

Is Christianity Jewish?

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Roses are reddish,
Violets are bluish.
If it weren't for Christmas,
We'd all be Jewish.



You may smile at the above rhyme (*it rhymes in the English language*), but the reality of the words ring true, especially for Christians. So what does it mean, "if it weren't for Christmas, we'd all be Jewish"? Well, just consider the origins of Christmas and Christianity.

The Christmas celebration was created by the gentile Christians in the fourth century in order to entice the pagan Romans to convert to Christianity without losing their own winter celebrations.^{1,2} There were prominent gods and goddesses of other religions that had their birthdays celebrated on December 25, including [Ishtar](#), [Sol Invictus](#) and [Mithras](#). The Romans held a festival on December 25 called *Dies Natalis Solis Invicti*, "the birthday of the unconquered sun." The use of this title allowed other solar deities to be worshipped collectively, including [Elah-Gabal](#) - a Syrian sun god, and [Sol](#) - the Roman sun god.³

Christ's Mass (*Christmas*) was promoted as part of the revival of Catholicism in 378 CE. The feast was introduced to Constantinople in 379 CE, to Antioch about 380 CE, and to Alexandria about 430 CE.⁴

*"They (pagans) cut down a tree in the forest;
a craftsman works it with his axe;
they deck it with silver and gold.
They fix it with hammer and nails,
so that it won't move."*

Jeremiah 10:3-4

While these verses are talking about making idols from trees, one cannot help but see the similarity of cutting down trees, or buying artificial trees, and decorating them for Christmas. Most Christians will respond that they are not worshipping Christmas trees, but think about the confused message they are sending out, especially to the Jewish people.

It is interesting that Christmas is on December 25th and Chanukah on Kislev 25th. Because of anti-Judaism, the Church replaced Chanukah (*Feast of Dedication*) with Christ's Mass or Christmas. Interestingly enough, Jesus, being Jewish, celebrated Chanukah (*the rededication of the Temple*) as recorded in John chapter 10:22-42, along with other Jewish festivals and holidays (*holy days*). It was at the Temple on Chanukah that Jesus affirmed that he was the promised messiah. So with regard to Christmas and Chanukah, Christians, instead of asking [WWJD](#), should be asking **'What Would Jewish Jesus Do?'**

✓ Followers of the Anointed One

Jesus is not the son of Mr. and Mrs. Christ as some have thought. The name Jesus is derived from the Greek name "Iēsous." Christ is derived from the Greek word "Christós" - meaning anointed one. In Hebrew the word is Moshiach, and in English is translated Messiah. Jesus Christ simply means - Jesus the anointed one or Jesus Messiah.

So the word Christian simply means follower of the anointed one. In Hebrew, Jesus' name is Yeshua - meaning salvation. Yeshua ha Moshiach - salvation, the anointed one.

In the New Testament, we also find the English word "church" which is translated from the Greek word "ekklesia." However, the Greek word "ekklesia" simply means assembly of called ones. In the common vernacular of the first century, it would have been an assembly of the called ones - Israel.

And throughout the Hebrew [Tanakh](#) scriptures we find the word "qahal" or "kahal" which is the equivalent of ekklesia. The context in which it was commonly used referred to the assembly or congregation of Israel.

So whenever the word "church" is used in the New Testament, the Jewish context would be assembly or congregation of Israel. Quite a bit different than the Christian concept of "church" today.

▶ [Click here for excellent review of replacement, separation, and remnant theologies](#)



Jesus was a Jew who lived in Israel; the early followers of Jesus were all Jews; the New Testament was written by Jews; and non-Jewish believers are grafted into the Jewish olive tree according to Romans 11. So is Christianity Jewish?

✓ One Question Christians Have Not Answered

Christianity has been evolving over the last two thousand centuries, most of it apart from the original Jewish roots of the New Testament. As a result, replacement, two-covenant, and dispensational theologies have become common teaching within Christianity. Other replacement practices have also entered thousands of Christian denominations and independent churches. Yet, one question Christians are not asking or answering is this:

Question: Did Jesus come to establish a new religion called Christianity?

Luke 2:25-32 states *"There was in Jerusalem a man named Shimon. This man was a righteous man, he was devout, he waited eagerly for God to comfort Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Messiah of Adonai. Prompted by the Spirit, he went into the Temple courts; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the Torah required, Shimon took him in his arms, made a brakhah (Hebrew blessing) to God, and said, "Now, Adonai, according to your word, your servant is at peace as you let him go; for I have seen with my own eyes your salvation, which you prepared in the presence of all peoples -- a light that will bring revelation to the gentiles and glory to your people Israel."*

Jesus told his disciples, *"Do not go into the territory of the gentiles, and do not enter any town in Samaria, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. As you go, proclaim, 'The Kingdom of Heaven is near.'" Matthew 10:5-7.*

Again Jesus stated, *"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Matthew 15:24*

Jesus told his followers, *"I must announce the Good News of the Kingdom of God in other towns too - this is why I was sent." Luke 4:43*

When Jesus spoke to the Samaritan women, he told her, *"You people don't know what you are worshipping; we worship what we do know, because salvation comes from the Jews." John 4:22*

So the question remains, 'Did Jesus come to establish a new religion called Christianity?' If one honestly examines what the New Testament says about the ministry, teachings, religious practices, and cultural relationships of Jesus, one has to conclude that Jesus came to proclaim the kingdom of God and be the ultimate atonement for sin and redemption of all mankind. He most certainly did not come to establish a new religion.

Rabbi Paul, who was the apostle to the gentiles, taught that the gentiles who come to faith in Messiah Yeshua are grafted into the Jewish olive tree (*Romans 11*) and the commonwealth of Israel (*Ephesians 2*) --- not apart from it. This was always the understanding among first century messianic Jews and the Jewish community in general. The Court of the Gentiles at the Jerusalem Temple had the largest of all the courtyards to accommodate the non-Jews who came to worship Adonai. It was never thought that gentiles who sought to accept the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the Jewish Messiah would develop their own religion apart from the people of Israel --- becoming a religion cut off from its Jewish roots.

✓ **The Messianic Jewish Movement 2000 Years Ago**

The four gospels (*Matthew, Mark, Luke and John*) are all focused on the role of the Jewish messiah. The historical context of those writings are about the land and people of Israel; Jewish culture and life; and Jewish beliefs and religious practices.

Some Christians claim that Luke, or Loukas in the Greek, was not Jewish because of his non-Hebrew name. He was in fact a follower of the Jewish messiah and even if he was not born Jewish, he certainly was a proselyte to Judaism. Some humorously assert that Luke must have been Jewish because he was a doctor.

There were many Hellenist Jews who had Greek names. An example of that is the well documented Jewish philosopher with the Greek name Philo who was a contemporary of Loukas (*Luke*). In the gospels we read that one of Yeshua's disciples was named Philippos (*Philip*) and another named Petros (*Peter*) meaning 'stone.' And in Acts chapters 6 and 16 we find Jewish men named Stephanos (*Stephen*) and Timotheos (*Timothy*). These

were Jews with Greek names.

So, was Luke Jewish? Most likely he was. Luke wrote two Jewish accounts in the books of Luke and Acts concerning the life and ministry of Yeshua, and the early Messianic Jewish movement. We know the book of Acts was written by Luke because in chapter 1 Luke writes "*Dear Theophilos: in the first book, I wrote about everything Yeshua set out to do and teach.*"

As Luke writes his historical account in the book of Acts he includes accounts and references to the Jewish people and religion. In fact the New International Version Study Bible introduction to Luke states that the author of Luke had a familiar understanding of Judaism - something a Greek gentile would not have had.

So let's look at each chapter in Acts to discover the Jewish faith of the early followers of Yeshua. Every chapter in the book of Acts has some Jewish reference.

The Jewish Book of Acts

[Acts 1:12](#) The disciples returned to [Yerushalayim](#) (*Jerusalem*) from the Mount of Olives - a shabbat day's walking distance (*about six eighths of a mile or nine tenths of a kilometer*).

[Acts 2:1-14](#) On [Shavuot](#) (*Pentecost*) the Jews are gathered in the [Beit HaMikdash](#) (*Temple*) courtyard for morning prayers and the Ruach HaKodesh (*Holy Spirit*) of God is released upon the believers.

[Acts 3:15-39](#) Petros (*Peter*) preaches to all the Jewish people gathered at the [Beit Mikdash](#) (*Temple*) about [Yeshua](#) the Messiah and calls people to [teshuvah](#) (*repentance*). Over 3,000 participated in [mikvaot](#) (*water immersion - baptism*) there in the temple courtyard.

[Acts 4:1-2](#) Petros (*Peter*) and Yochanan (*John*) appeared before Anan the [cohen hagadol](#) (*high priest*).

[Acts 5:12; 25-42](#) The Jewish believers in [Yeshua](#) continued to meet at the [Beit Mikdash](#) (*Temple*) in [Solomon's Colonnade](#). A debate occurs in the Sanhedrin concerning Petros (*Peter*) and the believers' teaching about Yeshua in the courtyard of the [Beit Mikdash](#) (*Temple*). Rabbi [Gamaliel the Elder](#) comes to their defense.

[Acts 6:1-4; 7: 15](#) [Greek speaking](#) Jews complained about their widows being neglected in the welfare distributions by the Hebrew speaking Jews. Large numbers of [cohanim](#) (*priests*) became believers and followers of [Yeshua](#). And the messianic Jew with the Greek name Stephanos (*Stephen*) was brought before the Jewish [Sanhedrin](#) (*Jewish court*).

[Acts 7:1-53](#) Stephanos (*Stephen*) gave a discourse on Jewish history and challenged members of the [Sanhedrin](#) (*Jewish court*) to believe in [Yeshua](#) the Jewish messiah.

[Acts 8:26-38](#) Philippos (*Philip*) explains Yeshayahu (*Isaiah*) 53 to an Ethiopian minister in charge of the Ethiopian treasury. They then find a [mikvah](#) (*body of water*) where he accepts Yeshua and is immersed.

[Acts 9:1-2; 21-30](#) Shaul (*Saul*) went to the [cohen hagadol](#) (*high priest*) for letters of introduction to [synagogues](#) so that he could arrest followers of the Way. The Jewish believers in [Yeshua](#) are fearful of Shaul, the former Jew for Judaism who persecuted them because of their beliefs.

[Acts 10:9-29](#) Petros (*Peter*) has a vision of [treif](#) (*unclean*) foods and has a distraught reaction to interpreting the vision because he eats only [kosher](#) foods.

[Acts 11:1-18; 25-30](#) Petros (*Peter*) is criticized for eating with [uncircumcised gentiles](#), but then the Jewish

believers come to understand that non-Jews are also privileged to make [teshuvah](#) (*repentance*). The messianic Greek believers in Antioch became known as [Christians](#), or *cristoians* in the Greek, meaning followers of the anointed one. The talmidim (*disciples*) in Antioch brought relief to the believers in [Yerushalayim](#) (*Jerusalem*).

[Acts 12:1-5](#) There was persecution of the messianic believers in Judaea during [Chag HaMotzi](#) (*Festival of Unleavened Bread*).

[Acts 13:9; 14-16; 42-44](#) On the [Shabbat](#) (*the seventh day*) the Jewish believers attended the [synagogue](#) for the reading of the [Torah](#) (*5 books of Moses*) and the [Nevi'im](#) (*prophets*). As a religious Jew, Shaul (*Saul*) is asked by the [synagogue](#) leaders to speak to the congregation. Shaul (*Saul*) is also known as Paulus - a Roman Latin name because he was a Roman citizen. Jews and [proselytes](#) to Judaism listen to Shaul and Bar-Nabba (*Barnabas*) after the Shabbat, and the whole city comes the next Shabbat to listen and learn more.

[Acts 14:1; 27](#) Shaul (*Saul*) and Bar-Nabba (*Barnabas*) traveled to Iconium and spoke to both Jews and Greeks in the [synagogue](#) on the [Shabbat](#), and both Jews and Greeks came to faith in Yeshua. It was reported to the believers in Jerusalem that a "door of faith" had opened up to many non-Jews who were accepting Yeshua as the Messiah.

[Acts 15](#) There were [Pharisees](#) coming to faith in Yeshua, who believed that non-Jews who were accepting the Jewish Messiah needed to have [brit milah](#) (*circumcision*) in accordance with the teachings of Moses. This became a serious issue between the Jewish and non-Jewish followers of Yeshua. And so a special Council was called in [Yerushalayim](#) (*Jerusalem*) to decide the issue. Amos 9:11-12 was prophetically quoted as stating that all the gentiles called by [Adonai's](#) name would come and seek after him. After much debate, the messianic leaders concluded that the non-Jews should be required to: abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from fornication, from things strangled, and from blood (*some of the [Noachide laws](#)*). These were the bare minimum. The leaders realized that the patriarchs Noah and Abraham were counted righteous, not because of physical circumcision, but because of faith and obedience. The chapter further states in verse 21 that the non-Jewish God-fearers would continue to learn more since they were already meeting in Jewish synagogues every Shabbat where the [Torah](#) was taught.

[Acts 16:1-3](#) Timotheos (*Timothy*) receives his [brit milah](#) (*circumcision*) as a young Jewish man before accompanying Shaul on a trip to Phrygia and Galatia.

[Acts 17:1-4](#) Shaul and Sila went to Thessalonica and taught in the Jewish [synagogue](#) on multiple [Shabbatot](#) (*Sabbaths*) giving drashot (*sermons*) from the [Tanakh](#) (*Hebrew Scriptures*), explaining that [Yeshua](#) was the promised messiah.

[Acts 18](#) Shaul lives with Jewish believers in Corinth and Ephesus. Every Shabbat he talked with Jews and Greeks in the [synagogue](#) and the head of the synagogue accepted Yeshua as messiah, along with many others.

[Acts 19:8-9](#) Shaul spoke for three months in the [synagogue](#) and the believers were referred to as 'the way', also known in [Judaism](#) as those who walk in the way of [halacha](#) (*Jewish law*).

[Acts 20:6; 16](#) Shaul travels after [Chag HaMotzi](#) (*Feast of Unleavened Bread*) and shortens his travel plans so he can be in [Yerushalayim](#) (*Jerusalem*) for [Shavuot](#) (*Pentecost*). Shavuot was one of the three annual pilgrimages required of Jewish men.

[Acts 21:20](#) In [Yerushalayim](#) (*Jerusalem*) tens of thousands of Jews had accepted Yeshua as messiah and they were zealous for the [Torah](#). Shaul (*Saul*) speaks to them in [Hebrew](#).

[Acts 22:3](#) Shaul (*Saul*) speaks in [Hebrew](#) stating 'I am a Jew, born in Tarsus, brought up in [Yerushalayim](#) (*Jerusalem*), and taught by the distinguished [Rabbi Gamaliel I](#) in every detail of the Torah.' [Rabbi Gamaliel](#) was the grandson of the famous [Rabbi Hillel the Elder](#).

[Acts 23:6](#) Shaul (*Saul*) declares before the [Sanhedrin](#) (*Jewish court*) that he is a [Pharisee](#), the son of a [Pharisee](#).

[Acts 24:11-14](#) Shaul (*Saul*) declares that he has been worshipping at the [Beit Mikdash](#) (*Temple*) and [synagogues](#) in [Yerushalayim](#) (*Jerusalem*). He declares that he worships the 'God of our fathers' and walks in the way and believes everything in accordance with the [Torah](#) (*5 books of Moses*) and [Nevi'im](#) (*prophets*).

[Acts 25:8](#) Shaul (*Saul*) declares that he has not done anything to offend the [Torah](#) (*5 books of Moses*) or the [Mikdash](#) (*Temple*) or the [Roman Emperor](#).

[Acts 26:4-5](#) Shaul (*Saul*) declares that he has lived his life as a [Pharisee](#).

[Acts 27:6-9](#) Shaul (*Saul*) was traveling by ship in the stormy part of autumn following [Yom Kippur](#), the day that is the holiest of God's appointed times.

[Acts 28:17](#) Shaul (*Saul*) states to the Jewish leaders that he has done nothing against the [Jewish](#) people or the 'traditions of his Jewish fathers.'

No where in the book of Acts does Shaul, also known as Paul, declare that he is no longer Jewish and is now a Christian. In fact, in all the writings of Shaul, no where does he declare that he has abandoned Judaism. He was born a Jew, lived as a Jew, and died a Jew - a Jew who found his Messiah, Yeshua. Faith and salvation in Yeshua was the essence of Shaul's preaching and writings.

The book of Acts is a historical account of the early Messianic Jewish Movement. Most Christians today read the book of Acts and interpret it as the birth of Christianity. But as one reads the New Testament with Jewish understanding, one soon discovers that the Jewish and non-Jewish followers of Yeshua were considered just another sect within the Jewish community. Not unlike Messianic Jews today who identify with the Jewish people.

✓ So What About Christianity?

Most Christians have adopted traditions and practices that are non-Jewish and have unwittingly reinvented Jesus so that he is not even Jewish. Most, even if they do not teach it, practice replacement theology. Some have instituted practices such as the Eucharist or Mass, and the creation of images. Many have adopted non-Jewish music, prayers and liturgy. Most have religious observances that replace the biblical Sabbath ([Luke 4:16](#)), Passover ([Luke 22:8](#)) and Chanukah ([John 10:22](#)). Some disregard the entire Hebrew Scriptures altogether. And a minority of Christians have anti-Semitic attitudes that portray the Jews as '[Christ killers](#).'

Does this mean that Christians should become Jewish? No. But should Christians behave like there is no relevance to their Jewish roots? As Christians, how are they to fulfill Romans 11 and Ephesians 2 if they do not embrace the truth of being grafted into the commonwealth of Israel? Being grafted into the house of Israel comes with responsibilities to bless Israel and support the Jewish people - to identify with them. How can Christians identify with the Jewish people if much of Christian theology and practice is distant from the Jewish people?

Sincere Christians will ask God to show them how to read the Bible through Jewish eyes and understanding. They will develop a love for the Jewish people and Israel. They will begin to build their faith more inline with the Jewish Scriptures and the result will be a provoking of the Jewish people to jealousy for their Jewish messiah.



In the end times many non-Jews, including Christians, will finally realize that their destiny is tied to the Jewish people, not apart from them, as is written in the Scriptures.

"Adonai of Hosts says, 'When that time comes, ten men will take hold - speaking all the languages of the nations - will grab hold of the cloak of a Jew and say, 'We want to go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'"

Zechariah 8:23

Ancient synagogue ruins
in the land of Israel

Some Must View Extras...

- ▶ [Dr. Michael Brown's video discussion - "Is Christianity Jewish?"](#)
- ▶ [Is Christianity anti-Jewish?](#)

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1. ["Christmas – An Ancient Holiday"](#), The History Channel, 2007
 2. ["Saturnalia"](#), The History Channel, 2007
 3. ["Mithraism"](#), The Catholic Encyclopedia, 1913
 4. ["Christmas"](#), Wikipedia Online