

Replacement Theology and Israel

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"In 1985, the number of Christian denominations worldwide surpassed 22,000, with an average of five new ones organized each week"¹

✓ Is Messianic Judaism - Christian?

Jewish critics of Messianic Judaism claim that it is nothing more than Christianity in disguise, while many Christians claim that Messianic Judaism is too Jewish.

To answer the question, "Is Messianic Judaism - Christian?" we need to first look at some of the history and teachings of Christianity and Judaism.



Over the centuries there has been a stream of rabbis, preachers and prophets claiming to *"have the truth."* Today many religious sects and denominations claim to *"have the truth,"* and that you can only find God's salvation by joining and staying with them. Some are subtle in emphasizing this claim, while others are more bold. People are encouraged and taught to put their trust, time, and money into these "religious" groups. Such groups often exert control and direction over the spiritual lives of their members, through "charismatic leaders or prophets." Any group that exhibits these characteristics is a "religious cult." God created you with the ability to think and reason. So beware of following some group or someone who seem to have all the answers. Read the Scriptures for yourself, asking God for understanding and the meaning.

A major factor that causes people to seek a "true religion" is an inner need and desire for acceptance by God and others. Many people with unresolved "self-worth issues" are attracted to groups that present a message of religious superiority. These people want to join and belong to such organizations, hoping to "certify" their standing with God and others. Being validated by a "true religion" breeds a strong sense of commitment and pride, even to the point of blind obedience. As people are indoctrinated, it becomes very difficult for them to leave those organizations because of their own unfulfilled spiritual needs.

Some in the Jewish and Christian communities label Messianic Judaism as an aberration of orthodox Judaism and Christianity. But is this really the case? Let's look at Christianity, Rabbinic Judaism, and Messianic Judaism from a biblical perspective.

✓ The Development of Orthodox Christianity

There are Christians today who teach [replacement theology](#) or [supersessionism](#), a teaching that says "God is finished with the Jewish people, and all the promises God made concerning Israel now belong to the Church." In contrast the teaching known as [dispensationalism](#), teaches that God has interrupted His dealings with Israel to deal with the Church, and after the Church Age, God will then deal again with Israel. This gentile theology is similar in affect.

Formulations of these doctrinal teachings began in the Christian Church with [Origen](#) of Alexandria, an early church father and philosopher (185-254 C.E.). He began to interpret and teach that all of God's covenants with Israel were now the sole possession of the Christians.

When the [Roman Emperor Constantine](#) issued the [Edict of Milan](#) in 313 C.E. making Christianity the state religion, Roman Catholicism developed their hierarchical structure that endured largely unchallenged until the Reformation. By the 3rd century, the Roman bishops had become the primary authorities within the church. ²

By the time of [Augustine](#) (354-430 C.E.), the [Roman Catholic Church](#) was teaching that the Church was to have dominion and authority throughout the world. During the Middle Ages, the Roman Church held authority over virtually all the rulers of Europe. History witnesses that this was one of the most oppressive periods of so-called Christianity towards those not in the Catholic Church. ³

Out of the [Council of Nicaea](#), fourth century, came a declaration that that new believers accepting Yeshua must renounce everything Jewish. As a result, Christianity dropped Jewish practices and began to reinterpret the Bible in a way that affirmed their "new religion" and practices. Much of what we see in Christianity today is a result of what happened approximately 1600 years ago in Rome.

Aside from "replacement theology," we find Christians who teach "two covenant" theology. A theology that says God is dealing with the Jewish people under the ancient covenants He made with Israel, and God is dealing with gentiles under a "new covenant." Interesting theology, since the ["new covenant"](#) of the New Testament is based upon the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:30-33 where it says *"I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Y'hudah... I will put my Torah within them and write it on their hearts."*

Where does this promise say anything about making a "new covenant" with the Gentiles? In fact, Rabbi Shaul (*Paul*) says this in Romans 15:27, *"for if the Gentiles have shared with the Jews in spiritual matters, then the Gentiles clearly have a duty to help the Jews in material matters."* Shaul (*Paul*) also writes in Romans 11:11-27 that the Gentiles are grafted into the Jewish olive tree and should not be boastful about their situation over the natural branches who are the Jews.

Over the centuries, Christianity has sought to define itself outside the promises God made to Israel. This has resulted in teachings that have created more division and separation within the Kingdom of God. Is it any wonder there are so many denominations and sects within Christianity? All because the "Church" has forgotten the Jewish roots of its faith.

✓ The Development of Rabbinic Judaism

With the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. and the subsequent scattering of Jewish people in 132-135 C.E., the Pharisees became the religious leaders of Judaism, replacing other groups in Judaism that had existed prior to (*i.e.* [Sadducees](#), [Essenes](#), [Zealots](#)). The Sadducees disappeared with the destruction of the Temple because most of them had served in the capacity of priests.

After the Temple was destroyed, [Yohanan Ben Zakkai](#) built a center for study. He taught his followers, *"do not be grieved (at the Temple ruins), for we have another means of atonement as effective as this. And what is it? Deeds of compassion, as it is said in Hosea 6:6, 'For I desire mercy not sacrifice.'"* With the destruction of the Temple and the sacrificial system for sin, the rabbis began to look for new explanations and developed a new teaching to replace the need for blood atonement. They began to de-emphasize sacrifice for sin, and instead began emphasizing performing good deeds as a substitute.

Religious leadership (*the priesthood*) was no longer based upon hereditary authority, but rather on individual learning. Rabbi Judah the Prince edited and promulgated the [Mishnah](#) (*Oral Torah*) about 200 C.E. Yeshiva schools were established for the study of the Scriptures, Mishnah and the [Gemara](#) - commentaries on the Torah based upon inference, deductions, comparison, and logical reasoning.

During the fourth century, rabbis edited the Palestinian Talmud. By the end of the fifth century, the Babylonian Talmud was completed, consisting of the Mishnah and Gemara. [Siddurim](#) (*prayer books*) were also developed for prayer, because the Temple and its services were gone.

During the sixth century, Midrashim were developed. The Midrashim were commentaries on the Torah. Between the sixth and eighteenth centuries, Judaism expanded along three main lines: legal, philosophical, and mystical.

Two prominent rabbis of the Middle Ages (*11th -13th centuries*) were [Solomon ben Isaac](#) (*Rashi*) and [Moses ben Maimon](#) (*Maimonides - Rambam*). Rashi wrote a commentary on most of the Talmud and Rambam wrote commentaries on the Mishnah (*Mishnah Torah*). One must keep in mind that the "Christian Crusades" were also occurring during this time and there was an effort within Judaism to rebuff the teachings of Christianity, namely the messianic claims about Yeshua.

In the sixteenth century there was the development of [Kabbalah](#) - Jewish mysticism. This was a philosophical effort to deal with the questions of good and evil, the nature of creation, and the relationship of God to the world.

In the seventeenth century we see [Hasidism](#) forming. Their emphasis was on a mystical way to finding God; fervor in prayer; joy in living; and intense appreciation of all manifestations of the divine in the world. The movement was founded by Israel [Baal Shem Tov](#) (*Besht*). They were opposed by other intellectual Jews who emphasized the primacy of learning over direct experience of the divine in religious life. Today there is a flourishing group known as [Chabad](#) that combines both learning and experience in their religious life. There are other hasidic groups as well.

During the eighteenth century, [Reform Judaism](#) began to develop. Basically it rejected the authoritative character of traditional Jewish law as formulated in the Talmud. It also rejected a study of the Jewish prophets and belief in a personal messiah. Rather it's leaders taught the concept of a messianic age that would someday arrive. They also emphasize and are concerned with social justice and ethics, universal peace and brotherhood.

In the nineteenth century, [Conservative Judaism](#) grew in an effort to adapt Jewish law to modern conditions. Through it's own research it determined what elements of Judaism were essential and what might be set aside.

Also during this time was a rise of [Modern Orthodoxy](#). This Judaism affirms the Torah and teaches that it should not be judged by modern external cultural criteria. It teaches that through the discipline of the Torah one can be trained toward a higher moral and ethical standard, while at the same time fully participating in the current culture.

In the past century, we find the development of [Reconstructionism](#) and [Humanism](#) forms of Judaism. These are in response to the times in which we live and they emphasize the evolving civilization of the Jewish people and human and social issues of the present day.

As you can see from this brief historical overview, Rabbinical Judaism as it observed today is quite different than the Judaism of 2,000 years ago, the Judaism before the destruction of the Temple. It is a Judaism that also has produced theological differences in understanding and practice.

✓ God's Chosen People - Israel

God chose to demonstrate His righteousness to the nations through the changed lives of individuals. Israel was chosen by God to deliver His message of salvation. *"Now if you pay careful attention to what I say and keep my covenant, then you will be my own treasure from among all the peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you will be a kingdom of cohanim (priests) for me, a nation set apart."* (Exodus 19:5-6)

The historical account in the Bible tells us that many in Israel refused to accept God's plan of salvation, not only for themselves, but for the nations. This history was foretold in Deuteronomy chapters 28-30 with the blessings and the curses that would befall Israel. But it also speaks about a restoration of Israel. The prophecies in the Tanakh speak of a remnant of Israel who have always remained faithful to God.

*"I say, isn't it that God has repudiated his people? Heaven forbid!
For I myself am a son of Israel, from the seed of Abraham,
of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not repudiated his people,
whom he chose in advance. Or don't you know what the
Tanakh (Hebrew Scriptures) says about Elijah?
He pleads with God against Israel, 'Adonai,
they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars,
and I am the only one left, and now they want to kill me too.'
But what is God's answer to him? 'I have kept for myself
seven thousand men who have not knelt down to Baal'.
It is the same way in the present age:
there is a remnant, chosen by grace."*

Romans 11:1-5

✓ The Nature of God's Kingdom

1—God's kingdom is spiritual, not political. *"You will know that I am with Israel and the I am Adonai your God, and that there is no other. Then my people will never again be shamed. After this, I will pour out my Spirit on all humanity... At that time, whoever calls on the name of Adonai will be saved."* (Joel 2:27; 3:1,5) *"But you are a chosen people, the King's priests, a holy nation, a people for God to possess! Why? In order for you to declare the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people."* (1 Peter 2:9-10)

2—God's kingdom is for all people. *"Adonai has made known his victory; revealed his vindication in full view of the nations, remembered his grace and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God."* (Psalm 98:2-3) *"Here is my servant, whom I support, my*

chosen one, in whom I take pleasure. I have put my Spirit on him; he will bring justice to the gentiles... I, Adonai, called you righteously, I took hold of you by the hand. I shaped you and made you a covenant for the people; to be a light for the Goyim, so that you can open blind eyes, and free the prisoners from confinement, those living in darkness from the dungeon." (Isaiah 42:1, 6-7) "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor freeman, neither male nor female; for in union with the Messiah Yeshua, you are all one. Also, if you belong to the Messiah, you are seed of Abraham and heirs according to the promise." (Galatians 3:28-29)

3—God's kingdom is an everlasting one. *"His kingdom lasts forever, and he rules all generations." (Daniel 3:33) "For he is the living God; and he endures forever. His kingdom will never be destroyed; his rulership will last till the end." (Daniel 6:27) "Therefore, since we have received an unshakable Kingdom, let us have grace, through which we may offer service that will please God, with reverence and fear." (Hebrews 12:28)*

God's kingdom is comprised of one people of one belief and obedience. But sin separates and prevents people from entering that kingdom. God's people, from Adam to the present, consists of all believers who accept God's righteousness by faith. Faith is simply believing and trusting God for salvation. Hebrews 11 reminds us that Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Samson, Samuel, and David all lived by faith in God, not religious works. Faith consists of three elements: belief, trust, and action. Belief is acceptance of God's salvation provided through the Messiah. Trust is a willingness to live our lives God's way. Action is our loving obedience toward God and his Word. Does your faith in God cause you to question the traditions and teachings of men? Are you willing to walk by faith, relying on the Bible alone? Are you part of God's spiritual kingdom?

Rav Sha'ul (*Paul*) describes how the Gentiles who accept Yeshua (*Jesus*) as the Messiah are grafted into the Jewish olive tree. They receive their nourishment from the roots of the olive tree, and are therefore spiritually part of the House of Israel. John 4:22-26 says that salvation for the Gentiles has come through the Jewish Messiah and the nation of Israel.

*"I say, 'Isn't it that Israel stumbled with the result that they have permanently fallen away?' Heaven forbid!
Quite the contrary...
And if the root is holy, so are the branches.
But if some of the branches (Israel) were broken off,
and you - a wild olive (gentiles) - 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...
It is a stoniness, to a degree, has come upon Israel,
until the gentile world enters in its fullness;
and that it is in this way that all Israel will be saved.
As the Tanakh says, 'Out of Zion will come the Redeemer;
he will turn away ungodliness from Jacob and this will be
my covenant with them, when I take away their sins.'" (Isaiah 59)
With respect to the Good News they are hated for your sake.
But with respect to being chosen they are loved for the
Patriarchs' sake, for God's free gifts and his calling are irrevocable."
*Romans 11:11-36**



Celebrating Sukkot - Feast of Tabernacles

"Finally, everyone remaining from all the nations that came to attack Jerusalem will go up every year to worship the King, Adonai, Lord of Hosts, and to keep the festival of Sukkot (Tabernacles)."
Zechariah 14:16

✔ Messianic Judaism and the Bible

Messianic Judaism is a call to return to the God of the Bible, the God of creation, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. It is a call to discover the roots of our religious faith and heritage. Messianic Judaism is not Orthodox Christianity or Rabbinic Judaism, but rather a Biblical Judaism. A Judaism that encourages the study of the Bible, asking God's Ruach HaKodesh (*Holy Spirit*) to reveal the truth of His Word. Unfortunately, many people would rather follow the teachings of religious rabbis and ministers, rather than seeking and studying the Word of God for themselves. Messianic Judaism is a movement toward sound biblical teaching that reflects our Jewish roots and recognizes Yeshua the Messiah.

The Bible is clear about what will happen to those masquerading as spiritual leaders who go around deceiving people. *"Oh no! The shepherds are destroying and scattering the sheep in my pasture, says Adonai... I will take care of you because of your evil deeds, says Adonai."* (Jeremiah 23:1-2). And Paul wrote, *"For we are not like a lot of folks who go about huckstering God's message for a fee; on the contrary, we speak out of a sincere heart."* (2 Corinthians 2:17)

Ask God to show you the meaning of a biblical passage in relation to other passages of Scripture. This will keep you from embracing faulty interpretations and conclusions. Use the following principles to guide you as you read and study the Bible.

1. *"How are we to know if a word has not been spoken by Adonai? When a prophet speaks in the name of Adonai, and the prediction does not come true - that is, the word is not fulfilled - then Adonai did not speak that word. The prophet who said it spoke presumptuously; you have nothing to fear from him."* (Deuteronomy 18:21-22). Do not accept the teachings of false prophets. Beware of those who do!

2. *"Every word of God is pure; he shields those taking refuge in him. Do not add anything to his words; or he will rebuke you, and you, found a liar."* (Proverbs 30:5-6). Using outside writings to interpret the Bible can lead to wrong interpretations and beliefs. After all, other writings are mere commentary and interpretations of men. Avoid treating commentary as equal with Scripture.

3. *"So when they tell you to consult those squeaking, squawking mediums and fortune-tellers; you are to answer, 'Shouldn't a people seek their God? Must the living ask the dead for teaching and instruction? For they will indeed give you this unenlightened suggestion.'" (Isaiah 8:19-20). Do not seek advice or teaching from sources God admonishes us to avoid. Use the Bible alone as your foundation of faith and practice.*

*"A foreigner joining Adonai should not say,
'Adonai will separate me from his people (Israel)...
And the foreigners who join themselves to Adonai to serve him,
to love the name of Adonai, and to be his workers,
all who keep Shabbat and do not profane it,
and hold fast to my covenant,
I will bring them to my holy mountain and make them
joyful in my house of prayer."
Isaiah 56:3, 6-7*

So much for Christian [replacement theology](#) and [supersessionism](#). According to the Scriptures, such teachings are wrong and bad theology.

Some Must View Extras...

- ▶ [What are replacement, separation, and remnant theologies?](#)
- ▶ [Is Christianity anti-Jewish?](#)

1. "U.S. News and World Report," March 4, 1991
2. "Encyclopedia Britannica," 1988, v.26, p.924
3. "The Road to Holocaust," Hal Lindsey, 1989, p.9