

As shown here, Israelites and Christians are conceived as two totally distinct groups of people, without overlap. Pop theology tells us that, 'Israelites all rejected Christ, and only non-Israelites accepted Him.' But in contrast to the

popular view shown above, we will see that neither the facts of Bible history nor Bible prophecy support a substitution of Israel in God's purposes during this age. In fact, no mention of any non-Israel converts takes place until at least Acts chapter 8. Peake's Bible Commentary informs us the idea, "THAT THE PRIMITIVE COMMUNITY INCLUDED GENTILES IN CONSIDERABLE NUMBERS IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE SUBSEQUENT NARRATIVE IN ACTS." (p. 893) That is, the Book of Acts shows that the Christian Church was mainly composed of Hebrews. Historians tell us that it was perhaps a full 8 years after the founding of the church before there were any non-Israelite converts to Christianity at all.

CAN GOD'S PROMISE BE BROKEN?

Dispensationalist scholar, M.R. DeHaan, correctly pointed out the purpose of Israel being the chosen people: "To lead all the rest of the nations to Him." God promised to Israel in Isaiah 49:6-8, "I WILL ALSO GIVE THEE FOR A LIGHT TO THE NATIONS, THAT THOU MAYEST BE MY SALVATION UNTO THE END OF THE EARTH." This is a promise by God that Israel would be His worldwide agent in salvation. It is indisputable that this salvation concerns faith in Jesus Christ. However, dispensationalists have a problem, because they teach instead that Israel rejected Christ and was set aside in God's purposes throughout this age. Did God keep His Promise or not?

In the Abrahamic Covenant, God promised in Gen. 22:16-18, "BY MYSELF HAVE I SWORN, saith the LORD, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven...And IN THY SEED SHALL ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH BE BLESSED; BECAUSE THOU HAST OBEYED MY VOICE." It is popular today to limit this to material blessings, as if God wasn't concerned with Spiritual matters! But as we saw in Isaiah, Israel was indeed promised to be a Spiritual blessing to all nations on earth, and the fulfillment of this promise depended on God's faithfulness alone. Israel would be a Spiritual light to the nations, bringing them knowledge of Jesus Christ. Since this was not based upon the obedience of the nation of Israel, but only Abraham's prior faith, we know that these blessings have taken place throughout the church age, without breaks or intermission. Do we see evidence of this in the New Testament record of the early church in the Book of Acts? Indeed we do!

THE CROWNING TRIUMPH OF THE GOSPEL

In Acts 6:7, we read of the great success of the gospel among both the Hebrew people and priests: "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and A GREAT COMPANY OF THE PRIESTS WERE OBEDIENT TO THE FAITH." Yes, multitudes, not just a handful, of the Hebrew priests eagerly accepted the new faith of Christ! Famous early Church historian, Eusebius, verifies this also, saying (IV:5) that the first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem were Hebrews, and that all of the members of the church were Hebrews also.

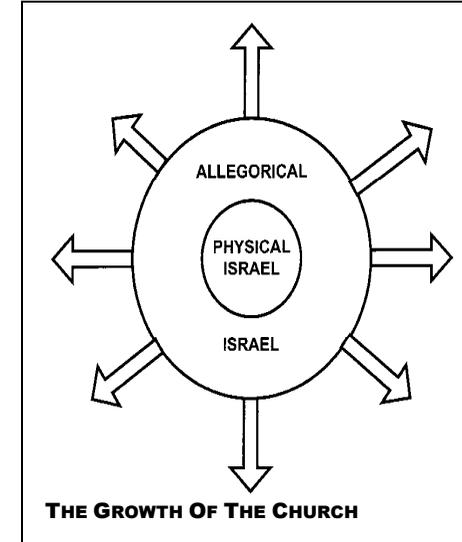
Jameson, Faussett, and Brown's Commentary says of the conversion of this "great company" of Hebrew priests, "**THIS WAS THE CROWNING TRIUMPH OF THE GOSPEL.**" (p.179) Yes! The conversion of a large number of the Hebrew priests and people was the crowning triumph of the New Testament church. Yet popular church theology completely denies this testimony of Scripture, saying that Israel rejected Christ! Acts 5:27 records the Jewish High Priest saying, "Ye have FILLED JERUSALEM WITH YOUR TEACHING," which the same commentary calls, "**NOBLE TESTIMONY TO THE SUCCESS OF THEIR PREACHING.**" (p.178) Does not popular theology imply instead that their preaching to the Hebrew people was in vain?

Acts 2:41-42 says, "Then they (Hebrews) that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." The Biblical Encyclopedia says of this, "**WHAT AMAZING EXCITEMENT MUST HAVE BEEN IN JERUSALEM! WHAT HATH GOD WROUGHT!**" (vol. 4, p. 371) Yes, God wrought the conversion of large numbers of His Israel, who heard the Word preached and believed, exactly as foretold by the prophets. (cp. Jer. 3:14-15, etc.)

Those who wish to deny these clear statements of Scripture are left with only two choices. Either the conversions of Israelites documented in the Book of Acts were fraudulent, or they were transitory. But the evidence of Scripture refutes both contentions. These new Hebrew believers, "...continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." (Acts 2:42)

What percentage of the church were Hebrew? The Expositor's Bible Commentary (V:322-3) tells us, "**THEY WERE ALL JEWS or Jewish proselytes, showing how extremely wide, at the epoch of the Incarnation was the dispersion of God's ancient people... At Rome, Alexandria, and Greece the Jews at this period constituted an important factor in the total population. THE DISPERSION OF THE JEWS HAD NOW DONE ITS WORK, and brought with it the fullness of time required by the Divine purposes. THE WAY OF THE MESSIAH HAD BEEN EFFECTUALLY PREPARED BY IT.**"

Historians indicate that virtually all of the "Jewish Hellenists" adopted Christianity in the first century, as we showed in another tract, "Did Israel Reject Christ?" (Available by request) That this was a large proportion of first century Israelites is clear. The Expositor's Bible Commentary says, "There were in that city [Jerusalem] nearly five hundred synagogues, a considerable proportion of which belonged to the Grecian Jews. ALL CLASSES AND ALL THE SYNAGOGUES, HEBREW AND GRECIAN



ALIKE CONTRIBUTED THEIR QUOTA TO THE EARLIEST CONVERTS WON BY THE APOSTLES." (V:358)

The dispersion of Israel was a divine punishment for their disobedience, yet through it God marvelously has caused His people to fulfill their commission, in spite of sin, as the servant race. As the Expositor's Bible explains, "A race of missionaries, too, equipped for their work, was developed through the discipline of exile. The thousands [of Israelites] who hung upon Peter's lips needed nothing but

instruction in the faith of Jesus Christ, together with the baptism of the Spirit, and the finest, the most enthusiastic, and the most cosmopolitan of agencies lay ready to the Church's hand. While, again, the organization of Synagogues, which the exigencies of the dispersion had called into existence, was just the one suited to the various purposes of charity, worship, and teaching, which the Christian Church required. Prophet and psalmist had lamented over Zion's ruin and Israel's exile into foreign lands, but they saw not how that God was thereby working out His own purposes of wider blessing to mankind at large..." (V:323)

Hebrew influence in the founding and growth of the Christian church may be seen in still other ways. The earliest Christian houses of worship were called, 'synagogues.' The literal translation of James 2:2 reads, "For if there should be entering into your SYNAGOGUE..." (Concordant Trans.) This shows that churches were still called synagogues in James day. The Expositor's Bible tells of a Christian Marcionite inscription dated 318 A.D., which also refers to their churches as synagogues. (V:361)

ISRAEL'S RELATION TO THE CHURCH

The second illustration above demonstrates the true relationship between Israel and the church. The Bible shows clearly that Israelites were the first converts to the faith, came to knowledge of Christ in great numbers, and formed the core of the Church. Not all Israelites believed in Christ, but a significant proportion of them did, and formed the foundation of the New Testament Church. These Israelites then went out and converted others, Hebrews and non-Hebrews; these latter becoming a form of allegorical Israel. In Old Testament times, non-Hebrews could join themselves to the Chosen Nation through faith in Israel's God. (Isa. 56:3-8) Under the same principle in New Testament times, by faith in Israel's Savior and God-In-Flesh, Jesus Christ, non-Israelites inherit the Abrahamic covenantal blessings. (Gal. 3:16) We may therefore say they are "**EXPERIENTIAL ISRAEL,**" a term coined by Bible teacher and author, Dr. Stephen Jones, for those who, while not physically Israelites,

come under the Israel covenantal blessings through faith in Christ. The combination of both groups, Christian physical Israelites and Christian “Experiential Israelites,” constitutes “New Covenant Israel,” Christ’s true Church. The body of Christ is therefore physically and allegorically Israelite throughout. This explains the otherwise inexplicable fact that the New Covenant was made only with Israel (**Heb. 8:8-9**), a point which has caused untold confusion among those who teach that Christ’s Church is non-Israelite.

The New Testament makes it clear that the Abrahamic covenant and blessings for Israel are applied to them only by faith in Christ. The Apostle Paul emphasizes this in **Galatians chapter 3**, declaring in **verse 7**, “*They which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.*” Again, he says, “*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ... There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.*” (**Gal. 3:16, 28, 29**) Paul’s reference to Abraham makes it clear that he was indeed speaking of the Abrahamic Covenant and its blessings. Paul further emphasized, “*For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly... But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly...in the spirit.*” (**Rom. 2:28-29**) The teaching that a non-Christian people constitute God’s Israel today is a concept foreign to the New Testament epistles.

Then of what importance is physical Israel? Paul answered this logical question, saying, “*What advantage then hath the Jew? ...Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.*” (**Rom. 3:1-2**) Israel was given the Scriptures, not to sit on them or brag, but to carry the knowledge of God “to the end of the earth,” as God promised and effected. (**Isa. 49:6-8**),

Church theology says that Israel completely rejected the Lord and the Lord completely rejected them, at least throughout this age, and possibly forever. But in Scripture, we find a much different theme. Acts chapter 10, a key passage, in no way supports the popular idea that Israel completely rejected Christ and was replaced by a non-Hebrew church. Israel is still the chosen people and still being used of God; but now others are joined to the household of God also. We “*should not call any man common or unclean.*” (**Acts 10:28**) Prior to Peter’s vision in Acts 10, the Apostles had only included Israelites in their witnessing. Now God revealed that the Church was to be truly universal in its extent. Christianity had burst its Hebrew shell, and now became the universal religion. The “turning to the gentiles,” (**Acts 13:46**) was not a rejection of all Israelites, but rather an inclusion of all nations in the plan of God.

GREAT INTERWOVEN SCRIPTURE THEMES

Dr. DeHaan, as quoted earlier, also tied together the themes of Israel and the Kingdom of God. Several great Christian themes are interwoven in Scripture: *Israel, the Kingdom, the law, and the New Covenant*. The kingdom is **GOD’S POWER OR REIGN IN THE WORLD**; in fact, the Greek word, *basilea*, is accurately translated as either “kingdom” or “reign.” God’s law is the **LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF THE KINGDOM**, a Covenant is the **CHARTER OF THE KINGDOM**, and Israelites are **CITIZENS OF THAT KINGDOM**. In any

kingdom, all four of these important elements are either fully present, or altogether absent. The ultra-dispensationalists recognize this fact in making all four future. In doing so, they are consistent with their own theories, although plainly inconsistent with Scripture. The New Testament affirms that the kingdom of God is present in this age (**Col. 1:13**), God’s moral law is still in force for Christians (**Rom. 3:31**), the New Covenant is now in effect (**Heb. 8:6**), and Israel is still the people of God (**Rom. 11:1-2**). It is a curious inconsistency of many Christians to make the New Covenant, or charter of the kingdom, a present reality, while supposing that the kingdom itself is entirely absent!

DID ISRAEL RECEIVE CHRIST?

Did Israel receive their Messiah in faith? What do we read? The Book of Acts records, “*THE SAME DAY THERE WERE ADDED UNTO THEM ABOUT 3,000 SOULS,*” (**Acts 2:41**) “*MANY OF THEM WHICH HEARD THE WORD BELIEVED; AND THE NUMBER OF THE MEN WAS ABOUT 5,000*” (**Acts 4:4**) “*AND BELIEVERS WERE THE MORE ADDED TO THE LORD, MULTITUDES BOTH OF MEN AND WOMEN*” (**Acts 5:14**) “*AND THE WORD OF GOD INCREASED; AND THE NUMBER OF THE DISCIPLES MULTIPLIED IN JERUSALEM GREATLY*” (**Acts 6:7**) “*THE NUMBER OF THE DISCIPLES WAS MULTIPLIED*” (**Acts 6:1**) and on and on. Not all believed, but great multitudes of them did. Their descendants are not known as Jews, since they no longer followed Judaism. They are *Christians*, in direct fulfillment of prophecy.

Israel was promised a multitudinous seed “*as the sand of the sea.*” (**Gen. 32:12**) In **Hoseh 1:10** and **Rom. 9:26-27**, this promise is tied to Israel becoming Christians, “sons of the Living God.” Dr. DeHaan professed ignorance as to who Israel’s descendants all are in the world today (*ibid.*, p. 31), but nevertheless admitted, “*ETERNITY ONLY WILL REVEAL THE COUNTLESS HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF ISRAEL’S NATION...*” (*ibid.*, p. 16) The relatively few number of Jews in the world today is factual testimony that **multiplied millions** of dispersed descendants of Abraham are Christians, and are not known as Jews. They are indeed ‘**as the sand of the sea**’ for multitude as God said, and have fulfilled Israel prophecies even while not realizing their Biblical heritage. Their numbers include hundreds of millions of Experiential Israelites by faith of all races.

In an important passage, the Apostle Paul says, “*I say then, HATH GOD CAST AWAY HIS PEOPLE? GOD FORBID. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. GOD HATH NOT CAST AWAY HIS PEOPLE WHICH HE FOREKNEW.*” (**Rom. 11:1-2**) Church theology says that Israel was cast out of God’s purposes in this age, either temporarily or permanently. But Paul, speaking specifically of the Church age, indicates that Israel was not “cast away,” even for an instant. The conversion of Israel was the crowning triumph of the gospel, because Israel, as God’s elected Servant People, then carried the gospel of “*[God’s] salvation unto the end of the earth.*” (**Isa. 49:6-8**) Israel was elected, not for her own sake, but for the world’s sake; and that election did not fail.

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“The Jews, without doubt, composed the great majority of the Christians” in the early Christian Church.

-Dr. John Peter Lange,
Lange’s Bible Commentary (IV:101)

The Hebrew Foundation Of Christ’s Church

A STUDY OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

By Pastor J.S. Brooks

Is the Christian Church a totally “gentile” church, built on a “gentile” foundation? Were the chosen people, Israel, set aside by God when the Church was founded? This is the teaching of most of our denominations today. For example, a leading dispensationalist author, the late M.R. DeHaan, summarized well this thinking: “*GOD CHOSE THE ISRAELITES TO BE HIS PEOPLE, TO LEAD ALL THE REST OF THE NATIONS TO HIM IN THE END TIME. HOWEVER, ISRAEL FAILED, AND WHEN THE MESSIAH CAME NINETEEN HUNDRED YEARS AGO TO OFFER THE IDEAL MESSIANIC KINGDOM TO THE NATION OF ISRAEL, THEY REFUSED THEIR KING, THE KINGDOM WAS SET ASIDE...*” (*The Jew & Palestine In Prophecy*, p.1)

We may thus summarize standard church teaching today:

- 1) ‘**Israel was called to be God’s Servant People and carry the good news of Salvation to the ends of the earth.**’
- 2) ‘**Israel completely rejected both Christ and their Servant commission, causing God to pick the “gentiles” or non-Israelites to be His servants instead, and build a church completely composed of non-Hebrews.**’

Thus, no credit is given at all to Israel for the foundation and growth of the Christian church. Christ’s church, they say, is completely and totally non-Hebrew.

For centuries in Europe and America, an antagonistic view toward the Jewish people caused a downgrading in the importance accorded the Hebrews in such things as the founding of Christ’s Church. The resulting theological attitude has been sharply adversarial: ‘We gentiles accepted Christ, but all of the Israelites rejected Him.’ The Protestant Reformation taught that the Church has permanently replaced Israel, while the dispensationalists proclaim that Israel has been displaced temporarily throughout this age. These views are summarized in the illustration on the next page, depicted as two independent circles.