

## **Church History – How We Lost Our Hebrew Roots - Part 1**

### **Early Church History – The birth of anti-Semitism and Replacement Theology**

**The first Jewish Revolt** - 66-73AD - resulted in the destruction of the Temple and the fall of Massada. Early believers had been witnesses to the Hebrew roots of the faith, but they heeded Jesus' warning and fled to the hills before the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and killed 1,000,000 Jews ( Luke 21 v20-21 ). The Jewish survivors considered them traitors.

**The second Jewish Revolt** – Bar Kochba - 132AD The name given to the leader of this revolt is Messianic (Num 24:17), so many Jews were supportive of his revolt, but believers refused to follow him. This widened the gap after the Romans violently put down the revolt and removed most of the Jews from the land. They also renamed Eretz Israel after their ancient enemies, the Philistines, calling it 'Palestine.'

**Rabbinical Judaism** The surviving Rabbis restructured Judaism to function without the Temple, sacrifices, atonement and the priesthood. Good works replaced sacrifice while Jesus' followers emphasized atonement through the blood of Jesus. There was a hardening of opposition to the Jewish believers. The Talmud, which encapsulates the rabbinic teaching, does not deny the existence of Yeshua from Natzeret but mostly seeks to avoid any discussion of him and his claims. In the growing polarization and competition between Christianity and Judaism, neither side wished to give the other any credit. The references that are made are disparaging, and the corruption of his name to Yeshua was introduced. Yeshua is an acronym for Yimach Shemo Uzzikhrono, which means, "May his name and memory be blotted out". The drive to discourage belief in Yeshua was accelerated by the inclusion of an extra prayer in the Shemoneh Esrei (Eighteen)

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prayers in the synagogue service. An early version reads, "For the apostates let there be no hope, and may the arrogant kingdoms soon be rooted out in our days, and the Nazarenes and the sectarians perish as in a moment and be blotted out from the Book of Life. Blessed are you, O Lord, who humbles the arrogant." This prayer would exclude Messianic believers, or identify them for exclusion from the community. (A fuller discussion can be found in "Jesus Ben Joseph" by Walter Riggans)

**Gentile Christianity** Jewish believers kept the faith in its original Jewish form, as taught by Yeshua who was a Jew, and as preached by Paul who was also very much a Jew. Unfortunately the Gentile church did not seek to understand the Jewish roots of the faith, but applied Greek philosophy to it. Whereas God intended us to bless Him for all the good things He gives and worship Him with body, soul and spirit while we live in this world, Plato taught that the material world was bad and merely to be endured. The Church adopted this philosophy and retreated into the monastery. God said, "It is not good for man to be alone" but the Church glorified celibacy. Church leaders took the sacred teachings and made them secular. This process started in the Church in Rome - prompting Paul's letter to the Romans.

### **The Church Fathers**

**Because of the Greek outlook the official line became very anti-Semitic. Also the Greek Church renamed Yeshua Ha Meshiach to Iesous Christos, (Jesus the Christ) and adopted the use of icons and religious paintings, which were similar to pagan idolatry. This would further convince Jews that this was a false religion. The separation of the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New Testament became very evident, and eventually were referred to as the God of Judaism and the God of Christianity. With the growing resentment of the Jews in secular life, the same attitude infiltrated into religious life.**

### **Marcion -c.85–c.160AD,**

*Marcion's major work was entitled Antithesis and has not survived. The main sources for Marcion's life are Iranaeus, Tertullian, and*

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*Hippolytus. But the Jewish writer Celsus also knew of Marcion and used his writings. Marcion came under the influence of the gnostic teacher Cedro "who believed that the God of the Old Testament was different from the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. The God of the Old Testament was unknowable; the latter had been revealed" - Marcion, by Dermot McDonald, in The History of Christianity, at 104-105. Cedro also stressed the existence of "secret knowledge" from Jesus that had not been previously made public (a common claim among gnostics). Marcion adopted these ideas into his "heretical" brand of Christianity. Marcion's teachings departed from traditional Christianity in a number of ways. Most dramatically, perhaps, Marcion rejected the idea that the Old Testament God and the New Testament God were the same being, inferring that the God of the Old Testament was a 'lesser God.' He started the Two God principle, which is still with us today.*

**Justin Martyr** - 100-165AD Claimed God's covenant with Israel was no longer valid, and that Gentiles had replaced them.

**Ignatius** - Said that those who partook in Pesach, the feast of the Passover were partakers with those who killed Jesus.

**Tertullian** - 160-220 AD Blamed the Jews for the death of Jesus.

**Origen** – 185-254 AD Origen and his school in Alexandria taught the interpretation of nearly all Scripture as allegorical rather than literal and based teaching on Greek philosophy. Although he was considered heretical at the time, he was tolerated and influenced Church teaching profoundly. He was responsible for much anti-Semitism and accused Jews of plotting to kill Christians.

**Eusebius** - 263-339 AD Wrote an influential history of the church and taught that the promises of Scripture were for the Gentiles, while the curses were for the Jews; and that the church was the "true Israel." He was also Constantine's priest.

**John Chrysostom** - 344-407AD Was considered the greatest preacher of the day but preached that there could never be forgiveness for the Jews and that it was the Christian's duty to hate Jews. He also taught that Jews worshipped the Devil.

**Jerome** - Produced the Latin translation of the Bible which became the official Bible. He said, "Jews are incapable of understanding scripture and should be severely punished until they confess the true faith." The authors of the Scriptures believed that the Jewish Messiah would literally establish a kingdom on earth, which would bless the Gentiles too; however this was rejected in favor of a non-literal "replacement theology."

**Augustine** - 354-430AD Turned the literal into spiritual - "The kingdom is only spiritual, is now, and is in men's hearts. The millennium is now and Satan is bound." He wrote that the Jews deserved death, but were destined to wander the earth to witness the victory of Church over synagogue. The Catholic Church has recently refuted this view, but it is still around.

### **The Church Councils**

**Council of Elvira (Spain) in 306 - Marriage of Jews and Christians forbidden.**

**Council of Nicea in 325 and Council of Antioch in 341 - Christians forbidden to celebrate Passover with Jews.**

**Council of Laodicea 434 - 481 - Christians forbidden to worship on the Sabbath.**

### **Replacement Theology**

One deceptive outcome of Church history was Replacement Theology. Put very briefly, replacement theology holds that God rejected the Jews (Israel) when they rejected Jesus (actually it was their religious leaders who rejected Jesus). From this it follows that the promises throughout the Bible now apply to the Church and the curses apply to Israel / the Jews. This is spiritualized in various ways, but it is surprising how often it surfaces if you listen out for it.

**Thankfully** " . . . God's free gifts and his calling are irrevocable." (Romans 11:29) Halleluiah!

## **The blame for the Death of Jesus (deicide) "Christ Killers"**

This has always been a major justification for anti-Semitism, but it is nonsense. The whole nation of Israel did not kill Jesus; a small group of self-righteous religious leaders was responsible for coercing the weak Roman governor.

It was God who determined that Jesus must die and Jesus said "no man takes my life but I lay it down". If someone had not killed Jesus there would be no Church and we would all still be in our sins. "... The lamb slain from the foundation of the world" – Rev. 13:8

## **The Paganization of Christianity and the Establishment Church**

Constantine made Christianity the state religion, taking control 'away from God' and enforcing "Christian" faith by earthly methods. He called the Council of Nicea (325 AD), which fixed the dates of holy days by the secular / pagan calendar rather than the Jewish calendar. Celebration of Jesus' death became Good Friday instead of Passover and his Resurrection became Easter (the feast of the pagan deity Ishtar) instead of Firstfruits. This detached the events in Jesus' ministry from their prophetic Jewish context, depriving us of so much deep insight into God, His designs and 'appointed times.' The Romans had many gods, the highest of which was the sun who was worshipped on Sunday, and whose birth was celebrated on December 25th. In 440AD the church adopted this date to celebrate Jesus' birth instead of the most probable time, which was around October – the Feast of Tabernacles ( See **The Jewish Calendar and the Gregorian Calendar - Dates in the Christian Calendar**).

The state Church enforced anti-Semitism and Jews accepting their Messiah were forced to renounce all Jewishness and become Gentile Christians.

It was not enough that a Jew should accept Yeshua as his Messiah, Saviour and Lord; he had to "convert to Christianity," which usually meant adopting an alien culture and sometimes required him to give up

everything Jewish! The latter can be seen in this profession from the Church of Constantinople, which Jews had to affirm if they wanted to join the holy Community of the Jewish Messiah, Yeshua:

*'I renounce all customs, rites, legalisms, unleavened breads and sacrifices of lambs of the Hebrews, sacrifices, prayers, aspersions, purifications, sanctifications and propitiations, and fasts, and new moons, and Sabbaths, and superstitions, and hymns and chants and observances and synagogues, and the food and drink of the Hebrews; in one word, I renounce absolutely everything Jewish, every law, rite and custom.... and if afterwards I shall wish to deny and return to Jewish superstition, or shall be found eating with Jews, or feasting with them, or secretly conversing and condemning the Christian religion instead of openly confuting them and condemning their vain faith, then let the trembling of Cain and the leprosy of Gehazi cleave to me, as well as the legal punishments to which I acknowledge myself liable. And may I be anathema (cursed) in the world to come, and may my soul be set down with Satan and the devils.*

*"Profession of Faith, from the Church of Constantinople: From Assemani, Cod. Lit., I, p.105" as cited in James Parkes, The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue (New York: Atheneum, 1974, pp. 397-398*

**It is significant that the Church grew faster *before* it became "Establishment" under Constantine than it ever has since!**

## **The Crusades ( 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries )**

The establishment Church and its teachings gave way to the crusades. Although some crusaders were sincere, if misguided, many were evil-hearted men, in it for their own ends and acting on their own prejudices by force of arms. In one thirty-six hour period the Crusaders murdered 40,000 Muslims and 10,000 Jews in an event hailed by medieval chroniclers as "cleansing Jerusalem from the contagion of pagans". Crusaders herded Jews into a synagogue, locked them in and burned it to the ground while singing, "Christ we adore thee." Christians went to the Holy Land at the beginning of the twenty first century to apologize

for the crusades. It seems incredible and unfortunate that some Christians still cheerfully talk of holding 'crusades.'

### **The Inquisition ( particularly the Spanish Inquisition - 15th and 16th centuries)**

The leaders of "Christianity" tortured and murdered tens of thousands of Christians holding views, which were not officially sanctioned, but they also tortured and murdered hundreds of thousands of Jews.

### **The Disputations - Spain (15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> centuries)**

At this time Jews were forced to participate in public debates with their Catholic oppressors. Government troops might descend on a town and drag the rabbi into the square to defend the Jewish faith. If he won, he could be charged with insulting the Catholic religion and be forced to flee for his life. If he lost, the Jewish community would be forcibly converted to Catholicism (See N. Gordon "Hebrew Yeshua vs Greek Jesus").

### **Martin Luther (1483 - 1546)**

He set the Reformation in motion, returning to sanctification by faith from the abuses of the Roman Church. He also observed the absurdity of making Jews into Gentile Christians. Tragically, he later turned violently against the Jews, proposing that they should be confined to ghettos, their property should be seized and they should be forced to do manual labor. "We are at fault for not slaying them" he wrote ("On The Jews and their Lies", 1543 AD). These doctrines provided Adolf Hitler with the religious justification for his "Final Solution."

### **The Pogroms of Russia** (The word means destruction )

The Jews who fled east from the Inquisition and settled in Poland were caught when Russia expanded into Poland. They were then used as scapegoats for all the ills of the day. The solution was one-third forced conversions, one-third deportation and one-third starvation. This was with the tacit approval of the Church.

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The Jews fled west from the Pogroms into Hitler's Final Solution.

From 1933 onwards the Jews were again used as scapegoats, this time by the Nazi party. They were segregated, degraded and finally rounded up and sent to concentration camps.

These camps became death camps in 1939, and were capable of murdering 25,000 Jews per day.

Six million Jews were murdered, of whom 1,500,000 were children.

***The Jews finally realized that the world did not want them, and GOD used the holocaust to bring his people back to Eretz Israel, fulfilling his word.***

***It is easy to believe something so terrible could not happen again but the fact that there are people like David Irving who are taking their "Holocaust Denial" views to universities and anyone else that will listen, should sound a warning.***

*Do I mean that the people of Israel fell, never to get up again? Certainly not! Their failure made it possible for the Gentiles to be saved, and this will make the people of Israel jealous. But if the rest of the world's people were helped so much by Israel's sin and loss, they will be helped even more by their full return. I am now speaking to you Gentiles, and as long as I am an apostle to you, I will take pride in my work. I hope in this way to make some of my own people jealous enough to be saved. When Israel rejected God, the rest of the people in the world were able to turn to him. So when God makes friends with Israel, it will be like bringing the dead back to life. If part of a batch of dough is made holy by being offered to God, then all of the dough is holy. If the roots of a tree are holy, the rest of the tree is holy too. You Gentiles are like branches of a wild olive tree that were made to be part of a cultivated olive tree. You have taken the place of some branches that were cut away from it. And because of this, you enjoy the blessings that come from being part of that cultivated tree. But don't think you are better than the branches that were cut away. Just remember that you are not supporting the roots of that tree. Its roots are supporting*

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*you. Maybe you think those branches were cut away, so that you could be put in their place. That's true enough. But they were cut away because they did not have faith, and you are where you are because you do have faith. So don't be proud, but be afraid. If God cut away those natural branches, couldn't he do the same to you? Now you see both how kind and how hard God can be. He was hard on those who fell, but he was kind to you. And he will keep on being kind to you, if you keep on trusting in his kindness. Otherwise, you will be cut away too. If those other branches will start having faith, they will be made a part of that tree again. God has the power to put them back. After all, it wasn't natural for branches to be cut from a wild olive tree and to be made part of a cultivated olive tree. So it is much more likely that God will join the natural branches back to the cultivated olive tree. **For I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, lest you should be wise within yourselves; that blindness in part has happened to Israel, and they will stay like that until the 'fullness of Gentiles' has come in.** (Rom 11:11-25)*