

Are Modern Jews Descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?

Tom's Perspectives
by Thomas Ice

Some people contend that modern Jews do not have the blood of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in their veins. They contend that modern Jews, whether in or out of the land of Israel have no genetic basis from which to claim that they are Jews, let alone the chosen descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Some say that since they are not true Jews then they are not descendants of those who were scattered across the globe in A.D. 70 then they cannot return to what they never really left, which is the land of Israel. Is this true or just another effort to disinherit God's ancient chosen people?

ARE MODERN JEWS FRAUDS?

The conviction that modern Jews are fraudulent has been clearly expressed by Presbyterian replacement theologian James B. Jordan.¹ "With the passing away of the Old Covenant, there is no longer any such a thing as a Jew in the Biblical sense," declares Jordan. I wonder, "Is there any other sense in which one could be a Jew except for the biblical sense?" "Unless by 'True Jews' we mean Christians. There is no covenant, and therefore there is no nation, no 'race.'"² Nowhere does the New Testament call Gentile Christians "True Jews," "Jews," "Israel" or any such term. New Testament believers are called the seed of Abraham because he was the father of those who believe. Abraham was the only Gentile in the history of the world who became a Jew or Israelite since the Jewish race descended from him, Isaac and Jacob. Thus, all Christian believers in the current church age, whether Jew or Gentile are offspring from the spiritual seed of Abraham (Rom. 4:1-5; Gal. 3:6-7, 14, 16-18). Abraham is both the father of physical Israel known as the Jews and father of spiritual descendants, that is, everyone who believes in Jesus as the Messiah, whether Jew or Gentile (Gen. 15:6).

Jordan makes one of the most outlandish statements possible on this topic when he declares: "It is entirely possible that there is not one drop of Abraham's blood in any modern Jew."³ One might think that only a radical Islamic terrorist would publicly write such things, but Jordan is an Evangelical Christian. He does not stop with the preceding comment, he continues with the following pontification:

Modern Jews are a separate nation of people with a self-identity, spread out among many other nations. The closest analogy to them are the Gypsies. The only difference between Modern Jews and Gypsies is that the Modern Jews claim to have a relation to the Bible Jews, a claim I maintain is false. . . . Modern Jews think of themselves as Jews, but they are not Jews. They are counterfeits of Biblical Jews. I say this not to disparage them, but to be accurate.⁴

Jordan's "scholarship" leads him to believe that today's Jews (he even coins a special term for the Jews of today—"modern Jews") are fraudulent, merely posing as Jews. History would be totally different if Hitler had thought this way, or if the Muslims of today would come to learn of Jordan's discovery. "Modern Jews are people who choose to think of themselves as descendants of Israel," insists Jordan.⁵

It is the Bible that divides mankind into Jew and Gentile, denoting one's descent by birth. One may repudiate the religious aspects of Judaism, but they cannot escape the

genealogical fact that they were born within the Jewish race. The Nazis during the Holocaust made little distinction between deeply religious Jews and secular Jews, or even Jews that had converted to Christianity. They killed them all when they had the opportunity. The same is true today. The Muslims kill Jews today whether they are religious or secular. It does not matter to them.

THE BIBLICAL DEFINITION OF JEWISHNESS

The Bible is God's inerrant revelation and is the supreme authority on any matter to which it speaks. The Bible speaks clearly and loudly concerning the issue of Jewishness. Scripture teaches that those who are descendants of the Abraham line make up the nation we call Israel (Gen. 12:1–3; 13:15–16; 15:4–5; 26:2–5, 24; 28:13–15). Jewishness is a nationality based upon descent, whether one obeys God or not. Arnold Fruchtenbaum correctly summarizes Israel as, "all descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, also known as the Jews, the Jewish people, Israelites, Hebrews, etc. The term is not limited to the present political and national state in the Middle East, which is merely a part of the whole; nor is it limited to those who adhere to the religion of Judaism only."⁶

The broader term *Israel* "appears over two thousand times in the Old Testament and seventy times in the New Testament. This term refers to a specific ethnic group . . . The name *Yisra'el* was conferred on Jacob (Gen. 32:28), Abraham's grandson, and means 'solider of God' or 'God persists.'"⁷ Israel began as a patriarchal clan when Abraham came out of Babylon, went to Egypt and 400 years later returned to the Promised Land as a true nation of two or three million. Yet Jordan imagines a problem in that Israel did indeed incorporate into the nation many non-Jews down through her history.⁸

Is this supposed to be a problem? Over time it appears that the Gentiles who became part of Abraham's clan integrated with his descendants so that by the time of the Exodus that nation was indeed Jewish—descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. At least this is the view that the Bible takes toward this matter. The Lord promised Abraham: "To your descendants I will give this land" (Gen. 12:7). "And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered" (Gen. 13:16). "And He took him outside and said, 'Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be'" (Gen. 15:5). "And God said to Abram, 'Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years'" (Gen. 15:13). "Moreover, the angel of the LORD said to her, 'I will greatly multiply your descendants so that they shall be too many to count'" (Gen. 16:10). "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you" (Gen. 17:7). There are many more similar passages indicating that God thought of those in the line of descent as offspring of the Abrahamic line.

Even though the Jews surely have intermarried with Gentiles that does not invalidate their Jewishness any more than intermarriage that was practiced in the Old Testament did not invalidate their Jewishness. Jesus Himself had a number of Gentiles within His genealogical line, yet He was certainly Jewish. In the time of the New Testament these people were still known as Jews—the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jesus referred to the residents of Israel in His day as Jews. When reading the New Testament, there does not appear to be a problem identifying who the Jews were

Christ's day. The notion that Jews cannot have the blood of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob flowing through their veins is purely one manufactured by those with an anti-Semitic bias.

Since there was about a two thousand year period from the call of Abraham until the time of Christ and Jesus referred to the residents of Israel as Jews, then we have a precedent to do so today. It has been about another two thousand years since the time of Christ until our present day. If the descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were considered Jews after two thousand years by Jesus in His day, then why should they not be considered descendents of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob today, after another two thousand years have passed? In fact, the last two thousand years have seen some Gentile intermarriage, but for the most part, the nations have shut up the Jewish people into their own ghettos and not allowed them to intermingle with Gentiles. Even though an unintended result by perpetrators, anti-Semitism has helped to keep the blood of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob flowing through the veins of modern Jewry. Also, those Jews that have repeatedly married Gentiles have lost their Jewish identity and are no longer part of the Jewish race and indeed are not considered Jews after a while. Ruthven correctly notes the following:

The tradition of identifying a Jew as one whose *mother* was Jew may represent an attempt to preserve the genetic identity of Jews in the Diaspora. Before that, Jews were those whose *fathers* were Jews. During the dispersion, oppression of the Jews made it difficult to know who someone's father was, due to the frequent rape of Jewish women by their oppressors, in times of war and peace. Conversions to Judaism, of course, complicate this purely genetic model somewhat. But the children of these converts will marry Jews and raise their children to do the same. So Jewish genes soon predominate.⁹

The Bible is the ultimate authority and it is significant to realize that both the Old and New Testaments speak of a specific destiny for the Jewish people in a day future to our own time. Maranatha!

ENDNOTES

¹ James B. Jordan is a Presbyterian replacement theologian coming from the preterist, postmillennial and covenant theology orientation.

² James B. Jordan, "The Future of Israel Reexamined" (Part 1), *Biblical Horizons* (No. 27; July 1991), p. 4.

³ Jordan, "Future of Israel" (Part 1), p. 4.

⁴ Jordan, "Future of Israel" (Part 1), p. 4.

⁵ James B. Jordan, "Christian Zionism and Messianic Judaism," in *The Sociology of the Church: Essays in Reconstruction* (Tyler, TX: Geneva Ministries, 1986), p. 183.

⁶ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link In Systematic Theology*, rev. ed. (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries Press, 1992), p. 2

⁷ Ronald E. Diprose, *Israel in the development of Christian thought* (Rome: Istitutio Biblico Evangelico Italiano, 2000), p. 7.

⁸ Jordan, "Christian Zionism," p. 177.

⁹ Jon Mark Ruthven, *The Prophecy That Is Shaping History: New Research on Ezekiel's Vision of the End* (Fairfax, VA: Xulon Press, 2003), pp. 40-41.