

# THE ROOT AND BRANCHES



**Remember you do not support the root,  
but the root supports you - Romans 11:18**

*An Introduction to the  
Jewish Roots of Christianity*

**Richard Booker**

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# **THE ROOT AND *AND* BRANCHES**



**Remember you do not support the root,  
but the root supports you - Romans 11:18**

## ***LESSON ONE***

### ***WHY JEWISH ROOTS?***

## ***LESSON 1 – WHY JEWISH ROOTS?***

### **LESSON PURPOSE**

The purpose of this lesson is to assist the believer in understanding why he or she should learn the Hebraic/Jewish roots of Christianity.

### **LESSON OUTLINE**

#### **A. Returning to Our Roots**

#### **B. Benefits of Learning Our Roots**

- ❶ A Fuller and Clearer Understanding of the Bible
- ❷ Learn Exciting New Insights about the Teachings of Jesus
- ❸ Clarification of Paul's Writings
- ❹ A Clearer Comprehension of God's Plan of Redemption and Prophetic Seasons
- ❺ Become a Better Follower of Jesus

### **LESSON INSTRUCTIONS**

Complete the following steps in order to properly understand this lesson.

#### **Step 1 - Reading Assignment**

Read the following lesson.

#### **Step 2 - Scripture Mediation Assignment**

Meditate on the specified Scriptures by writing them in the space provided.

#### **Step 3 - Fun and Games**

Complete the fun and games exercise.

#### **Step 4 - Lesson Review**

Answer the questions in the space provided

#### **Step 5 - Life Application & Personal Growth**

In the space provided, explain how you can apply the information to your life



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**READING ASSIGNMENT AND STUDY NOTES**

**Course: The Root and Branches**

**Subject: Lesson 1 – Why Jewish Roots?**

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Why should Christians learn about Jews and Jewish traditions? The answers to this question can not only be informative and enlightening, it can also be somewhat challenging because it forces us to rethink centuries of tradition and stereotyping regarding Christianity and Jews. In this lesson, we want to answer the question, “Why Jewish Roots?”

Most do not realize there was a vital connection between Christianity and Judaism that was severed by the Christian church centuries ago. Biblical Judaism and biblical Christianity, which the Lord intended to be one, went their separate ways with tragic consequences for both.



**A. Returning to Our Roots**

But we are living at a time when the Lord is calling both Jews and Christians back to their biblical roots. The biblical root of Christianity is Hebraic. “Hebraic” is not a word that we

commonly use in Christian circles. It sounds old and foreign.



**Crossing Over**

The word Hebrew simply means to “cross over” and refers to the fact that Abraham crossed over the Euphrates when he left his land for the land God promised him. There God made an everlasting covenant with Abraham which Christians become part of through faith in Jesus.

So, the phrase “Hebraic/Jewish roots of Christianity” simply means there was 2,000 years of Hebrew history, culture, language, traditions and customs that were the roots from which Christianity grew.

In order to understand the New Testament the way the writers intended for us to understand it, we must study it within the context of its Hebraic/Jewish roots.

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It was a Jewish rabbi from Tarsus, known as the apostle Paul, who wrote these words to the Christians in Rome, *For whatever things were written before were written for our learning ... (Romans 15:4).*



**The Root and the Branches**

Paul also wrote to those same Christians; *Do not boast against the branches (Jews). But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root (the Hebraic origins of our faith), but the root supports you (Christianity) (Romans 11:18).*

The root is the origin, the cause, the source that establishes and gives life to that which is attached to the root. The more we learn about our Hebraic/Jewish roots, the more fruitful we can be in our Christian lives.

**B. Benefits of Learning Our Roots**

Discovering the biblical roots of Christianity can bless us in many ways. I have listed some of the more obvious ways in this introductory lesson.

**Benefits of Learning Our Roots**

- ❶ A fuller and clearer understanding of the Bible.
- ❷ Learn exciting new insights about the teachings of Jesus.
- ❸ Clarification of Paul's writings.
- ❹ A clearer comprehension of God's plan of redemption and prophetic seasons.
- ❺ Become a better follower of Jesus

**❶ A Fuller and Clearer Understanding of the Bible**

While we Christians in America view life with a Western mind and worldview, the Bible was written by Abraham's descendants who had a Hebraic culture, language, and worldview. This presents a real problem and challenge. We have a Middle-Eastern book that we seek to understand from our Western culture.

It is difficult for Westerners to understand the Middle-Eastern culture and worldview from which the Bible was written. It is foreign to us. Furthermore, the Western mind has been influenced more by Greek philosophy than Hebrew thought. This is why it is important for us to study the biblical Hebraic/Jewish roots of Christianity.

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Reading the Bible through Hebrew eyes gives us a fuller, richer, and clearer understand of the text. It enlarges, clarifies and gives detail to the meaning of what we are reading.



Most of us are familiar with the 3-dimensional drawings that have recently become popular. When you first look at these drawings, you only see them a certain way on the surface.

But if you look past the surface, you can see a full rich, background of detail that you would never know was there otherwise. You are seeing it through the eyes of the artist. It is simply a matter of perception.

**Seeing with Biblical Eyes**

When we see the stories of the Bible through Hebrew eyes, the Bible become much richer, deeper, and clearer with more detail than we could ever imagine. We gain new and powerful insights and clarity of vision and understanding because we perceive the Bible through the eyes of the writers.

**Learn exciting New Insights about the Teachings of Jesus**

While Christians have a good understanding of the divinity of Jesus, few know Jesus the man. Every culture makes Jesus over into their image.

Those of us who live in America think of Jesus in American terms. Europeans see Jesus as a European. Religious groups get upset when they realize that Jesus was not a member of their denomination. The PLO wants to make Jesus into a Palestinian.

**Jesus was ...**

- A Jew born into a Jewish family in the Jewish village of Bethlehem in the land of Israel.
- He kept all the laws of God as well as the customs and traditions that honored God and benefited people.
- Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day and was dedicated to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the Temple in Jerusalem (Genesis 17:12; Leviticus 12:3; Luke 2:21).
- Jesus was raised in Nazareth in a very poor Jewish family (Luke 2:24).
- He had four step-brothers and two step-sisters (Matthew 13:55-56).

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**Jesus a Faithful Jew**

- Read the Jewish Scriptures*  
(Luke 4:16-21)
- Spoke Hebrew*  
(Acts 26:14)
- Wore Jewish clothes*  
(Matthew 9:20)
- Ate only biblically kosher food*  
(Matthew 26:26-28)
- Kept the Jewish Sabbath*  
(Luke 4:16)
- Celebrated the biblical feasts*  
(John 7:1-10, 37-39)
- Followed Jewish customs*  
(Matt. 8:1-4)
- Lived His entire life as a Torah*  
(*Hebrew for law*)-*observant Jew*  
(Matthew 2:22-23; Luke 2:39-40).



**Jesus Our Jewish Lord**

1. Ministered as an itinerant rabbi to the poor and needy (Isaiah 61:1-2; Luke 4:16-21).
2. Performed miracles similar to those performed by other rabbis plus other miracles ordinary rabbis could not perform (Isaiah 35:4-6; Matthew 11:1-6).

3. Presented Himself as the Jewish Messiah and Savior to the Gentiles (John 10:22-23).

4. Was rejected as Messiah by a small handful of powerful Sadducean priests (Matthew 27:1,20; Luke 2:22).

5. Had thousands of followers from the ordinary people (John 11:47-50, 53).

**Jesus' Followers**

- ✓ Were Jews
- ✓ Worshipped on Saturday
- ✓ Attended the Synagogue
- ✓ Celebrated the feasts
- ✓ Acknowledged Jesus as the Jewish Lord
- ✓ Wrote the "Jewish" New Testament
- ✓ Lived a *Torah*-observant lifestyle



When the church was taken over by the Gentiles, the Jewish believers were forced to deny their Jewish heritage and conform to the Greco-Roman beliefs and practices which were being incorporated into the organized church.

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The Jewish believers in Jesus either conformed or stayed to themselves and practiced their New Testament beliefs in secret. They were not accepted by rabbinic Judaism or by Gentile Christianity.

Some Jewish believers assimilated into the Gentile church while others maintained their Jewish identity until the fourth and fifth centuries when they passed from the scene. From that time, until the late nineteenth century, the New Testament Jewish way of life ceased to exist. Jewish believers thereafter had little choice but to become part of the anti-Semitic, Greco-Roman, Gentile led church.

Jesus and all His early followers were Jews who were deeply rooted in the rich Hebraic soil of their ancestors. They thought, taught, and lived out of this soil.

It should be obvious that when we Christians study the Hebraic/Jewish background and culture of the New Testament we will gain exciting new insights about Jesus.

**🕒 Clarification of Paul's Writings**

Other than Jesus Himself, the apostle Paul is probably the most misunderstood person of history. Both Christians and Jews believe Paul was an anti-law Jew who established a Gentile brand of Christianity that was different from his ancient faith. We learn

otherwise when we study Paul's writings.

**The Apostle Paul**

- A Jew whose name was Sha'ul, the Hebrew form of the name Saul
- Born into a Jewish family of the tribe of Benjamin
- Circumcised according to the law
- A zealous Pharisee
- Considered himself a Hebrew of the Hebrews
- Kept all the customs and traditions of his people
- Lived his entire life as a *Torah*-observant Jew



Because Paul was an extraordinary student, he was taken to Jerusalem where he was privileged to study under Gamaliel, who was the leading moderate Pharisee teacher of his day. Gamaliel was the grandson of the great rabbi and teacher, Hillel.

Gamaliel had about 1,000 students in Jerusalem and Paul was at the top of

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the class. Paul was fluent in both Hebrew and Greek (Acts 21:37-40).

**In Acts We Learn That Paul**

- ❖ Circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:3)
- ❖ Regularly attended synagogue (17:2)
- ❖ Took a Jewish vow (18:18)
- ❖ Hurried to Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Pentecost (18:21; 20:16)
- ❖ Paid for other Jews to offer sacrifices at the Temple (21:23-27)
- ❖ Claimed to have kept the laws and customs of his people (25:8; 28:17).

Furthermore, Paul assumed the Christians in Corinth would celebrate the Feast of Passover and exhorted them to do so in the proper attitude (1 Corinthians 5:6-8). This certainly does not sound like one who was against the law of God.

Because of the misunderstanding of the meaning of “Law,” and its role in the life of the Jews, Paul is accused of being “anti-Law.”

**Yet Paul Wrote ...**

- ◆ *Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good (Romans 7:12).*

- ◆ *For we know that the law is spiritual ... (vrs. 14).*

- ◆ *For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man (vrs. 22).*

When we realize who Paul was and the background and education he had, certainly we see the need to study what Paul studied, our Hebraic/Jewish roots, in order to understand his letters as he intended for us to understand them. We must do our best to put ourselves in his culture and think his thoughts.

If we study Paul through our Western eyes, we will certainly misunderstand him. Unfortunately, this is what our early church fathers did, and they have passed down their cultural misinterpretations of Paul from one generation to the next, even to our own times.

**④ Clearer Comprehension of God’s Plan of Redemption and Prophetic Seasons**

Another benefit of studying our biblical Hebraic/Jewish roots is a clearer comprehension of God’s plan of redemption and prophetic seasons. These are best understood in the Feasts of the Lord. While Christianity considers the Feasts as “Jewish” holidays, they are actually the Lord’s holidays He gave to the Jews as teaching aids for all believers (Leviticus 23).

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The major moves of God in the Bible happened on Feast days which were spiritual pictures of God's redemptive work in Jesus. Jesus not only kept every feast, He accomplished all of His redemptive activities on Feast days.



**Jesus Was ...**

- ✓ Crucified on Passover
- ✓ Buried on Unleavened Bread
- ✓ Resurrected on Firstfruits
- ✓ Sent the Holy Spirit on Pentecost
- ✓ Will return at Tabernacles

The seven Feasts of the Lord are visual aids teaching believers the seven steps of redemption in our walk with God.

□ The Feast of Passover teaches us how to find peace with God through Jesus, our Passover Lamb.

□ The Feasts of Unleavened Bread and Firstfruits teach us how to identify with Jesus in His burial and resurrection so we can walk in the fruit of the Spirit.

□ The Feast of Pentecost teaches us the necessity for the power of God to live under the Lordship of Jesus.

□ The Feast of Trumpets teaches us that Jesus is the Horn of our Salvation who gives us victory in spiritual warfare.

□ The Feast of Atonement teaches us that Jesus cleanses us as we humble ourselves and repent of sin.

□ The Feast of Tabernacles teaches us that Jesus is our rest and source of joy as we trust and obey Him.

**God's Prophetic Seasons**

The Feasts of the Lord also teach us God's prophetic seasons so we can discern the times in which we are living.

❖ In the 1500s God used Martin Luther to restore the spiritual reality of the Feast of Passover to the church.

❖ In the 1700's God used John and Charles Wesley to restore the spiritual reality of the Feasts of Unleavened Bread and Firstfruits.

❖ In 1906 God used the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to restore the spiritual reality of the Feast of Pentecost.

❖ God is now restoring Trumpets and Atonement in preparation for the restoration of the Feast of Tabernacles and His soon coming.

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When we understand our biblical Hebraic/Jewish roots, Christians will know how to walk with God. We will realize that salvation has a definite beginning, a specific process, and a glorious ending both personally and corporately.

We will be able to discern the spiritual times and seasons in which we are living and what this means for our lives. This will help us move forward from what God did in the past to what God is currently doing in His on-going work of redemption.

**5 A Better Follower of Jesus**

One last benefit of studying our Hebraic/Jewish roots is being a better follower of Jesus. Paul reminded Timothy that the “Holy Scriptures” makes us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3:15).

The only Scripture available in Paul’s time was the Hebrew Scriptures, the First Testament of the Bible. The New Testament did not become Scripture until later.

Studying the Hebrew Scriptures makes us wise for salvation through faith in Christ [Messiah] Jesus. But the Hebrew Scriptures were not written in a vacuum. They were written in a Hebraic culture that carried them through the centuries to the first century and time of Jesus.

**The Hebrew Scriptures and Jesus**

By the time of Jesus, the Hebrew Scriptures were organized into three divisions which everyone knew. Jews were taught from their youth to memorize the Scriptures.

The three divisions were the:

- ✓ *Torah* (Law of Moses)
- ✓ *Nevi'im* (Prophets)
- ✓ *K'tuvim* (Psalms)

After Jesus was resurrected, He said to His disciples, ... *These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me (Luke 24:44).*

**Opening Their Understanding**

*And He [Jesus] opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ [Messiah] to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things (Luke 24:45-48).*



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Jesus said that the Hebrew Scriptures were about Him. He opened their spiritual understanding that they might comprehend the Scriptures. That is, He taught them how the Hebrew Bible, (First Testament), with all of its surrounding history and culture, pointed to Him.

Jesus wants to open our spiritual understanding in this same way he did with His disciples. He wants us to learn the Hebraic/Jewish roots of our faith so we can know Him more fully and be better disciples.

**Beginning at Moses**

Jesus also said to two of His followers, *O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself (Luke 24:25-26).*

**A Spiritual Heartburn**

Luke explains, *Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him. ... And they said to one another, 'Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us? (Luke 24:31-32).*

When we learn our Hebraic/Jewish roots, the Spirit of the Living God will open our spiritual eyes to know the real

Jesus more clearly and more intimately. His words will burn within our hearts with a fresh fire that cannot be quenched.

The Bible will open up to us with a richness and depth that will inspire and energize us. We will better understand God's Word and be able to discern the prophetic times and seasons in which we are living. May God make it so!



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**SCRIPTURE MEDITATION ASSIGNMENT**

Read the following Scriptures and write in the space provided how this knowledge can help you better understand the Bible and your relationship with God.

**Luke 24:44:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Luke 24:45-48:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Luke 24:25-26:** \_\_\_\_\_

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**FUN AND GAMES**

Complete the following exercise.

**WORD SCRAMBLE**

Each of the scrambled letters below represents key words in understanding the biblical Hebraic/Jewish roots of our faith. Unscramble the letters and write the words in the boxes that follow.

1. hte

2. llibcbia

3. tosor

fo

4. arniiscytith

5. rea

6. shweji

(Answer Sheet – Page 16)

**LESSON REVIEW**

**Answer the questions in the space provided.**

1. What does the phrase, “Biblical/Hebraic Roots” mean?

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2. To properly understand the Bible, we must read it through the eyes of the writers.

True       False

3. Jesus was a:

Christian    European    Jew    Palestinian    Catholic

4. Jesus lived and taught within the culture of His people.

True       False

5. Jesus changed the Laws of God.

True       False

6. Jesus kept the Laws of God.

True       False

7. The first followers of Jesus were:

Christians    Europeans    Jews    Palestinians    Catholics

8. The Apostle Paul forsook his heritage.

True       False

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**READING ASSIGNMENT AND STUDY NOTES**

**Course: The Root and Branches**

**Subject: Lesson 1 – Why Jewish Roots?**

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9. Paul kept the traditions of his people.

- True       False

10. Paul was a traitor to his people who became the founder of Christianity.

- True       False

11. The Feasts of the Lord are Jewish holidays.

- True       False

12. List the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible in the time of Jesus.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
3. \_\_\_\_\_

13. God has prophetic seasons which He has revealed in the Feasts of the Lord.

- True       False

14. According to Luke 24, what did Jesus say about the Hebrew Scriptures?

- A. They were replaced by the New Testament
- B. They were hard to understand
- C. They taught about Him
- D. They were no longer relevant
- E. They had been misinterpreted by his followers.

**(Answer Sheet – Page 17)**

***LIFE APPLICATION & PERSONAL GROWTH***

**A. Why do you believe the Lord is calling believers back to their biblical roots?**

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**B. What significance or impact do you think this will have on the church?**

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**C. How can you apply this lesson to your life?**

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***FUN AND GAMES***

Complete the following exercise.

**ANSWER SHEET**

- 1. The**
- 2. Biblical**
- 3. Roots**
- 4. of**
- 5. Christianity**
- 6. are**
- 7. Jewish**

**LESSON REVIEW**

**ANSWER SHEET**

1. There were 2,000 years of Hebrew history, culture, language, traditions and customs that were the roots from which Christianity grew.
2. True
3. Jew
4. True
5. False
6. True
7. Jews
8. False
9. True
10. False
11. False
12. 1. Torah (Law of Moses) 2. Nevi'im (Prophets) 3. K'tuvim (Psalms)
13. True
14. C – they taught about Him