

ABRAHAM OUR FATHER, JERUSALEM OUR MOTHER

A Biblical Analysis of Judaism & the Modern State of Israel
in Relation to the Church of Jesus Christ

by

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There are certain Bible phrases which have a marked tendency to cause controversy and disagreement. For example, "...and all his household" (Acts 16:34; 18:8) has spearheaded the disagreement about baptism; the phrase "and bound him for a thousand years" (Rev.20:2) has led to division concerning the approach to the time of the end; the words "God our Saviour who desires all men to be saved" (1 Tim.2:3-4) have created controversy over the concept of universal grace; and a crassly literal understanding of the Lord Jesus' words "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood" (Jn.6:54) has given rise to the doctrine of transubstantiation. Such phrases have divided the professing Church throughout history — not because of any lack of perspicuity on the Holy Spirit's part, but because of the faulty hermeneutics of fallen men and women.

Another phrase which could be added to those above is "And so all Israel shall be saved" (Rom.11:25). Among evangelicals today, a common interpretation of this verse is that shortly before the end of this age there will be a global mass conversion of all living Jews according to the flesh. The existence since 1948 of the earthly nation Israel in the Middle East is therefore seen by many as part of the buildup to this phenomenon.

Correspondingly, as the year 2000 approaches there is an enormous interest throughout the Church in the nation Israel and in Jewishness. Indeed, in many cases one may call it an obsession. We seem to be witnessing today a massive crusade of Judaizing which is at least as pernicious as that which the Apostle Paul so forcefully opposed in his ministry. In this article, our purpose is to examine these ideas in the light of the clear teaching of Scripture. It is our firm belief that the failure to rightly divide the Word of God has led to a wrongful division of the people of God in the Gospel Age, who are called to be one flock under one Shepherd. We plead with our readers to adopt a Berean attitude (Acts 17:10-11) by checking all our Bible references and carefully weighing up our teachings against the Scriptures.

"Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all". (Rom.4:16)

"For these are the two covenants: the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage, which is Hagar — for this Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children — but the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all". (Gal.4:24-26)

INTRODUCTION

Shortly before December 25th 1997 a huge frontpage headline appeared in one of the UK's quality national newspapers which read: "It Never Happened". Above this headline was a portrait of the Manger Scene at the birth of Christ. The article, by the anti-Christian writer A.N. Wilson, set out to disprove the historicity of the Incarnation. In the wake of this conceit, there was no clamour from clergymen, no bellow from bishops, not a peep from the proletariat. It was a blasphemous statement; but it was "politically correct".

Now imagine what would have occurred if, above that headline, "*It Never Happened*", in the place of the portrait of the Manger Scene, there was a portrait of Mohammed making his hegira to Medina, or of Gautama Siddhartha Buddha sitting under a Banyan tree in Bihar, or of Arjuna and Krishna conversing elatedly in their chariot, or of David Ben Gurion being sworn in as first Prime Minister of the state of Israel in 1948. Imagine the huge chorus of outrage that would have ensued from the assorted packs of plebeian hordes — not to mention the outcry from the massed ranks of mortally offended interdenominational clergymen and their bishops.

One may utter the foulest blasphemy against Jesus Christ, but one must never cast the slightest aspersion against any of the world's religious movements. Such is the global agenda of political correctness in the religious field. It has now also become the agenda of the ecumenical movement, under the guiding hand of that socio-political organisation, the World Council of Churches. However, this same gag on exposing false religion has even spread to the heart of evangelicalism. For example, at one time, Bible-based Christians regarded both Roman Catholicism and post-Calvary Judaism as false religions, from which people needed delivering through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. However, in recent years, many evangelicals have come to regard Roman Catholicism as a mere denomination in the true Church and have also become protective of the present-day religion of Judaism — even upholding that the modern antichristian state of Israel in the Middle East is a fulfilment of Bible prophecy!

Because so many professing Christians have bought into the lie of so-called "political correctness" — which is the institutionalised suppression of truth — non-acrimonious and open discussion of these matters is universally barred, while emotive accusations of "anti-semitism" and "racism" are hurled at anyone who dares to analyse this dire state of affairs. The stultifying "politically correct" atmosphere being generated in the Christian scene today, quite apart from being dishonest, is most unhelpful to proper analysis and discussion on a range of issues.

Even more disturbing than this is the fact that in many professing Christian circles it appears that what one believes about 'Israel' and 'Jewishness' has come to define one's Christianity. For example, in a recent 'Jewish-Messianic' newsletter, it is stated that because the London-based Metropolitan Tabernacle sold a book entitled "*The Church is Israel Today*" (which teaches that the Israel of God under the new covenant is the Church) it therefore "*resembles more of a tomb than it does the vibrant house of worship it was under Spurgeon*" and now "*has ICHABOD written all over it*".¹ That is a very serious charge indeed. The Hebrew word, *ichabod*, means "no glory", "*the glory has departed*" (cf. 1 Sam.4:21). To claim that there is nothing of the glory of God in a church merely because it sells a book, or holds a view, on a matter which is merely an eschatological debating point rather than critical to the Gospel is schismatic in the extreme and plainly injurious to the cause of unity among God's people, who should be mature enough to hold differing views on secondary issues.

It is for this reason that this writer believes that the present article is called for. There is no doubt that a modern form of Judaising has gripped many branches of the professing Church and the spirit of Paul's letter to the Galatians needs to be invoked.

It seems that an unconditional love for the modern earthly nation Israel has virtually become an 'article of faith' among professing evangelicals. As a consequence, all manner of strange and unchecked claims are being made by many untaught and often arrogant people about Judaism and Israel. Here are some of the claims which are being made today?

1. That the Jews as an earthly nation are still God's chosen people today.
2. That Gentile converts to Christ are inferior to those converted out of Judaism.

3. That the nation-state called Israel in the Middle East is the fulfilment of biblical prophecy and a sign of the approaching appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ — either for the Rapture or the Second Coming, depending on the belief system to which people adhere.
4. That if we encourage the Jews of the world to emigrate to Israel the return of Christ will be hastened.
5. That Gentile Christians have a God-given duty to assist the modern state of Israel in every way they can — including financially.
6. That the Jews are the real root of Christianity and should therefore be held in the highest esteem.
7. That it is only because of the "temporary" rejection of the Jews that Gentiles can be saved at all.
8. That Jews do not need to be born again because they are already God's chosen people.
9. That Jews who come to believe in Messiah do not need to become part of the Christian Church, which is intended specifically for Gentile converts to Messiah, but instead should gather in so-called Messianic Fellowships.
10. That Jews who have "accepted Messiah" should continue with all the rituals and feasts of the Mosaic law — including a Saturday Sabbath — and even non-biblical festivals such as Hanukkah.
11. That those who say (as the Bible plainly teaches) that the Old Testament promises to Israel have now been fulfilled in Christ and His believing people are thereby guilty of a heresy which has been given the name: "Replacement Theology".
12. That to write articles like this represents the height of blasphemy, is racist, is anti-semitic and will bring a curse down upon the writer's head.

Obviously, no one individual will adhere to ALL these claims — some of which are contradictory — but they represent those heard from various quarters by this writer in recent years.

It should be said here that the purpose of this analysis is not at all in order to incite any kind of animosity against Jewish people. On the contrary, we seek to remove division between Christians and promote the salvation of Jews through encouraging the kind of evangelism which is based on the Bible rather than a false agenda dictated by Jewish people themselves and theologically ignorant Christians.

It might also be helpful to state here that the present writer is himself from a sephardic Jewish background and therefore understands the issue well — having a father, sisters and other living relations whom he earnestly desires to see come to faith in Christ.

We are aware that the accusation of "anti-Semitism" or "racism" may be made against us from certain Jewish and even Christian quarters. But to fall back on such charges is extremely disingenuous, manipulative, and plainly designed to stifle honest discussion. We saw an example of such behaviour recently when the organisers of a Christian event designed to evangelise Jews were accused of practising "*spiritual Nazism*" by a Jewish Rabbi.² We see this kind of emotional manipulation frequently from Jewish people. Hiding behind the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany, they seek, through subjective emotionalism, to prevent Christians from conducting any biblical debate about Jewish or Israeli matters.

A typical example of this occurs in an article on the Internet, entitled "*Antisemitism in the New Testament*" by Shmuel Golding.³ Here Golding writes:

"Christian love for the Jew is a kind of hatred. It loves the Jew, yet hates him for being what he is. It sees him as blind and in need of being changed into a believer. When missionary efforts failed, or are fobbed, the love for the Jew quickly turns to hatred and contempt.

We are not deceived by the 'new Christians' of today's hand-clapping Jew-loving fundamentalists. They teach the same anti-semitic doctrines as the church of yesteryear. Their tactics are different but we know that the message is the same. Any Jew who can pay homage to the New Testament or allow himself to believe in it, is, in my opinion in the same category as a Jew who tries to justify Hitler's *Mein Kampf* or, as one who covers up for the deeds of the Nazis".

While it is true that Christians understand Jews (in common with all unbelievers) to be spiritually blind and in need of becoming believers in Jesus Christ, it is not at all true that Christians hate Jews. Christians feel the greatest compassion for **all** unbelievers, whether Jews or Gentiles. To compare Christians to Nazis and the New Testament to Hitler's "*Mein Kampf*" is to indulge in the most extreme form of emotional manipulation. Sadly, many professing Christians have also fallen into the same sort of manipulation, and would try to smear the present article as an example of "anti-Semitism" or "racism". Well, we categorically refuse to be stifled by such false charges.⁴ First, it is inaccurate, to say the least, to restrict the name "Semite" to a person of the Jewish religion, for it has a far wider definition. In Merriam-Webster's Dictionary a Semite is defined as

"A member of any of a number of peoples of ancient southwestern Asia including the Akkadians, Phoenicians, Hebrews, and Arabs".

So the use of the term "anti-Semitic" to mean that a person is anti-Jewish is strictly a misnomer. Secondly, there is no such thing as the "Jewish race" — a term which many mistakenly use today. As the Encyclopedia Britannica states:

"The designation 'race' has been applied to language groups (the Aryan race), national groups (the Scottish race), religious groups (the Jewish race), and the entire species of humans (the human race), but these usages are biologically and scientifically meaningless".

Surely, therefore, any accusations about this article as being "anti-Semitic" or "racist" are equally meaningless. It is perfectly acceptable before God for us to open these matters for debate. Just as it is legitimate for us to analyse claims made about Islam — e.g., that they worship the same God as Christians (which is untrue), or that they have the same "father" Abraham as Christians (which is also untrue, Gal.3:29) — so it must also be legitimate for us as mature Christian believers to analyse the bewildering array of claims being made today about Jewish people or Israel and to reassert what we believe to be the biblical view.

Our plan is first, to examine the issue of Judaism and Israel from an individual standpoint, comparing post-Calvary Judaism with the biblical view, then to consider it on a corporate level, examining the many claims about the nation Israel, comparing the Middle-Eastern nation-state of today with that of the Bible.

I. The Hallmarks of Modern Judaism

First it would be useful to identify the origin of the term 'Jew'. In Scripture, the term originally referred to a member of the state of Judah (e.g., 2 Kgs.16:6; 25:25). In Hebrew, a Jew is *yehoudi*), while in Greek it is *youdaios*).

In the New Testament, we find that the word "Jew" is used to refer to members of the Jewish faith or their representative leaders — especially in the Gospel of John where the word is used 68 times, the apostle being at great pains to show the vituperative nature of Jewish opposition to Christianity and the redundancy of its religious foundations.

The word Jew has its origins in the Hebrew word (yawdaw) which means 'praise'. Paul takes this up as a 'play upon words' in Rom.2:28 when he speaks of a Jew as being a person "*whose praise is not from men but from God*". We shall be looking in more detail at this important verse later in our study.

In exposing a brief comparison between the religion and aspirations of modern Judaism and the kind of Judaism which is revealed in the Bible, we need to be clear that they are not at all the same. Modern Judaism has certain trappings which are associated with the Old Testament religion of Israel, but in reality it bears very little relation to the true religion of the Bible. Modern Judaism is similar to the religion which was espoused by the Scribes and Pharisees, with whom the Lord Jesus took issue, and which continued to be adhered to and codified after Calvary and especially after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple in AD.70.

As John rather pointedly observed on a number of occasions, "*there was a division*" among the Jews caused by the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ (Jn.7:43; 9:16; 10:19). And that division was not of equal proportions, but consisted on the one hand of the mass of the people who went along with the Pharisees and on the other hand of a small remnant who became His disciples and thereby the firstfruits of the Christian Church which would be made up of both former Jews and Gentiles.

After the debacle in Jerusalem in AD.70, both groups — unbelieving Jews and the Christian Church, made up of converted Jews and Gentiles — were scattered across Europe and the Middle-East taking their religion with them. The Church began to evangelise the world with the Gospel (in accordance with Acts 1:8) and the unbelieving Jews set about consolidating their beleaguered faith which by then had its roots in both Talmudic Pharisaism and mystical Essenism.

From that time to this — as post-Calvary Judaism was based on unbelief that the Messiah had come and a hatred of things Christian — certain characteristics of Judaism have held sway. And principal among those characteristics is that it does not maintain the exclusive authority of Scripture.

The only authoritative source of religious information, in both doctrinal and practical matters, is the written Word of God, the Bible:

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work". (2 Tim.3:16-17)

The importance of neither adding to nor taking away from the Word of God is paramount in both Old and New Testaments. We see this near the beginning of the Bible: "*You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it...*" (Deut.4:2), in the middle of the Bible: "*Every word of God is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him. Do not add to His words, Lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar*" (Pro.30:5-6), and at the end of the Bible we find a couple of verses which plainly can be applied to more than just the Book of Revelation:

"If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Rev.22:18-19).

So, from start to finish, the Bible — consisting of both Old and New Testaments — is complete and all that is necessary for revelation and teaching. Even the Old Testament Scriptures alone "*are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*" (2 Tim.3:15).

However, as post-Calvary Judaism has developed and adapted throughout the past 1900 years, the prevailing Judaism of today is drawn primarily not from the religion revealed by Jehovah on Mount Sinai, or from the authoritative sacred writings of the Bible, but from man-made writings which have a decidedly legalistic and antichristian emphasis. There are three ways in which modern Judaism fails to uphold the authority of Scripture.

1. It Denies the Jurisdiction of the New Testament

Augustine of Hippo made the statement: "*In the Old Testament the New is latent; in the New Testament the Old is patent*". The "Messiah who is to come" is the principal subject of the Old Testament. The "Messiah who has come" is the principal subject of the New. The New Testament is the Divinely inspired outgrowth of the Old. The Jewish nation, with its special code of civil and ceremonial law, was instigated by the Lord as a vehicle of succession for the coming Messiah (Gal.3:19). Everything about their law pointed towards the advent of the Christ (Col.2:16-17). So when He finally came, they should have received Him (Jn.1:11). And when the new revelation was given which became the New Testament, they should similarly have received that as authoritative.

However, post-Calvary Judaism has never accepted the sole authority of the New Testament or its writers. Indeed, the authoritative Jewish Encyclopedia refers to Paul the Apostle as an antinomian and a Gnostic, accusing him of contaminating God's people by preaching the Gospel to gentiles:

"While thus opening the door wide to admit the pagan world, Paul caused the influx of the entire pagan mythology in the guise of Gnostic and anti-Gnostic names and formulas. No wonder he was frequently assailed and beaten by the officials of the synagogue".⁵

Furthermore, the words of the Messiah Himself, as recorded in the New Testament, are judged by the authorities of modern Judaism to be derivative of the teachings of either the Pharisees or the Essenes:

"Many of Jesus's sayings can be traced to rabbinical sayings current in the Pharasaic schools; and many sentences, if not entire chapters, have been taken over from Essene writings".⁶

This claim that entire chapters of the New Testament have been lifted from the writings of the Essenes is a wild claim indeed, and worthy of exposure as a totally misleading allegation — especially as this is also a major claim of the New Age Movement today.

It is significant that the sect of the Essenes is never directly mentioned in the New Testament — unlike the Pharisees and Sadducees who feature so prominently in the four Gospels. The reason for this is most likely because they never attempted to confront Jesus directly and tended to live in secluded, secretive circumstances. However, there are many indirect references which are most instructive.

The word *essene* is derived from the East Aramaic, *hasen*, meaning 'the pious ones' (from which the name of the orthodox Jewish *Hasidim* is derived). The Essene sect (2nd century B.C. to 2nd century A.D.) was an ascetic, commune-based, Jewish monastic order which regarded itself as the true Israel. In some ways they resembled the Pharisees in terms of such elements as ritual purity and legal observances; indeed, in this respect they often out-Phariseed the Pharisees! But their rigid adherence to the Levitical code was augmented by many additional works and practices which were, at best, in transgression of Pentateuchal Law and, at worst, downright sorcery and superstition. For example, they adored the sun and earnestly prayed to it before it rose,⁷ they used a variety of magical and esoteric books, they practised divination and developed a highly elaborate angelology and cosmogony which went far beyond the biblical teachings of Moses.⁸ Their teaching

on angels was, in fact, '*derived from the Magi*',⁹ and in many ways, as Chambers Encyclopaedia states, the Essenes '*became the forerunners of the Gnostics and of the Jewish Kabbalists*'.¹⁰

This knowledge that the angelology of the Essenes was derived from the Magi becomes doubly significant when we are informed that among these Magi '*there was a strong tradition which favoured the exercise of sacerdotal and occult powers*'.¹¹ Even more significant, these Magi '*were in communication with evil spirits, and...they were well acquainted with Mesmerism and every practice of modern Spiritualism*'.¹² So the influences on the Essenes were decidedly occult.

Under these circumstances, is it at all likely — as the 'authoritative' Jewish Encyclopedia claims — that vast tracts of the Gospels — and in particular the words of the Lord Jesus Christ — have been plagiarised from the writings of the Essenes? In truth, there are far more similarities between Essenism and the later Gnosticism than with the teachings of Jesus. As one authoritative source puts it: '*The suggestions, occasionally made, that...Christ Himself had Essene connections, are most improbable*'.¹³ Let us list some of the glaring contrasts between Essenism and Christianity.

Unlike the Essenes, Jesus did not withdraw, nor advocate withdrawal from the world (cf. Jn.17:15,18); neither did He reject the aged and the physically handicapped (cf. Mt.12:9-13; 15:30) nor advocate hatred of His enemies, as did the Essenes. He never purified Himself before eating with sinners (Mt.9:10-13); He did not advocate or practise vegetarianism (Mt.14:19), and did not believe that defilement and uncleanness comes from unpurified food, clothing and people (Mt.15:11) — all of which were part and parcel of being an Essene. So deep was their bondage to the laws of purification that if one of their members was expelled from the community for sins committed, he would find himself unable to eat the unpurified food of the outside world and die of starvation.¹⁴ The Essenes also had such a highly developed system of elitism within their sect that the more 'advanced' members believed that they became spiritually polluted if they came into physical contact with, or ate food prepared by, novitiates.¹⁵ It is also quite probable that Jesus was referring to the Essenes when He made the enigmatic statement: "*You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy'*" (Mt.5:43). Nowhere is the idea of hating one's enemy advocated as such by the Jewish Law in the Old Testament (cf. Lev.19:17-18). There are, however, a number of such references in the Essenic documents which were found at Qumran in 1948.¹⁶ Therefore, far from being an Essene Himself, the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ were diametrically opposed to Essenic doctrine.

In spite of this mountain of evidence against the idea that Jesus was an Essene and that He proffered Essene teachings, the Jewish Encyclopedia asserts otherwise. There can be no other reason for this than to undermine the authority and witness of the N.T. Scriptures.

Obviously, it should be of no surprise that modern Judaism fails to regard the New Testament as authoritative Scripture. But does it rely on any other authority? This brings us to the second way that Judaism does not uphold the authority of Scripture:

2. It Upholds the Talmud as the Authoritative Writings

One of the primary complaints of the Lord Jesus Christ against the Pharisees was that they maintained the authority of man-made writings rather than the Holy Scriptures, thereby bringing the people under unnecessary bondage (e.g., Mt.15:8-9; 16:11-12; 23:1-4, 23; cf. Tit.1:14; Mt.11:28-30). On one occasion, the Jewish religious leaders asked Jesus: "*Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?*" To which He replied, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honours Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines

the commandments of men'. For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men".

On the many occasions when the Lord Jesus said to the Jewish religious authorities "*Have you never read...?*", He was surely being deliberately ironic. He knew very well that they most certainly *had* "read" the Old Testament to which He was referring; and in the Scribes' case their time was spent from morning till night copying out scrolls of Scripture to the highest degree of accuracy. They had indeed "read" the Scriptures, but they neither upheld them nor implemented them in their lives as their only rule for faith and practice, according to the commandment of God (Deut.4:2; Prov.30:5-6).

From that time onwards — but especially after the destruction of the Temple in AD.70 — unbelieving Judaism has continued to centre its teaching primarily on man-made written Talmudic teachings. In fact, even when the claim is made by Jews that the Old Testament is their highest authority, one generally finds the most cavalier allegorisation of the text, very much akin to that of the liberal Christian scholars who indulge in biblical criticism in university theological departments.

Regardless of any Jewish claims to hold the Old Testament as the highest example of authoritative writings, the truth is that the man-made Talmud takes precedence over the inspired Word of God for the vast majority of the Jews. The only exception to this is the sect known as the Karaites, who refuse to accept any Rabbinical writings which add to the Old Testament. However, it is interesting to note that the other Jews are particularly scornful of the Karaites. For example, the glossary of Jewish terms advertised by the Jewish American-Israeli Cooperative Enterprise (A.I.C.E.) defines Karaites as

"A Middle Eastern *heterodox* [i.e. deviant, ed.] Jewish group that arose in opposition to Rabbinism in the 8th century AD and emphasized the written scriptures while criticizing the rabbinic use of "oral law". [emphasis added]

And this disdainful view of the Torah-based Karaites is shown in the words of the Jewish poet, Walter Lichtenfeld Field, in his poem "*The People's Epic*", when he wrote about the dispute between the Karaites and Talmudic Rabbis:

"With Saadia, the Gaonate [Talmudic scholarship] reached its peak,
Karaites claimed for Judaism to speak,
But Saadia proved all their arguments weak".

And so the Talmud holds sway over Scripture as the primary source of authority for modern Jewry. Even the Talmud itself says: "*My son, be more careful in the observance of the words of the Scribes than in the words of the Torah*".¹⁷ Accordingly, we find the statement in an article in the Jewish Chronicle that in true *yeshiva* (religious teaching), Jews are "*devoted to the Talmud to the exclusion of everything else*".¹⁸ In the authoritative Jewish Encyclopedia it is stated: "*Those who professed Judaism felt no doubt that the Talmud was equal to the Bible as a source of instruction and decision in problems of religion*".¹⁹ And it goes on to say even more explicitly: "*For the majority of Jews [the Talmud] is still the supreme authority in religion*".²⁰

Frankly, it beggars belief to read translations of the *original* editions (rather than the sanitised editions) of the Talmud, in which, for example, it is said that a man should thank God every day for not making him a Gentile, woman or slave;²¹ that Jesus is being boiled in excrement in hell;²² that those who read the NT are anathematised;²³ and that Jews are advocated to destroy Christian literature.²⁴ And such destruction really does happen. For example, in accordance with the

entreaties in their Talmud, Israelis burned hundreds of New Testament books on March 23rd 1980 under the auspices of *Yad Le'akhim*, a Jewish religious organisation subsidised by the Israeli Ministry of Religions.²⁵ In fact, most non-Jews are entirely unaware of the venomous, 'Jewish supremacist' nature of the Talmud and modern Jewish Orthodoxy. The reason for this — as the Israeli writer Dr. Israel Shahak shows in his revealing work *"Jewish History, Jewish Religion"* — is because *"the rabbis deceptively eliminated or modified certain passages — but not the actual practices which are prescribed in them"*.²⁶ However, in spite of these wayward and offensive directions, the Talmud is held to be the high authority of modern Judaism and the proper field of rabbinical exposition. It is true that much of secular Jewry worldwide is not too interested in the Talmudic writings; but in zionistic Judaism there has been a resurgence of interest in recent years in these extra-biblical sources and they have fuelled Israeli nationalism. There can be no doubt that it is vigorously anti-Christian, upholds Jewish supremacism, and undermines the authority of the Bible.

The third way that modern Judaism does not uphold the authority of Scripture is seen in the fact that

3. It Champions the Kabbalah as Wholesome Spiritual Practice

A great many Jews today uphold the Kabbalah as being a valid spiritual pathway. The Kabbalah is a *'theosophical system'* which *'has strong connections with gnosticism and also with magical practices'*.²⁷ It is also described as *'the ancient esoteric Jewish mystical tradition of philosophy containing strong elements of pantheism and is akin to Neo-Platonism'*.²⁸ In section one above we have already noted that the Jewish sect of the Essenes *'became the forerunners of the Gnostics and of the Jewish Kabbalists'*. So the Kabbalah is a Jewish form of Gnosticism. As the Jewish Encyclopedia foolishly boasts: *"Gnosticism was Jewish in character long before it became Christian"*.²⁹

By the first century, Judaism had degenerated into occultism through the Essene cults in Israel, which had borrowed from Persian Zoroastrianism and other oriental mixtures. During the early Church period, this Jewish mysticism was to develop into the teachings of the Kabbalah — a complex esoteric and magical system which applies occult symbolism to the Old Testament, in much the same way as do the Freemasons. The Kabbalah subsequently became the foundation stone of occult organisations such as the Rosicrucians and various transcendental magic practitioners such as Eliphas Lévi (1810-1875) and Aleister Crowley (1875-1947).

The Kabbalah is now extremely popular among many Jewish groups, with radio stations devoted to its propaganda in Israel. As long ago as 1990, this writer recalls seeing a mainstream book on the Kabbalah prominently displayed in W.H. Smith in Temple Fortune near Golders Green (a predominantly Jewish area in London), the commendatory preface of which was written by none other than the then Prime Minister of Israel! That is an indication of how far the Kabbalah has become another arm of Jewish-Israeli nationalism.

Furthermore, the Kabbalah has become the vogue religion among Hollywood glitterati in much the same way as the Maharishi and Eastern mysticism became vogue for the Beatles and other celebrities in the 1960s and 1970s. Today, the Kabbalah is the cult of Jewish 'filmstars' such as Barbara Streisand and Jeff Goldblum. Even the pop idol Madonna has become a full time devotee of the Kabbalah, which is what lies behind her new 'spiritual' image and her 1998 CD *"Ray of Light"*. In a recent BBC interview, Madonna said that the great attraction of Kabbalah for her is that it teaches the same as Buddhism and other mystical religions: *"that we each control our own destiny"*.³⁰ This is essentially "works religion" posing as "higher knowledge spirituality", as is the

case with all forms of mysticism/gnosticism. On "*The Kabbalah Web Page*" on the Internet, the Kabbalah is described in the following terms:

1. The essence of religion is in the reaching by mankind of the highest possible level of development. This should be done in a good and painless way, not by suffering.
2. The desired goal - reaching this highest level (depending on the amount of work the person has done on himself) is a possibility that exists in our world!
3. Religion has been given to us not as a means of pleasure and benefit. It is rather a guide showing us the ways for self-improvement.

"*A guide to self-improvement*"? We see here that Kabbalah is yet another aspect of the false salvation-by-works religion of Judaism, the same religion as that of the Pharisees whom Jesus confronted, and from which Saul of Tarsus was saved (Rom.9:31-32; 10:3). Fallen human beings love to wallow in works religion, seeking to establish their own righteousness, instead of submitting to the fact that true religion means receiving "*the righteousness of God*" which has been revealed in the Gospel of Christ (Rom.1:17-18)! And for those who do not like their works religion to be too pedestrian and commonplace, in these New Age times they come in an esoteric wrapper posing as a mystery religion, such as the Kabbalah.



Many people will not realise that the so-called "Star of David" (see above) — the Jewish symbol portrayed on the Israeli flag — is derived from the occult-gnostic inspired Kabbalah. As the 1998 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica explains:

"The term *Magen David*, which in Jewish liturgy signifies God as the protector (shield) of David, gained currency among medieval Jewish mystics, who attached magical powers to King David's shield just as earlier (non-Jewish) magical traditions had referred to the five-pointed star as the 'Seal of Solomon'. Kabbalists popularized the use of the symbol as a protection against evil spirits. The Jewish community of Prague was the first to use the Star of David as its official symbol, and from the 17th century on the six-pointed star became the official seal of many Jewish communities and a general sign of Judaism, though it has no biblical or Talmudic authority. The star was almost universally adopted by Jews in the 19th-century as a striking and simple emblem of Judaism in imitation of the cross of Christianity".³¹

Jewish magic — in common with other occult traditions — has always used five and six-pointed stars (pentagrams and hexagrams) in its rituals and symbols. As the Encyclopedia Britannica states about the six-pointed "Star of David":

"The symbol — which historically was not limited to use by Jews — originated in antiquity, when, side by side with the five-pointed star, it served as a magical sign or as a decoration".³²

Below is the five-pointed star which is used in the Kabbalah and in many other occult traditions. Here we see it as borrowed by the occult-gnostic sect of the Rosicrucians and "impaled" on their cross surrounded by four roses.³³ The fact that modern Judaism and Israel has borrowed its chosen emblem from the ritual designs of gross heathen transcendental magic is rather hard to square with the Lord's commandment to His covenant people Israel in the Bible about the need to be separated from the ways of the heathen nations: *"When you come into the land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominations of those nations"* (Deut.18:9).



Moreover, it is surely a great irony that the five and six-pointed stars *and* the Swastika (as used by the occult-influenced Nazi Germany) were all originally occult symbols used in magic and can plainly be seen in Hindu designs and decorations. When we realise that the modern state of Israel has nothing whatsoever to do with the theocratic nation founded by Jehovah in the Bible, then it becomes easier to understand that both Nazi Germany and modern Israel have their roots in the occult and in political cabals.

Modern Judaism and Israelite Zionism cannot be viewed outside of the influence of Jewish gnosticism and occultism as contained in the Kabbalah. We can see, therefore, that modern Judaism is not governed by Holy Scripture, and does not maintain the authority of the Bible, regardless of its hollow claims to have its foundations in the Old Testament. That is what characterises modern Judaism and its foundations today. It is anti-Bible and it is thoroughly antichristian.

Having examined the hallmarks of modern Judaism, let us now turn to discover how the Bible identifies the religion of Judaism.

II. The Hallmarks of Judaism in the Bible

If Biblical Judaism is to be understood at all, it must be understood spiritually; and to be understood spiritually, it must be understood from the information provided not only in the Old Testament but also in the New. We have already quoted Augustine: *"In the Old Testament the New is latent; in the New Testament the Old is patent"*. While the O.T. Scriptures can make a person *"wise for salvation"* (2 Tim.3:15), they are incomplete without the vital additional divine revelation afforded in the New Testament. And in the New Testament we find that the Jewish converts to Christ, such as Saul of Tarsus and Simon Peter, are especially eager to explain the real identity of a true Jew.

We have isolated four ways that a true Jew can be identified from the pages of the Bible.

1. A True Jew is a Person of any Nation, Tribe or Tongue who has Faith in Christ

The covenant promises made to Abraham pointed forward to the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the one true Seed of Abraham in whom redemption under that covenant would find its consummation. When the Apostle states: "*Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made*" (Gal.3:16), he goes to the very heart of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Abraham is shown in Scripture as believing the promise of God that he would have numerous descendants. But wrapped up in that promise was the mighty fact that the blessing to all mankind would come through a special One of Abraham's descendants. Therefore unless the covenant community of Israelites receives the Messiah, who was the highest expression of the Seed of Abraham, it will not experience the bringing to fruition of the promises made to the fathers in that covenant. The Jews had centuries of preparation for their Messiah, and the knowledge that He would be not only their Messiah but also "*a light to the Gentiles*" (Isa.49:6). This was what lay behind Peter's preaching to the Jews, when he said:

"All the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.'" (Acts 3:24-26)

The preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles and their entry into the kingdom was not a "Plan B" enacted as an afterthought by the Lord when the Jews did not receive Him. Neither is the current preaching of the Gospel to the Gentiles some parenthetical sideline before the Lord once more begins again to deal with the nation Israel. The ingathering of converted Gentiles, along with that of converted Jews, is the main business of the Gospel until the Second Advent of Christ to effect the Final Judgement.

So we discover that the promise to Abraham finds its ultimate expression not in Jews *according to the flesh* but in all those who have faith in Christ. Therefore we find Abraham described as "*the father of all those who believe*" (Rom.4:11), of both Jews and Gentiles. "*There is one God who will justify the circumcised [Jews] by faith and the uncircumcised [Gentiles] through faith*" (Rom.3:30). So then, neither circumcision [being Jewish] nor uncircumcision [being a Gentile] makes any difference to potential for salvation in this Gospel Age (Gal.5:6; 6:15). What counts instead is "*faith working through love*" (Gal.5:6) and being "*a new creation*" (Gal.6:15), which are the fruits of spiritual regeneration and NOT genetic ancestry. As the apostle John puts it:

"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, even to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood [i.e. earthly ancestry], nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man [i.e. human decision], but of God". (Jn.1:11-13)

After all, even Abraham was an uncircumcised Gentile when he first came to believe, about which Paul makes a great deal in the fourth chapter of his letter to the Romans. In fact, Abraham can more properly be called a Christian rather than a Jew (Jn.8:56), as salvation in all ages has only ever been through the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor.10:1-4; Rom.4:16), prospectively in the Old Testament, retrospectively in the New Testament. Therefore we can say without reservation that a true Jew today is not a person of a particular line of descent who says "*next year in Jerusalem*" every Passover. A true Jew has always been a person from **any** nation, tribe or language who has faith in Christ, whether of Jewish or Gentile origin. So far as his Jewish credentials are concerned — being "*circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews*", etc. — Paul said that he counted them all as "*dung*" (A.V.), "*rubbish*" (NKJV), which are translations of the Greek word *skubalon*, which literally means the

dregs that you throw out to the dogs (Phil.3:4-9). A Jew after the flesh who comes to Christ has no further use for, or real interest in, these things because they have found their fulfilment in the Messiah. This is why we say that a true Jew is a person of any nation, tribe or language who has faith in Christ.

For this reason, Paul said: *"So then those who are of faith [i.e. Jew or Gentile believers] are blessed with believing Abraham"* (Gal.3:9). In other words, *"If you are Christ's [i.e. a believer of Jewish or Gentile origin], then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"* (Gal.3:29). Abraham's "seed" (descendants) today are those who have faith in Christ, rather than those who are physically descended from Abraham. How we need spiritual eyesight in order to understand these things! One of the great problems with the Jews has been their inability to understand things spiritually rather than corporeally or sensually. That is what has always constituted the difference between the believing Jew and the unbelieving Jew. The unbelieving Jew put his store in an earthly land as the 'be-all and end-all'; whereas the believing Jew knew for sure that there was a spiritual reality beyond the earthly type (Heb.11:8-10; 13-16). This is why we say that Judaism must be understood spiritually to be understood at all. A true Jew is a person from **any** nation, tribe or tongue who has faith in Christ, whether of Jewish or Gentile origin.

2. A True Jew is a Person Who has been Inwardly Transformed by the Power of God

The great covenant sign of the Old Testament era was circumcision. All male natural descendants of Abraham would be physically circumcised, but only those who were truly saved would understand the full significance of the rite. As baptism in the New Covenant signifies the washing clean from sin which comes through regeneration, so circumcision was symbolic of the cutting off of sin and casting of it away. Behind the outward rite of circumcision there lay a deeper spiritual meaning known only to the saved. Regardless of the outward rite of circumcision, a Jew had to be converted for that circumcision to have any spiritual meaning in his life. So we find that when Moses said to the children of Israel:

"When...you return to the Lord your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul...". (Deut.30:2)

he was referring to repentance and conversion, ultimately in the Gospel Age. Even the Jewish rabbi Moses Maimonides (1135-1204) understood it to refer to the time of the Messiah. However, rather than being a promise of release from **earthly** captivity (as Maimonides and the Jews would erroneously believe), the fruit of that conversion which is given a few verses later in Deut.30:6 speaks of the fact that

"the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live". (Deut.30:6)

It is plainly referring to the spiritual work which takes place in the heart of one who is a Jew after the flesh who then comes to believe in the Messiah. And as a profound echo of this, the apostle Paul made an extraordinary statement which cuts right across standard Jewish teaching and that of a great many professing Christians today, who seem to misunderstand the true meaning of Judaism. For Paul said:

"He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God". (Rom.2:28-29)

True circumcision is not a mere outward ordinance but a permanent putting away of sin from the inner life. This is a work which can only be done by God through Jesus Christ the Mediator. This is yet another aspect of the fact that Judaism must be understood spiritually to be understood at all. The many misunderstandings about Judaism and Israel have arisen precisely because of a failure at this point.

One of the great problems with the Jews has been their inability to understand things spiritually rather than corporeally or sensually. It is for this same reason that pious Jews wear phylacteries (little black boxes containing scrolls of Scripture) on their head and arm. But they are grossly misunderstanding Deut.11:18, which refers to the exact opposite of an externalised placement of written Scripture on the human body:

"Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes."

This is referring to the *internalisation* of the spiritual truth in God's Word, as David well understood: "*Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You!*" (Psa.119:11), and Paul reiterated when he said: "*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom...*" (Col.3:16).

Ultimately, Paul's dictum in Rom.2:28-29 means that a true Jew is a converted person who, in the New Covenant era would recognise Christ as his Saviour. Therefore, since the advent of Christ we can say that a true Jew is a member of the Christian Church who is of either Jewish or Gentile background. Such have been circumcised in the heart and now understand the true meaning of the outward rite. As Paul exclaims: "*We* are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil.3:3). The "we" to whom he is referring are "*all the saints in Christ Jesus*", to whom he wrote his letter (Phil.1:1), coupled with himself.

This is surely the essence of the Lord Jesus's contention with the church at Smyrna in Rev.2:9: "*I know the blasphemy of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan*". Jesus graphically calls such Jews a "*synagogue of Satan*". What would the politically correct lobby make of that today? Was the Lord Himself an "anti-Semite", or a "racist", or a "spiritual Nazi"? Not at all! He was a Man of truth who spoke plainly the words which people needed to hear and was not intimidated by threats from Jewish people.

Disbelief in Christ is a work of Satan. For it is the God of this world (i.e. the devil) who has blinded the minds of unbelievers (2 Cor.4:3-4, which refers primarily to Jewish unbelievers). Those who "*say they are Jews and are not*" and who are "*a synagogue of Satan*" are those Jews who claim their Judaism lies in their line of descent, who have confidence in the flesh. These will have been Jewish people *outwardly* who were persecuting the Christians at Smyrna. However, although they would have identified themselves as Jews, in reality they were not true Jews who are inwardly changed — new creations who would follow Christ as their Messiah now that He has come. They say they are Jews, but they cannot be so because they are not born again.

This was the rabbi Nicodemus's problem. Look at his conversation with the Lord Jesus in the third chapter of John's Gospel. Jesus told him that he must be "*born again*" if he was to be part of the kingdom of God (Jn.3:3, 5). Nicodemus, being at that time stuck in the earthly, sensual way of Jewish thinking, could only conceive of Jesus's words as referring to another physical birth (Jn.3:4, 9). Jesus even had to upbraid him with the rebuke: "*Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?*" (Jn.3:10). It is most likely that Nicodemus was eventually fully converted (cf. Jn.7:50; 19:39); but at this time he was merely a seeker who said he was a Jew but in reality was

not — who only perceived spiritual truth as a religious husk, not having a circumcised heart of his own. A real Jew perceives the spiritual truth behind God's words and acts on them.

And this was always the problem with the Jews from the very beginning: an inability to understand things spiritually rather than corporeally or sensually. That is what has always constituted the difference between the believing Jew and the unbelieving Jew. This is why we read that *"the Jews therefore quarrelled among themselves, saying, 'How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?'"* (Jn.6:52) after Jesus had said that he was the living bread who had come down from heaven whom they must eat. This pathological inability to see the spiritual meaning behind the words of the Lord has been the real Jewish problem to this very day. *"He is not a Jew who is one outwardly...but he is a Jew who is one inwardly...in the Spirit"*.

We conclude that genuine biblical Judaism involves religion which comes from within, from the heart, rather than being imposed from without. That is the essence of true religion. A true Jew is a person who has been inwardly transformed by the power of God and thereby perceives the truth about Jesus Christ in the Scriptures.

A third hallmark of biblical Judaism is seen in the fact that

3. A True Jew is, and only ever has been, one of a Small Remnant out of the nation of Israel

At the beginning of the section concerning Israel in his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul reveals that

"they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham". (Rom.9:6-7)

This needs to be properly understood as it is germinal to our comprehending the true meaning of Judaism and Israel. What these verses tell us is that we have to differentiate between Israel as the nation-state and those who are genuine Jews. The nation-state of Israel was set up by God on the basis of the twelve tribes of Jacob and was intended to serve a singular divine purpose until Christ came (Gal.3:19-29). Once the promised Seed had come — referred to by Paul in Gal.3:19, and plainly meaning Christ, as prophesied in Gen.3:15 — the Old Covenant nation of Israel's national and legal status no longer had any further purpose.

But always within the national body had been the remnant of true Jews who were genuine believers, looking forward to the Messiah, who would be the "Consolation of Israel". The Saul/David axis was a classic illustration of this dichotomy between the true Jewish believer and the carnal professor who merely sheltered under the covenant blessings but had no real spiritual interest. Saul was primarily zealous for Israel and for himself, but David was zealous for the Lord.

Not every Jewish person by descent was part of the *true* Israel, which is the believing people of God. Plainly, there was the *"House of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, And have come forth from the wellsprings of Judah; who swear by the name of the Lord"*. (Isa.48:1)

Yes, there was that national husk who were called *"by the name of Israel"* — it was *nominally* Israel. And they certainly *"made mention of the God of Israel"* (Isa.48:1) with their mouths. But the problem was that in spite of all those *external* realities, their use of the name Israel and their mention of God was *"not in truth or in righteousness"*, as the prophet showed (Isa.48:1). They certainly *"call themselves after the holy city, and lean on the God of Israel"* (Isa.48:2), but sheltering in external, earthly blessings never was enough to save or lead to a sanctified life (cf. Psa.51:16-17).

However, among the external covenant people of God, there was always a small remnant of believing people — true Jews, who knew the spiritual realities which lay behind the outer husk of Exodus deliverances, wilderness wanderings, the provision of manna, animal sacrifices, ritual washings, and promised lands. In the experience of this remnant, the Mosaic law code drove them not into increasingly abstruse legalism but into the arms of their Saviour, the Rock of their Salvation, the Anointed One. But the rest of Israel — the unbelieving majority — was an abomination to the Lord. As Isaiah puts it:

"Unless the Lord of hosts had left to us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom, We would have been made like Gomorrah". (Isa.1:9-10)

It was only the godly remnant which ensured the continued preservation of Israel as a nation. *"They are not all Israel who are of Israel"*. And neither have they ever been. Of course, even the unspiritual majority of the Israelites always imagined that they were also the true Israel. They based that solely on their family tree being traced back to Abraham. But when John the Baptist *"saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism"*, he said to them:

"Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones". (Mt.3:7-9)

They are not all Israel who are of Israel. The Lord Jesus also used this double-reference for Israel very clearly in a conversation with the Pharisees:

"I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. "I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father." They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. "But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. "You do the deeds of your father [i.e. the devil]". (Jn.8:37-41)

Do you see what the Lord is saying here? He first says that He knows that they are *"Abraham's descendants"*. But he then says: *"If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham"*. Is He contradicting Himself? How can they be Abraham's descendants and yet not be his children? The answer is that he is using the same term in different ways. Just as Paul uses the term "Israel" in two different ways to describe fleshly Israel and spiritual Israel (Rom.9:6), so the Lord Jesus does the same here. He knows that they are Abraham's descendants according to the flesh; but from a spiritual standpoint they are *not* Abraham's children. They are not all Israel who are of Israel.

So we also find the Lord Jesus recognising that difference exemplified in Nathanael as he walked towards Him. He said: *"Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"* (Jn.1:47). An Israelite indeed! A REAL Israelite. A true Jew; who is one inwardly and not merely dependent on external trappings.

And this is the essence of the biblical understanding of Judaism. A true Jew is, and only ever has been, one of a small remnant out of the nation of Israel. As Paul puts it: *"What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded"* (Rom.11:7). And therein lies the distinction which must be made. It makes no difference being circumcised, being of Israel according to the flesh, being a descendant of a tribe of Israel. Jewishness must be understood spiritually to be understood at all. Even if you could trace your genealogy back to Levi, Asher, Zebulun, Benjamin or Judah or whoever, that would merely be what Paul calls an *"endless*

genealogy" of the sort over which the Jews have always been so ready to dispute (1 Tim.1:4). Such a genealogy is "endless" because it goes nowhere of any importance today. The only meaningful genealogy now is the one traced at the beginning of the Gospels which leads to the Lord Jesus Christ, the epitome of the true Seed of Abraham. For "all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen" (2 Cor.1:20). It is in Jesus Christ that God fulfilled the promise to Abraham that in his seed all nations of the earth would be blessed. All covenant promises and blessings converge in Him. Without receiving Him, there can be no fulfilment of the spiritual promises made to the fathers in the covenant.

If there is one lesson the neo-Judaisers need to learn it is that "they are not all Israel who are of Israel". Even the psalmist, Asaph, knew this truth. When he said "Truly God is good to Israel", he immediately qualified that by saying "to such as are pure in heart" (Psa.73:1). They are not all Israel who are of Israel.

A true Jew is, and only ever has been, one of a small remnant out of the nation of Israel.

Another hallmark of Judaism in the Bible is that

4. A true Jew is one who has made the transition from the Old Covenant with O.T. Israel to the New Covenant in Christ

In spite of the fact that Israel broke the covenant which the Lord made with them, He promised a new covenant which would be on a completely different basis. We find this most clearly laid out in Jer.31:31-34:

"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when 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 lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more".

When the Lord says "after those days" (v.33) He is referring to the time when the exile to Babylon is ended. He repeats this same promise in Jer.32:37-40:

"Behold, I will gather them out of all countries where I have driven them in My anger, in My fury, and in great wrath; I will bring them back to this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely. They shall be My people, and I will be their God; then I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from doing them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts so that they will not depart from Me".

Now those who uphold the notion that Israel is still the chosen nation of God today claim that this "new covenant" mentioned in Jeremiah 31 and 32 has not yet been fulfilled. As one such publication puts it: "Since such a revival has never occurred in Israel's history, this event is yet to happen".³⁴ But this is to misunderstand the plain teaching of Scripture. The revival which that writer believes "has never occurred in Israel's history" most certainly **did** happen, but because it did not conform to the Jewish manner of thinking, both the Jews and the neo-Judaisers have missed it entirely. It happened with the coming of Christ — initiated in the Apostles and the few others

who at first believed, but was then compounded at Pentecost when three thousand souls were saved out of Israel, with many more to follow (e.g. Acts 4:4).

Moreover, the diligent student of Scripture will discover in the Letter to the Hebrews that this "*new covenant*" in Jeremiah — which is quoted in full in Heb.8 — is the same as the one established through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ (Heb.7:22; 8:7-13; 10:11-22; 12:24; 13:20-21; cf. Mt.26:28). Please read these texts, by which the myths and fables of the neo-Judaisers will surely be dissolved. There is only one Mediator of the "*new covenant*" of which Jeremiah speaks, and that is the Lord Jesus Christ who has already come and announced that covenant to both Jews and Gentiles alike at His first coming.

We see here once more how Jewishness must be understood spiritually to be understood at all. When the Word says that the Lord will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, this finds its fulfilment in believers rather than anyone with a physical descent from the twelve tribes. It is ratified in those who are God's people spiritually, whose sins are covered by the blood of Christ, who have the indwelling Holy Spirit — who don't need mere external commands to know the Lord but who actually have God's law in their minds and written on their hearts. After quoting Jer.31:31-34, Heb.8:13 states:

"In that He [the Lord] says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away".

This letter to the Hebrews was written shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple — which was God's way of demonstrating that the Old Covenant had been brought to a shattering conclusion. In reality, it had ceased the moment Christ had cried out: "*Tetelestai!*" ("It is finished"). There are many aspects to that mighty Word from our Saviour on the Cross, but surely one of the central facets is a powerful statement that the entire Mosaic economy was dissolved in order to make way for a better hope — the real hope of Israel in the finished work of Christ.

And for another forty or so years there was a strange interim, transitional period during which temple worship continued and Jews converted to Christ would still honour the Jewish Sabbath on the Saturday as well as assembling together on Sunday. What happened in AD.70 was therefore a powerful way of the Lord *visibly* removing every last vestige of the Old Covenant. A "New Israel" based on a New Covenant was in the process of being established. As Peter said to the Jews of Asia who had come to Christ:

"You are a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood, a holy nation**, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light; who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God". (1 Pet.2:9-10)

This is virtually a restatement of that Old Covenant saying in Ex.19:5-6:

"Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine. And you shall be to Me **a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.**"

So there can be no purpose whatsoever in the Jews adhering today to what is an "*obsolete*" covenant (Heb.8:13). We have already stated earlier that

"it is in Jesus Christ that God fulfilled the promise to Abraham that in his seed all nations of the earth would be blessed — that all covenant promises and blessings converge in Him and that

without receiving Him, there can be no fulfilment of the spiritual promises made to the fathers in the covenant".

This is why the Lord Jesus is plainly referred to as "*the Messenger of the Covenant*":

"Behold, I send My messenger, And he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, In whom you delight. Behold, He is coming, says the Lord of hosts". (Mal.3:1)

Throughout the entire O.T. era, from the judgement delivered by the Lord after the Fall, the promise concerning the seed of the woman was the focus of godly expectation. And that godly expectation homed in on the Messiah when He came in the fullness of time. Genuinely pious Jews at the time of the Incarnation of Christ knew very well that He was the fulfilment of this promise of a new covenant. That is the significance of the words of John the Baptist's father, Zacharias, when he prophesied:

"Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to our father Abraham: to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life". (Lk.1:68-75)

That is why we say that a true Jew is one who has made the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant in Christ. The fleshly, unspiritual Jews who were looking for a crass earthly kingdom under an earthly king rejected their Messiah when He came; and that rejection has continued to this day. But the true spiritual Jews recognised the Lord Jesus as the real "hope of Israel", as the fulfilment of all these O.T. prophecies concerning the covenant. And so we find that Israel's salvation lies not in any earthly restoration to the land but in the new covenant blood of Christ:

"And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: 'The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins'." (Rom.11:26-27).³⁵

The "*all Israel*" who are "*saved*" is *spiritual* Israel rather than *fleshly*, and their salvation is effected through the first coming of Christ — the Deliverer who comes out of Zion — and is based on the substitutionary atonement in the blood of the New Covenant rather than any restoration to the land. This is why the Scripture says elsewhere:

"Now [Christ] has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises". (Heb.8:4)

The children of Israel broke the Old Covenant, forfeited any rights to it, and instead the Lord graciously provided a New Covenant which they should have accepted (Jer.31:31; Lk.22:20; Heb.8:8). Therefore there is no covenant which can be claimed by Jews today other than this New Covenant in Christ. For He is the fulfilment of the promise at the heart of God's covenant: "*For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen*" (2 Cor.1:20). Therefore the one who wishes to adhere to the Judaism of the Bible will abandon the external trappings of Judaism, the beggarly elements of ceremonial law, and instead embrace the New Covenant in the blood of Christ.

*

Having examined modern Judaism and compared it with the spiritual understanding of Judaism in the Bible, we can only come to the conclusion that modern Judaism, biblically understood, is a false religion and should be treated as such. By this we do not mean that its adherents should be treated with disparagement, but wish to draw attention to the acute need for evangelism.

Those who continue to call themselves Jewish today but who do not follow the Lord Jesus Christ and thereby become part of His Church should not be treated as if they were from some special class of human being who, despite their disobedience, are still under the favour of God. Of all people, they need to hear and believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

God neither ordained nor created modern Judaism, which must not be confused with the religion which was ordained and created by God as recorded in the Old Testament. Modern Judaism came into being after the return from exile in Babylon. It was the religion confronted head-on by the Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry. It is a false religion — a mark of apostasy from God's ordained way.

So modern Judaism is a false religion. But, you may say, "*what if a Jew today follows the Old Testament Scripture to the letter and is very orthodox?*" Actually, that's impossible, for the following reasons: 1) There is no temple at which to sacrifice; 2) The priesthood has been abolished; and, 3) the entire ceremonial Levitical code was concluded on the Cross. In fact we discover that all the constituents of the Old Covenant economy find their fullness in Christ. If people were to read Rom.4; Rom.9 – 11; Gal.3 & 4; Heb.7-10 with the eyes of faith none of these problems would arise. How important it is to understand these things in order that we evangelise in a God-honouring manner.

Therefore, having been scattered around the world as a desolation, an astonishment, a hissing, and a curse — in fulfilment of the covenant curse in Deut.28:15 & 64 and what they brought on their own heads in saying "*His blood be on us and on our children*" (Matt.27:25) — the hope of salvation for any Jew today lies only in obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Rom.10:16-17: "But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God".

Therefore, we must conclude that the only true Jew today is one who has made the transition to Christ — who is the ONLY "hope of Israel", as we shall discover in the next part of our survey.

Having now considered Judaism at the personal, spiritual level — identifying what is a true Jew and contrasting this with the Judaism of today — we now turn to look at Judaism on a corporate level, concentrating on the array of claims made by many professing Christians about the earthly nation Israel.

Before opening this up, it is important to note that we should not be influenced by the fact that so many people adhere to the ideas about Judaism and Israel with which we are taking issue here. The fact that vast multitudes of professing Christians believe a certain teaching to be right — no matter how passionately they may believe it — does not prove that the teaching itself is right. Millions of sincere, devout Christians believe much of the hype about Israel and Judaism today, and these teachings have found their way into a broad section of respectable Bible commentaries, in spite of the wide range of written material which adequately refutes them. Does the widespread nature of such teachings give them authenticity? Of course not. The sheer number of professing Christians who believe a matter to be true is no pointer to its accuracy.

In the early years of the Church, Athanasius, a gentle deacon from Alexandria stood up against the prevailing heresy of Arianism, which denied the Trinity and the deity of Christ. As a result of this he became known as *Athanasius Contra Mundum* ("Athanasius against the world") — a reference to the fact that it was just one little man against the multitudes — and was banished from his country five times while a "contract was put out on him" for his assassination. But history eventually bore witness to the fact — as it has done so often — that the multitudes were wrong and Athanasius was right. It is fair to say (from a human standpoint) that if Athanasius had not resisted the beliefs of the majority of professing Christians at that time, there would be no Gospel to preach today. Christian truth would have perished. So much for the majority view at any time in the Christian Church! Truth is never authenticated by the number of people who adhere to it.

A mighty fact of divine sovereignty is that heresies and false belief systems regularly appear in the churches in order to spark the Body of Christ into life and to bring the truth sharply into focus (1 Cor.1 1:19; cf. 1 Jn.2:18-20). And then the Lord always raises up teachers who will successfully oppose those who bury this truth behind the alluring skirts of falsehood. Do not forget that at virtually every stage in Church history there have been far more professing Christians who would rather adhere to the false, complex, man-made systems of their choice than those who hold to the simple truths of the Scriptures.

An insatiable thirst for the truth has never had a very high premium in the Christian churches at large. Holding to truth is uncomfortable, and reaching it requires study beyond what is merely superficial; but most professing Christians want to be comfortable and appear to prefer superficiality. When Paul spoke of the time that people in the churches would heap up to themselves false teachers because they have ears which are just itching to hear them (2 Tim.4:3) — although he could have been referring to the prevailing situation in almost any era of the Church — surely the plethora of crazy teachings of the present day take some beating.

So let us not be overawed by the large numbers of people who may believe something. This is no barometer of truth, as even the most false of religions have always had a massive following, while those who are faithful are referred to in Scripture as a 'remnant'.³⁶

Having now established how Scripture defines a true Jew, in comparison with *"those who say they are Jews and are not"*, let us now examine the main claims that are made about the nation-state of Israel today.

3. Analysing some common claims about Israel and Judaism

Claim No.1: "The Establishment of the Middle-Eastern Nation State of Israel Today is a Fulfilment of Bible Prophecy"

This claim is based especially on two erroneous ideas. First, that the land promise to Abraham was never fulfilled in the Old Testament era and is therefore outstanding, awaiting its full accomplishment, of which the present Israeli state is the 'first instalment'. The second erroneous idea is that the O.T. prophecies which appear to speak of the restoration of the nation Israel to a land inheritance still await fulfilment. To these claims, we respond:

1. The Land promise was fulfilled in the Old Testament era

One of the principal claims made from certain quarters is that the land promise to Abraham was never fulfilled during the Old Testament period. But the word of God says otherwise. Two promises which God made to Abraham are a multiplicity of descendants and a portion of land which is described in clear terms. We see these clearly laid out in two Bible texts:

"Blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and **as the sand which is on the seashore**". (Gen.22:17)

"The Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: "To your descendants I have given this land, **from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates**". (Gen.15:18)

The key words are in bold text. However, these are no longer awaiting fulfilment, for during the reign of Solomon, we find a statement made which virtually mirrors the language used in Genesis concerning these promises. In 1 Kings 4:20-21 we read:

"Judah and Israel *were* as numerous **as the sand by the sea in multitude**, eating and drinking and rejoicing. So Solomon reigned over all kingdoms **from the River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt.**"

This is precisely the same territory referred to in God's promise to Abraham (cf. 2 Chron.9:26). And after the return from exile, the Levites and others raised up a mighty prayer to the Lord in which they said:

"You are the LORD God, Who chose Abram, And brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans, And gave him the name Abraham; You found his heart faithful before You, And made a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, and the Girgashites — to give it to his descendants". (Neh.9:7-8)

But they were in no doubt about the outcome. Unlike the confused neo-Judaizers of today, they were not waiting for a future fulfilment of this land promise, for they immediately said: "*You have performed Your words, for You are righteous*" (Neh.9:8). As the psalmist also exclaims:

"He remembered His holy promise, and Abraham His servant. He brought out His people with joy, His chosen ones with gladness. **He gave them the lands of the Gentiles, And they inherited the labour of the nations**". (Psa.105:42-44).

The land promise to Abraham was fulfilled a long time ago. Therefore we conclude that the Middle-Eastern nation state of Israel today cannot possibly be a fulfilment of Bible prophecy but, on the contrary, is merely the product of outright terrorism³⁷ and international political cabals.

Another way that we respond to the claim that the Middle-Eastern nation-state of Israel today is a fulfilment of Bible prophecy is to say that

2. The Restoration of Israel in the O.T. has only ever been based on certain clear conditions

The many Christians today who simply accept the notion that modern Israel is a fulfilment of Bible prophecy appear to overlook this important fact. In Jer.50:4-5, we are provided with a classic example of the conditions for the restoration of the people of Israel:

"In those days and in that time, says the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together; with continual weeping they shall come, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces toward it, saying, 'Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that will not be forgotten'".

This plainly refers to the restoring of Israel in the purposes of God. But note that there are preconditions attached. **Never once do we find in Scripture that Israel is restored without these conditions having been fulfilled.**

The first condition of this restoration is

i. Deep Repentance

We read "*with continual weeping they shall come*". That is a clear precursor to restoration. The desire for restoration is not simply to be restored to the land but to be restored to the Lord. And that involves deep repentance of heart. This is a fundamental law of restoration of any kind in Scripture — whether corporate or individual.

There are a great many times when we find Old Testament writers expressing the mind of God on the fact that He has no time for mere outward actions in worship but instead desires a contrite heart, a penitent mind-set. And that is the trigger for restoration. Other texts which plainly show the need for repentance as a precursor to restoration are Dan.9:1-6; Neh.1:4-11.

Do we find that it was this kind of repentance which led to the founding of the modern nation-state of Israel today? Not at all. There was only national pride, embitteredness because of having been persecuted and a desire to claim "their right" to a national homeland. The awful truth is that until there is a repenting of having broken the Covenant and killed their Messiah, Jewish people will perpetually be subject to trouble and devoid of a real relationship with the Lord.

Another precondition for the restoration of Israel is

ii. Faithfulness to God

Note in our text in Jer.50:4-5, it is said that the restored nation will be "*seeking the Lord*". What does it mean to "seek God". Surely it refers to the desire to be disciplined by Him, to be obedient to Him and to keep His ways. A seminal text in this respect is Deut.30:1-3:

"Now it shall come to pass, when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God drives you, and you return to the LORD your God and obey His voice, according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul, that the LORD your God will bring you back from captivity, and have compassion on you, and gather you again from all the nations where the LORD your God has scattered you".

Here we see that the compassion on Israel and its ingathering as a people of God is dependent on first returning to the Lord and "*obeying His voice*". And that indeed is the spirit that was found at the return of the Jews from the exile in Babylon:

"On the first day of the first month he began his journey from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month he came to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him. For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel". (Ezr.7:9-10)

Where does that leave the Israeli state of today? For it was not founded on obedience to the commandment of the Lord which, in a post-Calvary world, finds its highest expression in obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Pet.4:17)? Surely, the Israelites of today have not at all sought God, otherwise they would have realised that they are no longer under Moses but Christ.

Another precondition for the restoration of Israel is

iii. Being True Zionists

We read in our text in Jer.50:4-5 that an Israel which desires to be restored will be asking *"the way to Zion"*.

The word Zion has become most misused by modern-day Israel, mainly due to its earthly understanding of divine things. To be a "Zionist" in Scripture is to desire to be where God especially manifests His presence: *"Arise, and let us go up to Zion, To the LORD our God"* (Jer.31:6). Zion is the dwelling place of God in relation to His human creation: *"For the LORD has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling place"* (Psa.132:13). *"For the LORD dwells in Zion"* (Joel 3:21).

First, we find this manifested in relation to the city of Jerusalem in Old Testament times, where the Temple was, which was the heart of spiritual life in those days. Then, under the New Covenant, we find Zion used to refer to the body of Christ, the Church (Heb.12:22-23). However, the ultimate meaning of Zion is heaven in the new universe after the restoration of all things, as we see the heavenly Jerusalem portrayed in the closing chapters of the Book of Revelation.

If Israelites today were serious about "asking the way to Zion", and thereby being restored, they would be coming into the Church, the body of Christ, where the Lord dwells by His Spirit.

Another precondition for the restoration of Israel is

iv. Engaging in Genuine Spirituality

Our text says: *"They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces toward it"*. With their faces towards it, i.e. in sincerity of faith. There would be spiritual integrity. How can there be any spiritual integrity in the Israel of today when it is not only seeking Zion in the wrong place but it has such a hatred toward the One who came as their Messiah nearly two thousand years ago?

Another condition of the restoration of Israel is

v. The Desire to be in a Perpetual Covenant Relationship with God

An Israel which is desirous of restoration to God says: *"Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that will not be forgotten"*. But we have already shown above that Israel was disobedient to the Old Covenant and rejected the New Covenant in the blood of Christ.

So where does all this leave the Israel of today in the Middle-East? The picture we are given here regarding conditions for the restoration of Israel is one involving the deepest spirituality, penitence, desiring to be among the people of God and covenant obedience. Is that what we see in the so-called restored Israel of today in the Middle East?

Modern Israel is a secular state. It is proud and arrogant in its claims. It regards Zion as a nationalist polity run by human beings on a piece of earthly territory rather than the spiritual dwelling-place of God. It oppresses helpless people in a manner which defies the Law of God in a most dramatic fashion. For example, we read in the Torah: *"You shall neither mistreat a stranger nor oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt"* (Ex.22:21). Bear in mind that this particular command comes immediately after the commands: *"You shall not permit a sorceress to live. Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death. He who sacrifices to any god, except to the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed"*. This is how seriously God means His people to help the afflicted, helpless and oppressed foreigners. After all, the end of the law is love

(Rom.13:10; 5:14). All this cuts entirely across one of the three signs of the presence of true religion designated by James in his letter: *"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble"* (Jas.1:27a). Helping the helpless and afflicted lies at the heart of the Law of God, which the redeemed are to enact in their lives (Eph.2:10; Tit.2:13-14). To say otherwise is to take the heart out of the Law and to give the edge to "Liberation Theologians", who think that religion **only** consists of righting injustice. It was J.C. Ryle who said: *"We are not justified by our works, but the justified person works"*. People who are in God's covenant would not be brutal, and be seen as such by the world. Compare their brutality against the Palestinians, and the violent audacity of the Israeli state security force *Mossad*. How then can the nation Israel of today be living in covenant obedience even to the Old Covenant of the Mosaic era? We believe that the modern nation-state of Israel is an evil regime, and we are utterly amazed that professing Christians could give this corrupt, anti-Christian country their spiritual and financial support. As the courageous Israeli commentator, Dr. Israel Shahak, dares to state:

"The extent of persecution and discrimination against non-Jews inflicted by the 'Jewish state' with the support of organised diaspora Jews is also enormously greater than the suffering inflicted on Jews by regimes hostile to them".³⁸

However, not only is Israel today disobedient to the Old Covenant, it is also utterly defiant of the New Covenant which is now in force and which was prophesied for them in Jer.31:31-34. Nowhere in Scripture is there sanctioned a "restoration in unbelief", as is often asserted today. How, therefore, can the nation-state of Israel on a plot of land in the Middle-East today be a fulfilment of Bible prophecy?

So far we have shown that the land promise was fulfilled in the Old Testament era and that the restoration of Israel in the O.T. only ever based on certain clear conditions. There is yet a further aspect which proves that the establishment of the nation state of Israel today cannot possibly be a fulfilment of Bible prophecy:

III. The Real hope for Israel is not a restoration to the land of Israel but to Jesus Christ at His first coming

The O.T. prophecies which appear to speak of the restoration of the nation Israel to a land inheritance were either fulfilled at the end of the exile in Babylon or are to be understood to refer figuratively to the gathering under the Messiah at His first coming. This is where the real point of resistance to Bible teaching occurs. The failure to accept that the Lord can speak figuratively when uttering prophecies in the Old Testament about the future restoration of Israel is one of the main causes of confusion concerning its proper inheritance.

One of the main problems here is that it is assumed by so many professing Christians today — especially those who believe that there is still a place for the theocratic nation Israel in God's purposes today — that if one interprets an O.T. prophecy figuratively rather than literally then it implies a liberal, even apostate, approach to Scripture. However this is a false deduction. It is certainly true that liberal theologians allegorise the Word of God in the places at which it should be taken literally. But that does not mean that one should never understand any Scripture figuratively, for fear of being a liberal theologian! For example, when we read that an angel came down from heaven, *"having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand"* (Rev.20:1), are we to take that literally? Is it an actual material chain with metal links which is being spoken of here? And if one takes that chain figuratively does that make one apostate? Surely not! Is it not true that every single Christian has taken that chain to be figurative?

However, when it comes to O.T. prophecies about Israel, so many folk are suddenly overcome with a fit of hyper-literalism and denounce anyone who dares to spiritualise a text in any way. While it is obviously true that there are dangers in allegorisation and that "*no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation*" (2 Pet.1:20), there are sound rules which we can follow which have even been laid down for us in the Word of God. Let us demonstrate with a classic example. Take Amos 9:11-15, which says:

"On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, and repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old; that they may possess the remnant of Edom, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name, says the Lord who does this thing. Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, And the treader of grapes him who sows seed; The mountains shall drip with sweet wine, And all the hills shall flow with it. I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; They shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them. I will plant them in their land, And no longer shall they be pulled up From the land I have given them, Says the Lord your God".

On the face of it, if one was to take this passage absolutely literally, it appears to be a prophecy of the rebuilding of the earthly temple in Jerusalem, and the restoration of God's people Israel to the land. However, although that may be the way it looks to the casual reader, if we want to be true to the Word, we have to take into account the fact that this passage is interpreted for us very differently elsewhere in Scripture. For when some Judaisers were causing problems in the early Church by saying that converted Gentiles needed to be circumcised in order to be saved (there they go again with their failure to understand things spiritually), a council was called to make a ruling on the matter. After the debate had taken place, everyone present fell silent and James issued his wisdom:

"Men and brethren, listen to me: Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 'After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the Lord who does all these things'. Known to God from eternity are all His works". (Acts 15:13-18)

Do you see what James is saying? He quotes here the precise text from Amos 9 which we would have taken literally as being a reference to a future earthly restoration of the nation Israel to the land. However, we are here being furnished with a model of correct exegesis whenever we are confronted with Old Testament texts which seem to imply an earthly restoration of the Davidic kingdom and the bringing back under its dominion of the neighbouring non-Israelite nations over which David had once ruled.

The unbelieving Jew of today, with a veil over his eyes when he reads the Bible, will only see an earthly kingdom and an earthly dominion, just as did unenlightened Jewry at the time of Christ (Jn.6.15; 18:36; Lk.17:20; Acts 1:6). To his support will come the over-literalistic fundamentalist Christians of today who have failed to follow James's lead in Bible interpretation. For James is plainly revealing that the rebuilding of "*the tabernacle of David*" is a figurative reference to the building of the Church of the New Covenant in Jesus Christ, into which would come the Gentiles. In fact, James is here showing that the Bible certainly teaches a form of "replacement theology". The New Testament Church has replaced the Old Testament tabernacle and temple, which was the heart and soul of the theocratic nation of Israel (cf. 2 Cor.6:16; Eph.2:21). The Church is Israel today!

This is why we say — in answer to the claim that the Middle-Eastern nation-state of Israel today is a fulfilment of Bible prophecy — that the real hope for Israel is not a restoration to an earthly territory but to Jesus Christ at His first coming. We can adduce further proof of this mighty fact from the words of the Apostles. For example, when Paul arrived in Rome, he called a meeting of the leaders of the Jews to present his case before them. During his discourse, Paul tells them why he was a prisoner:

"For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, because **for the hope of Israel** I am bound with this chain". (Acts 28:20)

What was this "*hope of Israel*" for which Paul had been indicted? What message of hope for Israel had Paul been preaching that was so offensive to the Jews? Was it a future restoration of Israel to the land under an earthly king like David? Not at all, for that would have been perfectly acceptable. In his great commentary, Matthew Henry gives an illustrative paraphrase of Paul's words to the Jewish leaders here, which plainly reveals the identity of the true "hope of Israel":

"They would have you still expect a Messiah that would free you from the Roman yoke, and make you great and prosperous upon earth, and it is this that occupies their thoughts; and they are angry at me for directing their expectations to the great things of another world, and persuading them to embrace a Messiah who will secure those to them, and not external power and grandeur. I am for bringing you to the spiritual and eternal blessedness upon which our fathers by faith had their eye, and this is what they hate me for,— because I would take you off from that which is the cheat of Israel, and will be its shame and ruin, the notion of a temporal Messiah, and lead you to that which is the true and real hope of Israel, and the genuine sense of all the promises made to the fathers, a spiritual kingdom of holiness and love set up in the hearts of men, to be the pledge of, and preparative for, the joyful resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come."³⁹

What a masterly summary this is by Matthew Henry of the meaning behind Paul's words. The "*cheat of Israel*" has always been the continued notion of a temporal Messiah and an earthly kingdom in the land. But the "*true and real hope of Israel*" is the spiritual kingdom which has its roots in the death and resurrection of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ and which finds its only earthly expression in the Church which is called out by His name. The true hope of Israel is "*The Deliverer*" who "*will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, When I take away their sins*" (Rom.11:25-26). Sins can only be taken away by the blood of Christ in His New Covenant; and it is **this** which is the real hope of Israel.

This is why we find that all the godly, pious Jews such as Simeon, who were alive around the time of the Incarnation, were "*waiting for the Consolation of Israel*" (Lk.2:25). So for people like Simeon, Anna, Zacharias, Mary, Joseph and all the rest of the godly remnant of Israel who were alive when the Son of God came in the flesh, the fulfilment of the Jewish kingdom centred on belief in and union with the Lord Jesus Christ as the "Hope of Israel" and the "Consolation of Israel". There is never the remotest hint in the gospels — nor in the rest of the New Testament — that the hope of Israel lies in a restoration to the land. Indeed, we see clearly from the Scriptures that the eye of faith enabled the godly believers of the Old Testament to focus on something beyond a piece of real estate in the Middle East! For example, we are told that

"by faith Abraham dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God". (Heb.11:9-10)

Those Patriarchs knew that there was something beyond the promised territory on earth. Indeed, rather than revel in any territorial rights to land they

"confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them." (Heb.11:13-16)

That was the knowledge that all godly believers held dear in the Old Testament times. Their hope was in a heavenly country, a city prepared by God. What city is that? The answer lies in the next chapter of this letter to Jewish converts:

"But you have come to Mount Zion and to **the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem**, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, **to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant**, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel". (Heb.12:22-24)

The city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, is none other than the Church of the New Covenant mediated by Jesus Christ, the fulfilment of the promise to Abraham that in his descendants all nations of the earth would be blessed. And we find this heavenly Jerusalem referred to by Paul in his extraordinary allegory in Gal.4:24-26, where he speaks of the difference between the Old and New Covenants. First there is *"the one from Mount Sinai which gives birth to bondage...and corresponds to Jerusalem which now is [i.e. the earthly nation of Israel]"*, and then there is *"the Jerusalem above [the New Covenant community]"* which *"is free, which is the mother of us all"*, that is, all of us who are the people of God in the Gospel Age.

So the "heavenly city" to which the patriarchs looked forward was the Church of Jesus Christ made up of both Jews and Gentiles. This is why the Lord Jesus said that Abraham *"rejoiced"* to see His day (Jn.8:56). A transition in redemptive history has occurred which any godly Jew would have expected: The transition from an earthly nation (Ex.19:5-6) to a spiritual nation (1 Pet.2:9-10), from an earthly Jerusalem to a heavenly one, from incessant corporeal sacrifices of lambs, goats and bulls, to a once for all time spiritual sacrifice of the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of Jews and those from every nation of the world, if they believe (Jn.10:14-16; 11:49-52).

For four hundred years there had been an awesome silence of divine revelation. Just as the whole creation groans now, as it awaits the full revealing of those who are sons of God by adoption, so the world was then filled with pregnant longing for the appearance of the expected One who is the Son of God by nature. And as the time approached it must almost have been possible to cut the spiritual air in Israel with a knife. At that time Zacharias, Elizabeth, Mary, Simeon and Anna and all the rest of the remnant were waiting for their Hope, their Consolation (Lk.2:25). They were not looking for an earthly king to lead a revolt against the Roman occupiers. They were not waiting for a restoration to the land. Theirs was a spiritual hope. As Simeon said:

"Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel". (Lk.2:29-32)

The hope of Israel was also the hope of the Gentiles. And that hope was not a piece of land in the Middle East. It was the hope of salvation through the death and resurrection of Christ. And when the Incarnate Son of God grew and called out disciples from the godly remnant of the Jews, these became the firstfruits of the New Covenant people — a spiritual nation which would consist of both Jews and Gentiles together.

Therefore, for all the above reasons we believe that the Middle-Eastern nation-state of Israel today cannot possibly be a fulfilment of the Bible prophecies which speak of a restoration of Israel.

Claim No.2: "The Nation Israel is still God's Chosen People Today"

We hear a great deal of complaining today about "replacement theology", a nickname given to the idea that the New Testament Church is the people of God today (just as we are teaching in this paper). However, it is rather bizarre to give a nickname to something which the Bible plainly teaches and then call it a heresy, thus pulling the wool over so many young and gullible believers' eyes.

The idea that corporate national Israel is still God's chosen people is prevalent in the minds of many today. But we wonder if they have seriously considered the plain verdict of Scripture. For the Word of God shows that as a nation Israel has come under the wrath of God, who — although ever-willing to receive into the New Covenant kingdom individual believing Jews — has finished with Israel as a national-religious entity.

Israel broke the Old Covenant and thereby forfeited any rights to it. Virtually all Israel — except for a small remnant — rejected the New Covenant in the blood of Christ. They even killed their long-awaited Messiah. Interestingly, the Pope has said that the Church now no longer believes that the Jewish nation was responsible for killing the Messiah. In order to foster good relations between Christians and Jews this claim is being widely made today. But what does the Word of God say? In the first place the Bible shows that Jesus was rejected by the Jews: *"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him"* (Jn.1:11). No one would argue with that. However, it does not stop there, for the guilt for that sin which then came upon Israel is almost beyond comprehension. First, the Lord Jesus Himself upbraided the rulers of the people with the charge:

"Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar". (Mt.23:32-35)

He saw His own rejection as the culmination of a pathological pattern of rejection which had dogged the children of Israel from the outset. When they rejected Him, He laid the punishment clearly before them:

"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it". Mt.21:42-43)

And the Lord Jesus predicted how the judgement for His rejection would begin when he told a parable about

"a certain king who arranged a marriage for his son, and sent out his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding; and they were not willing to come. But they made light of it and went their ways, one to his own farm, another to his business. And the rest seized his servants, treated them spitefully, and killed them. But when the king heard about it, he was furious. And he sent out his armies, destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city". (Mt.22:2-7)

And this was fulfilled in AD.70 at the fall of Jerusalem under the Roman army commanded by Titus, which was given a literal prophecy by the Lord Jesus:

"If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation". (Lk.19:42-44)

The Jews even invited this judgement upon themselves when they chose Jesus rather than Barabbas before Pontius Pilate:

"When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather that a tumult was rising, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see to it'. And all the people answered and said, 'His blood be on us and on our children'". (Mt.27:24-25)

It is a great mystery to us to know how anyone could imagine that the Jewish nation bore no guilt for the death of Christ. The Apostle Peter charged them in his sermons thus:

"Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, **you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death...** Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, **whom you crucified**, both Lord and Christ". (Acts 2:23, 36)

"But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, **and killed the Prince of life**, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses". (Acts 3:14-15)

"Let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, **whom you crucified**". (Acts 4:10)

And Stephen said to the Jews:

"Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers **and murderers..**" (Acts 7:52)

And Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica:

"For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Jews, **who killed both the Lord Jesus** and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost". (1 Thess.2:14-16)

"Wrath has come upon them to the uttermost". As anyone can testify, that wrath which began at Jerusalem in AD.70 has echoed down even to our own day. Here Paul is referring back to the curses for rejection of the covenant which are so awesomely and graphically portrayed in Deut.28:15-68.

Surely it is plain to see that the nation of Israel can no longer be God's chosen people. The New Covenant Church, made up of both converted former Jews and converted Gentiles, has now replaced the Old Covenant nation-state of Israel as the people of God today. This is basic New Testament teaching. The Lord Jesus himself warned that this would happen when he said to those

who sat in Moses seat: *"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it"* (Matt.21:43). And it was prophesied long ago by God to Abraham when He said *"In you all nations of the earth will be blessed"* (Gen.22:18, etc.).

Yet we are continually told that the Jews are still God's chosen people. How can God have two different covenant peoples today, when the New Covenant has replaced the Old? Which covenant are the Jews under? There is only one covenant and one covenant people.

It should be stressed that the 'replacement' which has occurred is not a straight 'one for one'. For the New Covenant people of God began among the godly Jewish remnant who received their Messiah. In that sense, salvation is indeed "of the Jews" (Jn.4:22). So the new Israel began with the Jews, grew out of the people of Israel, and became the root of the New Covenant people of God. But Jesus Himself said that as well as those Jews who would believe there would also be

"other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one Shepherd" (Jn.10:1).

"One flock and one Shepherd". There are NOT two covenant peoples of God — Israel and the Church, with one somehow held in abeyance for a time. The covenant people of God are one!

"For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, *that is*, the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man *from* the two, *thus* making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." (Eph.2:14-22)

So it is wrong to teach, as some do today, that God now deals differently with Jews and Gentiles. Both Jews and Greeks are all under sin (Rom.3:9). There is no difference between the two; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom.3:22-23).

"Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith". (Rom.3:29-30)

Jew and Gentiles together. God now deals with them *as one*. As Paul says: *"So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham"* (Gal.3:9). *"If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring"* (Gal.3:29). Believing Jews and Gentiles are both the true seed of Abraham today, understood spiritually. Once the Seed (Christ) had come there was no further need for the theocratic nation of Israel under Old Covenant law. The restoration of Israel and the salvation of the Gentiles are one and the same: namely, in Christ as part of His Church.

Claim No.3: "The Establishment of the Israeli state in 1948 is the Beginning of a Process that will Culminate in a Global Conversion of Living Jews after all the Gentiles have been Saved"

We have already dealt with the founding of the Israeli state in 1948, which, for the reasons given above, we do not believe can be the result of specific Bible prophecies about the restoration of

Israel. The notion that the founding of the Israeli state will lead to a global conversion of Jews has, in the main, been grounded on the words of the Apostle Paul in the eleventh chapter of his letter to the Romans. However, this entire section of Paul's writings needs to be understood correctly. Many seem to regard Rom.11 as a kind of coded prophetic message for the end times — the prevailing idea being that Israel as a corporate theocratic nation, which has been out of God's favour since AD.70, will be restored to its former glory with a total global conversion and gathering of all Jews alive, once the parenthesis (as they see it) "*times of the Gentiles*" is over. However, we do not believe that such a doctrine can be supported from the eleventh chapter of Romans, as we will now show.

The whole section in Romans 9 – 11 is primarily about the mystery of Divine election and the sovereign work of God in salvation. The fact of election in relation to Israel and the Jews is mentioned, both explicitly and implicitly, at least ten times. These chapters are not man-centred or even nation-centred but **God-centred**. Let us look at this section in more detail, for herein lies the key to all our thinking about national Israel.

Having dealt with the issue of righteousness, how to obtain it (justification) and its effects in the life of the believer (sanctification) in the first eight chapters, Paul begins to speak about how the Jews fit into the Divine plan of salvation in the wake of the Cross. The key to this whole section lies in Rom.9:6-7:

"But it is not that the Word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham".

Unless one understands the pivotal significance of this verse, one will fail to grasp Paul's (and the Holy Spirit's) intent throughout the three chapters and, in particular, in the peroration of Rom.11:25-36. For Paul is showing that in order to understand Israel's situation in the scheme of the Divine plan, one must understand God's purposes in election. So when we look at Israel, we must realise that

"those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed". (Rom.9:8)

Paul first demonstrates this with a historical example in Jacob and Esau (Rom.9:9-13). Both of them are "*children of the flesh*", that is, offspring of Abraham genetically speaking. But only Jacob is one of the elect children of God by adoption (cf. Heb.12:17; Jn.1:12-13). Then, in Rom.9:14-24, Paul develops an argument supporting the doctrine of election against those who would say that God is unjust: "*O man, who are you to reply against God?*". Here he is still preparing his readers for the climax of his argument. The awesome doctrine of reprobation is then set forth in Rom.9:21-22, in which it is seen that the glory of God through His elective will is always the objective (Rom.9:23-26).

Then, in Rom.9:27-29, we are introduced to a most important parallel concept to that of election in this passage, namely, "*the remnant*", which Paul confirms in Rom.11:5 as being "*according to the election of grace*". And this "remnant theology" runs right the way through the Old Testament. Israel, according to the flesh, according to its bloodlines, does not consist wholly of saved people, even though they were certainly greatly favoured as a corporate body. However, salvation is a Divine act of grace in a person. "*It is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship...*" (Eph.2:8-10). Therefore, in terms of salvation, only those Israelites who were elected by the mercy and grace of God are saved: "*Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens*" (Rom.9:18). Only a very small number of Israelites were saved, and that on the basis of faith, which is the burden of Paul's argument in Rom.4. This small number

constitutes *"the remnant according to the election of grace"*. But the major problem with Israel, from start to finish, was that *"they did not seek [righteousness] by faith, but as it were, by the works of the law"* (Rom.9:32). They sought *"to establish their own righteousness"*, instead of taking hold of the imputed righteousness provided by God through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom.10:3-4; cf. 1:17).

Paul then shows that salvation comes to the Jews by the same means as it does to the Gentiles (Rom.10:9-16), through hearing the Word of God, and exercising faith. Then he quotes Deut.32:21 and Isa.65:1-2, concluding the chapter with the words: *"All day long I have stretched out My hands To a disobedient and contrary people"* (Rom.10:21). Because at this point one may well conclude that the disobedience of the Jews has rendered them unsalvable, Paul then begins Rom.11 with that begging question: *"I say then, has God cast away His people?"* The answer is straightway given: *"Certainly not!"*. But he doesn't just leave it at that. This is where so many have come unstuck on the subject of Israel. For the assumption is here made that Paul is saying that Israel as a theocratic nation has not been cast away — that there is yet a purpose for the Jews as a nation in the plan of God. But Paul qualifies what he means by the exclamatory *"Certainly not!"*. He cites himself as an example of the fact (Rom.11:1), as if he is saying: *"Look, I've been saved, so God cannot have cast away his people"*. But Paul is not using himself as a representative of the theocratic nation — merely as a member of the elect Jewish remnant:

"What then? Israel has not obtained what it seeks; but the elect have obtained it, and the rest were blinded". (Rom.11:7)

Israel as a theocratic nation has not obtained righteousness, but the elect children of God have done so. And this is what he means when he says that *"God has not cast away His people whom He foreknew"* (Rom.11:2). He has finished with Israel as a theocratic nation (which has not obtained what it sought), but He has not finished with those out of that nation whom He foreknew according to election — for that is the meaning of the word *"foreknew"*, as we can see from Rom.8:29: *"For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son"*. Peter uses this word in relation to the elect Jewish remnant:

*"To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, **elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father**, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ"*. (1 Pet.1:1-2)

So, in answer to the question *"Has God cast away His people"*, the answer is *"No"*, so long as you understand that it refers to the people whom God *"foreknew"* — the elect, the remnant. From this we see how important it is to see these three chapters as a grand lesson in the process of election in redemption.

Therefore, in answer to the claim that there will be a global conversion of living Jews after all the Gentiles have been saved, it is vital that we grasp the context of the elect remnant in Rom.11. Yes, the nation is finished as a corporate nation, but God is still saving people out of those who physically have their roots in that nation. God has not cast away those whom He foreknew, the elect remnant. If any Jews after the flesh *"do not continue in unbelief, [they] will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again"* (Rom.11:23). If they believe, they will be brought back into the Covenant people of God. And here Paul comes to the climax of his argument, the *"mystery"* concerning the salvation of the Jews. Just as there is a *"mystery"* concerning the salvation of the Gentiles, *"that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs [with the Jews], of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel"* (Eph.3:6), so there is also a *"mystery"* concerning the Jews. And the mystery is this: That the divinely appointed judicial blindness on Israel is set to last until the very last number of the elect Gentiles — *"the fullness of the Gentiles"* — has been brought

into the people of God, which will herald the end of the age and the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. But that does not mean that there is no salvation for Israel. There is always a remnant according to the election of grace. Israel as an earthly nation has not obtained what it seeks. But they are not all Israel who are of Israel. At the end of the age, when all the elect Gentiles have been saved, all Israel WILL be saved — because "*all Israel*" here means all the remnants put together, all elect Jews from the beginning to the end of time. So you see, God has not cast away His people **whom He foreknew**. Regardless of any confusion about Israel now, at the end of the age you will come to see that ALL Israel, all elect Jews, all those who are Jews inwardly (for they are the REAL Israel) will have been saved.

Many have stumbled into a false understanding of the "*all Israel*" in Rom.11:26 because they read the phrase as "**Then** *all Israel will be saved*". Whereas the text says "*And so*". The Greek word translated as "so" here is *houtos*, which means "thus" or "in this manner". Paul is saying, "*and in this manner all Israel will be saved*". Which manner? How will all Israel be saved? In the manner in which he has been demonstrating throughout the three chapters — through the process of the Divine election of a remnant.

Now do you see why we say that this section of Romans cannot be understood outside of the context of election. "*They are not all Israel who are of Israel*". But those who are of spiritual Israel — the elect remnants — are the "*all Israel*" who will be saved. What a mystery! Paul follows up his statement that all Israel will be saved by immediately saying "*as it is written*" and giving a proof in Isa.59:20:

"The Deliverer will come out of Zion, and He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins".

This is a prophecy of the coming of the Messiah who enters into a sin-bearing New Covenant in His blood personally with all those who have faith — Jew and Gentile — throughout this Gospel age. This has nothing to do with any end-time restoration of national Israel — "*all Israel*" simply means the sum total of all believing Jews who will be saved through faith in Christ, the deliver who comes out of Zion, the only hope of Israel, the only Consolation of Israel. It is in the believing remnant of Israel that the promises are realised, not in an earthly nation settling down in a land in the Middle East to build an earthly kingdom. The unbelieving mass of Israel always saw things in political/national land-based terms. Whereas the believing remnant was always looking for something better.

Just as blindness in part will happen to Israel "*until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in*" (Rom.11:25), so the earthly city of Jerusalem will be "*trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled*" (Lk.21:24). And then the end will come. The common assumption that there is something beyond these things is a false one. The word "until" does not imply, "then something else". Jesus must remain in heaven "*until the times of the restoration of all things*" (Acts 3:21); but there is nothing after that!

We do not close the door on the possibility that as the end draws nigh, there will be a mighty quickening of Jewish converts to Christ — indeed, we would dearly love to see such a thing — but we do not believe that Scripture gives any credence whatsoever to the idea of a future glory for Israel as an earthly nation. We are aware that many say that God cannot be glorified unless His ancient covenant people are seen to be restored as a nation. However, God Himself says "*Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious*" (Isa.49:5). His glory is in the Church of Jesus Christ comprised of converted Jews and Gentiles. It is "*in His saints*" that He is glorified (2 Thess.1:10; Jn.17:10; Eph.3:21).

IV. Where does all this leave the Jewish people today and in the future?

Having rejected their Messiah when He came at His first advent it is surely not at all beyond the bounds of possibility that the unbelieving Jews will in some way be caught up in the deception of the Antichrist, when he is revealed. Many of the Early Church Fathers assumed that the unbelieving Jews — far from being restored to a great earthly God-glorifying nation — would instead be engaged in welcoming the Antichrist. For example, Cyril of Jerusalem stated:

"Since the true Christ is to come a second time, the adversary, taking occasion by the expectation of the simple, and especially of them of the circumcision, brings in a certain man who is a magician, and most expert in sorceries and enchantments of beguiling craftiness; who shall seize for himself the power of the Roman empire, and shall falsely style himself Christ, by this name deceiving the Jews, who are looking for the Anointed, and seducing those of the Gentiles by his magical illusions".⁴⁰

According to the genuine treatise of Hippolytus, *Christ and Antichrist*, the Antichrist was to restore the kingdom of the Jews, to collect the Jews out of every country of the Dispersion, making them his own, as though they were his own children, and promising to restore their country, and establish again their kingdom and nation, in order that he may be worshipped by them as God, and he will lead them on to persecute the saints, i.e. the Christians.⁴¹ And Ireneus of Lyons said that the Antichrist "*shall remove his kingdom into Jerusalem, and shall sit in the Temple of God, leading astray those who worship him as if he were Christ*".⁴²

An interesting and significant fact is that this concept of a coming Christ-like figure, a World Teacher who sets up a Golden Age on earth, can be found in many world religious systems as well as in the literature of the occult. At present, numerous religious groupings are living in such an expectation.

For example, the Shi'ite Muslims believe that "*God has designated a line of the family of 'Ali' to act as sources of spiritual guidance to the community*".⁴³ The various members of this family line are known as 'Imams'. However, in the ninth century the twelfth of the line disappeared, and this led to a hiatus in the manifestation of the Imams. However, "*the Shi'is now await the return (raj'a) of the expected Imam, who will re-establish a reign of justice and peace on earth*".⁴⁴ The significance to world events of this expectation of the *Mahdi*, as he is called, should not be missed. For the Shi'ites believe that

"towards the end of the world, before the Last Day (Qiyama), a Mahdi, often identified with the returned Jesus, will establish a reign of justice on the earth. In Shi'ism the Mahdi is a vital figure, identified with the Hidden Imam who will reappear and rule by divine prescription".⁴⁵

The Ayatollah Khomeini was a Shi'ite Muslim and his Iranian Revolution of 1978-9 was a Shi'ite-inspired event. It is worth noting that after this Revolution, the Ayatollah Khomeini became recognised as 'Vilayat Faqih' or supreme temporal representative in Iran of the Hidden Imam or Mahdi who is still to come.⁴⁶ The power of the Shi'ites worldwide is enormous. If a World Teacher was to appear who could fulfil their expectations, his powerbase would be immense.

However, it is not only the millions of Shi'ite Muslims who are expecting a World Teacher to establish a reign of peace and justice on the earth. Classical Buddhism also speaks of the expectancy of a future World Teacher to follow in the line of its founder Shakyamuni Gautama Buddha, who was alive in the sixth century B.C. Establishing the link even more profoundly, the name of their expected teacher is Bodhisattva Maitreya, which corresponds precisely with the name of the 'Ascended Master' expected to come as the World Teacher of the Neo-Gnostics.

There is yet another interesting connection here: In Neo-Gnostic ideology, the 'etheric' retreat where the so-called "Ascended Masters" are reputed to live is referred to as *Shambhala*. In the religion of Tibetan Buddhism, the same name of *Shambhala* refers to

"a mystic kingdom ruled by the lineage holders of the Kalachakra Tantra (Wheel of Time Tantra). It is said that King Suchandra of Shambhala received this Tantra from Buddha in the latter's eightieth year and entrusted it to his successors, the last of whom, Rigden Pema Karpo, is expected to return and establish Shambhala as a universal kingdom".⁴⁷

Once again, we discover in yet another religion this idea of a coming World Teacher who sets up a Golden Age on earth. Let us remember here that the Tibetan Buddhist Dalai Lama, who is so influential among the Neo-Gnostics of today, occupies a similar role to that of the Ayatollah Khomeini in terms of being the "supreme temporal representative" of the Buddha, until the coming of the Maitreya to "*establish Shambhala as a universal kingdom*". In anticipation of this occurrence, the Tibetan Buddhist organisation known as *Vajradhatu*, with its headquarters in Boulder, Colorado, has set up an imprint entitled the "New Science Library Series of Shambhala", which publishes many titles propagating the New Gnosticism.

And the possibility of a great deception comes to the fore when we consider that the unbelieving Jews of the world are still awaiting their Messiah to bring a reign of peace and justice on earth. This fact takes on sinister proportions when one considers that enigmatic statement of the Lord Jesus to the Jews that, although they would not accept Him as Messiah, "*if another comes in his own name, him you will receive*" (Jn.5:43). Here we begin to gain an insight into the true identity of this World Teacher expected by so many of the world's religions. As Augustine of Hippo (A.D.354-430) rightly states, concerning the words of the Lord Jesus to the Jews in Jn.5:43: "*He intimated that they would receive Antichrist, who will seek the glory of his own name*".⁴⁸

So what we believe on this issue is important. Millions of professing evangelicals are being swept into following the Jews and putting all their eggs in the basket of Israel. But that is the pathway of apostasy. The earthly Israel of today is an apostate anti-Christian nation and should never be followed by Christians any more than they should follow Indonesia or Iraq.

The accepted teaching in many circles today is that after the Jews refused Christ, He turned away from them to bring the Gospel to the Gentiles, but, as they say, His dealing with the Gentiles is merely a temporary, parenthetical state of affairs, and that after a mysterious rapture of the Church from off the earth, God will begin to deal with the Jews again and subsequently will come back to earth with the saints from glory and establish an earthly kingdom reigning from a restored temple regime in Jerusalem for exactly one thousand years. This strange unbiblical teaching is based on what carnal, unbelieving Jews have taught for centuries. However, the timeline is crystal clear in the Scriptures, and it cuts across what so many are being taught today. To the Jews, Peter said that Jesus Christ was sent,

"who was preached to you before, whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began". (Acts 3:20-21)

What place is there here for any strange pre-tribulational raptures and carnal Jewish dreams about a one thousand-year reign of Christ in an earthly kingdom? Peter's words are clear: Jesus will remain in heaven until "*the times of restoration of all things*", i.e. the Final Day of Judgement, when He will return to effect the resurrection from the dead, judge the world, and create the new heavens and the new earth, exactly as foretold by all the prophets from the beginning. Peter gave out much the same timeline in his second letter, when he showed that we are looking not for any strange rapture

or thousand-year earthly reigns of Christ, but for the Day of the return of the Lord, which will be contemporaneous with the Judgement and the renewing of the entire universe (2 Pet.3:10-13).

So let us reject the teachings of the New Judaisers and the many Jewish myths they have put into circulation in these confusing days. As Paul put it nearly two thousand years ago:

"Rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth". (Tit.1:13-14 cf. 1 Tim.1:4; 2:7; 2 Tim.4:4)

CONCLUSION

Having covered all this ground, readers may question whether it matters what we believe about Israel today. Is it not merely a 'secondary issue'? On the surface, it may not appear to matter. Christians have always had minor differences about things which do not affect the Gospel or the foundational truths of Christianity. But there are some profound problems here.

First, although the place of Israel is technically a secondary issue — that is, one's eschatology would not normally be counted as a fundamental of the faith — the problem is that what one believes about Israel has indeed been given the status of a primary issue in some circles today. For example, one well-known propagator of these Jewish Messianic teachings wrote to the present writer as he was preparing this paper, warning:

"You are likely to lose many of the friends you made among Charismatic and Pentecostal moderates if you proceed on this ill contrived course".

Frankly, such a statement highlights the sinful schism which lies at the heart of the pro-Israel movement among evangelicals today. Why should a man lose friends simply because of what he believes the Scriptures teach about Israel? For this reason, we believe that this issue now matters very much, as it has become unnecessarily and harmfully divisive.

Secondly, there is the question of our stewardship of funds. If Israel today is not God's chosen people, and that cruel country in the Middle-East is not a fulfilment of Bible prophecy, then is it right that we should be siphoning our treasury in the direction of such an anti-Christian earthly nation? Surely this is another reason why our beliefs on this subject do make a difference.

Thirdly, we have noticed that a fascination with Israel and Jewishness usually becomes progressively obsessive, leading to an almost cultish mentality, in which one shuns other Christians who do not share these beliefs. This regularly happens to a greater or lesser degree. But where it becomes an obsession, there is always spiritual damage and the pursuing of harmful delusions. The present writer recently received a communication complaining of people on a Jewish Messianic style newsgroup on the Internet asking

"if they should wear beards, where they can buy prayer shawls from, guidance on blowing the *shofar* (a Jewish trumpet made of a ram's horn) and so forth".

Such redundant Judaising has become increasingly widespread in recent years and has plainly come about because of a failure to understand the transition from the Old Covenant to the New. One could be forgiven for such confusion in the first half of the first century AD; but twenty centuries later there can be no excuse for such ignorance among professing Christians.

Fourthly, the whole subject of Israel and the Jews has come to consume an inordinate amount of unnecessary prayer-time in the lives of many. There are a number of organisations today which are

solely devoted to this issue, with many folk being drawn into wasting hours of valuable prayer-time about an obsolete situation. We would certainly advocate prayer that Jewish people will come to a saving knowledge of Christ; but not to waste time praying about the country Israel as if it is the answer to the world's spiritual problems.

Finally, it is a real concern that so many have become grounded in a crass over-literalistic form of biblical hermeneutics. For this naturally colours one's general Bible interpretation and leads to error in other aspects of Christian doctrine.

Nevertheless, however much the neo-Judaizers of today desire to fossilise the redemptive plan of God in an Old Covenant mould — however hard they try to make nicknames such as "replacement theology" stick and become vogue terms — the Bible is clear about the true place of "Israel" today, and the nature of the real Jerusalem. The Church is Israel today (Gal.6:14) and the individual believer has that indelibly stamped on his heart. As the Lord Jesus Himself confirms:

"He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. And I will write on him the name of My God **and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem**, which comes down out of heaven from My God. And I will write on him My new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches". (Rev.3:12-13).

¹ Jacov Prasch, *Morial Prayer and Newsletter*, UK and Ireland Edition, No.10 Spring 1998, page 22.

² See the article "*I Believe in Jesus — not Hitler*" by Nick Howard in the Daily Telegraph, 20th February 1998.

³ See the website: <http://users.bournemouth-net.co.uk/~lloyd/antisem/g2.htm>

⁴ Unfortunately, George Carey, Archbishop of Canterbury, allowed himself to be manipulated by this sort of accusation when, in March 1992, he broke a 150-year-old tradition by turning down an invitation to become ex-officio patron of the Anglican "Church's Ministry Among the Jews", declaring that it would be unhelpful in his efforts to "*encourage trust and friendship between different faith communities in our land*" (as reported in Christian News, Vol.30, No.44, November 30, 1992, p.6.). Similarly, we find the former Anglican Bishop of Birmingham, Hugh Montefiore, declaring: "*In Jewish society, to become a Christian is to go over to the enemy, and I have found it counterproductive to try to convert Jews*" (Daily Telegraph, March 4th 1998). Here this "bishop" reveals his unbelief and failure to understand the sovereignty of God in evangelism (1 Cor.3:6). It is not our place to decide to whom we do or do not preach. The Gospel must be taken to *every* person with the glorious proviso that the Lord will add His blessing according to His will and purpose.

⁵ *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, (Funk & Wagnalls, 1903), Vol.IV, p.52.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ J. Hastings (ed.), *Dictionary of the Bible* (T. & T. Clark, 1898), Vol.I., p.769.

⁸ J. Hastings (ed.), *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church* (T. & T. Clark, 1915), p.368.

⁹ *Chambers's Encyclopaedia* (George Newnes, 1963), Vol.V, p.395.

- ¹⁰ Ibid. The *Kabbalah* is Jewish Gnosticism and will be the subject of our study in a later section.
- ¹¹ Merrill C. Tenney, *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*, 1975, Vol.IV, p.31.
- ¹² G.H. Pember, *Earth's Earliest Ages and their Connection with Modern Spiritualism, Theosophy, and Buddhism* (G.H. Lang, n.d., first published in 1876), p.162.
- ¹³ F.L. Cross & E.A. Livingstone, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (O.U.P., 1983), p.471.
- ¹⁴ J. Hastings (ed.), *Dictionary of the Bible* (T. & T. Clark, 1898), Vol.I, p.769.
- ¹⁵ Ibid. One is here reminded of the caste system in India.
- ¹⁶ G. Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (Penguin Books, 1975), pp.72-73, 91.
- ¹⁷ Erubin, 21b.
- ¹⁸ March 26th 1993.
- ¹⁹ *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (Funk & Wagnalls, 19), Vol.XII, p.26.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Menahoth 43b-44a.
- ²² Gittin, 57a.
- ²³ Sanhedrin, 90a; Rosh Hashanah 17a.
- ²⁴ Shabbath 116a.
- ²⁵ Israel Shahak, *Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of Three Thousand Years*, Pluto Press, 1997, p.21. This important book by Dr. Shahak — an ex-concentration camp Israeli Jew, and a former professor at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem who is bravely willing to expose the lies of his fellow-countryman — should be read by all Christians who seek to understand the true evolution of the state of Israel and the Jewish people today.
- ²⁶ Ibid., p.24.
- ²⁷ *Macmillan Encyclopedia* (Macmillan & Co.), 1986, p.659.
- ²⁸ *Hutchinson Encyclopedia* (Helicon Publishing), 1992, p.453.
- ²⁹ *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, op.cit., Vo.III, p.458.
- ³⁰ BBC World Service news programme, 0500hrs, Monday 16th March 1998.
- ³¹ Encyclopaedia Britannica CD 98, Article on "*The Star of David*".
- ³² Ibid.

³³ Illustration taken from John Ferguson, *An Illustrated Encyclopedia of Mysticism and Mystery Religions* (Thames & Hudson, 1976), p.159. As Martin Luther's personal seal or emblem was a rose and cross, it is likely that the Rosicrucians, in the sixteenth century, stole Luther's emblem and then — to add further insult to injury — impaled on it the Kabbalistic five-pointed star!

³⁴ Keith Parker, *Is the Church the New Israel? A Biblical Analysis of the Teachings of 'Replacement Theology'* (Prayer for Israel).

³⁵ We will be dealing with the eleventh chapter of Paul's Letter to the Romans more fully later in this paper.

³⁶ See the very pertinent quotation from William of Ockham on p.65.

³⁷ To say that modern Israel is the product of terrorism is no exaggeration. The former Israeli Prime Ministers Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir were both terrorists who fomented murder before Israel was founded as a state. Shamir, leader of the terrorist Lehi group — also known as the Stern Gang — ordered the murder of Lord Moyne who was gunned down in Cairo in 1944. In a recent interview with the Daily Telegraph, Shamir said that he "*would have been happy to kill Lord Moyne himself*" (Daily Telegraph, April 18th 1998, p.20). These men literally bombed their way into office. Shamir actually gave himself the pseudonym "Michael", inspired by the IRA leader Michael Collins.

³⁸ Dr. Israel Shahak, op. cit., p.103.

³⁹ Commentary, *in loc.*

⁴⁰ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, Lecture XV.

⁴¹ Hippolytus, *Of Christ and Antichrist*, § 25, 54, 56.

⁴² Ireneus, *Against Heresies*, Book V, chap.25, § 4.

⁴³ John R. Hinnells (ed.), *The Penguin Dictionary of Religion* (Penguin, 1984), p.161.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.162-164.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p.198.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.58.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.294.

⁴⁸ Augustine of Hippo, *Tractates on the Gospel According to St. John*, Tractate XXIX, §8.

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