Jesus fulfilled the hope of a coming Redeemer and King who is eternal, and yet born among men. Jewish believers were anticipating the fulfillment of the coming Messiah since the time of Abraham. For the two millennia preceding the birth of

Jesus, God had spoken through His Jewish prophets to declare that He would come as a suffering Messiah, and then in the last days as a conquering Messiah. These precious, yet complex prophecies, have continued to perplex the Jewish people and the entire world for more than 4,000 years.

While rejecting these profound prophecies, most people live in utter confusion and some refuse to accept the Jewish connection of God's Messiah, our Savior, and the Head of the church (**Colossians 1:18**). According to the Scriptures, the Messiah would be Jewish. He is a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (**Matthew 1:1-2**). He is a descendant of Israel's two greatest kings – David, and Solomon (**Matthew 1:6**).

Isaiah spoke of the coming Messiah, and wrote, **“For unto us a child is born...” (Isaiah 9:6)**. The pronoun **“us”** in this context makes direct reference to the Jewish

people. The promise of the coming Messiah was given exclusively to the Jewish people. God gave this promise to an unbelieving Jewish king, Ahaz, **“Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14)**. The name Immanuel means **“God with us” (Matthew 1:23)**. In essence, God told this wicked Jewish king that God would become a man and be born of a Jewish virgin. This sign, a supernatural event, would demonstrate to this wicked king that the God of Israel keeps His promises.

Both Joseph, the legal father of Jesus (**Matthew 1:16**) and Mary, the physical mother of Jesus (**Luke 3:23-38**), were Jewish descendants of King David of Israel. This means that Jesus has both the legal and physical rights to the throne of David as the Messianic King. It was this connection to the lineage of David that brought Joseph and Mary more than 2,000 years ago to the little Jewish town of Bethlehem, where Jesus would be born (**Luke 2:1-7**). In an amazing prophecy, 700 years before Jesus was born, God revealed to the prophet Micah that the future **“ruler in Israel: whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2)**, would be born in Bethlehem.

Clearly, the Scriptures demand that Jesus was conceived as a Jew; born as a Jew; lived as a Jew; died as a Jew; arose as a Jew; and will return as a Jew. I emphasize this because the world rejects the fact that Jesus is Jewish. Some Christians naively think Jesus is a Christian because the Bible declares Him as Head of the church. And they wrongly concur that since He is the Head of the Christian faith, He must be a Christian and not a Jew.

We must remember that the church did not exist when Jesus was on earth during His first coming. Jesus always referred to the church in the future tense (**Matthew 16:18**). Jesus never preached in a church. He preached and taught in synagogues throughout Israel (**Matthew 9:35**). He never preached the gospel that is preached in churches today. The gospel is about His death, burial, and

resurrection (**1 Corinthians 15:1-4**). Obviously, that message had to follow His ascension to heaven (**Acts 1:9**).

Let’s clarify this confusion. First, the term “Jew” is the designation of ethnic identity. It is a term that defines the ethnic identity of a group of people who can trace their lineage back to one of the 12 tribes of Jacob. Jews also can be identified by a nationalistic term. For example, they can be an American Jew or an Israeli Jew. An American Jew is a person who has a Jewish ethnicity, but lives in America. An Israeli Jew is a Jewish person who lives in Israel.

The term “Christian” is not a term of ethnicity or nationality. According to the Bible, a person cannot be born a Christian. A true Christian is one who has made the personal commitment to repent of his sins, believe the gospel, and receive Jesus Christ [“Christ” means Messiah] as their personal Lord and Savior. A true Christian believes Jesus is both God and man. They believe Jesus is the eternal Son of God. In other words, the term “Christian” is about a person’s spiritual standing with God.

Christians are from many different ethnicities and nationalities. The Bible speaks clearly about the distinction between a person’s ethnicity and spiritual standing. In the Bible there are two major ethnicities – Jews and Gentiles. The term “Gentile” refers to all other ethnic groups that are not Jewish. The Bible also refers to the nation of Israel, in contrast to “the nations” [all the other nations in the world]. So, in the Bible it clearly distinguishes between a person’s ethnicity and general nationality.

A person’s ethnicity and national status is not to be confused with their spiritual standing. All true believers are a part of the one body of Christ [Messiah] – the church (**Ephesians 4:4**). They can be a Jew or Gentile. They can be of any nationality. God only has one plan of salvation, and it is for all people (**John 3:16**).



When a person becomes a Christian, it does not change their ethnic or national identity. For example, they could be a Jewish Christian living in Germany. They are ethnically a Jew. They remain a citizen of Germany, but spiritually they are a member of the body of Christ – the church.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthian church about not being offensive to people while practicing their faith, he wrote that they were not to offend people of any ethnicity – Jew or Gentile. He also concluded that they were not to offend a brother or sister in Christ. He wrote, *“Give none offense, neither to the Jews nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God”* (1 Corinthians 10:32).

The confusion about the Jewish identity of the Christian faith [the church] has been in existence since the time of the first century. **CAUTION: THIS MAY NOT BE IMPORTANT TO YOU, BUT IT IS HIGHLY IMPORTANT TO GOD!** Jesus will judge the world based on how they have treated the Jewish people (Genesis 12:3; Matthew 25:31-46).

In this article, I would like to address two biblical facts about the Jewish identity of the true church.

Biblical Fact #1- The Jewish Origins of the Church

The church began in 30 A.D. at the Jewish feast of Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2). The believers in the church on that day and for the next seven years were **exclusively** Jewish. Their focus, as commanded by their Lord, was on Jerusalem and Judea (Acts 1:8). Jerusalem continued to be the hub of the infant church for the first 14 years (30-44 A.D.). It was not until Acts 10 [44 A.D.] that the first Gentile was saved and became a part of the church. For the next four years, the number of Gentile believers began to increase. Due to opposition from the Jews who rejected the gospel, the Jewish Christians were forced to flee from Jerusalem. Acts 8:4 says, *“Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.”*

According to Acts 13, it was not until 48 A.D. (18 years after the birth of the church) that the predominantly Gentile church in Antioch began to be a prevailing voice in the early church.

During the early years of the church, the believers gathered in the Temple in Jerusalem, synagogues, or homes. Church buildings did not come into existence until the latter part of the second century.

A study of Romans 11 reveals that the church was grafted into the true historical Jewish faith, which had roots grounded in the faith of Abraham and the Old Testament saints and prophets. In Romans 11, the Apostle Paul makes it adamantly clear that the spiritual life of the church comes out of the faith of the Old Testament believers. The faith of the church is the grafted extension of the faith of the Old Testament believers! Therefore, the faith and message of the church grows out of the faith and message about Jesus the Messiah as presented in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Biblical Fact #2- The Jewish Message of the Church

For the first 15 years of the church, they had no New Testament Scriptures. All they had were the 39 Old Testament books. James was the first New Testament book, written about 45 A.D. (15 years after the beginning of the church). The other 26 New Testament books were written over the next 50 years and they were passed around the churches as individual scrolls, while individual copies were made. The recognition of all 27 books as the New Testament did not take place until 300 years later at the end of the 4th century.

The Bible is a Jewish book. With Luke as the only exception, all the writers of the Bible were Jewish. The Apostle Paul declared, *“unto them [the Jews] were committed the oracles of God”* (Romans 3:2). God’s Word, which is eternal, is also a historical book set in time. God’s written revelation to man is immersed in the language, customs, geography, and history of the Jewish people and the nation of Israel. To ignore or reject this is to depart from the Word, will, and way of God! It is a defiant act of sinful pride. It becomes compliant with Satan’s scheme to reject God’s chosen people (Revelation 11). Attempting to remove the Jewish foundation and source of the true church is like removing the heart and brain of a body – it means sudden spiritual death!

The Bible demands that the message of the church must be an extension of the written message of the Jewish apostles! The teaching of the Jewish apostles is the foundation of the doctrine of the church (Ephesians 2:11-

22). If a message that someone proclaims does not agree with the teaching of the apostles, then it is not of God. The apostle John wrote, *“We are of God: for he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God [does not hear] us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error”* (1 John 4:6). While facing false teachers in the first century, the Apostle Peter admonished the church to remember the teaching of the apostles (2 Peter 3:1-3). The Apostle Paul clearly warned that anyone who attempts to change the message of the apostles, *“let him be accursed”* (Galatians 1:8).

At the heart of the apostle’s doctrine are the following six core teachings:

- 1- Jesus is the predicted Messiah of the Old Testament
- 2- The triunity of God- three persons & one God
- 3- The sacrificial death of Jesus Christ
- 4- The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ
- 5- Salvation is based upon faith alone in Christ
- 6- The Messianic hope – including the prophetic end-times

A careful study of [Matthew 16:13-18](#) shows that Christ is building His church upon the testimony of the apostle Peter at Caesarea Philippi. Peter declared, *“Thou art the Christ [Messiah], the Son of the living God”* ([Matthew 16:16](#)). This means that Christ must be recognized as the physical Jewish descendant of King David – the Jewish Messiah. It furthermore demands that Jesus must be recognized as the spiritual eternal Son of God.

Many professing churches fail to accept these core teachings that are demanded of all true believers. Many churches and professing Christians ignore the Jewishness of Jesus. They reject His people [Israel] and their renewed settlement of the Promised Land. They refuse to believe and teach the doctrines of the Messianic hope. They do not believe in a literal future tribulation on earth. They also reject a physical millennial kingdom when Christ will rule over all nations [which was the core teaching of Jesus in His earthly ministry].

Most churches today refuse to proclaim the prophetic Jesus because He doesn’t fit their mold of expectation. They view this Jesus as offensive, and to them, He does not appeal to the godless, rebellious, self-centered, materialistic, and morally bankrupt society that they want to lure into their assemblies. Our world today doesn’t

want to hear about judgment. Instead, they want to hear about how they can feel good about themselves, and how they can appeal to God and have Him bless them where they are in their sinful pride.

The confusion of the Jewish identity of the true church has existed almost since the very beginning of the church. The Spirit of God caused the Apostle Paul to clearly teach about this in [Romans 9-11](#).

Those in the true church must accept the divine role of Jesus’ Jewish brethren. Our efforts of evangelism should be *“to the Jew first”* ([Romans 1:16](#)). We should also *“pray for the peace of Jerusalem”* ([Psalm 122:6](#)). The Lord expects us to assist, protect, and support “His brethren” ([Matthew 25:31-46](#)).

As we celebrate Christmas this year, let our minds go back to Bethlehem, where Christ was born. Let us also remember that it was outside the walls of Jerusalem where the Messiah was crucified for our salvation according to the Scriptures ([Isaiah 52:13-53:12](#)).

The Changing Face of Bethlehem

Almost all Christians know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem ([Luke 2:4](#)). What they do not know is that the city of Bethlehem is now under the authority of the Palestinian government, which is totally controlled by the tenants and traditions of Islam.



Many decades ago, when I took tours into Bethlehem, the city had a very strong Christian community. However, when the Israeli government was forced by the international community in 1993 to surrender the “West Bank” to the Palestinians, this included the city of

Bethlehem. Consequently, the Arab Christians in Bethlehem were persecuted and murdered by Islamic terrorists. For the last 30 years, the Palestinian government has done nothing to stop or curb the attacks upon the Christians in the West Bank, including the city of Bethlehem. Because of this, most of the Arab Christian community has left the West Bank and moved into areas controlled by Israel. They know that the Israeli government provides equal protection for Christians and Muslims in the territories under their control. Only a small remnant of the Arab Christians has chosen to remain in Bethlehem and suffer the threats of persecution or death.

But amazingly, many American Christians have been deceived into making Israel the aggressor in the conflict in the Holy Land. This is simply not the truth. I know! I have personally interviewed Arabs and Jews living in Israel and I know the real facts! Our media and the liberal church leaders in America are anti-Semitic. They are ignorantly supporting the side of the conflict that is openly killing Jews and Christians. They also ignore that the “West Bank” is the same territory known in the Bible as ancient Judea and Samaria. Most of the events mentioned in the Bible took place in what is now called “the West Bank.”

Bethlehem is a Jewish Biblical city. Rachel, the wife of Jacob died near Bethlehem and is buried there ([Genesis 35:19](#)). King David was born in Bethlehem and was anointed there by Samuel ([1 Samuel 16-17](#)). Hence, Bethlehem became known as “*the city of David*” ([Luke 2:4](#)). The story of Ruth took place in the fields of Bethlehem ([Ruth 1-4](#)).

Seven hundred years before the birth of Christ, the prophet Micah declared that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, “*But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting*” ([Micah 5:2](#)). When Herod was inquired of the Magi where the Messiah would be born, the chief priests and scribes pointed to Micah’s prophecy as the place of the birth of Messiah ([Matthew 2:1-6](#)).

Many people in the world listen to the Palestinians’ propaganda about their historical ownership of the land.

The Palestinians say the Jews never lived in the land. Their lies totally ignore the Biblical history of this significant Biblical city. They even claim that Jesus was a Palestinian martyr. It is amazing to me how many liberal and Biblically illiterate so-called professing Christians agree with the enemies of Jesus and hate His people, Israel.

The hatred of the Jewish people has permeated the nations, and even the liberal churches of the world. These same people have created another religion that is totally foreign to the true Biblical church that was founded and established by Jesus and His Jewish apostles ([Ephesians 2:19-22](#)).

What to do When Surrounded by Evil (Part 3)

For the righteous child of God, this is a very difficult time to maintain our joy if we allow the sin around us to smother our strength in the Lord. If we, like the world, think only in terms of the physical world around us, then it can be very depressing. America is collapsing before our eyes and is facing the wrathful judgment of God. The hope of what has been called “the American Dream” is rapidly vanishing by the day. The church is in a state of decline. There seem to be so few professing Christians who are genuinely interested in spiritual things. The Psalmist said it so well, “*The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted*” ([Psalm 12:8](#)).

What should we do? How do we live in the face of evil? In the October and November 2022 newsletters, I wrote about five of eight spiritual realities to cling to when you feel overwhelmed by an avalanche of evil. Let us now turn our attention to the final three spiritual realities that will help us to rejoice during the onslaught of evil and its deadly effects.

Reality #6- Refrain from the Presence of Evil and those who Practice Evil

The Bible teaches that victory over evil always accompanies those who desire to be holy. God has called us to live in a world of great spiritual darkness. He has demanded, “*Be ye holy; for I am holy*” ([1 Peter 1:16](#)). The only way this can be accomplished is for the child of God to continually set himself apart from the spiritual filth around him. We have been called into a relationship with a holy God. In order to maintain fellowship with God we

must strive for holiness and continually confess our sins. This will always be accompanied by a hunger for the Word of God (**Psalm 1:2; 119:11; 1 John 1:8, 10**).

Our lifestyle must be different. Our speech, our attitudes, our actions, and interests must not be like those who are in love with the world (**1 John 2:15-16**). **Psalm 26:5** says, *“I have hated the congregation of evil doers: and will not sit with the wicked.”* **Proverbs 4:14** warns us, *“Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.”* A holy God will not bless those who want to mimic the lifestyles of sinners (**Psalm 1:1**).

This simply means that the child of God will not continually entertain himself with sin. He will guard his eyes, ears, and thoughts from wicked things (**Proverbs 4:23-27**)! He will not listen to ungodly music. He will not watch violent or lustful forms of entertainment on television or anywhere else. He will be careful about the friendships he develops. His heart belongs to a holy God. Therefore, he runs from everything that is offensive to God!

Reality #7- God’s Promises of Salvation are more Important in the Day of Evil, Rather than my Riches!

If we are honest with ourselves, we tend to be too concerned about the loss of our comfortable way of life. The child of God must not fall into the trap of loving material prosperity more than spiritual prosperity. His focus must be upon eternal things (**Colossians 3:1-4**). The true child of God may be living in this temporal world, but his heart and soul will be longing for his spiritual and eternal home in heaven. He understands that *“weeping may endure for a night, but joy [comes] in the morning”* (**Psalm 30:5**).

Abraham was said to have a great faith because he was looking *“for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God”* (**Hebrews 11:10**). While these eternal promises were in the distant future, these great men of faith *“embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth”* (**Hebrews 11:13**).

When difficult times come, physical riches cannot calm the soul or bring contentment and joy. The godly man in **Psalm 49** said, *“Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, ... They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; None of*

them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: for the redemption of their soul is precious...” (**Psalm 49:5-8**). A relationship with God in a time of evil is far more important than the false security provided by physical possessions. The evil culture in which we live may rob us of our wealth, but it cannot take away our faith and hope in the Lord! Nothing can separate us from the love of our Savior (**Romans 8:35-39**).

Reality #8- Remember the End of the Wicked!

According to the testimony of the godly in the Bible, the child of God seems tempted to wonder why the ungodly seem to flourish in the hour of evil, while the righteous suffer. (See **Psalm 37; 52; 73**.) The psalmist said that the prosperity of the wicked at times is very difficult to understand (**Psalm 73:12-16**). However, we can see the goodness of God when we consider the eternal destiny of the wicked (**Psalm 73:17-19**). God allows the wicked to prosper in this life because this is their heaven. For the righteous, this is hell. For the sinner, it will never get any better. For the child of God, there is a better day coming.

Sinful men live as if there is no God. God in His patience does not immediately judge them for their sin. However, there is a day for them in the righteous courts of God!

When the child of God keeps these eight spiritual realities in focus, he can have joy in the midst of the storms of evil around him. As our world approaches the Tribulation Period, we must remember that at any moment, we will be rescued by the Lord and taken into His arms where we will never suffer the rejection, torments, or hatred of the wicked anymore.

I love the testimony of **Revelation 7:14-17** which tells us of the love of our Savior that will be poured out upon the martyrs of the tribulation saints when they enter His presence.

Real joy in this life comes from serving the Lord who purchased our salvation. The world cannot begin to touch the rewards that come from being in His presence and the center of His will. *“For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness”* (**Psalm 84:10**).