

# **End Time Trends 2012 Footsteps of the Antichrist – 021 and 022**

*"Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people, producing the fruit of it. – Mt. 21:43 (NASB)*

*Psalms 66:18 If I perceive sin in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.*

*Psalms 32:5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.*

*1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all other unrighteousness.*

*I Cor 11:31 But if we judge ourselves rightly, we should not be judged.*

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God; 9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Rom. 11:6, *"But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace."*

Gal. 2:21, *"I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly."*

Gal. 3:24, "Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, that we may be justified by faith."

1 Corinthians 3:11 For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'

John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

*"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived." - 2 Timothy 3:13,  
KJV*

# Israel and the Church - What's the Relationship?

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Hebrew for Christians

When studying the Jewish roots of Christianity, certain questions often arise regarding the nature of the “Church,” the nature of “Israel,” and the relationship between them. Do Gentile Christians become “Jewish” on account of their relationship to Jesus?

Does the “Church” somehow replace the Jewish people in God’s plan as the “new Israel”? Exactly how should we understand the relationship between the Church and Israel today?

In general, Christian theology has developed three different interpretative systems that attempt to answer such questions:

### **1. Replacement Theology**

The Church and Israel refer to the *same* group of people.

### **2. Separation Theology**

The Church and Israel refer to *different* groups of people.

### **3. Remnant Theology**

The Church and Israel *overlap* in some manner.

Before we attempt to explore the ideas behind these three theological systems, we will need to define some terms.

In particular, we will need to define “Israel” and the “Church.”

#### Defining Israel

In the Torah (i.e., first 5 books of the Bible), Israel refers to the new name that Adonai gave to Jacob (or *Ya'akov*, meaning “heel holder” or “supplanter”), who was the son of Isaac, the grandson of Abraham, and the father of the twelve patriarchs of the tribes of Israel.



The name Israel (*yisrael*) is formed from a wordplay using the verb *yisreh* (the imperfect form of *sara*, meaning "will fight") combined with the suffix -*el* (God), which is used to indicate the subject of the verb.

Etymologically, then, Israel means "God fights."

The wordplay occurs in the phrase "for you have striven (*sarita*) as a prince (*sar*) with God and with men and have prevailed" (Gen. 32:28).

Israel further refers to the 70 descendants of Jacob who entered into Egypt (under the auspices of Joseph), and that later grew into a great nation during the time of the Pharaohs.

During the time of Moses, the clan fathered by Jacob is collectively called "The Children of Israel" or the "Israelites."

It is this group of 600,000 men (not including women and children) that Moses led out of Egypt during *yetziat Mitzraim*, the great Exodus from Egypt, and who established them as the covenant nation of the LORD under the terms of the Sinai covenant.

It was this same group of people whom, under the leadership of Joshua, began to take possession of the land originally promised to Abraham by God Almighty.

After Joshua led the Israelites to victory in the land of Canaan, the fledgling nation of Israel functioned as a sort of priestly theocracy with the *mishkan* (tabernacle) as the central point of worship.

In later centuries, after national apostasy, various *shofetim* (judges) arose that led battles against Philistine and Canaanite oppressors. Eventually, however, the people asked for a monarchy, and the prophet Samuel anointed Saul as Israel's first king. Later, King David succeeded him.

It was King David who wanted to build the great Temple to honor the LORD God of Israel, and on account of his passion, God made covenant with him by solemnly promising that one of his descendants would rule over Israel forever (2 Sam. 7).

David died, however, without building the Temple, though his son Solomon took the throne and completed the Temple project (1 Kings 5).

During the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam, Israel became a divided kingdom.

The southern kingdom, called Judah, included the city of Jerusalem and the Temple.

The northern kingdom continued to be called Israel.

The two kingdoms often fought with one another until the Assyrian Empire conquered the northern kingdom around 721 BC.

The Assyrians forced 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel out of Israel (the first Diaspora) and brought in foreigners to resettle the land (called Samaritans).

Later, the Babylonian Empire overpowered the Assyrians under the reign of king Nebuchadnezzar, and Babylonia sought to expand its influence by forcing Judah into submission.

Shortly thereafter, the Babylonian army attacked Judah and took more captives to Babylon (the prophet Ezekiel, one of the captives, explained that God was allowing Babylon to punish Judah because the people had been unfaithful to God). The aggression of Babylon continued until they destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple that Solomon built (c. 586 BC).

Most of the remaining Jews were taken away as captives to Babylon. After the death of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian Empire was conquered by Cyrus the Great (c. 539 BC), the king of the Medo-Persian Empire whom God anointed as a “messiah” by giving the Jews their freedom to return to Judah.

A faithful remnant of the Jews returned to Judah and began to rebuild the Temple (c. 536 BC). The Temple was consecrated exactly 70 years after the Babylonians had destroyed it (c. 586 BC). The Greeks began their rise to power under Alexander the Great, who defeated the Persian armies in Macedonia (333 BC) and eventually conquered the land of Palestine. Later, a Greek ruler named Antiochus Epiphanes ruled Syria (from about 175 BC to about 164 BC). Antiochus also ruled over Judah and tried to destroy the Jewish religion by defiling the Temple and burning copies the Torah.

This led to the Maccabean revolt, which opened the way for Jewish independence in Jerusalem and the surrounding area.

This victory is commemorated during Chanukah.

After the death of Alexander the Great, the Greek empire was divided up among four generals, which weakened the empire.

Eventually the Romans invaded Syria (under the leadership of Pompey) and Jerusalem fell under Roman rule. Awhile later, Jesus was born and performed His ministry to captive Israel.

Several years after Jesus was crucified, the Roman Army (under Titus) destroyed Jerusalem and Herod's Temple (70 AD), in fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy (Matt. 24:1-2).



Later, in 135 AD, the Romans (under Hadrian) suppressed the Bar Kochba uprising, completely destroying the Holy City of Jerusalem, and sending all the Jews into exile.

In an attempt to end all Jewish hope for an independent state, Hadrian renamed the land from Judaea to “Palestine” - after the Jews' historic enemies, the Philistines.

This is the start of the Galut, or great Jewish Diaspora.

In the late 1800's the Zionist movement began in Europe.

Theodor Herzl, a journalist from Austria wrote *The Jewish State*, which called for the creation of a Jewish nation as a solution to the Diaspora.

Herzl also organized the first World Zionist Congress, unifying diverse Zionist groups into a worldwide movement.

During World War I, the British forces defeated the Turks (Ottoman Empire) and governed the area (falsely) called "Palestine."

Under the Balfour Declaration, the Jews were permitted to return to resettle their ancient homeland. Later, Hitler's reign of terror in Germany eventuated in the Holocaust -- the Nazi's systematic murder of 6 million Jews -- which caused worldwide support for the Jews to reestablish the state of Israel as a permanent homeland.

After further immigration to Palestine, on May 14, 1948, the Jews declared independence for the democratic state of Israel (*medinat Yisrael*), a modern miracle that revealed the providential care of God for the Jewish people over the millennia. The rebirth of the nation of Israel meant that after nearly 2,900 years (since the time of King Solomon) the nation of Israel was both independent and united.

Within hours of Israel's declaration of independence, however, the surrounding Arab countries launched an invasion of Israel.

Israel was victorious, however, and the nation was born.

Later, in the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, Israeli forces recaptured more of their ancient Jewish homeland, and during the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel retook control of Jerusalem.

During recent years, the Intifada and the rise of Islamic militarism have again threatened to destroy the nation of Israel, despite various peace accords by world politicians.

**Note:** This historical definition of Israel implies that it is composed of those descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who are otherwise regarded today as ethnic “Jews.”

Of course not all Jews are Israelis today, just as not all Israelis are Jews, but for the purposes of this discussion I am restricting the scope of the term “Israel” to refer to this group of people.

## ***Defining the Church***

The word “church” does not appear in English translations of the Old Testament (as it does in the New Testament).

The Greek translation of the OT (called the Septuagint or LXX) uses the word *ekklesia* (from *ek-* + *kaleo*, “to call”) for two Hebrew words that both refer to a “congregation” or “assembly”: *kahal* and *‘edah*.

*Kahal* (from the Hebrew *kol*, “voice”) is generally translated as “assembly” or “congregation” (though other words are sometimes used).

The LXX uses the word *sunagoge* (synagogue) for the Hebrew word *‘edah* (from the Hebrew word *‘ed*, meaning witness or testimony), which is usually translated as “assembly.”

Most Hebrew scholars consider *kahal* and *'edah* to be synonyms (see Num 20:1-13), even though they are based on different word roots.

What is puzzling is that the Greek translators did not appear to be consistent when translating *kahal*, since sometimes they chose the word *ekklesia*, but in 36 places they chose the word *sunagoge* (the word *'edah*, however, seems to be consistently translated as *sunagoge*).

From my comparison of the terms, it seems that the word *kahal* conveys the idea of a general assembly, whereas the word *'edah* conveys the idea of assembling at a specific time *mo'ed* ("appointed time") or at a particular place of meeting (*ohel mo'ed*) for a particular purpose. In other words, the *kahal* is simply a group of some kind, whereas the *'edah* is an assembly brought together for a specific purpose, often for a meeting with the LORD God of Israel.

The reason I am providing all of this detail is because in the New Testament the word *ekklesia* is translated as “Church” in our English Bibles, and the question naturally arises as to whether this *ekklesia* is an extension of the *kahal* (or ‘edah) of the Old Testament or if it refers something entirely new in God’s plan and purposes.

This is perhaps the crucial question, and a lot of the discussion concerning the relationship between the “Church” and “Israel” hinges on how we decide to answer it.



It appears to be a major fault of various English translations of the “Christian Bible” that the word “Church” was translated for the Greek word *ekklesia* in the New Testament, since this suggests an anti-Jewish bias in their work by implying that there is a radical discontinuity between “Israel” and the *ekklesia* of Jesus (i.e., the “Church”). In other words, if the same Greek word (*ekklesia*) is used in both the LXX and the NT, then why was a new word coined for its usage in the English translation of the New Testament? Why not rather translate the word as it was used in the LXX, or better still, as it was used in the OT Scriptures?

In the New Testament sense, the word *ekklesia* refers to the group of “called out” people (from every tribe and tongue) in covenant with God by means of their trust in Jesus Christ. In particular, this *ekklesia* is composed of *only* those people who confess their faith that Jesus (Yeshua) is none other than Adonai come in the flesh, who died as a sinless substitutionary sacrifice for their sins, was buried, and resurrected from the dead (Rom. 10:9-10; 1 John 2:22, etc.).

### *Israel and the Church*

Historically understood, the *ekklesia* mentioned in the New Testament was founded by a Torah observant Jew and began with the Jewish people (Gal. 4:4; Rom. 15:8).

The first followers of Jesus (Yeshua) were all Jews, as were all the apostles and writers of the New Testament.

The “church” was therefore born among the Jewish people in Jerusalem.

Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost (i.e., Shavu'ot) was entirely Jewish, copiously quoting from the prophets and David, which would have meant little to any Gentiles in earshot (if there were any).

It is likely, therefore, that the 3,000 people who were saved that day would have been all Jewish (Acts 2:1-41).

These earliest members of the new church met regularly in the Temple, where Gentiles were explicitly excluded (Acts 2:46).

Note that the apostles Peter and John are recorded to have gone to the Temple for prayer during the time of the minchah (afternoon) sacrifices (Acts 3:1).

The ministry of the Apostles continued exclusively among the Jewish people, among whom were “thousands who believed and were zealous for the Torah” (Acts 21:20). Even after they were imprisoned but miraculously escaped, an angel told them to "Go, stand and speak in the Temple to the people all the words of this life" (Acts 5:20).

When Stephen was called before the High Priest and the council, he gave a defense that was thoroughly Jewish, encompassing the entire history of Israel before he was martyred (Acts 7)

Even Peter's vision and visit to the house of Cornelius, a *ger tzeddek* ("God fearer") who attended synagogue and observed Jewish customs and traditions (Acts 10), was subject to a crisis of conscience for him.

First, in his vision he said that he never would eat of the "unkosher" animals shown to him, and second, he had qualms about even entering the house of a non-Jew.

This indicates, among other things, how steeped Peter was in the Torah, even after spending three years under the teaching of Jesus.

Likewise the Apostle Paul was an observant Jew.

He was born in Tarsus but was brought up in Jerusalem and studied under the famous Rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3).

Did this Jewish Rabbi reject a Jewish lifestyle after his conversion on the Damascus Road? By no means, as the following events during his ministry clearly indicate:

- Paul identified himself a Jew, even to his dying day.

In Acts 23:6 he confessed, “I *am* (not “was”) a Pharisee.”

He even declared that concerning the observance of the Torah he was “blameless,” which indicates that he observed a Jewish lifestyle to the very end (Phil. 3:6).

Paul testified that he kept the Torah throughout his life (Acts 25:7-8, see also Acts 28:17).

- Paul circumcised Timothy, the son of a Jewish mother and Greek father. He considered Timothy to be Jewish and wanted him to be circumcised before taking him on a trip to assist with the ministry among the Jews (Acts 16:1-3).

- Paul regularly attended synagogue.

“He came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews.

And Paul, *as his manner was*, went in unto them, and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures” (Acts 17:1-2).

- Paul went to Jerusalem for the “feast” (most likely Passover) at the end of his second journey (Acts 18:21-22; see also 1 Cor. 5:7).
- Paul took the Nazarite vow (Acts 18:18; see Num. 6:2-6, 13-18

### *Israel and the Church*

- Paul sailed away from Philippi “after the days of Unleavened Bread” (Acts 20:6), indicating that he observed Passover and the days of unleavened bread (*chag hamatzot*) with the Church at Philippi (1 Cor. 5:7).



- After leaving Philippi he sailed along the coast of Asia Minor, stopping at a few places along the way, but skipped Ephesus because he wanted to be in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost (Acts 20:16).

This was at the end of his third missionary journey.

- Paul lived “in observance of the Torah” (Acts 21:23-24) and offered sacrifices in the Jewish Temple (Acts 21:26).

Notice that Paul was not only going to pay for his own sacrifices in order to be released from his Nazarite vow, he was also going to pay for the sacrifices for four other Jewish believers! Notice also that this was performed at the explicit request of James, the head of the Jerusalem Church (and half-brother of Yeshua).

- Paul's disagreement with Peter (Gal. 2:11-14) was about the requirement of the Gentiles to convert to Judaism, not about the lifestyle of the Jewish believers.
- Paul observed that the prison ship (on which he was sailing to Rome) was going too slowly and that "the fast was now already past" (Acts 27:9).

The "fast" was universally regarded to refer to Yom Kippur.

In its earliest years, the *ekklesia* of Jesus composed a somewhat tolerated subset within larger Israel. After the national tragedy of the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, however, evidence of formal Jewish persecution of the followers of Jesus can be detected.

This included the addition of the (infamous) Birkat HaMinim, a "blessing" (composed by the Sanhedrin at Yavneh) that was added to the weekday Amidah which invoked a curse on followers of Jesus (as well as the Essenes).

Jews unwilling to recite the Birkat HaMinim were suspected of heresy and subject to *cherem* (excommunication).

The rift between the followers of Jesus and Rabbinic Judaism was intensified during the bloodiest of the Jewish-Roman wars, the Bar Kokhba Revolt (132-135 AD).

The Jewish sage Rabbi Akiva convinced the Sanhedrin at Yavneh to support the revolt and actually regarded its leader (Simon Bar Kokhba) to be the Jewish Messiah.

Since the Jewish followers of Jesus could not support such a claim (and therefore could not support the war), the divide between Rabbinical Judaism and the early Jewish Church became sealed.

Concurrent with the rejection of the *ekklesia* of Jesus by the leaders of ethnic Israel, more and more Gentiles came to faith, and the Jewish roots of Jesus began to be forgotten.

This “forgetfulness” was solidified by various Gentile Christian teachers of the first few centuries who, influenced by Greek philosophy, advocated severing the *ekklesia* from its historic Jewish roots.

The Gentile “Church” then came into prominence as a distinct entity from Israel, with its own mission and purpose.

Sampling the teaching of many of the early Gentile Christian leaders reveals the “Gentilization” of the *ekklesia*.

Here is an abbreviated sample:

- Marcion of Sinope (110-160 AD) was a Hellenist steeped in the ideas of Plato and Gnosticism and wanted to separate Christianity from any connection with Judaism and the law.
- Justin Martyr (100-165 AD), an early Christian apologist, wrote his “Dialogue with Trypho the Jew” in which he claimed that God's covenant with Israel was no longer valid, and that the Gentiles had replaced them.
- Tertullian (160-220 AD) was another Gentile Christian apologist who blamed the Jews for the death of Jesus.

- Origen (263-339 AD) founded a school in Alexandria Egypt that taught the allegorical interpretation of Scripture.

Origen was heavily influenced by Neo-Platonic Gnosticism.

He was also an anti-Semite who accused the Jews of plotting to kill Christians.

- Eusebius (263-339 AD) wrote an influential history of the church that blamed the calamities, which befell the Jewish nation on the Jews' role in the death of Jesus.

- John Chrysostom (344-407 AD) denounced Jews in a series of sermons to Christians who were taking part in Jewish festivals and other Jewish observances.

- Jerome (347-420 AD) produced the Latin translation of the Bible which became the official bible of the Catholic Church.

He said, "Jews are incapable of understanding Scripture and should be severely punished until they confess the true faith."

- Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD) spiritualized the kingdom of God and introduced amillennial thinking into the mainstream church.

Augustine maintained that the Jews deserved death but were destined to wander the earth to witness the victory of Church over synagogue. Besides these Gentile "Church" leaders who rejected the Jewish roots of Christianity, various Church Councils of the third and fourth centuries likewise rejected Jewish

influence within the Church and abandoned the Jewishness of Jesus and His *ekklesia*.

These include the Council of Elvira (306 AD), the Council of Nicea (325 AD), the Council of Antioch (341 AD), the Council of Laodicea (434 AD), and so on.

These councils went so far as to forbid Jewish and Christian intermarriage, the observance of Passover, and worship on the Sabbath day.

The Reformers tried to return the Gentile Church to its early roots, but sadly this did not involve a return to the *Jewish roots* of the original *ekklesia*.

For example, Martin Luther (1483-1586) became frustrated by Jewish unwillingness to embrace his own



interpretation of Christianity and became one of the most bitter anti-Semites in history.

His writings described Jews as “worse than devils.”

Jews were “poisoners,” “ritual murderers,” and “parasites,” who should be expelled from Germany. His even went so far as to rouse the mob to “burn synagogues to the ground,” and seize Jewish holy books.

Later on, Adolf Hitler would tell Germany that his Final Solution was just an attempt to finish the work that Luther had begun.

(Note: The subject of Christian anti-Semitism is vast and should be soberly studied by all serious seekers of the truth.

For an overview of the subject, please see the Wikipedia article entitled, Christianity and Anti-Semitism).

Many definitions of the “Church” offered by today’s theologians are essentially Gentile (and Western) in flavor and perspective, defining it in abstract terms while focusing on the organization of church government, the nature and role of Christian liturgy, and so on.

However, in light of the fact that the Gentile Church owes its origin to the Jewish *ekklesia* of Jesus, it almost seems there is a “conspiracy of silence” regarding the Church’s Jewish heritage, and rarely is there adequate discussion regarding God’s relationship to Israel *today*.

For example, if a Gentile Church regards the rebirth of ethnic, national Israel in 1948 as a modern-day miracle, it will tend to believe that God has sovereign plans for the nations *in addition to* His plans for the Gentile Church (and therefore “Separation Theology” or “Remnant Theology” will seem plausible). On the other hand, if a Gentile Church regards the rebirth of the state of Israel as an “accident” of history, it will tend to believe that it is of little theological significance, and perhaps even regard its existence with suspicion and even antagonism (the view of Replacement Theology and most Reformed Churches).

There are a number of metaphors for the *ekklesia* of Jesus given in the New Testament, such as a household (1 Tim. 3:15), a kingdom (Col. 1:13; Phil 3:20), a priesthood (1 Pet. 2:9; Heb.

2:17); a temple (Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Cor. 3:11); one “new man” (Eph. 2:14-15); a body (1 Cor. 12:12-27; Rom. 12:4-5; Col. 1:18); a servanthood (Luke 17:10-17); a flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 2:3; 5:4; John 10:1-18); an army (2 Tim. 2:3-4; Eph. 6:10-17); a wife (Eph. 5:22-32); a bride (Rev. 21); a vine (John 15:1-7); and an olive tree (Rom. 11:16-24).

Each of these needs to be taken into account when considering the relationship of the Church to ethnic Israel.

Some of these metaphors show obvious parallels to ethnic Israel of the Old Testament (e.g., kingdom, priesthood, flock, wife, vine, etc.), while others seem to be unique in reference to those of the *ekklesia* of Jesus (e.g., body, one new man, bride, olive tree, etc.).

In the following pages, I will survey the three main ways that theologians have attempted to understand God's relationship to the Church and historic, ethnic Israel:

## **1. Replacement Theology**

The Church and Israel refer to the *same* group of people.

## **2. Separation Theology**

The Church and Israel refer to *different* groups of people.

### **3. Remnant Theology**

The Church and Israel *overlap* in some manner.

**Important:** In what follows, I will regularly use the Gentile term “Church” to refer to what the New Testament writings plainly refer to as the *ekklesia* of Jesus.

Please keep this in mind as you are reading.