

*JEWISH CHRISTIANITY:
Biblical Norm to
Modern Contradiction*

Mark Edward Sohmer

Honor's Thesis
The University of New Hampshire: 1995
Updated: 2005

All Scripture references taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

*This Thesis is dedicated to my good friend
Joshua David Corman,
who, as a brave freshman, introduced me, an arrogant junior,
to the most Jewish person I know: Jesus Christ.*

Table of Contents

Section One • Introduction.....	5
Section Two • Defining Terms.....	10
Section Three • Historical Account I.....	17
Section Four • Historical Account II.....	27
Section Five • Conclusion.....	35
About the Author.....	38

Section One • Introduction

*trying to explain the problem of Hebrew Christianity in today's
Modern-American Jewish Culture*

I was eating bagels with a fellow Jewish woman, when she said to me, "Mark, I hear you, but being Jewish and Christian just doesn't make sense. I mean, how can you be both?"

This comment was made after a lengthy discussion and debate on whether it is a contradiction to be both Jewish and a Christian. As a result of many conversations like this, as well as my experience as a Hebrew Christian, I became motivated to research and ultimately write up this thesis. The question is: *Can one be both Jewish and Christian?* There are obviously many opinions about this, and it shall be my job to properly represent most of them. This is, however, above all else a scholarly work. I shall be referring to historical accounts with the intent of defining crucial terms, and then I will take some time to reason out the implications of those terms. I make no bones about the fact that I stand before you a Hebrew Christian, so by my own existence, I believe the term not to be a contradiction. I shall do my best, however, to represent the side of those who are angered by my existence. To them I am an apostate, an abomination, a traitor. Hopefully, in this thesis, I shall prove to be a researcher, a historian, and a philosopher.

It will not take much to demonstrate that there are many who hold the position that Hebrew Christianity is an abomination. My question is: *Why?* Or perhaps more appropriately: *How?* Why is it so bizarre for a Jewish person to embrace and trust Jesus Christ as Messiah? And how did that become so? I intend to show that the early church was in fact a Hebrew Christian church. With that shown, one must ask how and when the status changed? Was the gentilization of the church a slow process, occurring over time, or was it a quick turn made by a council or a group of church leaders? This thesis will answer this question.

Before we can proceed, we must understand today's Jewish culture. Today, Judaism is more of a culture, based on common experiences, rather than a religion, based on a common theological view. I will do my best to explain the world-view and understanding of Modern American Judaism, so that when we deal with the issue of Hebrew Christianity, we can understand it from the view of those who are confused/upset by the thought of it. I will show the difference between Biblical Judaism and Modern-day Rabbinic Judaism. We shall see how and when the split between Biblical Judaism and Modern Judaism happened, as well as the implications of that change.

Growing up in a Jewish home, pride in my heritage was instilled in me powerfully at an early age. I can remember when my older brother Bradley had his *Bar Mitzvah*, a rites-of-passage celebration when a Jewish male turns thirteen years old. At that time, the boy is officially recognized as a man and leads the reading of a section of the *Torah* (the first five books of the Bible). I was nine years old, and I was allowed to read a prayer at Bradley's Bar Mitzvah. It was in Hebrew and I had studied it for some time, certain to be prepared to recite the prayer in front of everyone correctly. My recitation gave much joy to my parents who were looking on.

Bradley's Bar-Mitzvah was a very Jewish event. It took place in a Temple, it involved Hebrew prayers, and included Hebrew sacred objects: the *Torah*¹, *tallit*², et cetera. The Temple was a significant part of my upbringing. It was in Temple where I spent all my Saturday mornings. It was in Temple where I prepared for my Bar Mitzvah. It was in Temple where I witnessed marriages and attended holidays.

Looking back, I was different from the other kids at school. I was Jewish. They were not. I went to Hebrew School and I was learning the Hebrew alphabet; they were not. At school, I would not join in celebrating that Santa Claus was coming to town. He would not come to my house. I was Jewish. I didn't have Santa. Santa was for *them*.

In a lot of ways, Judaism is an identity. The Hebrew word קדוש (Kadosh) means holy and it is the same word used in the very well-known verse, "Ye shall be *holy*: for I the LORD your God am *holy*³." Literally, *Kadosh* means "the resultant state, the conduct befitting those so separated."⁴ This separateness which is denoted in the word *holy* is an appropriate word to think about when considering what it is that makes one Jewish. For me, growing up Jewish in a seemingly *Christian* world- being Jewish meant being separate.

This naturally prods us on to ask the question: separate from whom? Well, from my upbringing, if you weren't Jewish, you were Christian. I would soon learn that there were a lot more of them (Christians) than there were of us (Jews). We Jews had to stick together, I learned. And then, as I reached adolescence, I started learning why that was so important.

My oldest brother Alec was doing a paper his senior year in high school about World War Two. I still remember the old woman coming to our house. She lived in our neighborhood and I had walked by her house before, but I had never met her. And now she was in MY house!

I remember her unbuttoning her cuff and pulling her sleeve up. There, on her arm, I saw it: it was a green number tattooed into her skin.

"What's that?" I asked my dad much later that night.

He told me that she had received that tattoo in the holocaust. Naturally that lead to more questions. It was at that young age that I was told about Hitler. Hitler was the German leader during World War Two who wanted to kill all the Jews. He killed six million. Six million. He was one of *them*.

You see, the sticking together part of Judaism was as or more important than the part about being holy. We, as Jews, are separate from Christians, which means that we must be very tight with each other. Even from a young age I remember hanging out at the home of other Jewish families. We lit

¹ The Torah is a scroll that holds the first five books of the Bible (Genesis through Deuteronomy.) Even to this day genuine Torah's are completely hand-written in Hebrew, and checked to be error-free. For this reason they are very expensive, and often looked upon with reverence by a Jewish congregation.

² Tallit is a prayer shawl often worn by Jewish men during prayer time.

³ *Leviticus 19:2 (emphasis mine)*

⁴ Vine, W.E., *Vines Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1981, p. 225

the Hanukkah candles together. We spun the dreidel⁵ together. We sang songs in Hebrew together.

The idea of being Jewish in a modern sense is this: that if you're really Jewish, you stick together. You don't marry one of *them*. You don't live in one of *their* neighborhoods if you can help it, and you certainly do NOT ever believe what they believe!

With this understood, the problem of Hebrew Christianity becomes evident.

Many Jews today maintain separateness apart from Christianity, shunning Christian Theology. Why this is the case? And then: How? How did Judaism come to be so far from Christianity? Even growing up I knew that Christianity came from Judaism. What happened?

Growing up, I was taught that Judaism is a religion of sticking together. In this sense, it is much more a culture than a way of worshipping God. Judaism is a religion of being different from the others (the Christians!) Judaism is a religion of learning how to read a language, saying prayers in that language, regardless of whether or not you can translate or understand the language you're saying. See, you do not have to know what you're saying, nor agree with what you're saying, you just say it because it is what has been said for centuries. You just make utterances. Judaism is about tradition!

Judaism is also a religion of memory.

I was walking through *The Western Wall Tunnels*, an underground tour of the Western Wall put on by the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Jerusalem, Israel. These underground caves were unearthed in 1967 after almost two thousand years. What really struck me was not so much that there was dust on the rocks in the caves, but the comment the tour guide gave about the dust. To paraphrase the tour guide: "take note of the dust. That dust has been there for two thousand years and has been preserved in these caves. That dust is the dust of Jewish fighting. I suppose we could clean the place out, but we don't want to forget the Jewish lives lost here."

Did you catch that? There is an element of remembering in Judaism that is constant throughout the years. As a Jew, the worst thing you could do is to forget the sacrifices and trials of your elders and those who came before you.

The prayer that I read at my brother Bradley's Bar Mitzvah was the *viahavtah* prayer. It is very well-known, recited in Hebrew in Temples everywhere. But not many people bother to look up the English. Should one look it up, here's what one would find: "And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt *teach them diligently unto thy children*, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine

⁵The "dreidel" is a small toy, resembling a top, which is spun at Hanukkah. It's a very common Jewish tradition. Ironically, Hanukkah is mentioned only once in the whole Bible, and that is in *John* 10:22 where Jesus is said to have celebrated the holiday.

hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.⁶"

The whole idea of impressing the law of God on your children is a very prevalent theme in Judaism. It is important, even from the Biblical record, to pass on the stories. In fact, of those stories, Jewish people are commanded to "write them upon the posts of [our] house, and on [our] gates" which is why even to this day many Jewish people have a *mezuzah* nailed into the door-frame of their home. A *mezuzah* is a small cylindrical container made often of wood or clay. Often times an actual scroll with the words of God written on it is placed inside the *mezuzah*. In fact, even very orthodox Jews to this day wear *tafilin* when they pray. *Tafilin* wraps around their arms and forehead and also, like the *mezuzah*, contains a parchment with Scripture written on it. This *viahavtah*, this prayer reminding us to impress the law of God on our children, was the prayer I recited. And all of this comes from a spirit of remembrance so strong in Judaism. But why? More of this later.

As Jews, we are called to remember our past from generation to generation. We are the great lineage keepers. We are entrusted with the past and the continuance of the Jewish way.

To drive this home further, I would like to explore some Biblical precedents for passing on information from generation-to-generation. When Moses was commanded to keep the Passover, God commanded, "And thou shalt shew thy son in that day, saying, *This is done* because of that *which* the LORD did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt."⁷ Again, later everyone under the leadership of Joshua was commanded "take ye up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel: That this may be a sign among you, *that* when your children ask *their fathers* in time to come, saying, What *mean* ye by these stones? Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel for ever."⁸ The prophet Joel speaks of the Word of God, "Tell ye your children of it, and *let* your children *tell* their children, and their children another generation."⁹ The carrying on of the stories is a critical part of being Jewish.

Remember the elderly woman who came over to my house when I was young? She was a Jewish survivor of the holocaust. It is appropriate to talk about the holocaust, because in many ways, the holocaust is another facet that helps define Judaism *today*.

The holocaust is important because it is yet one more example of what makes Jewish people Jewish. The Third Reich wanted to extinguish the Jews; the Jews endured and remained. The remembrance of the holocaust is like the Ministry of Religious Affairs in Jerusalem's refusal to remove the dust from the caves. It would be wrong to forget.

We, as Jews, must tell the next generation. We must hold together and finally have victory over those who would destroy us for being Jewish. You defeat your foes by remaining Jewish. That is what being Jewish is all about; remaining Jewish.

⁶Deuteronomy 6:5-9 (*emphasis mine*)

⁷Exodus 13:8

⁸Joshua 4:5-7

⁹Joel 1:3

Jewish people celebrate Hanukkah. Hanukkah is the celebration of the victory of Judas Macabee in the resistance over the Jewish Persecutor Antiochus IV (160BC)¹⁰. Antiochus defiled the Temple of God, bringing even pigs into the place of the Holy of Holies.

There is a holiday known as Purim. Purim is the celebration of the victory of Mordecai over Haman, a hostile vizir¹¹. Growing up, I can remember that it seemed that every holiday was in commemoration of someone's failed attempts to kill all the Jews. It is my job, as a Jew, to keep the traditions going. It is my job, as a Jew, to continue to be Jewish.

Just as both of my older brothers had their Bar Mitzvah at age 13, so did I. Near the end of the service, my mother was given the opportunity to publicly exhort me, the new Bar-Mitzvah boy. My mother's words to me were:

This is a special day... My joy was to bring you up as a Jewish boy, because that's what you are. We have friends close by who came from down the street. We've got them from all states: Maryland, Florida, Tennessee. We've got them further; they came from England! Now, Mark, they may have loved you, but there is no way they would have met today if you were a 13-year-old. They met because you are a 13-year-old Jewish boy, who has observed a Bar Mitzvah. It is so important to me and to your Father that you continue [in your Judaism]. I'm so proud of you... I love you and you do me proud¹².

This testimony is very touching to me, and I love my mother and her sentiment, but I have to point out that she did not define Judaism as a religion. Judaism to my mother, and to our modern culture in general, is a means to keep a family together. It is Judaism that connects family from across the ocean. It is Judaism that motivates parents to instill traditions in their children, with no desire to search why they are following those traditions, nor seek the face of the God who is supposed to be the reason for the traditions. Modern Judaism clearly teaches that as a Jew, my job is to remain Jewish, even in the face of persecution. I must marry Jewish, remain in a Jewish neighborhood, and never Never NEVER believe in the Christian God.

The world-view of Judaism *today* is the world view of my family, and of the girl who I was eating bagels with that time; the one who told me that I couldn't be *both* Jewish and Christian. Modern Judaism teaches that one cannot be both Jewish and a Christian. But the question we must ask is: Has this always been the case? Obviously not. History proves this. So we come back to the problem of Hebrew Christianity: is it a contradiction? I propose to first define our terms, to show a distinction between Modern Judaism and Biblical Judaism, compare Scriptural doctrine, and then recap significant history of the church to find out how and why it is today a contradiction to be both Jewish and Christian. I intend to show that it was not originally a contradiction to be both Jewish and Christian. When the reasons it appears to be a contradiction today are brought to light, they will show themselves to be irrational, based on reactions to events happening hundreds of years ago.

¹⁰*The New Jerusalem Bible*, Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, New York, NY 10103, 1985. "Introduction to the Books of Macabees," p. 674

¹¹*ibid.*, "Introduction to Tobit, Judith and Esther," p. 624

¹²Sohmer, Sharon Abis, as spoken at the Bar Mitzvah of Mark Edward Sohmer, June 21, 1986.

Section Two • Defining Terms

*just what do we mean when we use the terms,
'Judaism' and 'Christianity'?*

Thus far I have been using the terms 'Judaism' and 'Christianity,' without a working definition of either. As I've already mentioned, growing up I viewed Christians as everyone who was not Jewish. I also believed that everyone who was not Christian was Jewish. I concede that *given these definitions*, it is a contradiction to be both Jewish *and* Christian. However these definitions are not only mistaken, but irresponsible.

Given that, it is appropriate at this point to spend some time defining our terms.

Since the Old Testament is the foundation of the Jewish religion, and the Old and New Testaments together are the foundation of the Christian religion, it is wise to start there. Much to my surprise, I've found that the Bible uses the word "Christian" a mere three times.

The first place the word "Christian" is used in the Bible is in the book of Acts, a book that records the history of the early church. In the 26th verse of chapter 11, the text reads, "And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch¹³." This is interesting because it says "the disciples" were called Christians. I was brought up to believe that if you weren't Jewish or Muslim, or Hindu or Buddhist, then you were a Christian by default. But here it says that only the "disciples" were Christians. "Disciple" is a word only used of those who followed Jesus' teachings and believed what He taught.

The second time the word "Christian" was used was during a conversation between the Apostle Paul and the Roman King Agrippa. After a heated Theological debate, King Agrippa said to Paul, "Almost thou persuadest me *to be a Christian*¹⁴." This use of the word 'Christian' here represents one third of all the times this word is used in the Bible, and here the context shows that being a Christian is something you come to by a conscious choice. It is something you become, not something you are born. King Agrippa talks about being persuaded "to be a Christian." This was further proof that the Biblical use of the word "Christian" contradicted the definition I had of Christianity growing up. It became clear that my definition was mistaken.

The third and final place the word 'Christian' is used in the Bible is in the Apostle Peter's first epistle. Peter wrote, "Yet if any man suffer *as a Christian*, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf¹⁵." In this instance, being a Christian was something that had value, something for which it was worth suffering. I again found myself surprised because I thought that being Jewish meant persecution! But it seemed that Christians also knew times of persecution. Biblically, it was worth persevering to be a 'Christian.'

I concluded, therefore, that my initial definitions were incorrect. In order to understand our terms properly, we must forsake prejudices and objectively define the terms properly and accurately.

¹³ Acts 11:26

¹⁴ Acts 26:28 (*emphasis mine*)

¹⁵ 1 Peter 4:16 (*emphasis mine*)

J. I. Packer, Professor of Theology at Regent College in Vancouver, defines a Christian this way: "true Christians are people who acknowledge and live under the Word of God... Their eyes are upon the God of the Bible as their Father and the Christ of the Bible as their Savior."¹⁶

Jesus Himself, "the author and finisher of [the] faith,"¹⁷ when speaking to a religious leader, said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life"¹⁸. This passage of scripture strongly shows that being a Christian, or following Jesus, requires a mind-set. In other words, being a Christian is something you decide to be, as the Acts 26 verse above shows, and not something that you're born into, as I had mistakenly believed.

Pastor Terry Sharbaugh, Master of Divinity from Denver Theological Seminary, defined Christianity as a "religious thought that centers on Jesus Christ."¹⁹ Sharbaugh continued to say that a Christian is "someone who has put their faith in Jesus Christ and has been born again of the Spirit of God."²⁰ Sharbaugh's definition aligns with the Scriptures.

All my research has shown that a true Christian is someone who believes, as the Apostle Paul did, that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,"²¹ and as King David did, when he said, "the Word of the LORD is tried"²² Furthermore, the book of Proverbs says, "every word of God is pure,"²³ and the prophet Samuel writes, "As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is tried."²⁴

There is a consistent Scriptural teaching that the Word of God is the final authority for the believer. Even Christ Himself, who is referred to as the "author and finisher of [the] faith,"²⁵ said to God in His famous last prayer, "thy word is truth."²⁶

So when defining "Christianity" accurately, we must keep exclusively to the Scriptures and Scriptural creeds. There is no value in defining "Christianity" by using thoughts not conforming to the very books that define it.

It is significant to point out that Christianity is defined by belief. A Christian is one who believes a certain way, not someone who was born at a certain place, like an *American*, for instance. Unlike nationality, the religion of Christianity is not inherited.

The next logical question to ask is: What are the beliefs that make one a Christian? Once we define the beliefs that make one a "Christian," then we will be in a position to define what makes

¹⁶Packer, J. I., *Knowing God*, Inter Varsity Press, Downers Grove, IL 60515, 1973, p. 116

¹⁷*Hebrews* 12:2

¹⁸*John* 3:3,16 (*emphasis mine*)

¹⁹conversation with Pastor Sharbaugh, 3 May, 1995

²⁰*ibid*

²¹*Timothy* 3:16

²²*Psalms* 18:30

²³*Proverbs* 30:5

²⁴*Samuel* 22:31

²⁵*Hebrews* 12:2

²⁶*John* 17:17

one "Jewish." Once that is completed (and that is no small task) then we'll be able to determine if it is a contradiction to be both "Christian" and "Jewish."

When the Roman Emperor Constantine decreed Christianity public, he opened the door for unbelievers to rise to leadership, concerned more with the political opportunities, rather than the Spiritual significance of Christ's church on earth. For that reason, a council of church leaders was assembled at Nicea to set the record straight, so to speak. The result was the drafting of the *Nicene Creed*. It will be very useful to look at the Nicene Creed, because it will show us what a Christian believes.

In A.D. 325, 300 leading Bishops, many of which could "show the scars of suffering and prison,"²⁷ met together in Nicea. What they came up with was the famous Nicene Creed, which is one of the most important documents, outside of the Bible, that explains the beliefs of a true "Christian." In its entirety, it states:

I believe in one God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible:

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made;

Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, and crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate;

He suffered and was buried, and the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father;

And He shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead;

Whose Kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified; who spoke by the prophets. And I believe in one catholic²⁸ church and apostolic church; I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins, and I look for the resurrection of the dead, and of the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Nicene Creed was not drafted to create Christianity. It is more correctly thought of this way:

Imagine a small club made up of close friends. There's a secret handshake, a secret code, a secret password, et cetera. Everyone is of like mind and agreement, and there is very good communication among the group. But then imagine they decide to open membership to everyone. As a result, more and more people join, unconcerned with the integrity of the original handshake,

²⁷Shelley, Bruce, *Church History in Plain Language*, Word Books, Inc., 1982, p. 115

²⁸"Catholic" refers to "universal," not to the Roman Catholic Church..

the original code, et cetera. Very soon, the club is in serious danger of changing forever into something unlike what it started.

The answer is to get together the ones who are from the original group, or as close as possible, and have them study the original intentions of the founders, writing down clearly a short creed so that the club can go back to the original form.

This analogy is not a bad one to explain the purpose for the Nicene Creed. The Christian church was becoming splintered with its rapid growth due to its legalization. "The Gnostic heresy, for instance, (which permeated Christendom in the lifetime of the apostles) drew strong condemnation in Paul's Epistle to the Colossians and John's First Epistle. Denying the deity of Christ, the Gnostics taught that He was inferior in nature to the Father, a type of super-angel or impersonal emanation from God.

"Following the Gnostics came such speculative theologians as Origen, Lucian of Antioch, Paul of Samosota, Sabellius, and Arius of Alexandria. All of these propagated un-biblical views of the Trinity and of the divinity of our Lord.

"But perhaps the most crucial test of Christian doctrine in the early church was the 'Arian heresy.' It was this heresy which stimulated the crystallization of thought regarding both the Trinity and the deity of Christ. The climax was reached at the famous Council of Nicea (325 A.D.). There, backed by laborious study of both Testaments, Athanasius and Paul (Bishop of Alexandria)... drafted the famed Nicene Creed and shortly afterward the Athanasian Creed. Thus the church recognized what the apostles and prophets had always taught - that the Messiah shares the nature of God, as does the Holy Spirit.²⁹" So the writers of the Nicene Creed did not create Christianity, but rather consciously listed the points of belief necessary to be considered a "Christian."

The Nicene Creed was written as a tool, a resource based on Scriptural teaching³⁰ for Christians to profess their beliefs, for it is those beliefs which define Christianity. It must be stressed that Christianity is defined by belief, by a mindset of the individuals' choice, not by birth or geography. Strongly implied in the Scriptures, and in the early church creeds, is the idea that one is a Christian by virtue of one's belief. For example, if one believes in the Trinity, has trusted Jesus Christ as Savior, and is following Jesus' commands as he awaits His return, then he is a Christian. If not, then that person cannot correctly be called a "Christian."

We must conclude therefore, that a Christian is someone who by his own sincere convictions, trusts in Jesus Christ for salvation, and believes that God raised him from the dead (compare: Romans 10:9)³¹.

Next we must come up with an accurate definition for a "Jew." It is critical to find an objective definition for what makes one "Jewish", so that we can discuss whether or not it a contradiction for a Jewish person to believe in a Triune God who sent his Son to suffer the sins of those who trust him.

²⁹Martin, Walter, *Essential Christianity*, Regal Books, Ventura, California, 1962, p. 26

³⁰It would take another thesis to support this claim, but I feel that at the very least, almost 20 centuries of Church History has supported this claim.

³¹"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, Theologian and writer, appropriately asks, "What really constitutes Jewishness? Who is a Jew? Does the term denote a religion, a race, an ethnic group, or a nationality?³²"

If Judaism is defined by religion, then it could be argued that Hebrew Christianity is a contradiction, since Hebrew Christians confess that the Messiah has come and is coming again, while modern Jews would not. However, this definition is problematic because it also excludes atheist Jews, as well as non-practicing Jews, and would in effect create a contradiction not only between Hebrew Christians from Judaism, but most Jews in the world as well, as very few believe in and follow the inspired Hebrew Scriptures.

If Judaism were a race, then one could not become *not* Jewish any more than one could become *not* Caucasian. This is hopeful for the Hebrew Christian, because this definition allows for their inclusion under the umbrella of Judaism. This definition could be problematic, however, because it allows for no conversions. No one would be able to become Jewish by choice, just as an Asian could not become Caucasian by choice.

Is Judaism an ethnic group? If so, then being Jewish would depend on traditions and upbringing. Those who spin the dreidel on Hanukkah³³, eat matzos on Passover³⁴, and have a mazuzza³⁵ on their home are Jewish. This definition does not satisfy, however, because of its superficiality. This definition completely disregards God from the picture, elevating what you eat and the customs you practice above who you worship. This definition would also exclude non-practicing Jews. Interestingly enough, however, defining Judaism as an ethnic group would not necessarily exclude Hebrew Christians. For example, I happen to have a mazuzza on my door, and I eat matzos at Passover.

Finally, let's consider whether or not Judaism is defined by nationality. If so, then being Jewish would be like being Italian. This is a similar position to the one that defines Judaism as an ethnic group. If Judaism were a nationality, then, as with an ethnic group, the worship of God would not be a factor in defining what it means to be Jewish. One has to wonder why the writers of the Hebrew Scriptures would spend so much time and energy describing their God, the God who makes them separate and holy, if that God has nothing to do in defining His people. For that reason, defining who is 'Jewish' by ethnic group or nationality must be rejected.

The Jerusalem Post asked fifteen hundred Jewish families what it means to be Jewish.

12% declared that a Jew is a person whose father or mother is Jewish or who has a Jewish spouse.

³²Fruchtenbaum, Arnold, *Hebrew Christianity: Its Theology, History and Philosophy*, Ariel Ministries, 1983, p. 1

³³The "dreidel" is a small toy, resembling a top, which is spun at Hanukkah. It's a very common Jewish tradition. Ironically, Hanukkah is mentioned only once in the whole Bible, and that is in *John 10:22* where Jesus is said to have celebrated the holiday.

³⁴"Matzos" is a wafer-like bread made with no yeast and not allowed to rise. It is commonly eat in place of bread during the holiday of Passover. The Biblical mandate comes from *Exodus 12:8*. Ironically, it is mentioned five times in the New Testament.

³⁵The "mazuzza" is a small wooden or clay cylindrical container nailed on the door posts of Jewish homes. Inside the mazuzza is placed a small scroll with some verses from the Hebrew Scriptures. The Biblical precedent is *Deuteronomy 6:9*.

23% claimed that a Jew is a person who considers himself a Jew.

19% held that a man be born to a Jewish mother or who converts to Judaism is a Jew.

13% said a Jew is one who lives in Israel or who identifies with the Jewish state.

13% stated that a Jew is one who observes the Jewish religious practices.

11% answered that a Jew is one who is raised and educated as a Jew.

9% said they could not define it.

These results were recorded in the *Jerusalem Post* of November 25, 1968.³⁶

Fruchtenbaum insightfully comments: "of the definitions listed, only one excludes the Hebrew Christian, but at the same time it also excludes a large number of other Jews who do not observe Jewish religious practices. The other five definitions would by no means rule out the Hebrew Christian.³⁷" And he also says that "more could be said and other examples could be given to show the confusion in the Jewish world over definitions. But these should suffice to show that there is no uniformity or objective standard for defining Jewishness; virtually all definitions are subjective.³⁸"

As with Christianity, we must turn to the Scriptures to find the objective definition of Judaism.

The key Scriptural factor in describing Hebrew Christianity is found in what is called the *Abrahamic* covenant: "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.³⁹"

From this passage, we learn that a man named Abram (later to be renamed 'Abraham' by the LORD - Genesis 17:5⁴⁰) was called to leave his country. He was provided land, and was promised "a great nation," and a "blessing" both for himself, and for the whole world through him.

The Abrahamic Covenant is the basis for Biblical Judaism. It is an error to confuse modern-day Judaism with Biblical Judaism: Judaism based on the Holy Scriptures. Where Modern Judaism conflicts with Biblical Judaism, we must conclude Biblical Judaism to be the more accurate.

Biblical Judaism is defined by the promises God gave to Abraham and to his descendants. If you are a descendant of Abraham, then Biblically, you are Jewish. Judaism, it seems, is not based on belief, as Christianity is; rather, it is based on the covenant established by the God of Israel. And this same covenant is repeated again to Isaac, Abraham's son (Genesis 26:2-5), and then to Jacob, Isaac's son (Genesis 28:13-15).

The Bible does not show any examples of Jews becoming non-Jewish. That would be impossible Biblically, as it would be impossible for a Caucasian to become not-Caucasian. It's a silly idea, and

³⁶As quoted by Fruchtenbaum, pp. 5-6

³⁷Fruchtenbaum, p. 6

³⁸*ibid*

³⁹Genesis 12:1-3

⁴⁰"Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee."

so is the idea that someone could lose their Judaism. The only way someone could become non-Jewish would be if a non-Biblical definition of Judaism were used.

Judaism is defined objectively as a nation. But, as would be discovered in reading the whole of the Hebrew Scripture, the people God calls "Jews", or "Israel," are not always living in a specific land. There is much writing dealing with the scattered Israel, removed from the land, and living in foreign lands. So it seems that Biblically speaking, "Israel," or "Judaism" is defined as those descended from Abraham, of whom this covenant was given, regardless to where they are physically living, and regardless of their beliefs.

Before one can be a Christian, one must believe a certain way, but none such tests are given to be Jewish. You are born Jewish, period.

God promised Abraham, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant."⁴¹ Being Jewish, then, is being a descendant of Abraham.

Biblically speaking, conversions to Judaism cannot exist. It is impossible to convert to Judaism, just as it is impossible to convert to being a Caucasian. Please understand that it is possible to turn and follow the Jewish God, as the example of Ruth shows. But it is impossible to become Jewish.

The book of *Ruth* records Ruth, a Moabitess who befriends and follows Naomi, a Jew. The rationale for Gentile conversion to Judaism is based on this story. However, that should not be, because it is true that Ruth does leave her pagan religion and says to Naomi, "for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God,"⁴² but just six verse later, Ruth is still called a "Moabitess" (Ruth 1:22), and throughout the book, 2:2, 6, 21; 4:5, 10, she holds that title, never called a "Jew" despite making a profession of faith in the Jewish God. The writer of *Ruth* knew, as we've seen, that being Jewish is something you're born into, and not something you can either gain or lose.

Fruchtenbaum concludes, "Biblically speaking, the Jewish people are a nation. Today, we are a scattered nation, but we are, nevertheless, a nation. We are a nation because we are descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The implication of this definition is that no matter what a Jew does he can never become a non-Jew; no matter what the individual Jew may believe or disbelieve he remains a Jew. A Negro who is a Christian, Moslem, or Buddhist remains a Negro. A Chinaman who becomes a Christian remains Chinese; a Chinaman who remains a Buddhist also remains Chinese. The same is true of the Jew, whether Orthodox, Reform, atheist, or communist. If a Jew chooses to believe that Jesus is his Messiah, he too remains a Jew. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can change the fact that he is a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."⁴³

It is interesting that the Bible does have a name for those who are not Jewish; they are called *Gentiles*. Simply, a Jew is someone who is physically descended from Abraham, where a Gentile is someone who is not. However, the Bible does have something to say about those like Ruth, Gentiles who decide to follow the Jewish God.

⁴¹Genesis 17:7

⁴²Ruth 1:16

⁴³Fruchtenbaum, p. 8

Fruchtenbaum writes:

"Acceptance of Judaism by a Gentile does not make him a Jew but a proselyte. We see the distinction between Jews and proselytes in four passages. The first is found in Matthew 23:15:

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is become so, ye make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves.

It should be noted that these evangelists for Judaism are not said to seek to make one a Jew, but to make a proselyte.

"A second passage is Acts 2:10, which is at the end of a list of place names showing the origins of the multitude who had come to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. The list ends with the phrase "both Jews and proselytes." Again, there is that same distinction.

"Acts 6:5 provides us with a third example:

And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaüs a *proselyte* of Antioch. (Italics added)

In this passage a distinction is made between Nicolaüs and the rest. The others were all Jews who had accepted Christ, but Nicolaüs was a proselyte, a Gentile convert to Judaism who had accepted Christ.

"The final example is found in Acts 13:43:

Now when the synagogue broke up, many of the Jews and of the devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who, speaking to them, urged them to continue in the grace of God.

Again the same distinction is clearly made. Gentile converts to Judaism are never given the title of Jews.⁴⁴"

The Biblical definition of a Jew and the Biblical definition of a Christian seem very different from each other. Judaism is defined by birth, where Christianity is defined by belief. A Jew is born a Jew; a Christian, at one point in his/her life, decided to become a Christian.

There is a Biblical objective definition for both "Judaism" and "Christianity" and the two do not conflict with each other.

Modern Judaism does in fact conflict with Christianity. Given that it didn't start out that way, let's explore, historically, how the split happened. Was it a result of non-Jewish thought inserted into the New Testament? Was it the result of the early church? Perhaps it was due to later historical events. In the next sections we shall research all of the above possibilities with analysis.

⁴⁴Fruchtenbaum, pp. 9-10; Scripture references are from the American Standard Version, 1901

Section Three • Historical Account I

*trying to explore how Christianity split apart from
first-century Judaism.*

Historian and University Professor Dr. Bruce Shelley writes, "Jesus was a Jew. He came from a Jewish family, he studied the Jewish law, he observed the Jewish religion. Any serious study of his life makes so clear that many people have asked if Jesus ever intended to create that company of followers we call 'the church'⁴⁵". This statement by Professor Shelley tells us that any serious study of Jesus' life will reveal his Judaism. Let us take up this challenge and explore the history of the events surrounding Jesus. This will better enable us to ask the question: How did Judaism and Christianity split from each other?

New Testament times started historically with the advent of John the Baptist. The historian Luke records that "Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness."⁴⁶ This is the first major event dividing Old Testament, or Hebrew Scripture times, from New Testament times. Something new was going on. But the important question to ask is this: was something *not* Jewish going on?

The Hebrew prophet Isaiah, writing approximately seven hundred years before John came on the scene⁴⁷ prophesied that there will be "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God."⁴⁸ The New Testament Gospel writer Luke interpreted that Hebrew prophecy to be concerning John son of Zacharias, or John the Baptist, because he quoted that same Isaiah passage himself in his Gospel (Luke 3:4-6). So it would not so appear that John's message was a non-Jewish message; after all, it came straight from the Hebrew prophet Isaiah.

But what about baptism itself? The Greek word used is βαπτίζω (*baptidzo*), which literally translates: "to dip"⁴⁹. Is it somehow non-Jewish to *dip* grown people in water as a symbolic gesture of their desire to be cleansed of their sins?

A good place to start would be to find out if there exists any pre-New Testament precedent to baptism. If so, then it would be helpful to know if it is a Jewish precedent. A study of Hebrew Scripture does not leave someone with many examples of baptism, if any. So we should ask: where did it come from?

Moishe Rosen writes in his book, *Y'Shua*: "Another use of symbolic purification by water became part of early Jewish tradition. It was immersion, or *tevilah*, for Gentile converts to Judaism... Although the only Biblical requirements for entrance into the covenant was circumcision, baptism became an added requisite. No one knows exactly when or by whom the requirements were changed to include baptism, but it was before the time of Jesus, as we learn from the debates on

⁴⁵Shelley, pp. 15-16

⁴⁶Luke 3:2

⁴⁷*The Ryrie Study Bible*, Moody Press, Chicago, IL, 1986. "Introduction to the Book of Isaiah," p. 916

⁴⁸Isaiah 40:3

⁴⁹Vine, p. 99

the subject of proselyte baptism between the rabbinic schools of Shammai and Hillel, both contemporaries of Jesus.⁵⁰

The facts do show that baptism was not a new idea thought up by John. It existed before the time of Jesus as a symbolic gesture of entering the Jewish covenant community. If John did anything new, he introduced baptism to Jewish people, to symbolically show their desire to be a part of the eternal covenant community. Remember, previously baptism existed and was practiced by Jewish people, but only for Gentiles wishing to follow the Jewish God. This new application may be considered new, but it did not cause the split between Judaism and the new Christianity. As we continue to explore the historical account, we will find other more glaring events and practices that answer our question more conclusively.

So if not John and his baptism, perhaps it was Jesus who went over the line, so to speak, and split Christianity from Judaism. It would not be a bad thesis to propose that it was the "author and finisher"⁵¹ himself who caused the split between Judaism and Christianity.

Jesus' public ministry began with his baptism by John.

And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.⁵²

Every indication here tells us that Jesus intended to remain Jewish. He stayed in Nazareth, a Jewish town, "where he had been brought up," and he went into the Synagogue, the Jewish place of worship. Significant is that he went on the Sabbath, "as his custom was." Jesus evidently had an amount of fame, because we are told that "there went out a fame of him through all the region round about." Again, where did he teach? On the street somewhere? In a private home? No. The scripture is very clear, "he went into the synagogue," the Jewish synagogue, and the reaction of the crowd? He was "glorified of all."

There are many who define Judaism as *not* believing in Jesus, yet Jesus did nothing in act or word that would separate him from his Judaism.

Jesus, in talking about the Hebrew Scriptures, believed that he was the fulfillment of those scriptures. Picture this, Jesus, the hometown favorite from Nazareth returns home after being baptized in the Jordan River by John. He had just spent some time preaching in Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel, and now he was back in Galilee in northern Israel. It was the Sabbath and we are told "there went out a fame of him through all the region round about." He was in the synagogue to read Scripture, as was his custom. Jesus opened the Scripture to the prophetic book of Isaiah, and opens further to a Messianic passage and read:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach

⁵⁰Rosen, Moishe, *Y'Shua, The Jewish Way to Say Jesus*, Moody Press, Chicago, IL, 1982, p. 79

⁵¹*Hebrews* 12:2

⁵²*Luke* 4:14-16

deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.⁵³

Imagine the Jewish audience listening to this. That Scripture was clearly Messianic, that is, a portion of Hebrew Scripture referring to the coming Jewish Messiah. Jesus confirmed his own claims to Messiahship by saying, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."⁵⁴ The reaction of the people tells us that they understood what he was claiming. The Scripture records that "all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong."⁵⁵ There is no doubt that Jesus not only claimed to be He who the passage was referring, but that the crowd clearly understood, reacting violently towards his claims.

Furthermore, Jesus publicly attested to being the Messiah in front of the Roman governor at his trial. "And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest."⁵⁶

This is also significant because Jesus did not forsake Judaism. "King of the Jews?" he could have said. "Forget them. I'm here to start a new religion. Forget Judaism!" But that's not at all what he said. What did he say? He very appropriately said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil."⁵⁷ And on another occasion he told the leading Rabbis, "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me."⁵⁸ This was a powerful testimony to these religious leaders who were so familiar with the Law of Moses.

Jesus had not said or done anything that would make him guilty of forsaking Judaism. In all cases, he only claimed to fulfill previously-existing religious doctrine.

Perhaps the most controversial words made by Jesus were his teaching on the new covenant. The Jews were a covenant people, so to bring up a *new* covenant sounds *non-Jewish*; but is it?

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the *new testament* in my blood, which is shed for you⁵⁹."

Now that the scene is set, we've read it, we know what he said, and what he taught, let's ask: is this teaching about the new covenant somehow *non-Jewish*?

Our answer is found in the Hebrew Scriptures. A student of Jewish ways at the time of Christ would be familiar with the thirty-first chapter of Jeremiah's prophecy. The Hebrew writer Jeremiah, writing approximately six hundred years before Messiah⁶⁰, taught, "Behold, the days come, saith

⁵³Luke 4:18-19

⁵⁴Luke 4:21

⁵⁵Luke 4:28-29

⁵⁶Matthew 27:11

⁵⁷Matthew 5:17

⁵⁸John 5:46

⁵⁹Luke 22:19-20 (*emphasis mine*)

⁶⁰The Ryrie Study Bible, Moody Press, Chicago, IL, 1986. "Introduction to the Book of Jeremiah," p. 1008

the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day *that* I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this *shall be* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people... for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.⁶¹"

Notice what is promised here: a new covenant. But why? What was wrong with the old one? The Scriptures say that nothing was wrong with the old covenant; the problem was in the fact that the people were unable or unwilling to follow it. Psalm 53 says "*there is none that doeth good. God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, that did seek God. Every one of them is gone back: they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.*"⁶² Clearly the Hebrew Scriptures confirm Jeremiah's prophecy, that God's people broke his covenant. It is in no way a contradiction to Judaism to talk about a new covenant.

But what about all that business about Jesus' body being broken for them?

It was in no way *non-Jewish* for Jesus to mention that, after all, it was the prophet Isaiah, who, talking about the coming Messiah, said that he would be "wounded for our transgressions, *he was* bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed."⁶³

Given the Hebrew precedent that a *new* covenant is coming due to the breaking of the old one; given that this new covenant would be about forgiveness, and that forgiveness comes through the suffering of the Messiah, and given Jesus' teaching about forgiveness, his claims of himself being the mediator of the *new* covenant is not at all *non-Jewish*. If Jesus actually is the promised Messiah, then there is absolutely nothing *non-Jewish* about his teaching about the new covenant. It is Biblical; it is Jewish! Jesus, correct or not, was convinced of being the Messiah. If so, then he is the fulfillment of Judaism. He did not come to forsake his Jewish roots, but rather to give them meaning.

But not only do Christians believe Jesus to be the Messiah, but also the second person of the Trinity. Now many Jewish people will object to this. According to Modern Judaism, Jesus cannot be God!

Given Deuteronomy 6:4⁶⁴, a very well-known verse recited in Temples weekly, it seems that Rabbi Stanley Greenberg's words are true when he says, "Monotheism, an uncompromising belief in one

⁶¹Jeremiah 31:31-33,34 (*emphasis mine*)

⁶²Psalm 53:1-3

⁶³Isaiah 53:5

⁶⁴"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." from "The Holy Scriptures," Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia

God, is the hallmark of the Hebrew Bible.⁶⁵ But I need to ask, is that *really* true? Let's look closer and use the original language as a tool to more accurate understanding.

"The main argument lies in the word 'one,' which is the Hebrew word, *echad*. A glance through the Hebrew text where the word is used elsewhere can quickly show that the word *echad* does not mean an absolute 'one' but a compound 'one.' For instance, in Genesis 1:5 the combination of evening and morning comprise one (*echad*) day. In Genesis 2:24 a man and a woman come together in marriage and the two "shall become one (*echad*) flesh." In Ezra 2:64 we are told that the whole assembly was as one (*echad*), though, of course, it was composed of numerous people. Ezekiel 37:17 provides a rather striking example where two sticks are combined to become one (*echad*). Thus, use of the word *echad* in Scripture shows it to be a compound and not an absolute unity.

"There is a Hebrew word that does mean an absolute unity and that is *yachid*, which is found in many Scripture passages, (Genesis 22:2,12; Judges 11:34; Psalm 22:21; 25:16; Proverbs 4:3; Jeremiah 6:26; Amos 8:10; Zechariah 12:10), the emphasis being on the meaning of "only." If Moses intended to teach God's absolute oneness as over a compound unity, this would have been a far more appropriate word.⁶⁶

We have seen that there is no Biblical contradiction to being both a Jew and a Christian. But, as we've seen in the introduction, there very definitely exists a distinction today. So the question still remains: How then did it happen? How did Judaism and Christianity split?

Well, often in history, the second generation somehow has the ability to ruin the hard work of the first. A Medieval example of this can be found in Shakespeare's *Henry* tetralogy. In the final scene of *Henry V*, we find the king at his highest point. He was the victor in a critical campaign against his country's enemy. Having defeated them, he became their king. He was also newly married to the princess of the land. Clearly, he was successful, but the text ends with the news that Henry's son will soon lose all that his father had worked for⁶⁷.

Given this trend in history, we must ask, is this what happened with the Christian church? It seems that John and Jesus, in establishing the new covenant, were not interested in removing Judaism. But what about the followers, the ones left to carry on the work started?

Historian Hugh J. Schonfield comments regarding the Jewish believers in relation to Jewish non-believers right after the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, "Their life remained unaltered; they worshipped in the synagogues with their fellow Jews, and were distinguished only by their adherence to the Galilean Wonder-Worker, whose claims they no doubt pressed as occasion offered."⁶⁸

⁶⁵Greenberg, Stanley, Rabbi of Temple Sinai in Philadelphia. As quoted by Fruchtenbaum in his article "Jewishness and the Trinity," *Issues Vol. 1*:8, Purple Pomegranate, San Francisco, CA, p. 3

⁶⁶Fruchtenbaum, "Jewishness and the Trinity," pp. 7-8; Scripture references are from the New King James Version of the Holy Bible (Thomas Nelson Publishers)

⁶⁷Shakespeare, William, *Henry V*, Epilogue, lines 9-12

⁶⁸Schonfield, Hugh J., *The History of Jewish Christianity: From the First to the Twentieth Century*, Duckworth, London, 1936, p. 19

In fact, closely studying the book of Acts, the New Testament book which records the history after the ascension of Jesus to the end of the ministry of the Apostle Paul, will show this comment by Schonfield true.

One of the first events in Acts is Pentecost. Pentecost was when God's Holy Spirit came down from heaven to live in the hearts of the believers⁶⁹. This must be it! That's not Jewish! But is it? Peter, the leader of the Jewish Christians, explained this by quoting the Jewish prophet Joel, who wrote:

And it shall come to pass afterward, *that* I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered.⁷⁰

Peter, like Jesus before him and John before him, was able to appeal to Hebrew Scripture to back up everything he taught. If what Peter was preaching at Pentecost was *non-Jewish*, then the Jewish prophet Joel must also be *non-Jewish*, a statement no Rabbi would agree to. In fact, it is significant that Peter opened up his speech by addressing the crowd: "Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem."⁷¹ Right from the beginning of this new covenant movement, it was clear that it was a movement established by Jews, based on Jewish Scriptures, and taught to Jewish people. In fact, a council had to be formed to discuss whether or not non-Jewish people, or *Gentiles*, could truthfully be followers of Jesus without being Jewish.

This we find in Acts chapter 10. For the purpose of context, I should explain that at this early point in the history of the new covenant church, it was actually against Jewish law for a Jew to associate himself with a Gentile or to visit him⁷². But Peter was invited to the house of Cornelius, a Roman, a *Gentile!* Peter was now in a tricky situation; on the one hand, custom told him not to be in the presence of non-Jewish people, but on the other hand, they honestly wanted to know about the Jewish God.

Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, I say, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the land of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom they slew and hanged on a tree: Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly; Not

⁶⁹Acts 2:2-4

⁷⁰Joel 2:28-32

⁷¹Acts 2:14

⁷²Acts 10:28

to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead. To him give all the prophets⁷³ witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that *on the Gentiles also* was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost⁷⁴.

It is clear that Peter in no way compromised the Judaism of Jesus. It was as if his attitude could be paraphrased as: *hey, Jesus is a Jew for Jews, but if the Gentiles want to be included, that's okay too.*

Jesus Himself taught this same way. Matthew records that a Samaritan woman, a Gentile, approached him to heal her daughter. His answer was very clear: "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel⁷⁵." Jesus eventually did heal the girl because of her faith, but it was only after making it clear that Jesus was sent to save first Israel. Even the Apostle Paul, a man who proudly called himself a "Hebrew of the Hebrews⁷⁶" writes in his letter to the church in Rome that the Gospel is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the [Gentile]⁷⁷."

With that we segue to discuss the Apostle Paul. Historian Bruce Shelley writes: "No man-other than Jesus, of course- has shaped Christianity more than Saul (or, as Christians came to say, Paul, a name more familiar to the ear of Greek-speaking people).⁷⁸" It was Paul who wrote thirteen of the twenty-nine New Testament books. It was Paul who spread Christianity throughout Asia, establishing more churches than any of the other Apostles. So let's ask of Paul what we've asked of John, Jesus, and Peter: Did his teachings conflict with Judaism?

Very practically, this is the easiest to answer because Paul wrote so much and was so clear in his articulation of his theology. If he had plans to somehow splinter Judaism from this New Covenant worship, it would be evident in his writings. So let's find the answer to the question: is it evident in his writings?

Paul's letter to the church at Rome begins this way:

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead⁷⁹

⁷³Here, of course, this is referring to the Hebrew Prophets, as mentioned many times in this thesis.

⁷⁴Acts 10:34-45 (*emphasis mine*)

⁷⁵Matthew 15:24

⁷⁶Philippians 3:5

⁷⁷Romans 1:16 (*emphasis mine*)

⁷⁸Shelley, p. 32

⁷⁹Romans 1:1-4

Here Paul tells five significant details about the message he was teaching. First, it was "promised afore by [God's] prophets." This is significant because like John, Jesus and Peter, Paul's theology was strongly based on Jewish Scripture. In fact, the second point is that this gospel is promised "in the holy scriptures." Given that Paul wrote to the Romans circa 58 A.D.⁸⁰, and the first New Testament Canon was not established until ca 140 A.D.⁸¹, and a full New Testament "official" canon until 397 A.D.⁸², then one can safely conclude that what Paul meant when he said "holy scripture," was in fact the thirty-nine books of the recognized Hebrew Canon. Paul was not departing at all from Jewish Scripture; on the contrary, he depended on it.

Point three about the Gospel is that it is about God's Son. Well, what about His Son? Point four is that God's Son would be a descendant of David. This is of strong significance since it was well known that the Messiah would come from the ancestry of David. (Psalm 132:11; Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15; Isaiah 11:10). This is also important because Jesus was descended from David (Matthew 1:1-16, Luke 3:23-38). The fifth point is that all of these claims are proved true by Jesus' resurrection from the dead. Referring to his future resurrection, Jesus himself in three places called it the "sign of Jonah,⁸³" once again depending on Hebrew Scriptures for the significance.

Referring to his message, Paul says that "it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the [Gentile]⁸⁴." Please note that in no way did Paul back off from the position that the gospel of Christ came first for the Jew. This is reminiscent of the story discussed earlier when the Samaritan (Gentile) woman wanted healing from Jesus and he replied that he came first for the lost sheep of Israel (Matthew 15:24). Paul's position in the letter to the Romans is a peculiar one to the twentieth century reader. To us, Christianity is a *Gentile thing*. How odd it is for us today to hear of a Jew who trusts Christ. It was in fact the other way around in Biblical times. Listen to the language Paul uses:

Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith⁸⁵.

Paul is actually defending that it's okay for Gentiles to believe in Jesus too. Over the past 2,000 years this has completely reversed!

The worst accusation that could be made against Paul is that he was including Gentiles into the things of Judaism. But even that is not new! The Jewish prophet Isaiah, writing hundreds of years before Paul, prophesied this about God's plan: "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth⁸⁶."

Even in Paul's argument that we are justified by faith and not by works, Paul uses the example of the Patriarch Abraham to prove his point. Paul devoted a whole chapter to Abraham (Romans 4). I conclude that there is no departure from Judaism in Paul's theology.

⁸⁰Ryrie, "Introduction to the Letter of Paul to the Romans," p. 1541

⁸¹McDowell, Josh, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict: Volume 1*, Here's Life Publishers, Inc., 1990, p. 37

⁸²Ryrie, "How We Got Our Bible," p. 1783

⁸³Matthew 12:39; 16:4; Luke 11:29-30

⁸⁴Romans 1:16 (*emphasis mine*)

⁸⁵Romans 3:29-30

⁸⁶Isaiah 49:6

If there were any doubts about Paul's loyalty to his Judaism, he testified about himself, "Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee⁸⁷." Paul unashamedly called himself a "Hebrew of the Hebrews." If there were a contradiction to being both Jewish and believing in Jesus as Messiah, then Paul was unaware of that contradiction. All who study Paul's life will find him a Jewish Apostle preaching the Jewish Gospel to both Jewish and Gentile listeners, about the Jewish Messiah.

We must conclude that there is no teaching in the New Testament which contradicts Biblical Jewish teaching.

This conclusion reached, we have failed to settle the matter and answer our question. It seems that all the major teachers of the new covenant based their teachings on Jewish Hebrew Scripture.

In the next section we shall examine the history of the new covenant church that stretches past the chronology recorded in the Scriptures. In the next section, we shall examine the Jewish revolt against Rome in the first century, A.D., events leading to Nicea, various creeds formulated centuries after Christ, and Rabbinic interpretations of these events.

⁸⁷ *Philippians 3:5*

Section Four • Historical Account II

*trying to explore how Christianity split apart from
first-century Judaism.*

It is important at this point to discuss the events around A.D. 70. It was at this time that the Roman Empire broke through and destroyed Jerusalem. It cannot be understated that the destruction of the Temple had many strong lasting effects, many of which are critical for us to adequately answer our question.

All of Judaism centered upon Jerusalem and the Temple in that city. It represented the heart of God's Promised Land. It was there where Abraham was lead to sacrifice his son Isaac (Genesis 22:2), where David ruled as king (2 Samuel 5:4), where Solomon built the first Temple of God (1 Kings 6:14), where Nehemiah rebuilt the Temple (Ezra 6:3), where Jesus taught (Matthew 26:55), was tried (Luke 22:66), crucified (John 19:18), was resurrected and ascended (Romans 1:4). Without a doubt, Jerusalem was the center of the new covenant church. But that all changed forever when the Roman Empire tore its way through the city.

"The tragic, bloody war that followed cost more lives than any previous conflict. The Jews held out against overwhelming odds for four years, but they could not withstand the power of Rome. In A.D. 70 the Emperor Vespasian's forces, led by Titus, broke through the walls of Jerusalem, looted and burned the temple and carried off the spoils to Rome. The Holy City was totally destroyed. In the reprisals that followed, every synagogue in Palestine was burned to the ground.⁸⁸"

The fall of Jerusalem had two consequences that explain how Judaism and Christianity split from each other.

The first consequence is that the rebellion of Israel against Rome significantly placed a wedge between Jewish unbelievers in Jesus and Jewish believers in Jesus. Here's how.

The early Jewish believers would have been very familiar with Jesus' words:

And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.⁸⁹.

Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, a Jewish believer living today in Israel, comments about the significance of this scripture: "According to this prophesy, the temple and Jerusalem were both destroyed. The Hebrew Christians were told that when they saw armies surrounding Jerusalem,

⁸⁸Shelley, p. 36

⁸⁹Luke 21:20-24

they were to flee. For this reason these Jewish believers refused to take up arms against the Romans, not because they wished to betray the Jewish cause, but because they felt bound to obey the words of Jesus of Nazareth. Now the sign Christ gave, the surrounding of Jerusalem by armies, had arrived. So when the Romans temporarily lifted the siege in A.D. 66, the Hebrew Christians took the opportunity to flee to the city of Pella in the Transjordan. Soon after that in A.D. 68, the Romans returned and besieged Jerusalem again, and in A.D. 70 Jerusalem and the temple were both destroyed.

"It is at this time that the term *Meshumod* or *Meshumodim* began to be applied by the Jewish community to Hebrew Christianity, and it is still used today. It comes from the Hebrew word meaning to destroy, but it is used in the sense of traitor.⁹⁰"

The situation was clearly a complicated one. The Hebrew Christians had no intention of splitting from the other non-believing Jews. It's important to note that the Jewish believers had no problem fighting alongside the other Jews, as I shall demonstrate a little later on. But in this case, they saw that they needed to obey first their King and listen to His words. Jesus said to flee, and so they fled.

I personally have been called a *Meshumod* when I was in Israel. There is a sting to that. In those words are found the wedge that was beginning to form between Hebrew Christians and other Hebrews. This wedge will prove throughout history to pull apart the two groups more and more, until eventually, there is almost no similarity between the two. After A.D. 70, a Jew was a traitor to believe in Jesus.

I have to admit that when uncovering this in my research, I was a bit surprised. My original hypothesis was that the split would not be evident till later in history, perhaps at the time of Constantine in the fourth century. This, however, was not the case. As early as A.D. 70, the split had started, and it intensified.

The Hebrew Christians, on the other hand, had no intention of splitting away from the other Hebrews. The historian Irenaeus observes of these Jewish Christians: "They practice circumcision, persevere in the obedience of those customs which are enjoined by the Law, and are so Judaic in their mode of life that they even adore Jerusalem as if it were the house of God.⁹¹" It seems from the practices of the Hebrew Christians that they had no desire to leave Judaism. Instead they had seen themselves as the logical fulfillment of so many prophecies of which they were all so aware.

But very closely after the destruction of the Temple, events took place which cinched the rejection of Hebrew Christianity by the mainstream Judaism of the time.

In speaking about events that took place from A.D. 132 - 135, Fruchtenbaum comments, "The events of these three or four years were to change the whole course of Hebrew Christianity for a long time to come, to the detriment of Hebrew Christian coexistence with the Jewish community. These were the years of the second Jewish revolt against Rome under Bar Cochba.

⁹⁰Fruchtenbaum, p. 39

⁹¹Barring-Gould, S. *Lost and Hostile Gospels*, p. 35 as quoted by Hugh J. Schonfield in *The History of Jewish Christianity*, p. 54

"When the revolt first broke out, the Hebrew Christians joined the fighting with their Jewish brethren, identifying themselves nationally since this was a national cause. This time the limitation that kept the Hebrew Christians from the first revolt was no longer applicable; so they took up their swords and rallied under Bar Cochba's banner. As long as the banner was strictly political and national, the Hebrew Christians had no problem. If things had continued in this pattern throughout the whole course of the revolt, the history of Hebrew Christians might have been radically different.

"But as the revolt progressed, Rabbi Akiba made the sad blunder of declaring Bar Cochba the Jewish Messiah. From this point on, the revolt was lead under the messianic banner of Bar Cochba, and the element of religion now entered in. This switch of policy forced the Hebrew Christians to pull out of the war since they refused to acknowledge Bar Cochba as the Jewish Messiah.⁹²"

This, I believe, gives us much insight into finding an answer to our question. The Hebrew Christians were willing to fight, as they had during the beginning stages of the Bar Cochba's revolt. But on two counts, the Hebrew Christians pulled out when it compromised their religious beliefs and loyalties to the Messiah Jesus. Of that, they would not compromise, and for that, the Jewish community would not forgive. Years before Nicea, a split was growing.

The *Talmud* is a series of rabbinic writing compiled in the first few centuries after Christ. They serve not only as a commentary on the Hebrew Scriptures, but also serve as the exclusive method for Rabbi's to interpret the text.

In the Talmud, one can clearly find out the Rabbis' attitude towards Hebrew Christians. I'd like to include one of the strongest that I've found. I believe the strength of the story will clearly demonstrate the split that was well established even at this early time, many years before Nicea.

"A Man shall have no dealings with the heretics, nor be cured by them, even for the sake of an hour of life... The grandson of Rabbi Joshua ben Levi had something stuck in his throat. There came a man and whispered to him in the name of Jesus, and he recovered. When the healer came out, Rabbi Joshua said to him, What was it you whispered to him? He said to him, A certain word. He said to him, It had been better for him that he had died rather than that. (Shabbath 14b)⁹³"

In this example, I think it is blatantly clear that the Rabbis, even at this early time, held strong opinions against the Hebrew Christians. The belief that it would be better to die than to be healed by a believer in Jesus is a strong opinion, and it shows the power of the consequences of some of the battles that happened after A.D. 70. The Bar Cochba revolt did much to permanently sever relations between Jewish Christians and mainstream Judaism.

Earlier I mentioned that the destruction of the Temple had at least two lasting consequences. The second consequence was more severe in its severing damage.

It is important to understand that the destruction of the Temple by the Romans changed Judaism of the time. It is a huge understatement to say that due to improper false-assumptions about the Messiah, many Jews at the time were let down by this event. Due to Messianic prophesies like

⁹²Fruchtenbaum, p. 42 (*emphasis mine*)

⁹³as quoted by Hugh J. Schonfield in *The History of Jewish Christianity*, pp. 75-81

Genesis 49:10⁹⁴, many Jews believed that the Messiah would come to rule and remove the oppressive tyranny of the Romans. They thought the Messiah would come in triumphant victory. They expected deliverance from the Roman oppressors!

In contrast, not only is this alleged Messiah Jesus dead, but then Rome came in and decimated the object of God's religion - the Temple! "Clearly Jesus could not be the Messiah," the Jews at the time no doubt reasoned. But the problem was not with Jesus, but with their false assumptions about what he was supposed to do. We've already discussed Isaiah 53 and many other Old Testament passages that show the Messiah as a suffering servant who would die for his people, only to come again *later* to triumph and conquer.

This misunderstanding is neither insignificant, nor trivial. This misunderstanding forms a major stumbling block to Jews about Christianity and the person of Jesus Christ to this day.

"The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple and the resulting dispersion of the Jews from the Land brought about a national and religious crisis in the Jewish world. Two questions were raised that had to be answered: (1) how can Judaism, deprived of the Temple and the sacrificial system, survive religiously? and (2) how can the Jewish people, scattered in a hostile Gentile world, survive nationally? The solutions were developed over a period of years: (1) biblical Judaism was set aside and replaced by Rabbinical Judaism, the rabbi replacing the priest as the leader of Jewish life, and (2) the synagogue became the center of Jewish life.⁹⁵"

It doesn't take long studying the Gospel accounts to become familiar with two first century sects of Judaism. The first is descended from the Levites of the Hebrew Scriptures. These were the priests, the class responsible for the religious life of the Jewish people, and those who took care of the Temple. They are known as the Sadducees.

The second sect was the legalistic Pharisees. This sect was constantly ridiculed in the Scriptures for placing more emphasis on the actions they performed rather than the intent behind those actions. Throughout the gospels, Jesus went out of his way to show the hypocrisy of this fallen sect.

"Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men *are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as *his* eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted⁹⁶."

Considering the low-status of tax collectors in first century Jewish society, this was harsh criticism against the Pharisees.

⁹⁴"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."

⁹⁵Fruchtenbaum, p. 40

⁹⁶Luke 18:10-14

It's important to note, that with the destruction of the Temple, the Sadducees fell. With the extinction of the Essenes (a third minor Jewish sect) by the Romans, the legalistic Pharisees became the only remnant left of Judaism.

It was at this *specific point in history* when Biblical Judaism died, Rabbinic Judaism taking over out of the traditions of the Pharisees. This event has shaped and redirected mainstream Judaism away from Hebrew Christianity more than any other. It was at this point that Judaism veered off to a new direction, away from Scripture, and towards human-made traditions based on false assumptions.

In contrast to the Pharisees, the new Hebrew Christians were followers of the Hebrew Scriptures. They believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the fulfillment of those scriptures. The new Rabbinic Judaism was harshly against the Hebrew Christians for reasons already outlined.

Historian Arnold Fruchtenbaum comments, "And so Rabbinical Judaism was born. This new form was unacceptable to Hebrew Christians because of their faith and conviction that Jesus the Messiah, by his substitutionary death and resurrection, fulfilled the Mosaic Law and brought in a new era of grace. The battles raged so that in A.D. 90, to the *Shmoneh Esreh*, the Eighteen Benedictions, was added a nineteenth aimed directly at Hebrew Christians and forced them out of the synagogue:

Let there be no hope for the apostates and let all the sectaries perish in a moment.

But even during the controversies after the destruction of Jerusalem, the Hebrew Christians continued to live in the midst of other Jews.⁹⁷"

The history of Hebrew Christianity and how it grew lined up with that of Gentile Christianity. Author Ray Pritz comments about the Hebrew Christians, "What we have seen of their doctrines lines up well with the developing christological doctrines of the greater catholic⁹⁸ Church. The sect seems to have been basically Trinitarian. They accepted the virgin birth and affirmed the deity of Jesus. They also seem to have had an embryonic, developing doctrine of the Holy Spirit, one which was no more nor indeed less developed than that of the greater Church at a comparable stage.⁹⁹"

The next critical event that contributed to the already sizable conflict between Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism was the public *conversion*¹⁰⁰ of the Roman Emperor Constantine to Christianity in the fourth century.

Professor Shelley writes, "The Emperor Constantine is one of the major figures of Christian history. After his conversion Christianity moved swiftly from the seclusion of the catacombs to the prestige of the palaces. The movement started the fourth century as a persecuted minority; it ended the century as the established religion of the empire.¹⁰¹"

⁹⁷Fruchtenbaum, pp. 40-41

⁹⁸"Catholic" refers to "universal," not to the Roman Catholic Church, which did not exist at the time.

⁹⁹Pritz, Ray, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity: From the End of the New Testament Period Until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century*, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1988, pp. 108-109

¹⁰⁰ The sincerity of Constantine's conversion is questionable.

¹⁰¹Shelley, p. 103

This once persecuted religion in an instant and by the word of the Emperor not only became legal, but required! This quick switch in power did much to destroy the Jewish roots of Christianity, as well as add more damage to the split between the two groups. We've seen that as soon as three hundred years before this event, there was already a huge split between Hebrew Christianity and this new Rabbinic Judaism. After Constantine it grew worse.

Professor Shelley writes, "Prior to Constantine's conversion, the church consisted of convinced believers. Now [after Constantine's conversion] many who came were politically ambitious, religiously disinterested, and still half-rooted in paganism. This threatened to produce not only shallowness and permeation by pagan superstitions, but also the secularization and misuse of religion for political purposes¹⁰²."

As always, Fruchtenbaum has much to say on the subject. He writes, "The church, now becoming a power in the Roman Empire, issued special professions of faith for Jews wishing to convert. This required not only that they renounce Rabbinical Judaism, but that they repudiate their very Jewishness as well, even to the point of adopting Gentile names.¹⁰³"

The Historian Hugh J. Schonfield comments, "As in twentieth-century Germany under Nazi rule, the forth-century Church authorities felt that isolation of their adherents from Jewish influence was the best policy to adopt, and they set to work with zeal to build again the middle wall of partition that had been broken down. East and West Church Councils met and promulgated strange decrees which in their terms throw an interesting light on the good relations which must have subsisted between many a Christian community and its Jewish neighbors.

"The so-called *Apostolic Canons* decreed:

"If any clergyman shall enter into a synagogue of Jews or heretics (i.e., Nazarenes) to pray, let him be disposed. If a layman do so, let him be excommunicated¹⁰⁴...

"At Elvira (Elibris) near Granada in Spain, nineteen bishops, thirty-six presbyters, and more deacons, met in 324 A.D. to enact, among other matters:

"...If any person, whether clerical or one of the faithful, shall take food with the Jews, he is to abstain from our communion, that he may learn to amend¹⁰⁵."¹⁰⁶

Of course these forth-century creeds are not based on Scriptural teaching. Christianity erred in a similar way to Judaism. Where Judaism broke from its Biblical base and conformed to traditions made by man, so too did Christianity hold to man-made creeds, based not on the Holy and inspired Word of God.

Due to non-Biblical practices, by both Jews and Christians, the wedge between the two grew even wider until there was almost nothing in common between the two religions, and a woman in the twentieth century can ask me, "Mark, how can you be Jewish and Christian at the same time?"

¹⁰²Shelley, p. 110

¹⁰³Fruchtenbaum, pp. 46-47

¹⁰⁴Canon 64

¹⁰⁵Canon 50

¹⁰⁶Schonfield, pp. 103-104

An excerpt from a profession of faith from the Church of Constantinople:

"As a preliminary to his acceptance as a catechumen, a Jew 'must confess and denounce verbally the whole Hebrew people, and forthwith declare that with a whole heart and sincere faith he desires to be received among the Christians. Then he must renounce openly in the church all Jewish superstition, the priest saying, and he, or his sponsor if he is a child, replying in the words:

'I renounce all customs, rites, legalisms, unleavened breads and sacrifices of lambs of the Hebrews, and all other feasts 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 above all I renounce Antichrist, whom all the Jews await in the figure and form of Christ and God.¹⁰⁷¹⁰⁸

More creeds like these can be found in Park's book, on pages 392 - 400.

One must wonder how these people could justify "in one word, I renounce absolutely everything Jewish" when the author and finisher of the faith¹⁰⁹ said Himself, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil¹¹⁰." As my own father, Leonard R. Sohmer, very insightfully commented after reading through the gospel of Mark, "Jesus didn't come to start a new religion." These un-Biblical creeds did much to split Christianity from Judaism.

"We have now to consider a new type of Jewish Christian, willing or unwilling convert to Catholicism, having no relationship with the old Nazarene groups, and in many cases as bigoted and intolerant in their attitude towards them and the Jewish people as were those of Gentile birth.¹¹¹"

Schonfield also writes, "The forth century dawned full of promise for the Christian faith... The Emperor Constantine had submitted to the grace of baptism. But for those who still clung to the observances of the Law of Moses, whether Nazarene or Pharisee, that day was one of darkness and gloom. The era of persecution by Pagan Romans was passing away, only to be succeeded by the more terrible and prolonged persecutions by Christian Romans. Incited thereto by a vengeful and fanatical clergy drunk with liberty and power, Constantine commenced to pursue a policy of cruel restriction against the Jews, embodied in a series of edicts, which the populace were not slow to construe as a policy bordering on extirpation.

¹⁰⁷Assemani, *Cod. Lit.*, I, p. 105

¹⁰⁸Parks, James, *The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue: A Study in the Origins of Anti-Semitism*, Meridan Books, The Word Publishing Company, Cleveland and New York, The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1961, p. 397

¹⁰⁹Hebrews 12:2

¹¹⁰Matthew 5:17

¹¹¹Schonfield, p. 99

We desire to have nothing in common with this so hated people, for the Redeemer has marked out another path for us. To this we will keep, and be free from the disgraceful association with this people.

So ran the imperial will. Massacres became frequent, and burning synagogues a Christian recreation.¹¹²"

How did Judaism and Christianity split? It was not Biblical inconsistencies between the Old and New Testaments, nor was it "new" teachings of the apostles of the new covenant church that caused the rift between Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity. The rift was caused and fueled by Judaism straying away from her Biblical roots, embracing Rabbinic Judaism, and Christianity forgetting her Jewish roots. Later historical events, such as the Crusades, Inquisition, Holocaust, etc. contributed further to the split. This split began to occur soon after the destruction of Jerusalem, and continues on to this day.

However, the person who believes Judaism to be a contradiction to Christianity is operating on false assumptions, and improper knowledge of the groups. I concede that Modern, man-made Judaism does conflict with Christianity, but the Judaism of the Bible, the Judaism of the Word of God, is in no way in conflict with Christianity; on the contrary, it depends on it.

The book of Revelation closes the Scriptural cannon with Jesus warning his people that He knows "the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but *are* the synagogue of Satan¹¹³." And again He warns those "which say they are Jews, and are not¹¹⁴." This is significant because it demonstrates that Jesus was not trying to end Judaism. Even at the end of the Bible, he refers to true believers as 'Jews.' This is significant because the Bible also refers to true believers as "Christians" (Acts 26:28, 1 Peter 4:16). It is clear that Biblically speaking, there is no contradiction to being both a Jew and a Christian. The contradiction only becomes an issue when people on both sides abandon the Scriptures and depend on their own traditions and creeds.

¹¹²Schonfield, p. 97

¹¹³Revelation 2:9

¹¹⁴Revelation 3:9

Section Five • Conclusion

*closing thoughts about how Christianity and Judaism split.
particular thought given to how this affects us today.*

It is clear that Christianity does in fact contradict with Modern Judaism. Equally clear, however, is that Modern Judaism is merely a shadow of true Judaism, having strayed far over the years from the authoritative Scriptures.

Biblical Judaism is defined by those who are physically descended from a man who God set apart; this man being Abraham. As promised, Abraham is the father of a great nation (Genesis 12:2¹¹⁵). Modern day Judaism has departed from Biblical Judaism, being formed by one particular first-century sect, the Pharisees, and further developed by Rabbinic writings known as the *Talmud* and the *Mishna*. These influences removed Scripture as the final authority in Judaism today.

Christianity is not blameless, however. Christianity forgot her Jewish roots. This was due in large part to the fact that the religion became a political tool, leaders being more interested in personal gain than religious accuracy.

Biblically, there are four types of people, each type derived from two different categories of people. The first category is ancestry. A person is either *Jewish* (physically descended from Abraham) or *Gentile* (not physically descended from Abraham). The second category is belief. A person is either a Christian (believes the points outlines in section two) or a non-Christian (rejects the beliefs outlined in section two). Given these two categories, the four types of people logically follow. They are: Jewish Christian, Jewish non-Christian, Gentile Christian¹¹⁶, or Gentile non-Christian.

The big problem we have today is that the word 'Gentile' is often used synonymously with the word 'Christian'. Thus, a Jew often is misled to think that he must become Gentile to believe in Jesus. This, of course, is absurd! This thought is based on two thousand years of history splitting Judaism from Christianity. As we have seen, upon careful study, there is no reason why a Jew cannot be a Christian and remain Jewish.

Being Jewish is a factor of birth, where being Christian is a factor of belief. There exists no contradiction.

We've also seen that just as one cannot lose his Jewishness, so too can one not lose his Gentileness. But this should never be a reason for a Jew to boast. Being Jewish does not make one more highly esteemed in God's eyes. God sees us all the same way: Jew or Gentile. The Apostle Paul appropriately asks, "*Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also*¹¹⁷." Later Paul defended the rights of Gentiles to be children of God when he argued that "the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the [Gentiles] through faith, preached before

¹¹⁵"And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing"

¹¹⁶Biblically, "Gentile Christian" is synonymous with "proselyte."

¹¹⁷*Romans* 3:29

the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed¹¹⁸." Please notice that Paul based his argument on Hebrew Scripture.

The Gentile who trusts and follows the Jewish Messiah should feel secure that he is equally loved and significant. "For there is no difference between the Jew and the [Gentile]: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved¹¹⁹."

Conversely, the Jew who rejects the Jewish Messiah needs to know the reality of his situation. "For they *are* not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children¹²⁰." Paul likens his fellow Jews, those physically descended from Abraham, to branches on an olive tree. He says that due to their unbelief, they have been cut off, while other branches not originally from the tree have been grafted in. Here, of course, he is talking about Gentile Christians. But Paul does offer hope to Jews who have been cut off for their rejection of Christ: "And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graff them in again¹²¹."

Both Hebrew and New Testaments consistently talk in such a way that there is no contradiction to be both a Jew and a Christian.

In the first century there was a revolt lead by Bar Cochba which alienated the Hebrew Christian community from the rest of the Hebrew Community. With the destruction of the Temple as well as forth century creeds, much was done to damage relations further. This continued until today most Jews merely know that they must never embrace anything Christian, but they do not understand why. It is not unlike a multi-generational vendetta. Eventually, the two generations no longer remember why they're disagreeing; they just know that they're supposed to disagree. So it is with Hebrew Christianity.

Hebrew Christianity has existed as long as Christianity itself. All of the writers of the New Testament (with the possible exception of Luke¹²²) were Jewish. They based their teaching on Jewish teaching, and taught in Jewish Synagogues. Dr. Jacob Gartenhaus, founder and president of the International Board of Jewish Missions, writes, "the Jews are not in any way, or for any cause, excluded from the universal intention and comprehensive purpose of the gospel and Christ's commission.¹²³"

The question every Jewish person needs to wrestle with is the same question every Gentile needs to wrestle with, and that is: Who is Jesus Christ? You may recall that earlier I cited Peter as answering that question by saying that Jesus is "the Christ, the Son of the living God¹²⁴." This is true for both Jews and Gentiles.

¹¹⁸Galatians 3:8

¹¹⁹Romans 10:12-13

¹²⁰Romans 9:6-7

¹²¹Romans 11:23

¹²²Whether or not Luke was a Jew or a Gentile is a topic of debate among Biblical Scholars.

¹²³Gartenhaus, Jacob, *Famous Hebrew Christians*, Baker Book House Company, 1979, p. 27

¹²⁴Matthew 16:16

The issue is: can one be both Jewish and Christian? According to today's society: No. But any Jewish person who honestly looks at the Scriptures and sees that they were fulfilled by a Rabbi from Nazareth approximately two thousand years ago can feel very secure in the fact that he is still Jewish and has not become a Gentile. My hope is that some of the ignorance we carry will be lost in light of the research shared in this thesis. I also hope that any confusion and prejudices by any Jewish or Gentile readers will be forsaken. Judaism and Christianity never did start out as a contradiction.

Author and Philosopher Edith Schaeffer writes, "People act as if Christianity is a new religion which just sprang up two thousand years ago, but it is not new, it is simply a continuation. It is a fulfillment. It is a next step. It is the proof that the covenant with Abraham is true. It is Jewish.¹²⁵" Judaism is defined by ancestry, where Christianity is defined by belief. It has only become a contradiction today to be both Jewish and Christian because we've strayed away from the Biblical definitions. I hope for our sake that we will find a way back. I conclude as the Apostle Paul did, that the gospel of Christ is "the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; *to the Jew first, and also to the [Gentile]*¹²⁶."

¹²⁵Schaeffer, Edith, *Christianity Is Jewish*, Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, IL, 1975, p. 121

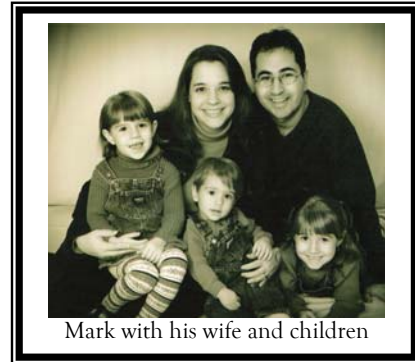
¹²⁶Romans 1:16 (*emphasis mine*)

About the Author

Mark Edward Sohmer is a Jew who is very proud of his Jewish heritage. At the age of 20, he was converted to Christianity, and is now a Jewish Christian.

This thesis was originally written as part of his graduation requirements for the Honor's Program of the University of New Hampshire in the Spring of 1995. It was revised and updated in 2005.

Mark lives with his wife and children in New Hampshire, where he seeks to "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18.)



Mark with his wife and children

Mark's story of how he came to know the Jewish Messiah can be read at: <http://mystory.sohmer.net>

Mark welcomes comments at mark@sohmer.net