

Anti-Semitism and Christianity

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✓ Anti-Semitism Defined

The word Semitic refers to both Jews and Arabs. It wasn't until the nineteenth century that the term "anti-Semitism" was introduced in Germany and was defined as follows.

"Anti-Semitism is a form of prejudice against Jews, ranging from hostility to violent hatred."

Before the 19th century, anti-Judaism was largely driven by religion – either Christian or Muslim.

Today anti-Semitism is most often driven by religious or sociological ignorance, whereby Jews are vilified and persecuted simply because they are Jews.



***"How odd of God to choose the Jew,
but not so odd as those who choose
the Jewish God and hate the Jew."***

✓ A Historical Review

The first "Christians" were Jewish and were considered a sect within Judaism because (1) they believed in a Jewish Messiah, (2) they accepted the Jewish sacred writings, (3) and they honored the Jewish festivals, including the Sabbath.

Although Christianity grew out of Judaism, Christianity has throughout its history, sought to disassociate and distance itself from Judaism. These facts become evident when carefully reviewing Jewish and Christian history.

During the first Christian centuries, there were several Jewish uprisings against Roman oppression. The [First Jewish Great Revolt](#) in 66-70 C.E. against Rome resulted in the destruction of the Temple and the City of Jerusalem by Titus and Vespasian and the dispersal through slavery of thousands of Jews. Tensions again mounted in the [Second Jewish Revolt](#) of 132-135 C.E. This last revolt brought the Jews a time of intense persecution. All things Jewish were strictly forbidden and punished. Rome's Hadrian seemed determined to exterminate the Jewish people.¹

During the first three centuries, many Christians experienced martyrdom because of their links with Judaism and their refusal to worship Roman gods. Because of Roman anti-Jewish hostility, the emerging Christian Church began dropping its signs of "Jewishness" and incorporating other religious practices from other cultures.

Early Christian writings from the 2nd century onward portrayed the Jews as religious heretics.² The Catholic [Epistle of Barnabas](#), written around 135 C.E., repudiated Judaism as the true religion. The book

influenced many Christians to adopt a new day of worship in order to remove the stigma of "Jewishness."³

Over the decades, Church and State laws stigmatizing Jews have included bans on intermarriage and intermingling with Jews; suppression of all Jewish books and teachings; punishment for participation in Jewish practices; forced baptism of Jews; destruction of Jewish synagogues; denunciation of Jewish holy days; and special taxes paid only by Jews—the "fiscus judaicus."

The Christian crusades during the 11-13th centuries, while directed against the Arabs, included forced conversion and massacres of Jews. The Spanish Inquisition forced conversions of some Jews, and death for others who refused to give up their faith. Jews were regularly accused of sacrilege and child murder. The [Fourth Lateran Council](#) (1215 C.E.) forbade Jewish employment in government, and required all Jews to wear a distinguishing badge for identification.⁴

Church reformer Martin Luther hoped Jews would convert to Christianity. When they didn't, he wrote a 65,000-word treatise titled [On the Jews and Their Lies](#) in 1543 C.E.

It stated, "First, to set fire to their synagogues and schools... Second, I advise that their houses also be razed and destroyed... Third, I advise that all their prayer books and Talmudic writings be taken from them... Fourth, I advise that their rabbis be forbidden to teach henceforth on pain of loss of life and limb... Fifth, I advise that safe-conduct on the highways be abolished completely for the Jews... Sixth, I advise that usury be prohibited to them, and that all cash and treasure of silver and gold be taken from them, and put aside for safe-keeping... Seventh, I recommend putting a flail, an ax, a hoe, a spade, a distaff, or a spindle into the hand of young, strong Jews... letting them earn their bread in the sweat of their brow." ⁵

Luther did much to spread doctrinal reform within the Church of his day. He proclaimed that God's salvation to mankind is a free gift, accepted by faith, and cannot be earned by religious works. But due to Luther's misunderstanding of Israel, his anti-Semitic remarks became a tool of Hitler to justify the mass extermination of the Jews.

"Perhaps the most important reason the Holocaust happened is that the Church had forgotten its Jewish roots." ⁶



The historical documentation substantiating anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism is too vast to cover in this short summary. However, the sources of two anti-Judaic changes are briefly presented here.

✔ Lord's Day Substituted for Sabbath

Shabbat (*Sabbath*) was given at Creation long before there were any Jewish people. The Bible says, "*God blessed the seventh day and separated it as holy.*" (Genesis 2:3). When God brought Israel out of

Egypt he gave them a command, *"Remember the day, Shabbat, to set it apart for God... For in six days, Adonai made heaven and earth, the sea and everything in them; but on the seventh day he rested. This is why Adonai blessed the day, Shabbat, and separated it for himself."* (Exodus 20:8,11). Israel was commanded to "remember" Shabbat, because it had been forgotten during their slavery. God gave Shabbat as a sign and reminder that He is the Creator.

The Jewish authors of the Bible, Yeshua (*Jesus*), the first Jewish congregations of believers in Yeshua observed Shabbat, the seventh day Sabbath. The Sabbath in the Tanakh is referred to as *"Adonai's holy Day"* (Isaiah 58:13).

History reveals that another day has been substituted in place of the biblical Sabbath by an institution not wanting to appear Jewish. By its own authority, these people changed Sabbath observance to Sunday.

1. *"Christians shall not Judaize and be idle on Saturday, the Sabbath, but shall work on that day; but the Lord's day (Sunday) they shall especially honor, and, as being Christians, shall, if possible, do no work on that day. If, however, they are found Judaizing, they shall be shut out from Christ."*

Canon 29, Council of Laodicea, 364 C.E.

2. *"All things whatsoever it was the duty to do on the Sabbath, these we have transferred to the Lord's day (Sunday)... because it is more honorable than the Jewish Sabbath."*

Eusebius of Caesarea, 4th Century⁷

3. *Question: Which is the Sabbath day?
Answer: Saturday is the Sabbath day.
Question: Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?
Answer: We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday."*

Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine⁸

4. *"Every Sabbath on account of the burial (of Jesus) is to be regarded in execration (denunciation) of the Jews... In fact it is not proper to observe, because of Jewish customs, the consumption of food and the ceremonies of the Jews."*

Pope Sylvester 314-335 C.E.⁹

5. *"The Catholic Church for over one thousand years before the existence of a Protestant (in the 1500's), by virtue of her divine mission, changed the day from Saturday to Sunday."*

The Catholic Mirror¹⁰

Note: The Catholic statement above supports the historical record that the seventh day Sabbath was observed by believers down to the fourth and fifth centuries. [Click for Sabbath historical statements.](#)

✓ Lord's Supper Substituted for Passover

The Torah says, *"You are to observe the festival of matzah (unleavened bread)... You are to observe this day from generation to generation by a perpetual regulation... You are to observe this as a law, you and your descendants forever."* Exodus 12:17,24

The Bible does not teach that Yeshua was instituting a new religious ceremony when he celebrated the annual Pesach (Passover) Seder (service and meal) with his disciples (Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22). Rather he used matzoh bread and wine (the third cup of redemption) to show that, he, the Messiah would deliver mankind from the bondage of sin.

Pesach is rich with symbolism that points to the Messiah and deliverance not only from physical bondage, but also from spiritual bondage. Rabbi Sha'ul wrote, *"For our Passover lamb, the Messiah, has been sacrificed. So let us celebrate the (Passover) Seder not with leftover hametz (leaven), the hametz of wickedness and evil, but the matzah (unleavened bread) of purity and truth."* 1 Corinthians 5:7-8

The Church once again, for anti-Jewish reasons, replaced the Passover celebration with its own version. This change has resulted in a variety of interpretations and practices among Christian believers today.

1. *"Anti-Jewish polemics (theological differences) figure largely in the Didache (an early church manual, 120 C.E.) which warns against Jewish fasting and prayers, but at the same time takes over Jewish elements for the liturgy of the Lord's Supper."*¹¹

2. *"It was generally agreed that the Savior ate the Pesach (Passover meal) on the fourteenth day of the Jewish month of Nisan, corresponding to the fourteenth day of the March moon. The Christians of Asia stuck to that date, and on that day merely substituted the Eucharistic Supper for the Jewish ritualistic repast."*¹²

3. *"It appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews... Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd."*

Constantine's Nicene Letter 325 C.E. ¹³

4. *"The idea of going from a church to a synagogue is blasphemous; and to attend the Jewish Passover is to insult Christ."*

John Chrysostom, Sermons II & III, 387 C.E. ¹⁴

5. *"No bishop, presbyter, or deacon, or any other member of the clergy is to share in Jewish fast or feast, or to receive from them unleavened bread or other material for a feast."*

Apostolic Canon 69, 4th Century

The social and theological conflicts between Judaism and Christianity, and the desire to appear distinct from the Jews, led the Bishop of Rome to make substitutions for Sabbath and Passover.¹⁵ Many Christians, while abhorring anti-Semitism, have failed to examine the Jewish roots of their faith and the history of anti-Semitism within the Church.

One highly respected "church father" was one of the most influential anti-Jewish teachers in the Christian church. Here is what the gentile John Chrysostom wrote:

"Jews worship the devil: their rites are criminal and unchaste; their religion a disease; their synagogue an assembly of crooks, a den of thieves, a cavern of devils, an abyss of perdition!"

"God hates the Jews, and on Judgment Day He will say to those who sympathize with them., "Depart from Me, for you have had intercourse with My murderers!" Flee, then, from their assemblies, fly from their houses, and, far from venerating the synagogue, hold it in hatred and aversion."

John Chrysostom, Eight Homilies Against the Jews, 4th Century

✔ Did the Jews Kill Christ?

Many respected Christians have taught that the Jewish people are cursed because of their role in the crucifixion of Jesus. This has resulted in "Christ killer" name calling and persecutions of the Jewish people for centuries.

The justification for such attitudes is not found in the writings of the Gospels (*Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John*). In fact, if Christians would carefully and thoughtfully study the life of Jesus, they would realize that he laid down his life voluntarily as an atonement for the sins of all mankind. It was because of all peoples' sins that Jesus had to die - a sacrifice once and for all.

Yeshua said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep... Just as the Father knows me, and I know the Father, I lay down my life on behalf of the sheep. Also I have other sheep (the gentiles) which are not from this pen; I need to bring them, and they will hear my voice; and there will be one flock, one shepherd. This is why the Father loves me: because I lay down my life -- in order to take it up again! No one takes it away from me; on the contrary, I lay it down of my own free will. I have the power to lay it down, and I have the power to take it up again. This is what my Father commanded me to do." John 10:11;15-18

"Then, taking the Twelve, Yeshua said to them, "We are now going up to Jerusalem, where everything written through the prophets about the Son of Man will come true. For he will be handed over to the Gentiles and be ridiculed, insulted and spat upon. Then, after they have beaten him, they will kill him. But on the third day he will rise." Luke 18:31-33

Blaming the Jewish people for the death of Yeshua (*Jesus*) is rooted in attitudes of anti-Semitism. It was not the Jews, nor the Romans who put Jesus on the cross, but the sins of all humanity. Jesus stated in John 10:17-18 that He willingly laid down and took up his life so that we might have eternal life, and that

He was following the will of His Father in heaven. How else could our redemption occur?

To teach otherwise demonstrates a real ignorance of John 3:16-17 which states, *"For God so loved the world that he gave his only and unique Son, so that everyone who trusts in him may have eternal life, instead of being utterly destroyed. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but rather that through him, the world might be saved."*

*"Even if you (Israel) have been banished
to the most distant land under the heavens,
from there the Lord your God will gather you
and bring you back. He will bring you to the land
that belonged to your fathers...
The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts
and the hearts of your descendants,
so that you will love him with all your heart
and with all your soul, and live.
The Lord your God will put all these 'curses'
on your enemies who hate and persecute you."
Deuteronomy 30:4-7*

Some Must View Extras...

- ▶ [Anti-Semitism historical timeline of events](#)
- ▶ [Dr. Michael Brown's video discussion - "Anti Semitism"](#)
- ▶ [Is Christianity anti-Jewish?](#)

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1. "Jewish Encyclopedia," "Hadrian," S. Krauss, 1907, s.v.
 2. "The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue," James Parkes, 1974, p.102
 3. "Anti-Judaism and the Origin of Sunday," Samuele Bacchiocchi, 1975, p.100
 4. "Encyclopedia Britannica," "Sunday," 1988, v.26, p.930
 5. "A Legacy of Hate," David Rausch, p.29
 6. "Our Father Abraham—Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith," p.101
 7. "Sabbath Literature," R. Cox, 1865, v.1, p.361
 8. "Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine," Peter Geiermann, 1977, p.50
 9. "Adversus Graecorum," S.R.E. Humbert, PL 143, p.936
 10. "The Catholic Mirror," Sept. 23, 1893
 11. "History of the Church," Jedin & Dolan, 1980, v.1, p.141
 12. "History of the Catholic Church," Fernand Mourret, 1931, v.1, p.291
 13. "Life of Constantine," Eusebius, v.3, c.18-19
 14. "The Conflict of the Church and the Synagogue," p.163
 15. "Anti-Judaism and the Origin of Sunday," p.61