



The

Jewish

roots

of

Jesus

Connecting the
Jewish faith & Jesus.



The Jewish Roots of Jesus

I AM THE Root and the Offspring of David...Rev 22:16
'until we attain to the unity of the faith, and of the
knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man.....
we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there
by waves, and carried about by every wind
of doctrine. (Ephesians 4:13-14)

Israel and the UK have not been excluded from the winds and waves of doctrine that have swept through Christendom in recent years, particularly in the last decade. Being 'tossed about' by the sudden surges of new doctrine that have come, like strong waves, into Christian circles, in an apt description. Many (including the writer hereof) have been tossed around, and left with an utter sense of confusion as to exactly what is right – this, or that? Being 'carried about by every wind of doctrine' is something that follows in the wake of waves that have first knocked us off our feet, and unsettled us.

There are many NT scriptures warning us that this is exactly what would happen in the last days. To name a few: 1 Timothy 4:1: 'paying attention to deceitful (seductive) spirits and doctrines of demons'; Luke 21:8: 'Take heed that ye be not deceived. 2 Corinthians 11:14: 'even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light'. This is precisely why Paul points so strongly towards the necessity of gaining nothing less than a 'true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself, in Whom are hidden all the Treasures of wisdom and knowledge'. (Colossians 2:2-3) Paul says this, 'in order that no one may delude you with persuasive argument'. And, if we are going to avoid being tossed and carried about by waves and wind of argument and doctrine, we must hold very tightly to Paul's further exhortation in regard to the place of Jesus, the Messiah, in our lives, 'having been firmly ROOTED (and now being built up) IN HIM...' (Colossians 1:7)

The whole of Colossians is a most wonderful book, but it is particularly important, for those of us with an interest in Israel and the Jewish people, to realise that Paul, himself of Rabbinic stock, was writing to a Church where Judaisers had been at work. (Read any Bible Commentary.) This is precisely why he goes on to personalise and emphasise his warning: 'See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men...' (Colossians 2:8)

Why?

'For (because) in Him dwells all the fullness of Deity... in Him you have been made complete... in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands.' (2:9-11) Everything points to Christ, the Messiah; there is not a vestige of reference here to Jewishness, nor the value of Jewishness, and not a jot about 'Jewish roots' – a phrase that is not found in the Bible. 'THE LAW (Teaching) WAS OUR SCHOOL-MASTER TO BRING US TO CHRIST' (Galatians 3:24) In fact, Paul, listing his matchless Jewish pedigree in Phil. 3, openly says that he 'considers everything a loss (i.e. waste of time) compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for Whom I have lost all things' (laying even his pedigree in the dust). He disdains the 'righteousness...that comes from the law' (teaching; Heb. 'Torah') but exults in that righteousness which comes through faith in Christ, the Messiah. Paul could not make his case plainer on this score, further adding, elsewhere, that 'Neither circumcision (Jewishness) nor uncircumcision (being a non-Jew) means anything'. All that counts (in value before God) is being 'a new creation' – i.e. being born again. (Galatians 6:15). Does this mean that Paul abandoned, or did not value, his being Jewish? No! We find him saying, 'I am a Jew!' ... 'hurrying to be in Jerusalem for Shavuot' '... circumcising Timothy' '... becoming as a Jew to the Jews that he might win Jews!' (Acts 21:39, 20:16, 16:3, 1 Corinthians 9:20). He tells us too of the advantage and benefit of being a Jew, for example 'being entrusted with the oracles.' (Romans 3:1-2)

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Was Paul putting himself back under the Law (Torah) by doing or saying these things? By no means! Rather, he was merely demonstrating what he had already stated: that 'the Law was (but) a schoolmaster (tutor) to bring (him and) us to Christ, the Messiah, that we might be justified by faith'. (Galatians 3:24) It is therefore of great concern to us within PFI, as well as to a large part of the Body of Christ elsewhere that, as a result of the spread of the teaching on 'GETTING BACK TO OUR JEWISH ROOTS', strong moves have begun amongst certain believers abroad and in Britain to Judaize the Body and bring believers back under the (curse of the) Law. Just as one example, instead of merely referring to either 'the Scriptures' or even 'the first Five books of Moses', the term 'Torah' (Hebrew word for teaching or doctrine), is being rigidly or increasingly employed by much of the 'Jewish Roots' movement.

What is the 'Torah'

If by 'Torah' we mean getting back to the whole Word of God – fine, wonderful! But if by 'Torah' we mean getting back to just the first Five Books of Moses (how about the rest of the Bible?), we are on dangerous ground. If by 'Torah' we mean the Old Testament, as Rabbis sometimes mean, is the New Testament of less value? If by 'Torah' we mean what the Rabbis more often mean – the Books of Moses plus the Oral law allegedly given by God to Moses at Sinai, plus Rabbinic commentaries on the whole, we are on very dangerous ground indeed. With the wide range of possible meanings, why use the term 'Torah' at all?

Further, instead of using scripture to expound scripture, the various promoters of this movement supply a mixed diet of Christian and Rabbinic thought and quotations - all held up as commendable. All this notwithstanding the fact that Paul writes his Epistle because he is contending against 'Alexandrian Jews who had appeared at Colosse, imbued with Greek philosophy combined with the Rabbinic theosophy and angelology which was afterwards embodied in the Cabbala!' (See any Bible Commentary) Instead of teaching the scripture (Colossians 2:16): 'Therefore (as a result of your being complete in Him), let no one act as your judge in regard to food and drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day...' this new Movement are teaching that not to keep this Jewish Festival, or that Sabbath, or this dietary law – 'is sin against G-d!' This is a direct contradiction of the Word of God. (See Romans 14).

The whole theme of the New Testament is that we are 'saved by grace' (alone) through faith; and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast'. Who will dare to add to the work of the Cross?? Romans 14 is as clear as scripture could possibly be, that Jews are free to observe Biblical Jewish customs, if they so choose, but should understand that there is no spiritual merit in the customs themselves, other than the fact that they all point to Christ. If the laws are kept, it is to be voluntarily – commemorating the finished work of Christ, the Sabbath, for instance, pointing to the eternal rest He has won for us. A legalistic observance of the law merely brings one back under the yoke of bondage from which Jesus came to save all – Jew and Gentile.

The Root we Need

Christ, the Messiah is 'the root and the offspring of David' (the beginning and the end); it is to Him that we need to return. This is not to discount the value of the things that many of the biblical symbols and festivals represent, as long as we remember that these are but 'a shadow' of what was to come. The substance and reality is Christ Himself.' (Colossians 2:17) To repeat therefore, 'Jewish Roots' (or Hebraic Roots) is a non-biblical term which can well serve to take us back into Judaistic principles, or into Rabbinic teaching (much of which was conceived to oppose the Messiahship of Jesus), or place us back under the law.

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The whole point is that it leads us away from the 'simplicity which is in Christ'. "When we try to remove the 'stumbling block' of Christ, we remove Christ himself!" There is a fine line to be drawn here between truth and error. The teaching of 'Jewish Roots' says many things that sorely need to be said to restore a balance to some teachings of the historic Church. But there is a tendency to overbalance, and to promote Judaism, and Rabbinic Judaism at that. Do we not thereby open minds, particularly of 'Christian Zionists', to that which caused Paul so much trouble

- Judaising? Are we going to be 'deceived by persuasive argument, or taken in through the tradition of men?' Jesus said: 'You transgress the commandments of God for the sake of your tradition'. (Matthew 15:3)

I write as one merely representative of many Jewish (and Gentile) believers who have mounting concern over yet another 'wind of doctrine' that can well divide the Church, unless it is properly withstood and refuted. There had been no greater Judaiser than Paul who had been 'ultra-zealous for his ancestral traditions' (Galatians 1:14). If those traditions of his were not 'Jewish Roots' what were they? Jesus said also, 'You invalidate the Word of God for the sake of your tradition'. (Matthew 15:6)

THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS; WRITTEN ORIGINALLY IN HEBREW OR GREEK?

The same Jewish and Gentile believers are concerned also over other teachings: that the Synoptic Gospels were derived from a Hebrew original which has 'been lost'. Now, allegedly, in order to fully understand them, one needs to grasp the Hebrew meanings behind the Greek by retranslating the Greek back into Hebrew. In other words, one has to have or acquire Hebrew scholarship, or grasp the Hebrew meanings and customs behind the Greek words in order to be a good student of the Word! This must cause us to ask, which are the inspired scriptures – the ones which we have, or so-called 'Hebrew Life of Christ' which has been lost? What kind of uncertainty and doubt will this bring into the Church? Is it not yet another wind and wave of doctrine?

The battle has always been against the Word of God, and these End Time days are proving no different from earlier Christian history. Let us remember that when Paul speaks of 'the root that supports you' (Romans 11:18) he is not talking at all about 'Jewish roots'. (The word is in the singular, not the plural.) Rather, he is talking about the Abrahamic faith in God and the Messiah that was bequeathed to us through the Jewish patriarchs. This is the root that supports the Church, termed here 'their own Olive Tree. A big difference.

We should indeed bear a sense of indebtedness to those whom God thus chose to pioneer the Gospel. And, there is a value in being Jewish in the sense that we are elected of God to be His servants, and that election has not been annulled. But there is absolutely no merit whatever in any of us, Jew or Gentile, outside of the gift and blessing of 'Christ in us, the Hope of glory'. There is a wonderful future ahead for the nation of Israel. But is it not to our 'Jesus root' that we (and all the Church) need to return, rather than our Jewish roots?

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How to Pray?

- For the zealous believers teaching these other doctrines, that they will be open and hungry enough to open themselves up to what the Holy Spirit has to say here. He alone can guide them into all light and truth. Psalm 43:3
- For Gentile responses (often very odd) where there is a desire to please Jewish people. (Galatians 1:6/7 and especially v.10).
- Against the spirits of contention and divisiveness that facing these issues can bring.
- For God to protect Messianic Fellowships and believers (and the Church at large) in Israel, the UK, and elsewhere, from the error, persuasive arguments, and seducing spirits that lie behind these deceptions. Such prayer is an urgent, ongoing, long-term need.

KEN BURNETT, February 1997 Reviewed 2014