

The Just shall live by Faith

Volume 1 - Study 4 Unique meanings of Hebrew, Israelite, Jew, Judahite, Jewish, Judea, Israel, etc. that we discover in the Bible books of Esther, Jeremiah, and Zechariah.

C. Ronald Johnson, Christian Wilderness Press: Kingdom of Judah and kingdom of Israel, southern kingdom and northern kingdom, Judea and Israel, exiled Jews and exiled Israelite...we discover the Biblical distinctions in the Old Testament books of Esther, Jeremiah, and Zechariah.

Studies - Distinctions between Israelite and Jew of the Tribes of Israel in the Hebrew Scriptures. We study in Esther, Jeremiah, and Zechariah; and also in the New Testament.

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These are brief studies, not “teachings” or “doctrines”.

Volume 1, Study 4

In Volume 1, Study 2, I wrote of the ‘Jews’ when discussing the persecutions of the early church in Rome to whom Paul was writing. Now I have decided to use scripture to demonstrate why I believe there is a distinction of meaning in scripture between ‘Israelite’ and ‘Jew’, the former being the term for all individuals of all the tribes of Israel even as the term has always been from ancient times.

In the early days of God’s people Israel, when they escaped from Egypt, the whole of twelve tribes were called Israel after Father Jacob who had been spiritually renamed by God as ‘Israel’. From Jacob’s loins were twelve sons of whom came twelve tribes. In the Sinai Peninsula during the time of the Exodus Epoch, God issued the Mosaic Law to the nation. That law called for a priesthood and a set of workers to labor under the priests in the duties, paraphernalia, and housing of the sacrifices...sacrifices that were instituted for the covering of the sins of the people. The first “housing” of the sacrifices was the mobile tabernacle built during the latter months of the first year out of Egypt. The priests appointed to the sacrificial duties of the Law were Moses’ brother, Aaron, and his sons. Under their authority were appointed men of their same tribe (Levi) from twenty years unto fifty years old for the duties of carrying the tabernacle from encampment to encampment.

These assignments and all that went with the sacrifices were given to the entire tribe of Levi, the priests being of the family of Aaron and the workers being of the other major families of that tribe. The assignments were fixed and were an essential part of the Mosaic Law. The duties of the priests and the workers carried over from that time unto the time of the temple built by David’s son, Solomon.

This arrangement, then, left the nation with eleven “regular” tribes. However, God desired that the number of tribes be twelve and so He ordered that the tribe of Joseph be divided into two tribes to make up a total of twelve tribes plus the tribe of Levi which was given over unto the ministry of the Mosaic Law. The two sons of Joseph, and thus the names of the two tribes from them, were Ephraim and Manasseh. The men of Levi who functioned as laborers under the priests were referred to as ‘the levites’. Now the modern way of referring to them is ‘the Levites’ with a capital L; however, it seems to me that speaking of ‘priests’ and ‘Levites’ places undue significance on the workers in comparison to the ‘priests’. Therefore, I have taken up the practice of referring to them as ‘the levites’ even as I refer to ‘the priests’, and I have done so in all of my writings.

Shortly after the death of Solomon, the son that took the throne in his stead greatly antagonized all the tribes of Israel, which resulted with the majority of the tribes splitting off from the kingdom of David to form their own kingdom and this large group of tribes continued using the title, ‘Israel’. Therefore, the kingdom of David became known for its major tribe from which David came, ‘Judah’. Now it so happened that the tribe of Simeon had its bounds within the larger bounds of Judah, and the tribe of Benjamin was located directly north of Judah; and the people of Benjamin decided to remain loyal to the original kingdom’s capital city, the holy city of Jerusalem where recently had been built the new temple by Solomon.

The northern tribes on both sides of the Jordan River, known as ‘Israel’ in scripture, shall be called in this study the ‘northern kingdom of Israel’ so as not to be confusing. The predominate tribe in the northern kingdom of Israel was the tribe of Ephraim...and occasionally the

prophets of scripture referred to the northern kingdom as 'Ephraim' since Ephraim was the lead tribe leading the people of the northern kingdom astray from God's way for His people Israel.



Eventually the northern kingdom of Israel in 721 BC was taken off exiled into Assyria and consequently the people of those tribes were scattered into Assyria's conquered nations. Later some of them managed to return to their homeland, but 'Israel' (i.e. people of the northern tribes) was never again a kingdom. Even so, the people of those northern tribes will be drawn in unto their homeland by God in the Time of the End to be reunited with the southern tribes to again form the (united again) Kingdom of David with Christ Jesus sitting upon its throne.



After the people of the northern kingdom of Israel were exiled the people of the southern kingdom of Israel, 'Judah', were conquered in 587 BC and put under subjection by the new and powerful kingdom of Babylon; however, at a later date many citizens of the higher crust of Judah were exiled to Babylon; and then another exiling occurred as the greater number of the people were taken into the city of Babylon and its nearby districts.

Book of Esther

So, when in scripture were the people of the southern kingdom of Israel (Judah) first referred to as 'Jews'? Strong's Bible numbering system and word definitions record (for the Old Testament) that 'Jew' is first found in the book of Esther where it occurs a number of times, particularly for Esther's uncle, Mordecai. Mordecai was taken (much like Daniel was taken) into captivity with a group that also contained Judah's king, Jehoiakim. This happened in 605 BC. In the book of Esther, the text has 'the Jew Mordecai'. Strong's definition for Jew is 'Jehudite' or 'Judaite', which simply means 'a descendent of Judah'.

Now Mordecai was of the tribe of Benjamin (i.e. not of the tribe of Judah) of the kingdom of Israel (Judah). By this time in history (with the northern kingdom of Israel long sense having been exiled from their land) we see that the southern kingdom of Israel was the only part of the Promised Land (as yet acknowledged as such by the world) that had Israelites still living there. Indeed, some of the citizens of the southern kingdom were from all the tribes of Israel, some of them having escaped from their exile lands. Jerusalem, the holy city, was the predominate feature of the southern kingdom. Jerusalem was the center of the religion of Yahweh. The people of the little nation of Judah (since Israel split into two kingdoms) had considered themselves the keepers of the Yahweh religion with the priesthood and the temple. This is why the people of 'Judah', particularly those sympathetically and financially tied to the Yahweh religion, referred to themselves as 'Judaites', which in time became shortened to 'Jews'. Many of the other religions of the world (and there were many) considered 'Jews' as a sect.

Book of Jeremiah

The next place (in time and scripture) that we can find the word Jew is in Jeremiah 34:9. Consider Strong's numbers as they can be observed in the verse:

That every manH376 should let(H853) his manservant,H5650 and every manH376 (H853) his maidservant,H8198 being an HebrewH5680 or an Hebrewess,H5680 goH7971 free;H2670 that noneH1115 H376 should serve H5647 himself of them, to wit, of a JewH3064 his brother.H251

Here is the verse without Strong's numbers:

That every man should let his manservant, and every man his maidservant, being an Hebrew or an Hebrewess, go free; that none should serve himself of them, to wit, of a Jew his brother.

It seems that most people of modern times take this particular verse to mean that all Hebrew people were called 'Jew'. But I see in this verse a major distinction between 1) the people who called themselves 'Jews' and 2) other people groups whom 'the Jews' knew as 'Hebrews'. From the Bible we see that Hebrews were a much larger grouping of people than were the Israelites (a branch out of the Hebrew people). I will not go into all of this: however, for an example consider that out of the loins of Abraham were several people groups, one of which was Isaac, then Jacob, and then Jacob's twelve sons...from whom came the early nation of Israel (i.e. before it split). Nonetheless, Abraham had other children, and from them came people groups of whom scripture often refers to (in the whole) as 'the nations'. Each group was well acquainted with the other groups of common ancestry. Hebrew people groups were separate from Assyrians, Babylonians, Egyptians, etc. The reader can study this in the earlier chapters of the book of Genesis.

Now let us consider the passage. It is during the latter stage in the southern kingdom of Israel, not long before many of the people would be taken exile off the land. A great many people over quite a few years had moved for protection into the walled city of Jerusalem. Judah's king has just given a compassionate order to the higher class, the well-to-do families of the kingdom living in the expanded city. The command was for the well-to-do to recognize, and at least to some extent honor, the kindred Hebrew people who had immigrated to the city for refuge, many of whom had escaped the conquering nation (at this time it was Babylon) to arrive in Jerusalem very poor and usually with nothing.

These poor people, to survive, had sold themselves into indentured servitude to the wealthy families that could afford to keep them. The wealthy considered this their compassionate duty to all of the poor. However, the king in his compassion ordered the wealthy families to set all of their Hebrew servants free. The wealthy families obeyed, realizing that it was the correct thing to do according to the Mosaic Law. However, the poor could not survive without help, and instead of giving help with no strings attached, which was the Law, the wealthy families responded by taking the poor back again as servants or even as slaves.

God became angry (i.e. the reason Jeremiah was speaking in the city). The first action by the wealthy families was good, but by the Law they should have been helping the poor with food and shelter. The wealthy families did so, but soon (and not according to the Law) their help returned to again making the poor to be their servants or even their slaves.

Here, then, the very people referring to themselves as 'Jews' (keepers of the Law, the temple, the sacrifices, etc.) were self-righteous in caring for their 'brother Hebrews'; doing it in a demeaning fashion that was a slap at the Law and a slap in the face of God. The "keepers of the brethren" were acting in a manner which God despises. Here, then, is the distinction that I wish to make between 1) 'the Jews' and 2) all of the other people and people groups that were Hebrew which were thought of by 'the Jews' as *not worthy* 'to be considered Jews'.

Note that 'Hebrews' in this passage means *all people other than 'Jews' that could trace their lineage back to the man, Heber, in the Bible*. Israelites were but one of the lines from Heber. There were other lines and therefore there were many non-Israelite Hebrews in Jerusalem for protection. Also, there were many Israelites of the northern tribes who had returned and were seeking refuge. However, even citizens of the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin who were too poor to be financial supporters of the Yahweh religion were excluded from the term 'the Jews'. I trust that the reader sees the distinction made by the 'Jewish' king and by 'the Jews' themselves. In other words, the term 'the Jews' was reserved for citizens of the tribes Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin...but only those who had the financial means to support the Yahweh re-

ligion or who worked within the workings of the Mosaic Law in Jerusalem. The time of it was 520 BC.

In the Book of Esther we have seen that an important man, Mordecai, was called ‘a Jew’ by the author of that book, and that other exiles in that same book also were called ‘Jews’. This means that they had been important ‘Jews’ in the southern kingdom of Israel and in Jerusalem before they had been captured by Assyria and exiled. Consider that Mordecai had been exiled in 605 BC and that some 85 years later the passage (and episode described just above) occurred in Jerusalem. Therefore, in the southern kingdom not long before it would be captured by Babylon, the people who considered themselves keepers of the Yahweh religion were ‘the Jews’. Also, however, people in exile who had been similarly connected in sympathy to Jerusalem, the temple, and the priesthood...and who longed for God to glorify Himself and defeat the enemy and return His people to the homeland and the holy city...were referred to as ‘Jews’. That is, in scripture they were referred to as ‘Jews’ by some of the writers of scripture.

Therefore, know that the word ‘Jew’ was used in scripture after the northern kingdom of Israel was exiled. But more specifically know that it came into broad usage when true believers of the Yahweh religion were taken from the southern kingdom (Judah)...even while a mixture of Israelites and other Hebrew peoples were yet living in the southern kingdom of Israel. For the books of the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel were continued warnings to the people of the southern kingdom who were not yet totally taken off exile into Babylon. In those years, there was a connection and a communication between the people yet in Jerusalem with exiled people groups of both Judah (the southern kingdom) and Israel (the totally exiled northern kingdom). The people in exile and the people in Jerusalem were holding onto a hope (perpetrated within false prophesies) that Yahweh would forgive them and return the exiles to the homeland. However, meanwhile, Jeremiah and Ezekiel were prophesying to all of the people that the southern kingdom of Judah and Jerusalem would be completely defeated and the people taken into exile. Moreover, this would happen to the neighboring nations throughout Palestine.

Book of Zechariah

The Old Testament has ‘Jew’ only eleven times: nine in Esther, one in Jeremiah, and the last in Zechariah 8:23 - **Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.**

We see in this verse that there will be *a returning of a remnant to the homeland and the holy city Jerusalem*; note that the New Testament explains this to be in the Time of the End. Moreover, even when many Israelites are beckoned by the Spirit to join in this *returning*, it shall be the faithful ‘Jews’ who will be helping and leading many people of the nations to go with them to God’s chosen land. This, then, is according to the early and ongoing promises of God, which the Apostle Paul terms as ‘a mystery through the ages’ and ‘in the last days it shall come to pass’. Indeed, Paul for some years thought that he was living in ‘the last days’, even though he knew and preached that God was delaying the second coming of Jesus for *the bringing in of many people of the nations* before completing His promises to United Israel (with Jesus Christ sitting on David’s throne).

By all of the above, we see that the term ‘Jew’ was used in a specialized fashion in the Old Testament and that it was *not* a generalized term for all Hebrews or even all Israelites. At least this is my understanding of the matter.



But what of the term ‘Jew’ used in the New Testament? Strong’s numbers are -

G2455 = ‘the name Judah’,

G2453 = ‘of Judah’,

G2452 = ‘judicially’ (i.e. ‘in a manner resembling a Judean’ which means “like a Judean would do it...whether in faith, action, or even dress”), and

G2450 = ‘to become a Judean’ (i.e. ‘becoming Judaized’ which means “to become a proselyte of the Yahweh religion”).

The New Testament was written more than 400 years after the last occurrence of the word ‘Jew’ in the Old Testament. During those 400 years, the southern kingdom of Israel was reestablished with a revitalized city of Jerusalem and a new temple. However, the nation was without a king until the Romans assigned them a king. In the latter years of that extended period, King Herod rebuilt the temple in a rather glorious manner so that by the days of Jesus the temple was a pride and joy of the Israelites...both in the homeland and among the many still scattered Israelite groups among the nations. The Israelites among the nations sympathized greatly with the people and the ideals of the homeland. Therefore, they stayed as true to the Yahweh religion as they could, given their circumstances, and so they stayed as “separated from the Gentiles” as they could. Even though many Israelites had been absorbed into the fabric of the nations, there remained the smaller number of them in cloistered groups, who longed to see Yahweh glorify Himself by bringing His people back to the homeland and to Jerusalem...as He had promised.

Ah, but also during those 400-plus-years, the Yahweh religion had become modified. It had become, to some extent, twisted and modernized to accommodate the modern state of Judaea (i.e. the revitalized southern kingdom of David); but also this modernization was to take into account the many cloistered groups among the nations longing for their Messiah. Indeed, some people of these groups were coming to Jerusalem in yearly pilgrimages. This, then, was the state of the religion (i.e. the Mosaic Law broken down) when Jesus reproved the leading ‘Jews’ of his day...whereupon eventually they crucified him. This, then, was the state of the religion when Saul experienced Jesus on the road to Damascus and Saul’s name was changed to Paul.

Consider Pilate speaking to Jesus: John 18:35) **Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?**

We see Pilate 1) distinguishing himself from being a Jew, 2) indicating that the word ‘Jew’ was at the time entirely tied up with the insignificant little nation of Judaea, the city of Jerusalem, and the temple, but also 3) indicating the disconnect between the powerful chief priests and the ancient rules of the Mosaic Law.

In regards to (3), these chief priests were not of the family of Aaron, though the priests of the priesthood from the time of Moses to the time of Jesus (by the Mosaic Law) had always been of the family of Aaron. These high priests were but ‘leading Jews’ whom the Romans had appointed in charge over the priests of the Aaron priesthood...even as the Romans had appointed Herod as king over Judaea.

In Acts 10:28, Peter is speaking, **And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean.**

Peter speaks of the normal ‘Jewish’ custom of his time, which hundreds of years ago had taken on the elitism of ‘the Jews’. Indeed, all who loved Yahweh had become religiously gathered around ‘the Jewish hope of Israel’ and so they, too, were proud to be known as ‘a Jew’. In this verse, then, Peter verifies that he is no longer like the modern ‘Jew’ of his day.

How much is *the Jews gathering around the temple in their ‘hope’ of their Messiah* (like in this verse in Acts) like unto *Christians today gathering around their church in their ‘hope’ of the Messiah’s return?*

In Acts 18:24-28 we read about Apollos, **And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria [Egypt], an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord [i.e. the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets]; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing [however] only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly [i.e. completely]. And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.**

Apollos was an intelligent man trained much as Paul had been trained and upon hearing the preaching of John the Baptist he became (at least for a short while) John's disciple. Likely John (who was not taught in scholarship by men) had taught Apollos by the scriptures (of which Apollos was entirely familiar) that the Messiah had come to Israel. By God's Spirit, then, Apollos had not only become convinced, but had also become empowered in his discourse to others. Indeed, Apollos had been led of the Lord to leave John (or perhaps John had been taken from him when Herod captured John and then beheaded him) to begin preaching directly from his Bible (the Old Testament).

Here is the interesting part of this passage: Apollos had left Jerusalem (where he would have been rejected by 'the Jews' and perhaps he had to flee) to go out into the nations to carry the message to scattered 'Jews' and Israelites (i.e. all of them were God's people, thus were Apollos' people). In other words, Apollos was already preaching the Gospel to scattered 'Jews' and Israelites, and in so doing he met Aquila and Priscilla. However, he had not met Jesus nor had been baptized in the faith which he was preaching unto God's people Israel. By God's manipulation of events, the three came together and this very intelligent man consented to be taught more of God's Plan of the Ages by these two lowly tent makers.

Likely, Apollos was experiencing more rejection of his message as he worked among 'the Jews'; and so by two tent makers he became aware of many Christians and of churches hungering for teaching from the scriptures; and so God surely redirected Apollos into a ministry similar to that of Paul.

And now I will list together these verses: Romans 2:9-11; 10:12; 1Corinthians 9:20; and Galatians 2:14; 3:28. **Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; But when I saw that they [i.e. Peter and other Israelite Christians in Antioch] walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel [i.e. in Christ, the law was no longer for Christians], I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.**

However, dear reader, here is Romans 3:1-2) **What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.**

To the Jew first: This means the true 'Jew'; that is, *the Israelite with the love of God in his heart for God's Glory in fulfilling the Promises of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Cove-*

nants regarding the Promised Land, the Holy City, and the True Temple in Heaven as viewed early on by Moses, along with the ingathering of the Remnant to form a United Israel, along with the Inclusion of the Gentiles (you and me).

The Apostle Paul surely mourned for his people Israel and especially for the many 'Jews' who continued resisting their Messiah, who were persecuting their brother Gentile Christians, and who - in the Time of the End - will truly see their error and see their Messiah and will encourage Gentiles to take hold of their Jewish clothing so as to bring them in with the Remnant to the Holy City...where Christ Jesus will sit upon David's Throne.



Therefore, dear reader, read again the above passages where Paul writes negatively of 'the Jews' when inferring their *elitism*, but he writes positively when inferring '*the truly righteous Jew*' and '*the Jew of God's promises*'.

Though all the people of the loins of the sons of Jacob are 'Israelites', from the time when the northern kingdom of Israel was conquered (and the people exiled from the northern land) there developed an ongoing contingent of Israelites from the southern kingdom of Israel (i.e. 'Judah') that considered themselves to be the 'keepers' of the Mosaic Law and 'keepers' of the holy city and the temple. They tried very hard to do this, but were conquered by the Babylonians, whereupon the higher classes were exiled to Babylon. But after seventy years, God arranged for a remnant of these who were taken from the southern kingdom to return, whereupon the southern kingdom of Israel became known as 'Judaea'.

The fervor of this returning remnant heightened within their purpose as 'the keepers' for God of the holy city of Jerusalem; also they were 'claimers' of the promises of the Covenants; and they became known as 'Jews', the word taken from 'Judah' which became 'Judaea'. Moreover, any Israelites among the nations who sympathized with this purpose of 'keeping' and 'claiming' were also called 'Jews'.

Keep this distinction in mind when reading scripture; for the promises are to 'the Jews of the Promises' even though many elitist 'Jews' made it very difficult for the writers and Christians of the New Testament.

There is no practical difference between ignorance of Christians in *a relationship to God* and ignorance within *any religious pursuit, like that of the elitist Jews*. In varied ways we Christians also fight among ourselves...do we not? Fervor among Christians can be 'fervor of God' or 'fervor for God'. The many characters in the story of the birth of Jesus show us the 'fervor of God' in them. The Christians in the church of Corinth (1Corinthians 1) show us the 'fervor for God' in them. It was the latter that gave the early churches problems.

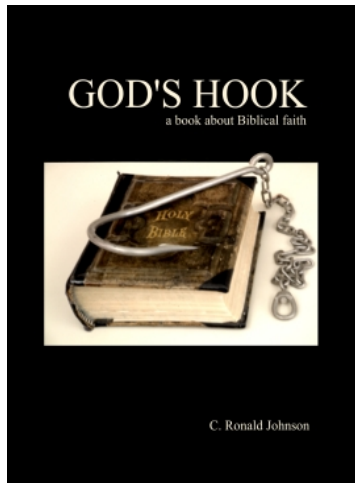
And so it was with 'the Jews'...some having 'the fervor of God' in them and some having 'a fervor for God'. It was the latter that gave the early churches problems.

Even so, **'Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God.'**

All shall be made clear in the judgment.

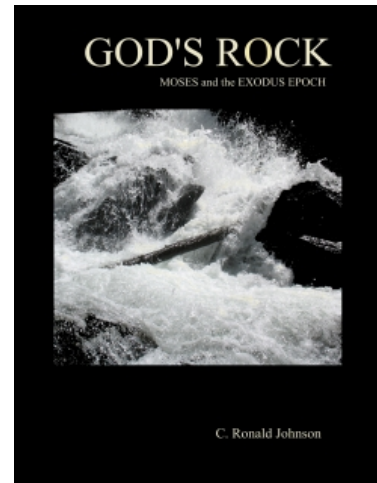


These are short Bible studies by C. Ronald Johnson at Christian Wilderness Press



a book
about
Biblical
Faith

the life of
Moses
and the
Exodus



C. Ronald Johnson