

When Did The Church Lose Its Hebrew Roots or Jewishness of Christianity?

I left our family's tradition of Catholicism, after I sought answers to some very basic questions. **HOW, WHERE, WHO AND HOW** did Catholicism get started? In the realm of things, IF we are following a belief, a doctrine, tradition or a Religion, I would think most of us at one time or another would have a need to ask ourselves these very basic questions?

1. How did OR what I believe in --- as far as my faith --- evolve?
2. In researching, if you call yourself a Christian, I found the one thing we all had in common --- A belief in the bible. But how did all these religions come about?
3. Where and how did all these different religions become so different with different beliefs and values?
4. How is it that Catholics, Protestants, Methodists, Presbyterians and on and on and on all believe in the same Bible, but have different doctrines or beliefs?

Like most Christians or I should say believers, If, you read and basically understand the book of Acts, you'll know the church began in Acts 2 with 120 people in the city of Jerusalem and they were all Jews. But, by the end of the day the 120 grew to about 3,000 men and women (Acts 2:41-47).

⁴¹Those who accepted his messages (Paul message) were baptized and about three thousand were added to their number that day. **The Fellowship of the Believers** ⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.

⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts.

Now, the great majority of these people were Jews. So the first question we should or might ask is *"if this is all Jewish and this was all about a Jewish Messiah that had come as promised in the first 5 books of Moses, "Exactly when did the church stop being Jewish? **THINK ABOUT THAT!**"*

Throughout the books of Acts, the members of the church continued as active members of the Jewish community. After finishing the book of Acts, I really can't **EVER** remember **OR EVER READING** anywhere, where the people were taught to break off or where they broke off their relationship with Judaism.

I was amazed to discover that as late as the 2nd century it was still very common for Christians to attend synagogue on Sabbath and then go to a church on Sunday. Just as we have many people, that do that today.

While there were some Gentile writers in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, which were clearly anti-Semitic, there is and was clear proof that much of the church remained pretty much Jewish. It wasn't until the 4th century, under the influence of Constantine, that the church family broke off from its Jewish roots. But, in spite of all of this, it took centuries of persecution to completely remove the Jewish influence. I have made this statement several times in our congregation.

"Was it really God's will for the church to break from its Jewish roots, or have we lost something that God intended us to have?"

I don't know if I read it or heard it, but they say there are more Jews, coming to faith today more than ever before **OR** in any other time.

Many Christian churches today are now starting to acknowledge and are returning to celebrating what **MANY** consider to be Jewish feasts. This is Passover, First Fruits, Feast of Unleavened Bread, Sukut, etc. Because, Leviticus 23, say; **The LORD spoke again to Moses, saying, ² "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'The LORD'S appointed times which you shall proclaim as holy convocations (meaning formal assembly or meetings) My appointed times are these:** Then the feasts are listed.

These feasts were **NOT ONLY** for the Jewish people! These feasts are the feasts for **ALL PEOPLE**. If you really take close notice, we can see that God is about to do a new work

in the Christian or Gentile churches. It is really good to see what He is doing among the Jews.

The work of God many times follows the pattern of Romans; 1:16 **“to the Jew first, then the Gentile”**. In the past and even today, there are many people or Christians that try to talk to Jews or Jewish people about Yeshua or Jesus with very little response or reaction. As Paul pointed out, there has been a veil or scales over their eyes and they have not been able to receive the truth.

While there are many Jews that have or had come to accept Yeshua or Jesus as their Messiah, most of them had in some way forfeited their Jewish identity and became part of a Gentile church. As recent as 1967, this is only 44 years ago, there really wasn't any Messianic congregations peresay anywhere in the world. Now, there are literally hundreds --- some of the listings you can find in our Messianic times!

In June of 1967 something very dramatic happened during the six day war. Israel retook the city of Jerusalem for the 1st time in over 2,000 years. Jerusalem was no longer **“trampled under the foot of the Gentles”** as was prophesied in (Luke 21:24).

This event was the major turning point in God's prophetic program or plan. The veil or scales began to be lifted off the eyes of the Jewish people. Since that day, more Jews have come to know their Messiah than all previous generations, since the 1st century.

Romans 11

It is estimated that more Jews have come to know their Messiah in the past years than in the previous 2,000 years. Most Jews who turn to Yeshua/Jesus today claim a greater appreciation for their Jewishness than they ever had before! They (the new Jewish believers) now attend Messianic congregations, they celebrate the feasts, and they observe the ceremonies and rituals that are part of Judaism. **BUT NOW**, they find a deeper meaning in those observances. They are faithful to observe the Hebrew traditions, yet they honor and worship Yeshua/Jesus as the promised Savior and Messiah of Israel.

Paul stated in Romans 11:15, the return of Israel to their Messiah will not only mean new life for Israel, but it means **"Life from the dead"**, for the Gentile church.

The early church has been or was called the "Early church, "The New Testament Church or the 1st Century Church. I prefer to call it the **MESSIANIC CHURCH**. It was and is real. There is and are documented historical records. It was a church made up of real people with real problems, but was characterized by a life or power the world could not resist or avoid.

If you have studied Acts 2, this is the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit fell on 120 people. As I said earlier, by the end of **JUST ONE DAY** the church had grown to 3,000. Within a year some historians estimate, that by the time of Stephen's death or martyrdom (which was about two years later) the church had grown to about 20,000 members. Remember they didn't have the modern things of today – autos, planes, etc. to carry the good news.

A good example of the early church growth is seen in Acts 19 at the church of Ephesus. Paul went there and stayed two years teaching his disciples or converts. Historical records show that the city numbered around 200,000 people. During those two years that Paul was there, not only was the entire city of Ephesus evangelized, but also the cities in the surrounding providence. This was the church of Colossae, as well as the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2 & 3. Commentaries say that they were all probably planted during this two year period.

The church of Ephesus grew so fast that it disrupted the city's economy. The local idol makers were losing business because many of their customers were turning or converting to Christianity.

Now it affected their businesses so much it actually caused a riot – and you can read this or and look at Act 19:29 it says; – ²⁹**"Soon the whole city was in an uproar. NOW**, can you imagine the church today making this kind of impact? **Think of it!** What would it be like if we saw all the drug dealers and the Porno shop and bar and tavern owners on Whiskey Row rioting and protesting because of the loss of business!

In their fear or terror, the religious leaders in Jerusalem tried to slow down the growth of the churches by persecution. But, despite the persecution, the Messianic Jewish Congregations continued to grow. Some commentators say that at its peak, half the population of the city of Jerusalem was in the church.

Basically They Were Living In Continual Revival:

If we or you were to study revivals in history, we would find that a revival is a time of strong excitement. There have been literally hundreds of revivals. The church comes alive, there is a presence of God, miracles happen, lives are changed and thousands of non-believers are saved.

But, revivals very seldom last very long. Usually after a few months, the presence of God leaves and things get back to normal. A good example would be 9-11. **Remember?**

The churches and Synagogues were filled. Today, we are back to normal. We have very short term memories. Even the greatest revivals in modern time only lasted about a year or two.

The early church however lived in continual revival. The presence of God came over the church at Pentecost and didn't depart. The early church continued a multi-generational revival!

This revival spread everywhere. By the end of the 1st century the early church had spread throughout the known world. Its growth and its spreading **AMAZED THE WORLD**. In Acts 17:6 when Paul & Silas came to town, the pagans cried out **"These men who have turned the whole world upside down have come"**. A historian Philip Schaff wrote *"It may be fairly asserted that about the end of the 3rd century the name of Yeshua/Jesus was KNOWN, REVERED (which means respected) AND PERSECUTED in every city of the empire."* and *"In all probability at the close of the 3rd century the church numbered tens of millions of souls."* **THIS IS WHAT I CALL REVIVAL.**

Now, Let Us Take A Look At The Early Church:

It may be a funny example but there are stories that many Christians assume that on the day after Pentecost, Peter went out, rented a building, put a steeple on it, hung up a sign that said "**1st Baptist Church Of Jerusalem**" and started services.

Most of us **HAVE NOT** stopped to even think about what the New Testament church was like.

After reading and researching a couple of books, **ON** and **OF** church history, I am going to try and describe to you how several of the authors described the early church. In describing it, it is based on historical descriptions that were thoroughly researched by these authors. You can find it --- either in the New Testament or early Christian literature.

Try to imagine what I going to try and describe. First of all, no one in the 1st century ever saw a church building. There were no pulpits, pews, stained glass windows, candles, hymnals, or written liturgy. A lot of this stuff didn't become part of the church until about 1,000 years later. The early church lacked most of these things, yet **HAD THE POWER** far beyond anything the church could understand or comprehend.

So I ask, What Was The Service and Worship Like In Those Days?

Let's think about it. What was or so you think of what the church was really like say 60 years after Pentecost? I liked the way this one author described it. The church operated on two levels: the house church and the congregation.

Even if the church grew to 20 or 3,000 members, its basic unit was the house church. From time to time the house churches would get together into a large group – **congregate, so comes the word congregation**. Many or most of them met outdoors. In Jerusalem they met in the temple courts. Now let's pretend or imagine that we are going into one of these houses or church groups.

As we go through the door we come into a small court yard. The way one author describe it, is that it appears like a party is going on.

Some of the people are playing flutes, guitars, tambourines, while others are singing and dancing and clapping their hands. For those of you that have attended one of our service's at Ahava's congregation, we actually do this and I often think of what some of the new people think when they come to our service and see us dancing and singing and clapping our hands and lifting up holy hands to the Lord?

Now, keep thinking or imagining. A person would probably be immediately looking around to make sure they are in the right place?

So as they listen to the words, they hear the praises to Adonai or our Lord Yeshua/ Jesus! And everyone is up and full of love for each other. **AHAVA B'SHEM YESHUA means Love In The Name of Jesus!** I see this here at Alliance. People are filled with joy because they have come to know the living God. This is the way the early church praised our Lord, our God.

This type of worship is foreign to many of the churches today because they are stuck in **A TRADITION MODE**. From biblical and historical records we can find, that this was what the worship was like in the early church. The way it is described, it was a free and a joyful celebration with a great deal of singing and dancing.

Now before I go any further, I want to say that this is just **ONE OF MANY WAYS OF WORSHIPPING**. You don't have to be clapping or dancing to worship the Lord, but feel free to express yourself to the living GOD - maybe by lifting your hands or quietly closing your eyes and having a worshipful conversation with the Creator of the universe.

Now getting back to the early church, most of the church's services began with people getting into a circle or ring and dancing Jewish style dances like the Hora. This picture of the church rejoicing before the Lord in dance and song comes as a surprise to many people. Now a lot of people think of the early church's worship as somber, sober, dull, drab or subdued, or quiet and almost mournfully sad. **THAT IDEA** or thought of how to worship didn't become widespread until after the 4th century. This is after the church was overrun by the strictness of pagan thinking or values.

In Augustine's day (this about 400 A.D.) opposition to dancing started rising, but he urged his people to "**keep the sacred dances**".

I quote "Robert Heidler" an author as he described it. *"There was a great deal of singing and dancing and rejoicing in the Lord. As the songs slowed down a little, many people got down on their knees before the Lord. Most of them are lifting up hands to Him and a tremendous sense of the Lord's presence fills the courtyard"*.

You know, I can go on and on about people quoting scriptures, giving testimonies, miracles happening, healings, having communion, then a meal, the meal being centered on a devotion to the Lord. It wasn't worship for an hour or two but almost all night long.

In Korea there is a large group of people that actually start their worship at 4:00AM and go till 6:00 P.M. That is worship and being with the Lord. Our Son when he was there said he experienced that.

So getting back to the early church, this was a weekly occurrence in the early church.

When members of the body came together, they came as "Living Stones" forming the temple of God. As the presence of God once filled Moses tabernacle as in (Exodus 40:34) and/or in Solomon's temple in (II Chron. 7:1-2) so the presence of God filled His new temple --- **THE PEOPLE OR CHURCH**. This is what Yeshua promised in Matt. 18:20: **²⁰ for where two or three gather in My name, there am I with them."**

The Ministry continues (that is the looking after or attending to). This is where much of the evangelism in the church took place ... through the miraculous power of God working in the midst of His people.

Most of us don't even have an idea, notion or concept of that happening, but this was the norm in the early church.

Now, let's go back to Apostle Paul and see how he would go into a city, start a church and the presence of God would come. Within a few years tens of thousands of people would be saved and the entire region would be affected. By the end of the 1st century,

the church had spread everywhere because pagans didn't have anything that could stand **against the power of God and His church**. For 300 years that is what the church looked like.

THEN, comes 325 AD or around 325 AD the church began to change and by the year 500 A.D. the early church was gone.

The Early Church:

The early churches were Messianic congregations, founded by Messianic Jewish missionaries like the Apostle Paul. Their God was the God of Abraham, The God of Isaac and The God of Jacob. **THE GOD OF ISRAEL!** They quoted the Jewish bible and worshipped the Jewish Messiah. Many of the early church leaders were Messianic Jews. Their values, lifestyle and worldview were heavily influenced by Judaism.

For the first 400 years of the church existence, it was common for the Gentile believers to celebrate the Jewish Sabbaths and feasts. In many places, it remained common practice for Christians to be closely linked with the Jewish community, often attending synagogue on the Sabbath.

And like I had said earlier, they attended church on Sunday. In the first few centuries, a Gentile who joined the church joined it knowing he was linking himself or herself into something Jewish.

Biblical Judaism **WAS NOT** a man made religion. It did not develop or evolve as other human cultures and/or religious movement. Biblical Judaism was then a complex set of values, traditions, doctrines and practices **given by God Himself**. It was established by God to teach a group of people (**THE JEWS**) what the true God is like and what he requires. Just like the unchanging God that gave them, the values and principles, **THEY ARE A REVELATION OF THE WISDOM OF GOD**. God promised that those who observe these principles and values will experience success: Joshua 1:8 says.

"This book of the law (the Torah) shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according

to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success.

Better said, is **“Do not let this book of the law depart! (which is quit, leave, disappear, from your mouth”)**.

The Jews commitment to honor these principles has given them the success God promised. Those same principles of success were also part of the church’s traditions or customs. Biblical Judaism was not only the religion of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but also of Yeshua and the apostles.

Paul in Romans 11:16-17 wrote.

¹⁶If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root (meaning the Jews) is holy, the branches are too. ¹⁷But if some of the branches were broken off, and you (meaning the Gentiles), being a wild olive, we’re grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree.

When the 4th century church rejected the Jewish heritage to embrace the Greek pagan Gods and Roman culture, it lost this God given inheritance.

There are some in the churches today that teach and have taught, they (**THE JEWS**) had to leave the ways or traditions of Judaism to move out or advance and become the religion of the world or as you might have heard **“To Become A Christian”**. This actually ignores the fact that Christianity was more effective in reaching the world when it was mostly Jewish in nature. If you really look at it, **JUDAISM CAN STAND ALONE**, but without Judaism there would be **NO CHRISTIANITY**. I am going to repeat this!

To understand the structure of the church, it is important to see how God views the church. To really see it, we have to take a close look and understand Romans 11:15-24;

“If the root (the Jews) is holy, the branches are too. ¹⁷But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree. ¹⁸do not be arrogant toward the branches; but if you are arrogant, remember that it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you. ¹⁹You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." ²⁰Quite right, they were broken off for their

unbelief, but you stand by your faith Do not be conceited, but fear; ²¹for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either.

²²Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. ²³And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. ²⁴For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?

Or we can go to Ephesians 2:11-19 or Ephesians 3:4-6. These scripture verses describe the church as a tree having four distinct parts: (1) A Holy Root, (2) Natural Branches, (3) Branches Broken Off, And (4) A Wild Branch Grafted In. Now I am going to give a brief description of each and what they all mean:

The Root: The church's root is Biblical Judaism. It was the religion of Abraham, Moses and David. It is the religion revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures.

If we go to Matthew (the New Testament) or the right side of the bible, everything on the left side of the bible (the Old Testament) is the root. Its 2,000 years of introduction or preparatory revelation of God poured into Israel to create a people through whom He could send His Son Yeshua.

The Living Branches: The living branches are the natural growth of the root. They represent the New Covenant of Messianic Judaism. This is what the apostle Paul was, also, Matthew, Mark, John, James and Peter. They were not Catholic, Baptist, or Methodists. They were Messianic Jews. They went to Synagogue. They worshipped in the Temple. They celebrated the Jewish feasts. They were more Jewish than any or a lot of Messianic Jews today.

This was not an insignificant part of Israel. Many of them had been taught that the Jewish people had rejected their Messiah. This was only a partial truth. Many of the Jewish leaders rejected Yeshua, but the common people accepted Him.

The reason the leaders rejected Him and persecuted the church was they were threatened by growth and popularity amount the people. There was a large number of Jews that believed.

In Acts 21:20 James brags ²⁰And when they heard it they began glorifying God; and they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law;

In Acts 6:7 "and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

Also in Acts 15:5 even some of the Pharisees believed. ⁵But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood. Judging by the fast growth of the church, the 1st century Jews were at the beginning more responsive to the Gospel than the Pagan Gentles Paul teaching or preaching to.

The Cut Off Branches: The cut off branches represent the Rabbinic Judaism. And this passage tells us that some of the natural branches were cut off because of unbelief.

AHAVA B'SHEM YESHUA Love In The Name of Yeshua! As natural Branches the whole tree is their rightful inheritance. But, like Israel they are forfeiting their blessing through unbelief.

Then We Have The Wild Olive Branch: Finally God took a branch from a wild olive tree (Gentile or Goyim) and grafted it in among the natural branches. The wild olive branch represents the Gentile church.

Paul tells us in Eph. 2:12, that the "*wild branch- Gentile*" *had been once excluded from citizenship in Israel, strangers or foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God*".

Going on to verse 13, but because of their faith in Yeshua or the Messiah of Israel, God engrafts them into the root of Israel. Here they share all the rich blessings of God's covenant. Those "**who were once far away**" are brought near by the blood of Yeshua. Then in verse 19, they become fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's family or household.

But now, we come into Romans 11:18, which is **VERY, VERY IMPORTANT!** Paul says to the Gentle believers **"You don't support the root; the root supports you"**. Biblical Judaism is the root from which Christianity or we grow. Being grafted into the root (which is the Jewishness), we get to share in the nourishing sap. It feed us and it nourishes our lives in Adonai/ the Lord.

Throughout the years some Christians have rejected that root. There are many churches today that pretty much ignore the Hebrew Scriptures. They teach that it doesn't apply to them or us anymore ... that we should avoid anything Jewish.

This was **NOT THE ATTITUDE** in the early church! Ask yourselves what did the early church use as a bible? It was the Old Testament Hebrew Bible **OR** the 1st five books of Moses. That was the only thing that they had. It was approximately 40 years after Pentecost before the first book of the new covenant was written.

So, if you really look at it, the early church did pretty well with a bible that some churches reject today! They reached the WHOLE WORLD in their generation.

I'll stop here, because I could go on and on.