

“JERUSALEM MEETS ROME AND FINDS BABYLON: A STUDY IN CHURCH PURITY”

FALL 2022-SPRING 2023

March 08, 2023

“THE BRANCHING OF THE CHURCH”

I. THE DEVELOPMENT OF JUDAISM AFTER THE BABYLONIAN EXILE (SECOND TEMPLE JUDAISM)

- A. Gained structure during the exile through the synagogue centers*
 - B. Gained improved writing and reading skills through the scribes*
 - C. Gained more doctrinal conformity through the teaching of the scribes from the Scriptures*
 - D. Scribes collected and edited the TANAKH*
 - E. The TANAKH is translated into Greek*
 - F. A tighter organization around the Torah and the full body of Scriptures is formed*
 - G. Groups are splintering off the body of Judaism in authority, the Sadducees, due to political and social corruption*
 - H. Groups of traditional Jewish people are fleeing to the rural areas and the “wilderness” to attempt to live a righteous life*
 - I. Hellenism, acquiescence to the Greek style of life, is making major inroads into the society*
 - J. However nationalism is growing in intensity and would ultimately be the death knell for the Jews living in Israel.*
 - K. A second large diaspora would take place in 136 CE (AD) that would remove the large bulk of Jewish people out of the land. The 10 northern tribes were already dispersed all over the known world. This dispersion would last until 1948 CE (AD)*
 - L. Along with the dispersion came the development of rabbinical Judaism. There would also be the divisions in this Judaism into the familiar categories of “liberal” and “ultraconservative”* and everything in between.*
- * Liberal can be defined as a compromise of Jewish scripture and/or tradition with the current culture and philosophy to get along better with that society or even to correct error in that society. Ultraconservative is defined as conserving all the old ways of doing things and a resistance to modern society wherever they are found.*
- M. Enter the church - new Judaic development or new movement?*

II. THIS DEVELOPMENT OF JUDAISM WOULD CONTRIBUTE GREATLY TO THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL ALONG WITH OTHER DETERMINING FACTORS

- A. Knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures and theology would be learned in the new cultures the dispersed Jews found themselves. This would give Gentiles a bit of a jump start to grasping the fundamentals of the gospel.*
- B. Since Judaism is not simply a religion but a lifestyle lived daily and a philosophical worldview explaining the origin of things by a single deity, it held the curiosity of many Gentiles who found their native religions backward and superstitious.*
- C. The new Messianic Judaism (Christianity) with the crucified, resurrected Christ as its center point; a monotheistic worldview with adequate philosophical explanations to all of life; and an ethical format based around loving one another, was fascinating to the Gentiles bored with their unsatisfying religions, their fallible gods and their philosophical heaviness with an inadequate worldview was appealing to many Gentiles*
- D. Yet there were elements of Gentile culture that found their way into the body of Christian belief. These beliefs or practices could be found in a shadowy, potential, and/or dark form in the Scriptures if one stretched the logic far enough*
 - 1. The supernatural found in the paganism of the Gentiles the Christians would encounter, would find their way into the doctrinal body of Christianity through practice.*
 - 2. Often the philosophies of the Greeks would have some level of agreement with the philosophical revelations in the Scriptures. These were often seen as universal, natural truths that were acceptable to both Christian doctrine and Gentile philosophy*
 - 3. Though there was little if any similarity with the Greek gods and the Creator God of Scripture, the forms of worship and the holy days were sometimes modified and adapted to Christianity and then syncretically brought into Christian practice. Later these would either be rejected as pagan or adopted after alteration and redefinition of its meaning by the church leadership*
- E. As the Gentile-majority believers adapted to the culture of the Gentiles and away from the Jewishness of the gospel, the*

Jewish-majority believers pulled away. They usually pulled away into the less populated areas, especially in Israel and Jerusalem. They tried to incorporate Torah into the faith in Christ. This had started within the first 20 years of the church's existence as is evidenced by the book of Galatians and by the need of a church council decision on what is required of Gentiles to be in the church.

III. THE MAIN AREAS ABOUT WHICH THE CHURCH IS GOING TO BE TOUCHED BY THE GENTILE CULTURE THAT COULD CHANGE ITS NATURE (JERUSALEM MEETING ROME AND FINDING BABYLON)

- A. Church identity - a final stage for the Torah-bound Israelis i.e. a mature Judaism? A new and separate movement apart from the Old Covenant? A fulfillment of the New Covenant? The church replacing unbelieving Israel? Are the churches supposed to be a large conglomeration of local bodies? What is the role of the Word of God?*
- B. Doctrinal conformity and uniformity - Will all churches believe the same thing? How will the church maintain its purity? What is the truth about the Godhead and who will decide it? What is the truth about salvation, calling, election, how to live, the ministry of the church, etc...?*
- C. Church liturgical practice - what is the proper form of worship for the gathered believers? What is the reason for the church's gathering? Are there requirements to be met at each church gathering? Should the church own property and its own building? Special vestments for the clergy?*
- D. Church structure - what is the role of the elders, deacons, pastors? What is the proper church government? Is there supposed to be a church government? Are all the churches to be ruled by a governing body? By one ruler? Is each local church an autonomous body or does it have a denominational obligation to a greater governing body? Is there a universal church or is the church only the local body?*
- E. Church membership - how does one become a member of the church? What is the benefit of church membership? Does one have to be a member to participate in the ordinances?*
- F. Church obligatory duties - Sacraments or ordinances? Salvatory or salvific or memorial? Necessary to salvation?*