

# Chosen by God

## The Jewish Roots of Christianity

### In His Image

### Introduction

I suppose everyone, at least in this country, has seen pictures of the Grand Canyon. It is on postcards, in picture books, and on the covers of those calendars that your insurance company sends you at the beginning of the year. Even the most superficial glance at these images testifies to the immensity and beauty of this place. We know that the colors vary according to the time of day the photo was taken. We see the layer upon layer of exposed stone. We can see by the size of the teeny tiny trees and the river far below that this is an enormously vast expanse. In grade school we have learned the impressive facts and figures; the 277 miles of length, the mind boggling 18 mile width, and the 1 mile of depth. ("Grand canyon national park") We learn that it is one of the most studied geological landscapes in the world because of the wealth of fossil record and the variety of geological features. In addition, it contains a diversity of eco systems and desert types all in one location. It is home to numerous rare plants and animals, some found only in this single spot on earth. Artists attempt to interpret and replicate it, biologists, geologists, and paleontologists study it, adventurers climb, hike and raft it. Everyone knows something of it.

Then, as an adult I actually visited it. The real thing. What I already knew of it enhanced what I was now experiencing. I had seen many of the helicopter view photos that gave me an idea of the scope, and the big picture layout, as I stood at the rim looking over the edge. What is beautiful in the photos is breathtaking in person. As we descended into the canyon, I found both dangers and delights that the pretty pictures don't show. Loose rocks, trail hogging mules, steep drop offs with no guard rails, the beating sun, the heaviness of the necessary water, and the responsibility for the safety of my young and carefree tribe were more than balanced by a multiplicity of delights. The diverse plant and animal life were no longer bits of data in a book, but a reality. Beautiful plants that I had never seen before growing out of what appeared to be sheer rock. Funny little scampering things, and out-of-this-world rock formations. The Grand Canyon was always real, but now presence filled in the pictures, and fleshed out my knowledge.



Interestingly, the converse was also true. Now that I had been there, the information became much more interesting and meaningful. The adventure and richness of this wildly beautiful and very real place made me much more appreciative of the imagery of the paintings, photography, and written descriptions.



So it has been as I have begun to study the Jewish roots of Christianity. Living the reality of Christ makes me have a far greater appreciation for the picture painted by the Old Testament and found in the customs and festivals of the Jewish people. Our God delights in giving us images to show us realities. Just as Jesus taught with imagery in His parables, so God has used the nation of Israel as a large scale picture postcard to show us who He is. The Jewish nation was not some beta prototype that had to be abandoned because it didn't work out. It was always intended as a picture of the reality, the Presence, that would later come. The New Covenant in Christ is the natural and intended outflow from the people chosen as priests to the world, not a separation or detour from it. The New Testament is

not a replacement of the Old Testament, but a continuation and fulfillment of it. My trip to the Grand Canyon did not nullify the value of the photos, and information, it simply gave them much more meaning.

In Colossians 2:16-17, what are the Jewish customs regarding food, drink, festivals, and New Moons called? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the substance? \_\_\_\_\_

The shadow is less than the substance, but not false to the substance. I still remember the day that my daughter discovered her shadow, and those minutes of wonder as she moved her arm while watching the shadow self also move its arm. It was her, but also not her. She controlled the shadow, but was not controlled by it. It demonstrated a 3 dimensional reality in a 2 dimensional form. It can appear distorted by its limitations, but is as true of a representation as a black and white photograph of the Grand Canyon. As Dr. Richard Booker says it, "While the Hebrew Scriptures provided the pictures, the New Testament provided the person." (Booker 15)



How did Jesus express this in Matthew 5:17? \_\_\_\_\_

How did the Law and Prophets (our Old Testament) become flesh according to John 1? \_\_\_\_\_

How can a better understanding of the Law and the Prophets better our understanding of their fulfillment? \_\_\_\_\_

As I begin to study the image of God that biblical Jewish practice portrays, I am gaining a new respect and appreciation for the ways of these people, both past and present. There is much the Christian can gain from their example, not that we might become more Jewish, but that we might become more holy. The Jews seem to understand holiness, perhaps because that has been their central identity for thousands of years, since the days of Abraham when God disclosed His plans for a nation of people

who didn't yet exist.

What were the plans God outlined to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3? \_\_\_\_\_

Since before they were a people, while still only a promise, they had been set apart. Chosen to be God's holy race, a priesthood for the entire world, including Christians today. God gave them very specific instructions on the symbols and shadows that they were to live so that the spiritual realities revealed later would be better understood.

Every aspect of the devout Jews' life revolves around reverence and obedience to God. In even the most mundane of daily tasks, careful attention is given to God's wishes. Gratitude is expressed for every aspect of God's blessings. There are even prayers to be said in using the restroom, or before having sex, or while cooking. (Winner 65-80) No part of daily life is excluded from a mindfulness of God. In fact, even the day itself is measured from evening to evening after God's pattern in Genesis 1. Their entire lives are relegated by a rhythm set in place by God.



It is that which makes me feel that perhaps we have thrown the baby out with the bathwater in the movement of Christianity away from Judaism. For sure, it is imperative that we claim the Messiah, as indeed many Jews have done. In doing so, we must not neglect that God, in His infinite wisdom sent His Son to live as a Jew, to offer salvation first to the Jew, then to the Gentiles. It was the Jew who had been prepped and primed by God for thousands of years to receive Him. It was the Jew who had been given messages through symbol and celebration about who the Messiah truly was, and delivered that message to the world.

I feel that perhaps I, among other Christians, have been slow to embrace the Jewish heritage of the church into my own spiritual walk, and have perhaps missed some of the rich meaning behind some of what Jesus said and did. I begin the journey of taking a closer look at the Jewish heritage of Christianity, and the message that God chose these people to deliver. I hope to increase my own awareness of the holiness that I am called to, to enrich my understanding of God through the shadows and images He has given us, and to evaluate the authenticity of my own spiritual practices.

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(You can go to the Day of Discovery site to watch this three part video series free of charge: [http://www.dod.org/Products/The-Jewish-Roots-of-Christianity--Part-I\\_\\_DOD2151.aspx](http://www.dod.org/Products/The-Jewish-Roots-of-Christianity--Part-I__DOD2151.aspx) )

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