

Newsletter, February 2016

In this newsletter we shall discuss the origin of antisemitism that led to the intense persecution that Jews have suffered over many centuries. We shall address racial antisemitism in the present secular world, as well as religious antisemitism that is deeply rooted in many of today's temporal churches. We shall list seven general sects that divide present-day Judaism and ponder the difficulty that this wide diversity of thought, as well as a falsely assumed antisemitism, poses in attempts to reach today's Jew with the Gospel. We shall discuss Israel's future redemption, and the important role that God has ordained for Israel in end-time events. Accordingly, we shall address the need for bible-believing Christians to support Israel as a sovereign nation through our personal prayers for her health and safety, as well as supporting continued material and military aid on a national level.

When Jerusalem and Herod's Temple was destroyed in AD 70 (cf. *CRC Book III* page 64), Temple worship as well as the entire sacrificial system came to an abrupt end. In its absence, Judaism descended into a form of Rabbinical Pharisaic Judaism as we find it today. This is exemplified by the *Talmud*, which is a chaotic assemblage of Jewish thought and rabbinical debate. It is believed that the first part or the *Mishna* (repetition) containing an oral interpretation of the Scriptures was completed near the end of the second century A.D. and the *Gemara* (completion), which is a commentary on the *Mishna*, was finished sometime in the fourth century. The *Talmud* expresses the intransigent and confused condition of Judaism existing in that era. It is decidedly anti-Christian, as one may reasonably expect, and it contains a terrible curse against any Jew that would consider converting to Christianity or marrying a baptized Christian. As a consequence, the bloodline of the Hebrew Jew has remained remarkably pure as descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Antisemitism, as the word is commonly used today, is defined as an all-consuming hatred and prejudice against the Jewish people both culturally and racially, but it has a very strong religious basis as well. From the times of the Roman emperor Constantine in the early fourth century, Jews were persecuted by the Roman church as “murderers of Jesus Christ” – fully ignoring the fact that it was Roman authorities that had unjustly carried out the crucifixion as a political expediency to prevent a possible Jewish uprising. After the Roman state aligned itself with Christianity in the fourth century, Jews found themselves systematically persecuted and oppressed by Roman Christians. The result of this intense persecution was a further dispersal of Jewish populations to regions far removed from Rome and from the Holy city of Jerusalem. Those early persecutions were but forerunners of continuing maltreatment and abuses that have followed the Jew in their distant wanderings over the earth as they sought refuge. The terrible persecutions that took place in Russia under the Czar and in Germany under Adolph Hitler are but more recent examples of their dreadful torment as every effort has been made by Satan through his human pawns to eradicate the Jewish people from the face of the earth.

Unfortunately, the Protestant Reformation Movement did little to eliminate this irrational hatred of the Jew because of the continuance of what is commonly referred to as “replacement theology,” which Protestantism inherited from Roman Catholicism. We touched on this false doctrine when we discussed the relationship between Israel and the Church in our September 2012 Newsletter. Basically, it puts forward the unbiblical notion that, when Israel rejected their Messiah, the nation fell into a permanent reprobate state, such that all Jews have forever become anathema to God – eliminating all hope of their future redemption. The Jewish nation was envisioned as having been replaced by a Gentile church as God's “newly chosen people.” Jews were considered to be an inferior reprobate race that practiced the religion of the antichrist inasmuch as they rejected Jesus as their Messiah. Although replacement theology is denied by today's biblically conservative churches, there is still a sense that Israel has been displaced by the church – at least during this present age.

Following World War II, Zionism, which is a political movement that was founded earlier around the year 1890, greatly encouraged the return of all Jews to their ancestral homeland. As a consequence of this sudden inrush, Israel was finally re-established as a sovereign political nation in 1948, through an act of the United Nations, in fulfillment of the prediction of Ezekiel in Chapters 35 and 36. The dry bones of Israel that lay in the dust of the earth sprang again to life when Jews came forth out of the many Gentile nations of the world, in which the bones of their ancestors had been buried, to repopulate their land (cf. *Eze.37:1–11*). In God's mind, this restoration was preordained and inevitable as we approach the end of the age, but the placement of Israel in the midst of a greater Muslim-controlled area resulted in a perpetual state of war.

The delusion of a permanent refugee status of displaced Arabs, has resulted in many nations viewing them

as innocent victims in the on-going conflict. Their militant Islamic leaders choose to keep them in a state of poverty in an effort to enlist the sympathy of the world's nations to force the dismantling of Israel. Money that could be used to better the lives of Arabs living in Gaza and the west bank are instead being diverted into the purchase of weapons to destroy the nation of Israel. Moreover, Israel is repeatedly viewed by the secular world as the aggressor when it must periodically respond militarily to a persistent barrage of Muslim rockets and suicide bomb attacks. In general, secular world leaders envision Israel as the main obstacle to world peace. By eliminating the nation of Israel, it is falsely assumed by some that the violent attacks of radical Muslims against the western world would subside, and the world would ultimately settle into a stable state of peaceful coexistence. As we demonstrated in our January 2016 newsletter, such thinking is delusional considering Islam's determined effort to gain world-wide religious and political dominion.

Use of the term "Palestinianism" is on the increase as many allege that today's Jews are but counterfeit political opportunists having no legitimate claim to the land that they stole away from Palestinians. Inasmuch as Israel's hall of records in Jerusalem was burned in AD 70, an individual Jew can no longer trace his personal heritage back to specific tribes to prove an inheritance of land. However, Israel's inherent right to ownership of the land as a nation remains firmly established upon the boundaries given to it by God in the Old Testament Scriptures (cf. Ge.15:18; Ex.23:31; Nu.34:6-12; De.11:24; Jos. 1:4; Eze. 47:17-20). Israel is by definition the ancient homeland of the Jew. Moreover, there has never been a sovereign nation of Palestine. "Palestine" only describes a geographic region located between the Mediterranean sea and the Jordan river, which was very sparsely settled at the time of Israel's reestablishment. "Palestine" was first used by ancient Greek writers and later by Rome when it took over the region as one of its provinces to avoid recognizing Israel as a sovereign nation. Today, "Palestinianism" has become a de facto synonym for Jewish antisemitism.

This growing satanically-inspired anti-Israel sentiment, which has always been present in traditional churchianity through the delusive doctrine of replacement theology, has greatly increased in today's ultra-liberal temporal churches and denominations ever since the establishment of the modern-day nation of Israel. Many of these churches loudly denounce Israel and advocate a complete divestment of all assets in that land, and they further encourage international sanctions and a boycott of all Israeli exports in support of destitute Palestinians.

Antisemitism is also found imbedded within the anti-abortion movement (cf. Newsletter May 2015) as many of its proponents incorrectly identify today's *Humanistic Judaism* (see below) as the source of all liberal thought. As we have repeatedly pointed out in our books and newsletters, humanism is the natural religion of all mankind since the day of Adam's fall, and it is not specifically isolated to any one ethnic group or race of mankind. Humanism is deeply imbedded in today's liberal churchianity as well as in liberalized Judaism. Many have even falsely identified Judaism as the source of the abortion movement because a relatively large number of surgeons providing surgical abortion are professing Jews. However, we must realize that Jews hold many prominent positions throughout all of the medical professions wherein they are a great benefit to all of mankind.

In Jesus' day there were many factions within Judaism, which Scripture primarily records as Pharisees, Sadducees, and Zealots. There were also the monastic Essenes living in the desert and many other Jewish sub-sects within each of those major factions. It should not be surprising, then, that today's Judaism is not a homogenous unified faith, but can be divided up into seven general categories or denominations as follows:

1) *Ultra-Orthodox Jews*, who strictly adhere to Jewish Law as found in the Torah (i.e. the Pentateuch), live separately from modern society, and dress distinctly different from all other Jews. There are also pietistic and mystical movements within Ultra-Orthodox Judaism, known as *Hasidic* and *Kabbalah*.

2) *Modern Orthodox Jews*, who consider the Torah (i.e. the Old Testament Pentateuch) God given through Moses. They adhere to all of the commandments of the Torah, but integrate themselves into modern society.

3) *Conservative Jews*, who see the Torah as God-given, but transmitted through human thought and authorship. Consequently, they believe that the law can be adapted to conform to contemporary culture.

4) *Reformed Jews*, who believe that the Torah was written by various human men, not God, and that the texts were later combined. Although not recognizing obedience of Jewish Law binding, they do accept various values, ethics, and practices contained within it.

5) *Re-constructionist Jews*, who consider Judaism as a developing religion. They do not believe in a personalized deity that is actively involved with the affairs of men and therefore deny that Jews are a chosen people of God.

6) *Humanistic Jews*, who consider Judaism to be a non-theistic man-centered philosophy, which celebrates the ethnic Jewish identity and culture by promoting mutual dignity and self-respect of the individual.

7) *Messianic Jews*, who are Hebrews that have intellectually accepted Jesus as their messiah, yet remain practicing Jews as they continue to observe all Jewish holy days, and rituals such as the passover.

This vast diversity of thought among contemporary Jews must be taken into consideration when approaching an individual Jew with the Gospel. Attempts to evangelize Jews are commonly met with revulsion and a highly defensive attitude – regardless of their “denominational” background. Jews do not consider themselves in need of redemption, but view themselves as obedient suffering servants carrying out a holy (or political) mandate for the survival of the Jewish people and nation. Therefore, the Jew views the offer of redemption in the Gospel as but another form of antisemitism. However, if we truly care for the souls of the unsaved, there is a great imperative placed upon us to present the Gospel to Jews in order that some may come to believe in Christ and be saved from the great wrath that is to come at the end of this age. The Apostle Paul, who was himself of devout Jewish heritage, said that Israel had been blinded by the close proximity of the light of God’s Son so that Gentiles, seeing that light from an objective distance, could be drawn into a close relationship with God (cf. Ro.11:8,25).

Today, expressing this spiritual “blindness” is viewed by the Jew as an antisemitic pejorative term that militant Christians hurl about berating the Jew’s supposed ignorance of God. However, this blindness narrowly refers to their rejection of Jesus as their Messiah, not to their complete denial of God; they are not atheists. The Jew is a strict monotheist, which they understandably infer from the *Shema* (cf. De.6:4; *CRC* Book 1, page 370), while the Christian also comprehends God as one divine being, but subsisting in three distinct centers of conscious awareness or “persons.” This biblical revelation is difficult for many Christians to fully grasp, but they learn to accept it on faith gained from the clear teaching of the New Testament – which Jews do not recognize as Holy Scripture (cf. *CRC* Book 1, Chapter 6.3). The Jew’s characterization of trinitarianism as tritheism (three gods) hindered by their spiritual blindness leads directly to their rejection of Jesus as their Messiah.

However, as the Apostle Paul said, this spiritual blindness of the Jew is not a condition that is total but only in part; it can be overcome if and when God chooses to act on their behalf. “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in” (Rom 11:25). In that sense, every Gentile Christian is deeply indebted to the Jew for their close relationship with God in Christ. Not surprisingly, then, Christians desire to repay that debt by attempting to remove the blindfold from Jewish eyes so that they may recognize their Messiah. However, since God has placed that spiritual blindness there to serve his divine purposes, only He can remove it when He chooses to do so. In this regard, the Apostle Paul said that he would be willing to give up his own salvation if it were possible that in doing so his fellow Jews could be saved (cf. Ro.9:2,3).

While disbelief continues in today’s Rabbinical Pharisaic Judaism, many individual Jews have come to accept eternal salvation in Christ over the many centuries since his crucifixion, and by God’s grace more will come to accept Him in the days ahead. We must realize, however, that the conversion of a Jew to Christianity is fraught with many perils. Conversion is viewed by other Jews as a traitorous denial of faith, such that it totally separates the new convert from their ethnic people and forever locks them outside of the Jewish community. While Judaism as a whole no longer recognizes such Christian converts as Jews but as apostates to the Jewish religion, Gentile Christians often consider them to be something less than Christian because of their Jewish roots. Jews who genuinely convert to Christianity by accepting Jesus as their Messiah becomes a Christian in every sense of the word. Although their ethnicity remains, they are no longer under Judaism nor should they attempt to conform to its practices lest they deny the reality of Christ’s final sacrifice over the mere foreshadows of atonement that were veiled within the ceremonial law. That law, having been fulfilled in Christ, has now faded away into history.

Nevertheless, the Messianic Jew erroneously attempts to merge a distorted form of Christianity into Judaism. This movement began in the first century AD as is evidenced by the epistle to the Hebrews. The author implored Hebrew Jews that had become Christians in his day to leave their old ceremonial practices behind in view of the far more superior new covenant written in their Messiah’s blood (cf. He.8:6; 12:24). The modern Messianic movement was at first established as “corner ministries” within various Gentile churches, but as Zionism led to the reestablishment of the nation of Israel in 1948, the movement became far more organized. In the 1970’s they began to form their own congregations. Attracted by Jewish ritualism, many unwise Gentile believers have also

been drawn into these congregations. This movement has now become global such that assemblies of Messianic Jews can be found wherever a significant Jewish population exists.

Admittedly, the support of Israel as a Jewish nation poses a dilemma for the devout Christian. Jesus unequivocally said, "...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me (Jn.14:6). This dogmatic statement is supported by other verses found in the New Testament text: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Ac. 4:12). "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1Jn.5:12). In view of these and other such exclusive statements found in Holy Scripture, it becomes awkward for a devout Christian to fully support Israel knowing that salvation is through Christ alone – a fact that Israel as a nation emphatically denies. However, the Apostle Paul said in regard to the Jews entrenched unbelief, "Hath God cast away his people? God forbid...God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew" (Ro.11:1,2).

Miraculously, the Jewish people remain as a scattered but cohesive religious ethnic group to this very day. If God has not abandoned Israel, neither dare we. God's Old-Testament blessing given to Abram can be understood as having been perpetuated through Isaac and Jacob to the nation of Israel, which God created out of Abraham's descendents, such that those nations that bless Israel will be blessed by God, and those nations who curse Israel will be cursed (cf. Ge.12:2,3). It is therefore reckless for any nation to oppose Israel in view of God's promised continual protection, for in doing so they contend against God. Accordingly, many biblically-conservative churches openly defend the sovereignty of present-day Israel as a nation. One of the largest Christian organizations of churches and concerned individuals, presently boasting two million members, is *Christians United for Israel*, whose founder and national chairman is Pastor John C. Hagee of the Cornerstone Church in San Antonio Texas. This organization supports the inherent biblical rights of Jewish people to live in their own homeland and further supports their right to defend themselves with all the military might available to them against any outside efforts intended to degrade and destroy their national sovereignty.

A careful study of the Old Testament reveals that there are many prophecies specific to Israel as an ethnic people and nation that have not yet been fulfilled. God made promissory covenants with Israel without condition – such that even Israel's vehement rejection of Christ cannot alter their fulfillment. God's unconditional covenant with Israel regarding a Kingdom Age on earth can be found repeated throughout the Old Testament text as a promised future age and again in the New Testament as Jesus Christ openly offered the Kingdom to the Jews in his kingdom declaration, commonly referred to as the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Mt.5:1-7:27; Newsletter March 2014). One significant Old Testament example of this promise is found in Jeremiah the 23rd chapter, verses 5 through 8: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land." In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul also spoke of this day in the future when all Israel will be saved (cf. Ro.11:26,27). The Jew's spiritual blindness will be fully lifted in that day as they fully embrace their Messiah – such that all Israel in that day will be saved (cf. Zec. 12:10). The Book of Revelation specifically speaks of 144,000 Jews in a future age, consisting of 12,000 men from each of the twelve tribes of Israel, that will be sealed through the power of God's grace to safely live and bear witness of Christ through a time of God's fierce wrath that will be hurled upon a decadent earth (cf. Re.7:3-8).

Although the Jew continues to reject the Gospel today, we have a divine obligation to present the good news to them in exchange for the great gift they have given us in preserving the Old Testament Scriptures – and even for their rejection of Christ. The Jew as an ethnic group has taken upon their own backs the terrible torment for having blindly crucified their Messiah (cf. Lu.23:34a), which led to the full atonement of sin through Christ's death for a vast multitude of Gentiles. Nevertheless, from the very beginning the Church was populated with individual Jews who had their eyes opened to the Truth by God's merciful grace, such that we should expect no less today. We must therefore continue to pray for the redemption of Jews individually and collectively as God's chosen people, and we must pray for the health and safety of the sovereign nation of Israel, which remains captive to her unbelief until Emmanuel comes to ransom her in the last days. © Arthur J. Smith February 2016