

Who are the Jews?

Introduction

It is very difficult to talk about the ‘Jews’ without creating much strong emotion and accusation from some quarters. Fear of being labelled anti-Semitic, a heretic or made to feel guilty for simply raising the topic is probably why most avoid this important subject. Unfortunately, in the absence of any genuine open discussion, mainstream media, politicians and church leaders have been free to promote and repeat many views completely unchallenged. As a result, few now understand who the ‘Jews’ are, where they come from, what they believe or what the future holds for them. For most Christians, the ‘Jews’ represent the biblical Israelites and hold them to be exclusively God’s people and therefore never to be challenged. However, how do we know whether these common beliefs are true or not unless we do some investigations for ourselves?

Accordingly, let’s review the background and history of both Israel and the ‘Jews’, including what these two terms actually mean. Wherever possible we will use quotes from ‘Jewish’ authorities themselves to avoid any labelling.

History and Background

As a result of Abraham’s great faith, God made an unconditional covenant with Abraham. He would become a people and a nation with all the land he could see before him as an inheritance. Kings would also come from his descendants (Gen 17:3-8). This promise was confirmed to His son Isaac, because it was through Isaac that Abraham’s descendants were to be reckoned (Gen 21:12) and later reconfirmed, with God adding that his descendants would also be as numerous as the stars, with all peoples on the earth to be blessed through them (Gen 26:2-5). These same promises were confirmed to Jacob and his descendants (Gen 28:13-15). Jacob’s name was eventually changed to Israel and the promises reconfirmed another two times to Israel, with God adding his descendants would become a nation and a community of nations (Gen 35:9-13; 48:4)

After God had lead Israel out of Egypt, He promised them (Israel) if they obeyed Him fully and kept His covenant, then they would be His treasured possession; a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. A covenant which was later made unconditional. In reply Israel agreed to do everything the Lord had said (Ex 19:5-20 & 2 Sam 7:22-24). God gave Israel His commandments and statutes at Mt Sinai. The commandments providing both a summary of his entire law and a morale code for the individual. His statutes (based on the commandments) providing the nation with all the laws they would need covering all aspects of their national life including its structure of government; justice system; economy and taxes; foreign relations; personal property rights; sustainable agriculture practices; health laws; welfare system; employment relations; holidays; social responsibilities and military to name a few. It is important to note that while Israel was to administer these laws, they could not add, remove or alter any of them since they were God’s and given by Him. Something modern government might well remember (Ex 20 - Deut 34).

In confirmation of the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Israel under the leadership of Joshua began to take possession of the land they and their descendants were promised as an everlasting possession (Gen 15:18-21, Num 34 & Jos 1:2-5).

The nation of Israel was established as a theocracy. This means God was the King and head of the nation (Judges 8:22-23; 1 Sam 8:7, 10:19 & 12:12). In Him all the powers of the state, legislator, executive, and judicial were united. Only He could make or change the laws and He exercised His government offices for the most part through men whom He raised up. This is the opposite to a democracy where the people elect who they want to administer the nation, with the elected officials then able to make or change the laws which they administer. In the course of time, the people demanded their own king to the displeasure of Samuel (1 Sam 8:4-22) due to the exactions a monarch would make upon the people. However, God granted their request so they would learn their mistake and realise how much better off they were when God was their direct King and Ruler. Even so, the monarch remained the representative of God (1 Sam 10:1; 13:14; 2 Sam 5:2; 2 Kings 9:6; 1 Chr 29:22-23; Ps 2:2,7; 20:6) and as often recorded in scripture, when the monarch displeased God, another monarch was raised up.

Eventually, the nation of Israel split into two separate nations (Israel and Judah) after King Solomon's death (1 Kings 12). The House of Israel (10 Tribes in Northern Palestine) after being taken captive by the Assyrians around 721 BC is said to have never returned to Palestine, but migrated north west to the land they would be replanted in fulfilment of the words Samuel prophesied to King David (2 Sam 7:10-11). God is said to have removed all Israel (2 Kings 17:18) from His presence (i.e. removed them from Palestine) and the bible doesn't mention anyone returning accept one priest (2 Kings 17:23-28). This is further confirmed in 2 Esdras 13:40-45 stating when the House of Israel was captive in Assyria, they took "counsel among themselves, that they would leave the multitudes of the heathen, and go forth into a further country, where never mankind dwelt".

Josephus the renown ancient Jewish historian, wrote in his Antiquities of the Jews, Book 2, Chapter 5, v2 that out of all the "entire body of Israel" (12 tribes), only 2 tribes remained in Asia and Europe subject to the Romans since the "ten tribes were beyond Euphrates till now" and were an "immense multitude, and could not be estimated by numbers". This migration has also been confirmed by many leading historians, archaeological findings and historical records which is all in fulfilment of the prophesies and promises concerning Israel.

In due course the House of Israel lost its identity and became gentilized among the nations of Europe as they migrated toward Western Europe and eventually into Britain. It's worth pointing out before continuing that while 'gentile' (translated from the Greek word "ethnos") can mean a 'non-Jew', it does not necessarily mean 'non Israelite' for two main reasons. Firstly, it primarily means "a race (as of the same habit), i.e. a tribe" (Strong's Concordance) and a "people of the same race or nationality who share a distinctive culture" (thefreedictionary.com). In other words, gentile is not a general term which refers to all races and nationalities of the world who are 'non Jewish', but refers to a specific people of the same race. Secondly, while all true Jews (descendants of the tribe of Judah) are Israelites; most Israelites are not Jews, since the tribe of Judah is only one of 12 tribes, so there are 11 other tribes from which Israelites are descended. Most confusion would be eliminated if Christians stopped using the term gentile or 'non Jew' as if it also meant 'non Israelite', when it clearly need not.

Accordingly, an Israelite can be both a 'non-Jew' and a gentile, and yet still be an Israelite by race. In fact, it appears only the Israelites (10 tribes of the House of Israel) can be gentiles according to the above biblical definition, since only they are related to the southern House of Judah (i.e. of the same race).

Continuing on, although Israel had been rejected and divorced by God in judgement for their sins, this was not to be permanent since God promised they would never cease to be a nation before Him and were to be restored at the end of their punishment (Jer 3:8-25; 31:1-37 & 50:17-20). This was made possible through the death of Christ enabling divorced and rejected Israel to be restored to the Abrahamic Covenant so in the place they were called "not my people", they could be called "the sons of the living God" when God promised He would make a new covenant with Israel:

"Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God" (Hos 1:10)

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Jer 31:32-33)

Accordingly, Israel (the northern ten tribes) was never permanently rejected by God nor ever ceased to exist as a people or nation. Nor were they replaced by the Jews and or the church.

As for the House of Judah (3 Tribes in Southern Palestine) many were also taken captive along with the House of Israel by the Assyrians around 721BC and never to return (2 Kings 18:13-17). However, those remaining of the House of Judah ignored the judgement and punishment Israel received and committed even worse sins (Jer 3:8-11) and were eventually also sent into captivity as their punishment. Only a small

remnant of descendants are said to have returned after their captivity by the Babylonians (Ezra 2:1, 64) with many deciding to either remain in Babylon (Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 11, Chap 1, v3) or migrate with the House of Israel.

The Promises and Prophesies Made to Israel and Judah ('Jews')

From the time of their separation in King Rehoboam's day, both nations and peoples were completely separate and were treated as such in the bible. This included the promises and prophesies made after this event. Accordingly, when the Prophets directed their prophesies to Israel, it is to the House of Israel they must be applied and vice versa. It is a common mistake to apply the promises made to Israel to Judah or the 'Jews'. However, the House of Israel and the House of Judah are prophesied to join together and return from the northern land to Palestine after Christ returns and establishes His rule from Jerusalem (Jer 3:14-18).

Regarding the promises, it's essential we remember these were made to the racial descendants of Jacob (Israel), not the 'Jews' only for they represent but a very small portion of Israel (being only 1 of 13 tribes). In fact the Jewish people make up an even smaller portion of Israelites since the term 'Jew' is only applied in the bible to the very small remnant of 42,360 of the Tribe of Judah who returned to the land of Israel about 538BC after their captivity in Babylon when they became known as the Nation of the Jews (Ezra 2:1, 64). This is confirmed by the Jewish historian Josephus who wrote "Jew is the name they are called by from the day that they came up from Babylon." (Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 2, Chapter 5). Many of the Southern Kingdom of Judah either choose not to return to Jerusalem (Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 11, Chap 1, v3) or had been taken captive earlier by the Assyrians around 721BC along with the Northern Kingdom of Israel as confirmed by the bible (2 Kings 18:13-17) and ancient Assyrian Cylinder records. This is a fact even the Learned Jewish Rabbis state themselves since they have always looked forward to the day they would be united with the "lost ten tribes of Israel". Dr Hertz, former Chief Rabbi of London said, "The people known at present as Jews are descendants of Judah and Benjamin, with a certain number of the descendants of the tribe of Levi. As far as is known there is no further admixture of other tribes. We look forward to the gathering of all the tribes at some future date."

In fact, the number of true 'Jews' was reduced further as they inter-married with other races in disobedience to God's commands soon after they returned from captivity, while many other races of people converted to the Jewish faith and also became known as 'Jews'. In Esther 8:17 we are told "many people of other nationalities became Jews because the fear of the Jews had seized them". Many Edomites adopted the Jewish religion around 125 BC when their kingdom was destroyed by the 'Nation of the Jews' and the whole nation of the Khazars converted to Judaism around the 8th century AD. They later spread out to become the 'Jewish' populations of Eastern Europe. As a result of this change, we must be careful not to assume that all those who call themselves 'Jews', are in fact the actual racial descendants of the Tribe of Judah. Just as Christ was careful not to when talking to those who called themselves 'Jews' in His day. Is it not possible that Christ in John 8, was acknowledging that although they might be able to claim Abraham as their father, they were at best descended through the line of Esau who was rejected by God, rather than through the line of Jacob? They stated themselves that their forefathers had never been slaves of anyone, which would prove the point since if they were Israelites their forefathers would certainty have to have been slaves in Egypt.

Who Does the Bible Say the word 'Jew' Refers to?

As a result of this inter-marrying and other races converting to Judaism and calling themselves 'Jews' also, it has become increasingly difficult to understand the difference between Israel and the 'Jews' (Judah). This is because the word 'Jew' now means something completely different to the Hebrew and Greek words it was originally translated from. While the term 'Jew', was once a racial label referring to a "descendant of Judah" (Strong's Concordance) and "One belonging to the tribe or to the Kingdom of Judah" (Westminster Dictionary of the Bible), it has since been changed into a mere religious one. Enabling many different nationalities who were never descendants of Abraham through the line of Isaac and Jacob (Israel) to claim themselves to be 'Jews' who are not. This problem is referred to by both Jesus in John 8 and in Revelation where we are told there would be those who would call themselves 'Jews', but who were not. A subject further discussed in a later section.

However, for us we should only use the biblical meaning when trying to understand the term 'Jew' ('descendant of Judah') rather than any new modern political or religious meaning which differs from it and as a result causes much confusion. Accordingly, the bible is clear. The word 'Jew' can only correctly be applied to a racial descendant of the tribe of Judah. Anyone else using or calling themselves by this name is not an actual 'Jew' or Israelite.

Aren't the Jews and Israelites the same People?

There are many reasons why so many make the mistake of viewing the Israelite (Israel) and 'Jew' (Judah) as the same people even though this understanding isn't supported by either scripture or history. The 'Jews' themselves understand the difference and state that "Strictly speaking it is incorrect to call an Ancient Israelite a 'Jew' or to call a contemporary Jew an Israelite or a Hebrew" (1980 Jewish Almanac, article entitled "A brief History of the Terms for Jew" pg.3).

Maybe the best definition of the term 'Jew' in its modern context rather than its true biblical meaning is best summed up by the modern Israeli State government itself who state "The term Israelite is purely biblical. An Israeli is a citizen of Israel, regardless of religion. A Jew is a person anywhere in the world born to a Jewish mother, or converted to Judaism, who is thus identified as a member of the Jewish people or religion." (Information Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem, February 1998).

Accordingly, the Jewish authorities agree that the word 'Jew' now refers to a person's religion, not their race or ethnic background as it does in the bible. This is why there are 'Jews' of every race, because the modern definition of a 'Jew' does not denote race as the original Hebrew word does in the bible. This response is perfectly in accordance with the Halakha (Jewish Law) which also defines a 'Jew' as any person, anywhere in the world, who is born to a mother who is already a Judaist or who converts to Judaism themselves. Converting to Judaism makes one not only a member of the religion of Judaism, but also "a member of the Jewish people" they say. This clearly demonstrates that according to Halakha, the word "Jew" refers to a person's religion, not their race or ethnic background. In context then it is no different from the words "Muslim" or "Buddhist". Note that the term Israelite is defined as "purely biblical" and therefore has no relevance to the definition of a 'Jew'. It is vitally important that we understand this if we are to properly comprehend what follows.

Now, if we honestly look at the history of "the Jewish people" we will see that there have been a surprisingly large number of conversions down through the centuries. Whole peoples converted at times, most notably the nations of Edom (the descendants of Esau) and the Khazars (a Turkic-Mongoloid people from southern Russia) who originated from central Asia. Together these two groups, neither of which are descended from the ancient Israelites of the Bible, make up a large majority of today's 'Jews'. Even the Jewish encyclopaedias testify to the fact that both the Edomites and Khazars are to be found among the Jewish people today.

Who are the Modern Day Jews?

The fact is, the vast majority of 'Jews' living in Palestine during the Lord's day were not Israelites as is still true today. Of the entire nation of Israel and most of Judah taken captive by the Assyrians, only one priest is said to have been allowed to return (2 Kings 17:23-28). Of the remaining nation of Judah, taken captive by the Babylonians less than 42,500 are said to have returned under Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 2:1, 64). Compare this to the entire nation of Edom who were already living in Judaea when the tiny remnant of Judah returned, and who were converted to Judaism under John Hyrcanus in 126 BC, well before the Lord Jesus was born. Never mind all the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Samaritans and the rest who had taken over the land when the Israelites were removed (2 Kings 17:24):

During the rule of the Maccabees, "Judas Maccabeus retook Hebron and the other towns that the Edomites had occupied (1 Macc. 5:65; Jos. Antiq. XII. 8, 6). John Hyrcanus compelled the Edomites to submit to the rite of circumcision, and incorporated them with the Jewish people (Jos. Antiq. XIII. 9, 1). The Herods were Idumeans, i.e. Edomites. (The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible under "Edomites")

"Hyrcanus took also Dora and Marissa, cities of Idumea, and subdued all the Idumeans; and permitted them to stay in that country, if they would circumcise their genitals, and make use of the laws of the Jews...they

were hereafter no other than Jews." (Jewish Historian Flavius Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book XIII, Chapter IX, sec. 1)

"Herod the Great...was the second son of the Idumean Antipas or Antipater... (Jos. Antiq. xiv. 1, 3; 7, 3). Thus, neither by the father's nor by the mother's side was Herod a real Jew, though the Idumeans, who had been conquered by John Hyrcanus, and compelled to be circumcised and adopt Judaism, had now become nominally Jews." (The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible under "Herod")

Following the conversion of the Edomites to Judaism, "Antipater the Idumean", the Edomite governor, became procurator of Judea, Galilee and Samaria. Through collusion with the Romans he consolidated his power and effectively usurped the Judahite throne by arranging for his son Herod the Great, followed by his grandson Herod Antipas, to become the king of Judea. Herod the Great also took over the religious affairs of the nation, in addition to the throne rebuilding the temple to his own requirements and specifications, taking control of the priesthood and appointment of the high priest:

"Antipater was made procurator of Judea by Julius Caesar in 47 BC." (Jos. Antiq. xiv. 8, 3 and 5). "Phasaelus, the eldest son, was made governor of Jerusalem...by his father, and Galilee was committed to Herod" (Jos. Antiq. xiv. 9, 2). Later "war ensued"...and "Jerusalem was captured by Herod and Herod became king of Judea in 37 BC." (The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible under "Herod")

In Esther 8:17 we are also told "many people of other nationalities became Jews because the fear of the Jews had seized them". So by the time the Lord Jesus arrived in Palestine many different nationalities had begun calling themselves 'Jews', but it was the Edomites who had seized the kingdom from the true Judahites, the descendants of the tiny remnant of exiles who had returned from Babylon. The Edomites had control of the land, the throne and the temple when the Lord Jesus was there. They were posing as true Israelites of the house of Judah, but the Lord Jesus knew that they were impostors (John 8) and He warns us about them in the book of Revelation:

"I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan." (Rev 2:9)

"Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee." (Rev 3:9).

Maybe the knowledge that the bulk of the people present in Judea in the days of our Lord Jesus as is the case today are not and were not Israelites seems absurd to you, or maybe you are just finding it difficult to take in. If so, then please realize that the Edomites were simply doing what Isaac had prophesied they would do when, on comforting Esau, who had just thrown away his birthright said:

"And by thy sword shalt thou live, and shalt serve thy brother [Israel]; and it shall come to pass when thou shalt have the dominion [Kingdom], that thou shalt break his yoke from off thy neck." (Gen 27:40)

From this it is logical that Esau/Edom was to possess the kingdom at some point in time. So given the history of Judea just prior to the arrival of the Lord Jesus and in recent history, is there really anything at all startling in what is being said here? If Esau's descendants were not in possession of the kingdom at the time of the Lord Jesus, then when exactly were they in possession of it? If not then, they appear to certainly be in possession of it now, with the political 'Jews' (Zionists) claiming Israel for themselves after WWI. With the blessing of politicians and church leaders they have been able to simply take possession of it as they continue to do so today. Again the bible tells us that these people would be no other than the Edomites (Eze 33:24-29; 36:1-8 and Mal 1:1-5).

Since the time of Christ, this admixture of other races claiming to be 'Jews' has only intensified with many more nationalities and races of people converting to Judaism through the centuries and also becoming known as 'Jews' as continues even today. There have also been more large scale conversions, including the entire nation of the Khazars who converted to Judaism around the 8th century and also became known as Jews. The 10th century Persian historian Ibn al-Faqih confirmed this when he reported that "all the Khazars are Jews." It was this group of people who later spread out to become the 'Jewish' populations of Eastern Europe. Accordingly, based on these historical facts it is obvious that there are many people today calling

themselves 'Jews' who are not (just as prophesied) because they are not the descendants of the tribe of Judah or any other for that matter. People who have no right to call themselves 'God's chosen people' or claim God's promises for themselves. Remember, the promises were made to the racial descendants of Abraham through the line of Isaac and Jacob only, although later opened up to others professing faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. However, the descendants of Esau were to be excluded for all times.

The term 'Jew' is not in the original scriptures

If the term 'Jew' was not already hard enough to understand, matters are made worse when one learns that the word 'Jew' does not even exist in the original Hebrew or Greek scriptures. Nor the original 1611 version of the King James Bible. The term was only added to the King James Version in the late seventeenth century when it was revised. Benjamin H. Freedman, a Jewish man himself wrote:

"It is an incontestable fact that the word "Jew" did not come into existence until the year 1775. Prior to 1775 the word "Jew" did not exist in any language." (book entitled 'A Jewish man writes about the Jews' 1954).

The confusion surrounding the term 'Jews' and its misuse has unfortunately been made more difficult by many churches, governments and various 'Jewish' groups spreading the falsehood (many unintentionally) that the 'Jews' represent all Israel. For example, The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia defines "Jew" as meaning the same as defined in the Strong's Concordance stating "Jew denotes originally an inhabitant of Judah, but later the meaning was extended to embrace all descendants of Abraham." The question which faces us here is who had the authority and power to change the meaning of a word and extend its meaning and in doing so, transfer God's promises to a people who are not entitled to them?

It's sad that our politicians and church leaders haven't taken the time to learn the truth for themselves, but rather blindly believed the Zionist claims about themselves without ever asking for any evidence to prove their claims of descent. As a result true Israelites, which include descendants of the House of Israel (10 tribes), racial 'Jews' (descendants of Judah) and all who accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour (regardless of race), have had their rightful inheritance taken from them by a people whose ascendants never knew God nor lived in Palestine. Until this is rectified, the violence and bloodshed in the Middle East will continue. It is interesting that this all appears to have been prophesied in the bible stating that the Edomites would claim Palestine for themselves Eze 33:24-29 and 36:1-8; Mal 1:1-5. Isn't it amazing that after thousands of years they are still trying to get the birthright and inheritance back which they had lost to Jacob and his descendants?

Didn't Christianity Originate From the 'Jews'?

There remains a great gulf between Christianity and the Jew since they totally rejected Jesus Christ and Christianity and this rejection and hatred continues today. This rejection includes the bible too, with few Christians appearing to understand that Judaism is not based on the Old Testament, nor even the Torah (books of Moses) but on the Jewish Talmud. A collection of books written in the centuries immediately before Christ and shortly after which contain the accumulated sayings of the learned Jewish sages and Rabbis, including the 'oral law' which they believe was handed down by Moses to the religious leaders, parallel, but different to the 'written law' as recorded in the first 5 books of the bible. The Jewish Talmud is a most violent and anti-Christian book and condones and encourages every possible crime and perversion provided it is against a 'non-Jew'. Non Jews being described as 'Goy' or 'Goyim', which translates as 'Cattle' in English.

The central theme of their religion also teaches they are the 'master race' and are destined to rule the world with all 'non Jews' their servants. In fact, their most sacred day, the Yom Kippur, or Day of Atonement has been made into the yearly opportunity for each 'Jew' to ask for and receive forgiveness for all the sins and wrongs they are about to commit in the coming year. A one-year, renewable license to lie, cheat and steal with impunity!

"All vows, prohibitions, oaths, consecrations or equivalent terms that we may vow, swear, consecrate, or prohibit upon ourselves from this Yom Kippur until the next Yom Kippur, may it come upon us for good - regarding them all, we repudiate them henceforth. They all will be abandoned, cancelled, null and void; they will be without power and without standing. Our vows shall not be valid vows; our prohibitions shall not be valid prohibitions; and our oaths shall not be valid oaths." (Yom Kippur)

The Jews themselves certainly don't believe or teach that Christianity originated from Judaism:

"This is not an uncommon impression and one finds it sometimes among Jews as well as Christians - that Judaism is the religion of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). It is, of course, a fallacious impression...Judaism is not the religion of the Bible." (Rabbi Ben Zion Bokser, "Judaism and the Christian Predicament", page 59)

"The return from Babylon and the introduction of the Babylonian Talmud mark the end of Hebrewism and the beginning of Judaism." (The late Rabbi Stephen F. Wise, formerly the Chief Rabbi of the United States)

"Judaism is, specifically, the religion of a Jewish community living among Gentile peoples and is to be distinguished from the religion of ancient Israel." (Funk & Wagnalls Standard Reference Encyclopaedia, 1959, Volume 14)

"...you will notice the great difference between the Jewish and Christian religions. But these are not all. We consider the two religions so different that one excludes the other...we emphasized that there is no such thing as a Judeo-Christian religion...There is not any similarity between the two concepts" (Rabbi Moshe M. Maggal, President, National Jewish Information Service, Letter of August 21, 1961).

The London Jewish World of March 15, 1923 declared: "Fundamentally, Judaism is anti-Christian."

The Scribes and Pharisees

The scriptures tell us that the Scribes, Pharisees and most of the 'Jews' who they represented were not Israelites. The Scribes and Pharisees admitted this with their own mouths when they said:

"We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man" (John 8:33)

To understand this properly let's go back a few steps. There is a very good reason why the 'Jews', as represented by the Scribes and Pharisees, received harsh comment from our Lord Jesus and why they rejected and killed Him. And it is to do with who they were. God referred to these people in Isaiah Chapter 6:

"And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed" (Isaiah 6:9-10).

It is clear from this passage that God did not want "this people", whoever they might be (note He did not say "my" people), to understand His message and be converted. But we know that it was the 'Jews' who God was speaking about because the Lord Jesus quotes these very verses when the disciples ask Him why He speaks to the 'Jews' in parables:

"And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given...For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." (Matthew 13:10-11,15)

Firstly, the Lord Jesus uses the terms "you" and "them". When Jesus said to the disciples "unto you it is given" it should be obvious that He didn't mean that the disciples were the only twelve people on the earth who would ever be able to understand His message. Jesus was, therefore, referring to a particular group of people of whom the disciples formed but a part. Likewise, when He said "but to them it is not given", Jesus wasn't referring only to that gathering of people who happened to be present on the sea shore on that particular day, but again to a larger group represented by that gathering. So by His use of the terms "you" and "them" it is clear that Jesus was referring to two separate and distinct groups of people.

Secondly, Jesus confirms that these people were not allowed to understand ("unto them it is not given"). So we can't just brush this under the carpet by claiming that Jesus was talking about "believers" and "unbelievers". Surely we have to hear, understand and accept the message before we can become a believer. Therefore everyone is an unbeliever to begin with. So we cannot say that a person does not

understand and accept the message because they are an unbeliever, but rather they are an unbeliever because, for whatever reason, they have not yet understood and accepted the message. Even the disciples had to have the parables of the kingdom explained to them. Remember Jesus never explained them to the multitudes. Thomas continued to doubt right up until the end. No, this was an act of God as per His own prophecy as recorded in Isaiah Chapter 6. These people were not allowed to understand and Jesus confirms the reason why. So they would not be converted. Furthermore, He makes it clear that they can never be converted ("lest at any time they...be converted").

So who are these people who were and are never allowed to partake of the kingdom? We know that the Lord Jesus was sent to Israel and to Israel alone:

"I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24)

This is why, when sending the disciples out to preach the kingdom message, He instructed them:

"These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matt 10:5-6)

The Lord Jesus' mission was clearly to His "lost sheep", the house of Israel. Now look at what He said to the Scribes and Pharisees:

"I am the good shepherd and know my sheep, and am known of mine...But ye believe not because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." (John 10:14,26-27)

Note carefully that He did not tell them that they were not His sheep because of their failure to believe. In fact He said the very opposite. He told them that the reason they did not believe was because they were not of His sheep. Do you see the difference? It is very important. Check your concordance and you will find that the term "sheep" is used literally dozens of times throughout the scriptures to refer to the nation of Israel, God's chosen people. So could it be that these people, the 'Jews', were and are not Israelites? The Pharisees provide us with the answer. In their response to the Lord Jesus' statement "the truth shall make you free", the Pharisees give us an astounding piece of information that is vital to a proper understanding of the scriptures. Again:

"We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man." (John 8:33)

The Pharisees here state that they were descended from Abraham, but had never been in bondage. However, we know that all Israel was in bondage in Egypt (Exodus 1:1-5,13-14). Therefore, the Pharisees cannot be Israelites. Now please do not believe anyone who tells you that the Pharisees were lying when they made this statement, since the Lord Jesus not only does not rebuke the Pharisees for lying, but a few verses later actually confirms what they say:

"I know that ye are Abraham's seed"...[but]..."If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham" (John 8:37,39)

The Lord Jesus accepts their claim of descent from Abraham, but says that they are not "Abraham's children". What does He mean by the expression "Abraham's children"? There is no need to attempt to spiritualise this expression away as many do, since Paul provides us with a full explanation of it in Romans 9:

"For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." (Rom 9:6-8)

He then goes on to explain how the promises passed to Jacob. Paul is telling us here that not all of those calling themselves "Abraham's children" are actually Israelites. He explains that being descended from Abraham is not sufficient to make them "children", but rather only the "children of the promise", i.e. (those descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), are counted for the seed (the promises passed down from Abraham through Isaac to Jacob/Israel). So the "children" the Lord Jesus is speaking about in John Chapter

8 are the "children of the promise". And in case we are still in any doubt as to the identity of the "children of the promise", Paul confirms it for us:

"For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises" (Rom 9:3-4).

Paul is telling us, well after the Lord Jesus has been and gone, that the "children of the promise" are his literal brethren - flesh and blood Israelites, descendants of Jacob/Israel. So we see that in John Chapter 8 the Lord Jesus does indeed confirm the revelation by the Pharisees that they were not Israelites. They could not be Israelites as they were not the "children of the promise", i.e. they were not descended from Jacob/Israel. Didn't you ever think it odd that the Pharisees never claimed to be descended from Jacob, only ever claiming descent from Abraham? Now you know the reason why.

Of course, there will still be those who will want to spiritualise these verses away. For this reason, great care must be taken with the sentence: "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (KJV), especially if you use a modern translation like the NIV. Modern versions tend to swap the two clauses of this sentence around and render it: "For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel." Read literally this translation is nonsensical. What the translators are attempting to do here is to have us believe that Paul is talking about a "spiritual Israel", i.e. the Church. But this idea totally contradicts the rest of Paul's teaching in these verses we have just studied above. Indeed Paul went to great pains in them, and also elsewhere, to make it clear that both he and the Lord Jesus were referring to the literal, flesh and blood Israelites.

The 'Jewish' historian Flavius Josephus, writing in around 69 AD, also confirms that the Pharisees were not true flesh and blood Israelites:

"For there are three philosophical sects among the Jews. The followers of the first of which are the Pharisees; of the second, the Sadducees; and the third sect...are called Essenes. These last are Jews by birth." (Flavius Josephus, The Jewish War, Book II, Chapter VIII, sec. 2)

Josephus is clearly telling us that the Pharisees and Sadducees were not "Judahites" by birth (the same translation problem applies here by the way), i.e. they were converts to Judaism and therefore, imitators.

So who were the 'Jews'? To make it as plain as possible, which group of people:

1. were descended from Abraham;
2. were not in captivity in Egypt;
3. were not "children of the promise" (descendants of Jacob);
4. were present in Judea in large numbers during the time of Jesus; and
5. were excluded from the kingdom?

Only one group of people fits this description. A very prominent group in Bible history who the scriptures tell us are to be cut off from the kingdom for all time. They are Edom, the Edomites, the descendants of Esau who despised and threw away his birthright and the promises. The book of Obadiah records for us the wrath which is to be poured out on Edom as punishment for their treatment of their brethren Jacob/Israel:

"For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off forever." (Obadiah 10)

I recommend that you read Obadiah and related passages to remind yourself of what the Edomites did to their brethren, the nation of Jacob/Israel, to deserve such wrath and final condemnation and punishment from God. It relates how they behaved treacherously towards their neighbours and kinsmen, murdering them in cold blood, giving them up to be slaughtered and then moving in to steal their land, their homes and everything they owned after Judah had been taken captive by the invading Babylonians. I repeat my earlier question: Who are these people today who are doing the exact same thing again?

If the Majority of Jews aren't Israelites, then who is?

The bible states, Israel would be lost even to its own identity, however they would never be forgotten or lost to God. Who in place He said they were no longer His people, would call them His people again, when He would make a new covenant with Israel and write His laws on their hearts. For us the only way we can identify true Israel is by faithfully studying the many prophesies and promises made to Israel and then look to history to see their wonderful fulfilment since God never lies. Here are some of the many promises made which we can then use to identify who Israel really is:

Become a multitude of people as countless as the stars (Gen 15:5)

Become a nation and a community (commonwealth) of nations (Gen 35:10-11;48:19)

Become established in another land they did not know outside Palestine (2 Sam 7:10-11)

To settle in the 'isles of the sea', north and west of Palestine (Isa 24:14-15; 49:1,12; 59:19; Jer 3:12-18, 23:8, 31:7-8, 10).

To never cease to be a nation before God (Jer 31:35-37)

To crush all other empires and used as a weapon in the hand of God to defeat other gentile nations (Dan 2:34-45; Jer 51:20)

To grow to become the fifth world empire (Dan 2:44; Rom 11:25)

To possess the gates of its enemies (Gen 22:17-18)

Must be a sea power (Ps 89:25; Num 24:7)

Must have immense colonies, inheriting and colonising the desolate place, islands afar off, coastlands and ends of the earth (Isa 49:8; 54:3; Jer 31:8,10)

To retain its monarchy and have a descendant of David as King or Queen ruling over them (1 Chr 22:10; 2 Chr 13:5; Jer 33:17-26; 33:19-26; 2 Sam 7:13-16))

To speak another language different from Hebrew (Isa 28:11)

Become the chief of nations (Deut 26:19; Amos 6:1)

To be blessed with great wealth (Deut 8:18; 33:13-17)

Known worldwide for it's crops, lamb and beef (Deut 28:3-14)

To be a blessing to mankind showing the fruits of righteousness (Matt 21:43; Gen 18:18)

Become a great missionary people taking Christianity around the globe (Isa 27:6; 43:21; 44:3-5; 49:6; Mark 16:15 & Matt 7:20)

To be a Christian nation (Hos 1:10; Isa 9:2,8; 45:17-19,25; 48:20; 49:3)

When studying these promises, and remembering that God never lies, it becomes clear that neither the 'Jews' nor the modern day Jewish state of Israel meet any of these identity marks (past or present). Accordingly, there must be another group of people today who being descended from the biblical Israelites, meet all these identity marks. When studying the promises, the answer to who these people becomes quite obvious and one's faith grows accordingly. It is amazing how God fulfils all His promises and keeps His Word exactly! For more information on 'Who and Where is Israel Today', please ask for the study of the same name or visit:

<http://revealingthetruth.weebly.com/who-and-where-is-israel-today.html>

Of course, please don't simply accept or reject what is written in this study, without first checking it out for yourself with an open mind and Bible. Remembering to put aside the traditions, teachings and opinions of man and allowing God's Word and His Spirit to speak to you.

God bless

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