Rethinking “Ethnic Israel” – A Call to Reexamine Assumptions

Introduction

This discussion will address a subject that many individuals, including Christians and pastors, have not been encouraged to scrutinize. Engaging with this profoundly important aspect of biblical and historical understanding – often neglected or insufficiently examined by many believers – may provoke discomfort for some when confronted with this truth, leading them to dismiss it as unfounded. Nevertheless, the evidence is firmly documented in scripture and is historically irrefutable.

For generations, many within the Christian world have accepted, often without question, the idea that the modern Jewish people represent the direct, unbroken lineage of ancient Israelites – the physical descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This belief lies at the heart of countless sermons, prophetic interpretations, and eschatological frameworks. Entire theological systems, particularly dispensationalism, hinge upon the assumption that God has an unfulfilled, future plan specifically for ethnic Israel – a group presumed to exist today in identifiable form.

But what if this foundational assumption is deeply flawed? Let’s press for the truth where many accept assumption!

What if the modern identity of “Jew” is not equivalent to biblical Israelite? What if the people we commonly associate with the term “Jewish” are, by historical, biblical, and even rabbinic admission, not a pure ethnic remnant of Jacob’s seed,

but rather a diverse amalgamation of peoples – Edomites, Ituraeans, converts from Babylon to Europe – who adopted the religion of Judaism over centuries?

And what if the religion practiced today under the name "Judaism" bears little resemblance to the faith delivered to Moses at Mount Sinai, having been reshaped during the Babylonian exile and later codified in the Talmud – a text often held above the Torah itself?

To answer these questions, we must go beyond surface-level tradition and return to Scripture, history, and honest inquiry. We must ask: **Who truly are the children of Israel according to God's Word? Is the modern "Jewish" identity grounded in biblical lineage – or religious conversion and cultural preservation? And what does this mean for the promises of God, the identity of the Church, and our understanding of prophecy?**

This study invites you to lay aside inherited assumptions and examine the evidence afresh. What you'll discover may not align with popular teaching – but it may bring you closer to biblical truth.

I. Biblical Evidence of Ethnic Mixing – And the Collapse of the "Ethnic Israel" Assumption

To understand the weight of the claim that God still has a future plan for **ethnic Israel**, one must begin with a proper understanding of the word **"ethnic."** At its root, *ethnic* refers to a group of people who share a common **ancestry**, **bloodline**, **language**, and **cultural heritage**. When applied biblically to **Israel**, the term would denote a people descended **biologically**

and covenantally from the twelve sons of Jacob, whose name was changed by God to *Israel*.

But herein lies the critical issue: **Scripture and history both testify that the bloodline of the people known as "Israel" has been deeply and irreversibly intermingled with other nations and peoples**, to such an extent that to claim any sort of *pure ethnic continuity* from Jacob to the modern-day Jewish population is both historically and biblically indefensible.

⚠ Mixed Lineages in Ancient Israel

Throughout the Old Testament, we see repeated examples of foreign blood being interwoven into the fabric of Israel:

- **The Exodus itself** was not purely Israelite in composition: *"And a mixed multitude went up also with them…"* (Exodus 12:38, KJV)
  This "mixed multitude" likely included Egyptians and others who joined Israel in their departure from Egypt, thereby becoming part of the nation.
- **Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh**, were half-Egyptian, born of **Asenath**, daughter of an Egyptian priest (Genesis 41:45). Yet they were not only accepted as part of Israel, but given tribal status.
- **Rahab the Canaanite** (Joshua 2) and **Ruth the Moabitess** (Ruth 1) were foreign women who became ancestors of David — and thus, of Christ (Matthew 1). While their faith granted them acceptance, their inclusion underscores the fluidity of Israel's ethnic boundaries.
- In **Nehemiah and Ezra's day**, widespread intermarriage with foreigners led to a national crisis, revealing just how diluted the bloodlines had become during and after the Babylonian captivity (Ezra 9–10, Nehemiah 13).
- By the time of the **Second Temple period**, intermarriage and forced conversions were common:
  - The **Edomites (Idumeans)**, long-time enemies of

Israel, were forcibly converted to Judaism by **John Hyrcanus** in the 2nd century BC and absorbed into the Jewish nation.
- **Herod the Great**, a central figure in the New Testament, was an Edomite by descent, not an Israelite – yet he was installed as "King of the Jews."

✅ "Becoming a Jew" – A Religious Identity, Not an Ethnic One

Scripture itself uses language that shows "Jew" had already shifted from an ethnic identity to a **religious or political** one:

> *"And many of the people of the land became Jews…" (Esther 8:17, KJV)*
> *These were not descendants of Jacob, but Gentiles who* ***converted to Judaism*** *in fear or admiration of Jewish power. From this point forward, "Jew" became as much a* ***religious designation*** *as an ethnic one.*

By the first century, the term "Jew" (Greek: *Ioudaios*) could refer to:

- A person from the tribe of Judah
- Someone from the region of Judea
- A follower of the Jewish religion
- A proselyte (Gentile convert)

✅ Genealogical Loss and National

Corruption

Following the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, **Jewish genealogical records were lost**. Without temple records, **no Jew today can trace lineage back to the tribe of Judah, Levi, or any other**. Even the priesthood, tied to Aaron's lineage, has no verified continuity.

Additionally, by the Babylonian exile and beyond, the priesthood itself had become corrupted. God, through **Malachi**, rebuked the priests for offering defiled sacrifices and perverting the covenant (Malachi 1–2). The Levitical order was never restored in its true form after the exile.

□□ Modern Israel: A Political Entity, Not a Biblical Ethnic Restoration

The contemporary state of **Israel**, founded in 1948, was not the result of divine intervention in fulfillment of prophecy, but a **political project advanced by secular Zionists**, many of whom were atheists or agnostics. The founders of the state did not seek to revive biblical Torah observance but rather to establish a **secular Jewish homeland**.

Modern Jewish identity is defined largely by **religion (Judaism)** or **culture**, not demonstrable descent from the twelve tribes. In fact:

- **Ashkenazi Jews**, the largest Jewish population today, are largely descended from **European converts**, including Khazars.
- **Sephardic and Mizrahi Jews** also reflect centuries of mixing with local populations in Spain, North Africa, and the Middle East.

Thus, when **dispensational theologians speak of "ethnic Israel"**, they are using a term that no longer has biblical

substance. There is **no verifiable ethnic Israel left**, and those who now occupy the land known as Israel **do not meet the biblical criteria for God's covenant people**, either by faith **or** by lineage.

✝ Biblical Israel = Covenant People, Not Race

The Bible consistently points not to racial purity but to **covenant fidelity** as the defining mark of God's people:

> *"Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham."*
> *— Galatians 3:7 (KJV)*

> *"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly… But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly…"*
> *— Romans 2:28–29 (KJV)*

✝ Conclusion

The term **ethnic Israel**, as used in modern theology and prophecy teaching, is **a misapplication** of biblical language. Israel in Scripture was never preserved as a racially pure group — and by the New Testament, God's focus had shifted from ethnicity to **faith in Christ**.

Those who continue to elevate modern Jews or the state of Israel as "God's chosen people" based on ethnicity are doing so on a **mythologized version of history**, not on biblical truth. God's covenant people are now found **in Christ**, from every tribe, tongue, and nation — not through blood, but through the blood of the Lamb.

II. Judaism Today Is Not the Faith Given to Moses — A Religion in Contrast to the Torah

While many Christians equate “Judaism” with the religion of the Old Testament — as if Jews today are still practicing the same faith Moses received at Mount Sinai — this assumption falls apart under historical and scriptural scrutiny. Judaism today, in both doctrine and practice, is a radically different religion from the Torah-based covenant established through Moses.

The confusion between the two has led to a widespread misidentification of modern Jews as “Old Covenant believers,” as if they are simply waiting for their Messiah while still following God’s Law. But in reality, **modern Judaism is not Mosaic; it is rabbinic**, and it emerged in its full form **after the destruction of the Temple**, long after biblical priesthood, sacrifice, and covenantal fidelity had ended.

📜 The Torah: God’s Covenant Through Moses

The Torah — the Law of Moses — was more than a moral code. It was a divinely revealed covenant system that required:

- **A functioning Levitical priesthood**
- **Animal sacrifices for atonement**
- **A physical tabernacle or temple**
- **Ceremonial purity laws**
- **National obedience to the covenant terms**

This system was centered around **blood atonement**, administered by priests descended from Aaron, and tied to the **physical land and temple** in Jerusalem. It was the framework through which Israel remained in covenant with God.

But this system had **conditions**. Israel's obedience brought blessings; disobedience brought curses (see Deuteronomy 28). And by the time of the prophets – and certainly by the exile – Israel had already broken covenant repeatedly and terminally (Jeremiah 31:32; Hosea 1:9).

Judaism After the Temple – The Rise of Rabbinic Authority

After the **destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD**, everything changed. With no temple, no altar, and no functioning priesthood, the Mosaic system **ceased to function**.

In its place, a new form of Judaism arose – **Rabbinic Judaism** – based not on Torah-ordained sacrifices and priesthood, but on **oral traditions**, legal interpretations, and rabbinic rulings, eventually codified in the **Talmud**.

> *"The Talmud is the central text of Rabbinic Judaism and the primary source of Jewish religious law and theology."*
> *– Encyclopedia Judaica*

This new system shifted authority **away from Scripture** and into the hands of **the rabbis**, who claimed to interpret and even override biblical commands through oral law. Jesus Himself confronted this system:

> ***"Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition."***
> *– Matthew 15:6 (KJV)*

By the second century AD, Judaism had become **a man-made religion built on tradition**, not divine revelation. The rabbinic rejection of Jesus as the Messiah only deepened their rebellion against the God of Israel, who had fulfilled His promises **in Christ**.

📖 Talmud vs. Torah – A Different Religion

The **Talmud** (especially the Babylonian Talmud) became the central religious authority in Jewish life, not the Torah. It contains:

- Commentary, debates, and traditions that often contradict the written Law
- Blasphemous passages regarding Christ and Christians
- Legal loopholes, reinterpretations, and philosophical ideas far removed from biblical worship

Even many **Jewish scholars** admit that modern Judaism is a **Talmudic faith**, not a continuation of Mosaic religion. Moses Maimonides (12th-century Jewish philosopher) helped shape Judaism as a philosophical and legal system grounded more in reason than in sacrifice and temple worship.

🚫 Modern Judaism Denies the Core of the Old Covenant

Key elements of biblical, Torah-based faith are **absent or outright rejected** in modern Judaism:

Biblical Torah-Based Faith	Modern Rabbinic Judaism
Blood sacrifices for sin (Lev. 17:11)	No sacrifices since 70 AD
Levitical priesthood	No functioning priesthood
Temple in Jerusalem	No temple; emphasis on synagogue & study
Faith in a coming Messiah (fulfilled in Christ)	Rejection of Jesus as Messiah
Torah as final authority	Talmud and rabbinic tradition reign supreme

Thus, modern Judaism is not “Old Testament Christianity.” It

is not even biblical Israelite religion. It is a **post-biblical religion** that replaced God's commands with man's traditions — the very thing Jesus condemned during His earthly ministry.

✝ Why This Matters Theologically

If Judaism today is not the faith of Moses, and if the people practicing it are not ethnically descended from Jacob in any verifiable way, then:

- **Modern Jews are not "God's chosen people" by covenant or blood.**
- The **state of Israel** is not a restoration of biblical Israel, but a secular political project.
- **Biblical prophecy** concerning Israel cannot be fulfilled through a people who no longer meet the covenant conditions.

God's promises were never about ethnic privilege but about **faithful obedience to His covenant**. And now, all of God's promises are fulfilled **in Christ**:

> *"For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen…"*
> *— 2 Corinthians 1:20 (KJV)*

> *"He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second."*
> *— Hebrews 10:9 (KJV)*

✝ Conclusion: Judaism Today Is Not the Religion of the Old Covenant

Modern Judaism is a **rabbinic system that broke away from Torah fidelity** and rejected the Messiah sent to fulfill it. It does not represent a continuation of biblical Israel's covenant, nor does it possess any spiritual authority apart from Christ.

As such, those practicing it are in need of the gospel — not theological elevation as "God's chosen" outside of Christ.

III. The Old Covenant Is Obsolete — Judaism Has No Covenant Standing with God

One of the greatest misunderstandings in both Christian theology and popular culture is the idea that **Judaism continues to represent God's covenant with Israel**, even after the coming of Christ. This error has fueled false teachings that modern Jews still hold a unique spiritual status before God, apart from faith in Jesus, and that the religion of Judaism somehow maintains a legitimate connection to the Mosaic covenant.

But **Scripture is unambiguous**: the Old Covenant has **been replaced**, the sacrificial system **fulfilled and abolished**, and any attempt to maintain or revive its rituals — whether through Judaism or any other means — is **null and void** in the eyes of God.

Jeremiah's Prophecy of the New Covenant

The prophetic foundation for this covenantal shift is found in **Jeremiah 31**, where God Himself declares that the Mosaic covenant would not last forever:

> ***"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… which my covenant they brake…"***
> *— Jeremiah 31:31–32 (KJV)*

This passage foretells a **complete covenantal replacement**, not a renewal of the old. God makes it clear: **the new covenant will not be like the old**, because the old was broken and failed due to human unfaithfulness.

✝ The New Covenant in Christ – Fulfillment and Replacement

The **Book of Hebrews** takes Jeremiah's prophecy and shows how it was **fulfilled in Jesus Christ**. Christ is not only the mediator of the new covenant, but the **perfect sacrifice** that ended the old system.

> ***"He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second."***
> *– Hebrews 10:9 (KJV)*

> ***"In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."***
> *– Hebrews 8:13 (KJV)*

These verses demolish the idea that Judaism – a religion which rejects Jesus and clings to rabbinic tradition – could hold onto any divine covenantal status. The old covenant is not only **superseded**, it is declared **obsolete**.

Furthermore, **the central component of the Mosaic covenant – the sacrificial system – was forever ended by Christ's once-for-all atonement**:

> ***"But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God…"***
> *– Hebrews 10:12 (KJV)*

With no temple, no priesthood, and no sacrifices, Judaism has **no mechanism** to fulfill the terms of the Mosaic covenant – even if it wanted to. And because Christ has fulfilled the law

(Matthew 5:17), any attempt to return to the old system is a **rejection of the completed work of Jesus**.

⚠ Judaism Is Not the Faith of the Old Covenant – And It's Not a Covenant at All

Given this, we must recognize the serious implications:

- Judaism is not a continuation of Old Testament religion – it's a **post-Christ, post-temple, rabbinic invention**.
- It **cannot fulfill** the requirements of the Mosaic covenant.
- It **rejects the new covenant** and the Messiah who mediates it.
- Therefore, Judaism is **not a valid expression of covenantal relationship with God**.

The Myth of "Judeo-Christian" Tradition – A Theological Oxymoron

This brings us to the popular but deeply flawed term: **"Judeo-Christian."**

This phrase attempts to tie together **Judaism** and **Christianity** as if they share a common theological foundation. But the reality is:

- **Christianity** is the fulfillment of the **Old Covenant**, brought to completion in **Jesus Christ**, the true Messiah.
- **Judaism**, as it exists today, is a **rejection** of both Christ and the covenantal fulfillment found in Him.

Thus, the term *"Judeo-Christian"* is a contradiction. It unites **two opposing systems**:

- One that **accepts** Christ as the Son of God and the final sacrifice.
- One that **denies** Him, and continues in a man-made religious system devoid of covenantal legitimacy.

As Jesus said to the religious leaders of His day:

> ***"If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins."***
> *— John 8:24 (KJV)*

There is no shared spiritual ground between Christianity and modern Judaism — any more than there is between the true gospel and any false religion.

✝ Conclusion: Only One Covenant Remains — In Christ Alone

There is no valid covenant outside of Jesus Christ. The Mosaic covenant has been fulfilled and set aside. Judaism, whether ancient or modern, cannot replace or stand alongside the New Covenant. And any theology that elevates Judaism or the Jewish people apart from Christ **stands in opposition to the gospel**.

There is no "Jewish track" to salvation. There is no future return to the Old Covenant. There is no dual-covenant theology. The new and better covenant has come — and Christ is its Mediator.

> ***"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."***
> *— Acts 4:12 (KJV)*

IV. Who Is the True Israel of God? — The Church as the Fulfillment of the Promises

With the collapse of the notion of ethnic purity, the passing away of the old covenant, and the invalidity of modern Judaism as a continuation of biblical Israelite religion, we are left with a pressing question: **Who is Israel now?** If the promises of God to Israel still stand — and we know they do — who inherits them?

The answer, according to the New Testament, is both radical and profoundly rooted in the heart of God's redemptive plan: **the true Israel of God is composed of those who are in Christ**, both Jew and Gentile, who walk according to the Spirit and not the flesh.

✝ Paul's Bold Claim: Not All Who Are of Israel, Are Israel

Paul, a former Pharisee and Hebrew of Hebrews, does not mix words when addressing this issue:

> ***"For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children…"***
> *— Romans 9:6–7 (KJV)*

This statement shatters any idea that **natural descent from Abraham or Jacob** guarantees covenantal standing. Paul clarifies that **the true children of Abraham are those of faith** (Romans 9:8, Galatians 3:7).

✝ The Olive Tree: One People of God in

Christ

In Romans 11, Paul uses the imagery of an **olive tree** to describe God's covenant people. Natural branches (ethnic Jews) were **broken off** because of unbelief, and **wild branches (Gentiles)** were **grafted in** by faith.

> ***"…because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith."***
> *— Romans 11:20 (KJV)*

This illustration reveals two key truths:

1. **Covenantal identity is based on faith**, not bloodline.
2. There is **one tree**, not two — not a "Church tree" and a "Jewish tree," but one people of God, rooted in Christ.

Galatians: Abraham's Seed Are Those in Christ

Paul makes this even clearer in Galatians 3:

> ***"And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."***
> *— Galatians 3:29 (KJV)*

There is no higher clarity than this: **to belong to Christ is to be counted as Abraham's seed.** God's promises to Abraham — including land, blessing, inheritance, and spiritual offspring — are fulfilled not through DNA, but **through union with Jesus**.

Ephesians: One New Man in Christ

Paul describes how in Christ, **the wall between Jew and Gentile is broken down**, creating **one new man**:

> ***"…to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace."***

— Ephesians 2:15 (KJV)

This wasn't a metaphorical idea only. It was a spiritual and literal **cosmic shift** — a fulfillment of what occurred **the moment Christ died**:

> ***"Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom…"***
> *— Matthew 27:50–51 (KJV)*

The tearing of the veil wasn't simply about access to God — it was the **end of the old covenant temple system**, the priesthood, the sacrifices, and the division that kept Gentiles in the outer courts.

Under the Old Covenant:

- The **veil** separated man from the Most Holy Place (the presence of God).
- The **outer courts** separated Gentiles from even entering the sanctuary.
- The **law and ordinances** reinforced this structure of distance and distinction.

But in Christ:

- The veil was **torn from top to bottom**, by **God**, not man — signifying **divine initiative**.
- The division between Jew and Gentile was **abolished** (Ephesians 2:14).
- No longer is God confined to a **temple made with hands** (Acts 7:48).
- **Believers themselves become the temple** (1 Corinthians 3:16–17; 6:19; Ephesians 2:21–22).

The **physical temple system ended** when Christ died. The **spiritual temple** – the Church, the body of believers indwelt by the Holy Spirit – began to take shape. There is now **one people**, **one high priest (Christ)**, and **one access point to the Father – Jesus Himself** (Hebrews 10:19–20).

✝ The "Israel of God"

Paul uses this title in **Galatians 6:16**:

> ***"…and as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."***

This phrase is directed at **believing Gentiles and Jews** who have placed their trust in Christ and walk by the new rule of the Spirit. The term **"Israel of God"** here cannot refer to unbelieving Jews or a future ethnic group – it is the **spiritual people of God**: the Church.

✝ New Testament Summary: The Church Is the True Israel

- The promises to Abraham are inherited **through faith** in Christ (Gal. 3:7–9, 29).
- There is **no longer Jew nor Greek**, but one body in Christ (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11).
- The Church is now **a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation** (1 Peter 2:9–10) – titles once given to Israel.
- There is **no future covenant with unbelieving Jews** outside of repentance and faith in Jesus.

V. Misusing Genesis 12:3 – A Dangerous Justification for Zionism

One of the most misapplied verses in modern theology is Genesis 12:3:

> *"I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee…"*

Evangelicals often use this to justify **unconditional support for the modern state of Israel**, believing any criticism of Israel invites God's judgment. But this promise was made to **Abram**, and Paul clarifies its meaning:

> *"To Abraham and his seed… which is Christ." (Galatians 3:16)*

The blessing is fulfilled **in Christ**, not in a modern political state. Yet Christian Zionism often overlooks this, supporting even the unjust actions of the Israeli state, including:

- Displacement and violence against Palestinians
- Military retaliation that kills civilians
- Persecution of Christians in the region

Jesus never condoned ethnic violence or blind nationalism. Using Scripture to justify injustice is a **perversion of God's Word**. Our allegiance is to Christ and His Kingdom, not to any earthly nation.

VI. Conclusion: Let God Be True –

The Gospel Is the Line in the Sand

The popular idea that God has two peoples — the Church and ethnic Israel — is not only biblically indefensible, but it **undermines the sufficiency of Christ**, the clarity of the gospel, and the nature of God's eternal covenant.

In review:

- There is **no pure ethnic Israel** remaining.
- Modern Judaism is **not biblical faith**, but a **man-made religion** that rejects the Messiah.
- The **Old Covenant is obsolete**, and cannot be revived.
- God's promises are **fulfilled in Christ**, and those who are in Him are **the true Israel** — regardless of nationality or bloodline.

This truth has profound implications:

- The Church must stop **idolizing the modern state of Israel** as though it holds covenantal significance.
- We must reject any theology that **replaces the gospel with race, religion, or ritual**.
- We must **preach Christ** to all, including Jews, without partiality — because *there is no salvation outside of Him.*

> ***"For there is no respect of persons with God."***
> *— Romans 2:11 (KJV)*

Let us boldly and faithfully declare that the people of God are not defined by ethnicity or tradition, but by **faith in the Son of God**, who loved us and gave Himself for us. In Him, the promises stand — and in Him alone is the hope of salvation.

> ***"Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper***

of the Lamb.” *— Rev. 19:9*