

**Association of Hebrew Catholics**

New Zealand Branch

[www.hebrewcatholic.org.nz](http://www.hebrewcatholic.org.nz)

# **Fulfilment For All In Jesus Messiah**

A Hebrew Catholic Perspective

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## Introduction

Our readers will be well aware that there is a vast literature available on the topic of Judaism and its alleged "fulfilment" in Christianity. This has evolved over such a long period of time that it is not surprising it reflects a very wide divergence of opinion.

Our comments below are intended to reflect on very basic points at **conversational level**, really as a preliminary starting point for study and research. We have recorded these basic ideas in five sections:

- I At the Synagogue in Nazareth.**
- II Jesus: Light as Through a Prism.**
- III When Does a Completed Painting Fulfill Its Purpose?**
- IV Implications For Hebrew Christian Culture.**
- V Are we Turning the Clock Back?**

### I At the Synagogue in Nazareth

The simple account of Jesus going back to visit His old synagogue — the one He worshipped in during His youth — is one of the most beautiful moments captured in writing. You can reflect on that if you wish by reading "**The Spirit of the Lord Is Upon Me**". At the beginning of that Gospel Reflection we list seven Gospel "moments", all focussed on revealing some aspect of the coming of the Messiah. The visit to the Nazareth Synagogue is the seventh. It is the moment when Jesus humbly but clearly and boldly declares that He is the long awaited Messiah promised and prophesied about throughout the whole of the Old Testament. Jesus was invited to chant in ancient Hebrew a reading of His choice from the Prophet Isaiah. Upon completion Jesus rolled up the scroll and said to the congregation:

"Today this scripture passage is **fulfilled** in your hearing."

Everyone present knew precisely that He was thereby informing them He was the very same Messiah the scriptures were pointing towards.

It is especially important for us that it is Jesus Himself who states unequivocally that He is the fulfilment of the Sacred Scriptures. He puts the issue of "fulfilment in Him" on the table.

It is so easy for us all to misunderstand the concept of "fulfilment". The New American Bible, which is our base translation, provides us with a footnote explaining:

"..... this sermon inaugurates the time of fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy."

We can see, therefore, that the concept of '**fulfilment**' in terms of the whole of the Old Testament — the writings of the Law and the Prophets — **is the first item the Messiah, our Lord Jesus, puts on His agenda to deal with**. If we don't get that right, **everything else becomes distorted** — seriously so — the further we proceed.

We can safely work on the basis that in this incident at Nazareth — on the Sabbath, by the way — Jesus **begins** the time of fulfilment. It is an extended period of time, not an instant. It is going to carry on through future ages until He is satisfied that everything has been attended to in preparation for His Glorious Return at the end of time and the consummation of the world. It is **preparation** at a new level: it is "a project in progress". It is going to be a long day, as we understand time, but it is a "year acceptable to the Lord". It is the time He has designated as though an extended Holy Year, commencing on a Sabbath Day of His choosing.

**Blessed be His Name, whose glorious kingdom is forever.**

## **II Jesus: Light As Through A Prism.**

The use of metaphors and various types of comparisons has its limits, but an illustration of the function of light, later in this section, may help us understand, just a little better, the image of our Lord as LIGHT.

- As the Psalmist wrote:

"For with you is the fountain of life, and in your light we see light."  
(Psalm 36: 9.)

- St. John the Evangelist wrote:

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life". (John 8: 12.)

- St. Matthew noted our Lord's inclusion of His disciples in His mission outreach: "You are the light of the world".

If we take an overview of the whole scope of what the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) relate to us, we behold a vast array of teaching, ordinances, prophecies, religious practice and historic events.

As St. John demonstrated in the Prologue to his Gospel account, (see the front page 'centre button' of our website: "**The Torah Became Flesh.**"), each member of the Blessed Trinity was present and actively involved "in the beginning". St. John went further and pointed out that the Divine Word was present with the Father before creation "and was God". (John 1: 1) Further:

"What came to be through Him was life and this life was the light of the human race."  
(John 1: 4 — 5)

As noted above, Jesus claimed later in St. John's Gospel, to be the Light of the World. Light is therefore one of the images associated with the Divine Word from the beginnings of time. That very light has been at work constantly "enlightening everyone" (John 1: 9) who would see the light!

Everything in the Old (meaning, Older) Testament pointed towards the coming of the Messiah, the true Light. Everything therefore, in some way, adds to our understanding of the work and purpose of this Light.

When the Messiah finally arrived, "and became flesh" (John 1: 14), a new Age dawned. In due course, the Messiah, as we read in Part I of this presentation, publicly announced to the congregation at a Sabbath Day Service in the Synagogue at Nazareth, that the message of the Prophet He had just read to them "is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4: 21). All the light of the Old Testament pointed to this Son of God, right there and then. This moment "inaugurates the time of fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy". (New American Bible footnotes.) This moment is a point in time, becoming a **process** in time. It is also a localisation of light in Jesus Messiah. From this moment, from this point in time, the Light we hear of referring to the Son, projects His mission, His light forward into the workings of His followers, soon to be commissioned as His Church.

He is like a prism into which all of the Old Testament is directed, and out of which proceeds that same light refracted into its spectral or constituent colours. It is only then that those colours, as in a rainbow, become visible — they give testimony to the authenticity of the light source.

In the case of our Lord, He indeed is the light source. But His light which He shares is the former invisible light now made manifest in His own life and work, and later in His Church and each of its members, as well.

The image we have used is limited, but we think it may help some to see that the flow of spiritual blessings from the Hebrew revelation and religious practice did not stop on the day Jesus declared the Scriptures "fulfilled," nor indeed at His death on the Cross, when He said, "It is finished." (John 19: 30 ) It was not the end of the role of the Hebrew Scriptures: it was the beginning, in a new unveiling of the light, the Light of the Lord Jesus Christ. Yes, these Scriptures have performed their role in preparing the way of the Lord. But that role does not cease with the coming of the Messiah; it takes on a new intensity.

In a way, those Scriptures continue to point towards the perfect consummation in Jesus Christ. In a mysterious way their role of preparation continues, at a new level, to point towards the ultimate fulfilment of the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ, and His Great Return to bring His Kingdom to final perfection.

Now that is the "fulfilment" we should all be preparing for!

### **Judaism: Past History?**

Within Christianity there has developed among some people a truly strange doctrine that the whole Faith and culture of Judaism was "finished with" the moment Jesus died on the Cross as a sacrifice for our sins. The theory claims all the teaching of the Old Testament therefore was "fulfilled in Him".

So we are back to this challenging concept of "being fulfilled". What does it mean?

### **Fulfilment In the Bible**

The Biblical understanding of "fulfilment", as we have hinted, is **not a static state, but a dynamic and totally creative process.**

It is one of the most precious and beautiful understandings arising out of the unfolding Hebrew Christian vocation in which we are immersed.

So let's open up this concept just a little more.

- Fulfilment, as we have noted, is a time — a period of time, **not just an instant but a season**. It begins at a very specific **point** of time, but that is only to mark the beginning.
- Not only is the process an extension of time in the history of salvation: **it is a person — the Lord Jesus Christ**.
- Fulfilment talks of a **completion** and **consummation** yet to come, when the Lord Jesus returns at the end of time.
- In a sense, it is the **extension of the Sabbath**, "this day" on which Jesus proclaimed fulfilment. This is a **restoration** — a filling full — a renewal of the Breath of God within us: a process under way, but far from completion.
- Fulfilment sees the **Light of Christ** opening the understanding of the Ancient Scriptures: lifting the veil, that we might now see how the Messiah spreads His Light to all humanity; and see our role in this.

### III When Does a Completed Painting Fulfill Its Purpose?

#### How Did Judaism and Christianity Become So Firmly Separated?

Both the way the New Testament was translated, as well as explained and interpreted, have been the cause of a devastating mindset which has become very deeply embedded in much Christian theological development. Evidence of this abounds in all directions.

We will benefit hugely as a Faith if we examine our individual perceptions of this bizarre "cutting loose" from our spiritual moorings, our heritage. Thankfully a complete re-appraisal of this past tendency is beginning to see new links forged with our "parent body" — or as Pope John Paul II referred to Judaism, our "Elder Brother".

#### Perhaps Art Works Can Help Us.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is truly the fulfilment of the Promises and Prophecies in the Old Testament all of which, in some way, point to Him. He completes the beautiful tapestry of teaching, events, and worship as presented in the Old Testament. But let us note — many things continue to be worked through in the life of the Church which He established to continue His mission.

When a tapestry or painting receives its final touch of colour, it is not put away because it is finished. On the contrary, now that it is truly complete, it reaches its intended goal, to portray, to inspire, to keep certain items before our eyes. It actually fulfils its purpose **now** more than ever before. It is **now** that it must be examined in full light: much more so than when it was only partially complete.

**So it is with the Old Testament and the Hebrew heritage it portrays.**

#### Old Testament: A Living, Not a Dead Backdrop.

This Hebrew heritage is the backdrop against which we should observe the actions and teaching of the Messiah which it foretells. **Only** then will the **full power** and **perception** which the Holy Spirit brings to believers, make their full impact upon them and those to whom they pass on the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We are not talking about the age-old argument of the Judaisers in St. Paul's day: that people should become Jews first and then be admitted to the Church. If we go down that path we will likely end up seeing the history of the Church plagued by de-Judaisers, more than the other way round.

We are talking about valuing our cultural heritage in ways which help us grow spiritually stronger in a world determined to neutralise Christianity and its Divine Message. We are therefore talking about a restoration of our spiritual patrimony in ways which are appropriate, authentic and truly meaningful to our people.

#### **IV Implications For Hebrew Christian Culture.**

We offer a few comments in three areas of growing interest:

- **Jews accepting Yeshua as the Messiah**

Jews who wish to follow the Messiah, Yeshua, Jesus Christ and retain their full Jewish identity, worship, culture and customs — which may even extend to the continuation of Laws of Kosher living.

- **Christians With Jewish Links**

Christians who wish to respond to the Jewish family links they have (current or evident in family history).

- **Christians With No Jewish Links**

Christians who have no Jewish links or background but who wish to be part of this revival and to be located within this apostolate — this Hebrew Christian stream.

#### **A. Jews Accepting the Messiah Yeshua**

For these people, there are important questions regarding "fulfilment" with respect to:—

Sabbath;  
Circumcision;  
Mitzvah  
Mikvah — (Immersion);  
Kosher living;  
Other treasured customs and culture.

Our various articles and quoted sources which appear on this website make it abundantly clear that —

"The special role" # of the Jewish people did not come to an end with the coming of the Messiah, as some theologians maintain, because of two crucial facts mentioned above: ***God's fidelity, and the fact that the Jewish people continue to be a privileged witness to Christ's coming.***

# "Special role": — "the covenant with Abraham, the election of the Chosen People, and the Law of Moses were all given as a ***preparation*** for the coming of the Messiah, who was promised as a blessing to all peoples."  
(From: "The Mystery of Israel and the Church" — page 86.)

This is true even in their unbelief in Jesus, and it will be even more true — if they come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, as we believe shall happen before His Second Coming, whenever that shall come to pass."  
(From: "[The Mystery of Israel and the Church](#)" by Lawrence Feingold.)

This special role is continued even within the Church of our day. All aspects of Jewish culture have been transformed in our Lord Jesus Christ, but as explained above, they have a vital continuing role: especially in our troubled times.

We believe they are **NOT** "finished," "past history," or over with". This particular fellowship: in which we are writing is a very ancient one: it is Hebrew Catholic. We have a venerable history, and we invite all Christians to share in our mission. We cannot speak for other denominations, but in our case, we affirm and value the continuity of Jewish living: and strongly encourage Jews who accept Yeshua Messiah to uphold in the life of the Church, **as much of their Jewish religious practice as they wish, with appropriate consultation. All is valued when seen anew in the Light of our Lord Jesus Messiah.**

There is no conflict with the teaching of the Church when everything is viewed in the saving Light of Jesus Christ.

Indeed the Church stands in awe of the loyalty of the Jews to their cultural heritage and seeks unequivocally to support them in the continued upholding of traditions and religious practice if they choose, out of their own accord, to enter into the service of Jesus Messiah,

The maintaining of their Jewish identity within the Church is strongly supported. We cannot be more emphatic!

Thus we stand by to render all possible assistance to those people and help them express their Faith within the life of the Church. Whilst we do not proselytise Jews, openly or covertly, once Jews request help to find out more about the Lord Jesus, we welcome them warmly and consider it an honour to receive them into our fellowship. In doing so we are confident that we can help one another not only to learn each other's culture and traditions, but we will develop much needed robust explanations of the Faith to a rapidly changing society around us.

For Jews in this situation, it is not so much a process requiring denial of their heritage but of adding elements which demonstrate fulfilment that is seen in the teaching and worship of the Church: e.g. the Eucharistic sacrifice of Jesus.

It is a wonderful testimony to the Faith of these people that frequently they talk of themselves as "completed Jews". They strongly and confidently deny the charge that one cannot be a Jew and a Christian; and they are a beautiful testimony to the truth of their claim that one can indeed continue to be a loyal, even traditional Jew within the full life of the Church.

## **B Christians With Jewish Links**

Many people living and practising Christians discover Jewish links in their family history often which have sadly been ignored or even skillfully suppressed. In our day they yearn to re-establish links with their Hebrew roots, and sometimes discover relief from spiritual restlessness when they do so.

Our apostolate seeks to help these people pursue their spiritual yearning and to encourage learning aspects of this cultural heritage from which they have been disconnected. Our training programmes have this as an important priority at all levels.

In the process we are very focussed on acknowledging their authentic Jewish birthright — despite its late discovery — and ensuring they have every opportunity to develop a sense of pride and belonging. The number of devout Jews entering the Church, together with established Christians discovering their Jewish links, identify clearly the need for a determined effort to cater for their needs.

## **C Christians With No Jewish Links**

An increasing number of people are interested in being associated with the restoration of Hebrew culture within the Church. A significant number wish to be active within this movement, as full and active members of a living stream which nurtures the ideal of the "distinct vocation and heritage of the Israelites" in the Church. (Cardinal Raymond Burke.)

In the history of Hebrew culture, the place of non-Jewish associates is a **very, very major consideration**. From the earliest times, non-Jewish people have been part of Hebrew history. Certainly at the time of the Passover, the blood sprinkled on the doorposts of Hebrew homes in Egypt saved the lives of Hebrews and non-Hebrews alike who lived there.

The Patriarchs and Prophets always made provision for non-Hebrew members of their households.

In the Temple in which Jesus worshipped regularly, special provision was made to ensure Gentiles had a place where they too could honour God. Most people are familiar with His great anger that the Temple authorities of the day allowed that space to be used for dubious commercial practices from which they received an unjustified income.

Those people, in our times, who attend Synagogue worship will attest to the hospitality and honour paid to non-Jewish visitors who are always welcome in such places.

Therefore in our apostolate, we see the role of non-Jewish Christians to be of corresponding importance and value as that of Jewish. There can be no question whatsoever of any hierarchical grades of membership. Thus people of Gentile background are encouraged to take their place as Gentile members of this restored cultural stream within the Church. They are, indeed, very highly esteemed members of this exciting apostolate.

An interesting phenomenon with regard to these people is that many report a sense of personal fulfilment developing within them as they continue to study and worship in this restored cultural stream. It is as though the forms of Christian worship in which they participated (both Protestant and Catholic) had predisposed their souls to discover, in some Hebrew practices, something which alerted them so that they were drawn towards exploring and developing their interest further. This precious gift of the Holy Spirit brings a new joy and confidence to those upset by the distressing reports of the situation of the Church at large.

Before leaving this Section we draw attention to our "manifesto" — our "[Messianic Fellowship of the Household of God](#)", available on-line. Within that booklet is a section: "[Our Messianic Charism](#)". Readers of this article may well find both of these helpful in thinking through issues we have raised. These are offered as a first, "preliminary" step looking towards a fully restored Israelite Community within the Church.

## V Are We Turning The Clock Back?

Probably the most common objection we hear against our practice of maintaining Jewish identity, religious practice and worship is that since the Messiah has come, the time of preparation is over. Therefore we shouldn't try and turn the clock back and "go backwards," clinging to the old way with emotional attachment — being "stuck" in the past.

We certainly understand our contemporaries feeling this way. It's part of the old idea of Christianity "replacing" Judaism or "superceding" it. After all, quotations from St. Paul (Rabbi and Apostle) and from the Book of Hebrews (among others) **seem** to state plainly that the Christian fulfilment (e.g. as seen in the New Covenant) is "superior" to anything Jewish. They are often used to suppress the restoration of a re-vitalised Hebrew Christian perspective. We can assure you that, whilst well meant, they are often erroneous.

Much of the comment we hear in these matters has originated out of a milieu of unconscious anti-Semitism, and awkward translation of the Scriptures together with confusion and often incomplete teaching about the relationship between Judaism and Christianity. Readers should beware of those who quote St. Paul endlessly and think they have everything "tied up". Their use of St. Paul's epistles can be theologically and culturally misleading.

This topic is very well explained in "[Some Special Books](#)" authored in some cases by Jews who have become Christian and proudly maintain they are still Jews; in fact (as mentioned) the often describe themselves as "completed Jews". By that, they do not mean their Judaism has been fulfilled and they have therefore left it behind. On the contrary, their Judaism — viewed in the Light of Jesus Christ — is indeed "filled full" and remains alive and active in their Christian life: and this is manifested in various forms.

We really only raise this issue briefly to assure people interested in sharing our apostolate and service within the Church, that it is a very valid way of living the Christian life.

We therefore have no hesitation in working towards the recovery of a Hebrew culture within the Church and assertively seeking the help of any who wish to support this movement of the Holy Spirit in our times.



## Sharing In A Vision

The Messianic Fellowship of the Household of God is committed to support in every way possible, the restoration of a vibrant traditional Jewish culture of worship, spirituality, study, hospitality and religious practice within the Church.

As we have stated in several places within our documents, all such pursuits in the light of our Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ — **can continue to promote the glory of God:** May His Name be praised, whose glorious Kingdom is forever.

We therefore strongly support our Jewish sisters and brothers who believe they are called to be part of such movements within the Church.

As a Fellowship, we are equally committed to establishing clear guidelines for non-Jews who wish to join in the restoration of our Hebrew Christian heritage and, as Gentile members of the Church, seek to be **full participants** and members of this religious revival within the Church. Their presence and membership are critical and highly valued.

## Introduction to Association of Hebrew Catholics (AHC)

The AHC is one of the most prominent organisations engaged in helping people of Jewish lineage or culture who have become Christians, to retain their Jewish identity, whilst finding their place in the Church. Although centred in the Catholic Church they welcome other fellow Christians as associate members who participate fully in the Association's activities.

Fr. Elias Friedman, co-founder of the AHC wrote in one of his counsels:

**"Consider the primary aim of the group to be, not the conversion of the Jews, but the creation of a new Hebrew Catholic community life and spirit, an alternative society to the old."**

(Quoted from: The Hebrew Catholic No. 91 2013-2014)

This is a very exciting concept, and one which deserves much attention. Some readers may, in all sincerity, find themselves asking: "Why Hebrew Catholic? After all, that implies one has to be both a practising Catholic and having some sort of Jewish connection."

First, the primary aim of the group is not exclusiveness! Catholic culture is a vast expanse in time and throughout almost countless cultures. The Catholic Church strongly and emphatically declares in its promulgated teaching documents that other Christian Faith communities contain much in their creeds and articles of Faith which is in harmony with its own doctrine. It therefore acknowledges these areas of common ground to signify opportunities for Christians of different persuasions to respect one another's membership of Christ's Body, the Church, and to work together for the greater glory of God.

On this basis AHC welcomes various forms of involvement and attachment.

### **Messianic Fellowship: A Partner to AHC**

The Messianic Fellowship has grown from a diverse mixture of Christian and Jewish background. It is strongly motivated to stimulate interest in personal renewal, restoration and service to (and beyond) the Church at large. For some, it may be a stepping stone towards membership of AHC. For others, it may provide a place to belong, to learn and support the promotion of Hebrew Christian thinking alongside other similar organisations.

The Fellowship is committed to making available forms of prayer, meditation, worship, celebration, and community service which evolved from earliest Catholic sources. These are for the use of individuals, family and in other group settings.

Indeed our Fellowship has been set up to embrace any sincere person who wishes to join in these activities. Thus the Fellowship, whilst strongly supportive of AHC, wishes to open pathways to people who have no Catholic or Jewish background, and are not in a position to deal at any given stage, with what these entail.

The Messianic Fellowship seeks to facilitate the interface of Christians coming from vastly different backgrounds and traditions. It thus provides an atmosphere of learning, fellowship and worship, in appropriate ways, thus helping pave the way for future developments and interactions as people feel led by the Holy Spirit.

### **Mutual Support**

It is our hope that we can work together in collaboration and make real and actual a love of our Hebrew heritage throughout the Christian world.

## Conclusion

It is our intention, under the lawful authority of the Church, to encourage these forms of restoration and development, and make them available to all people of good will.

Thus our closing message is one of a very warm welcome assured to anyone reading this article and desiring to take positive action towards joining our mission.

**Shalom!**

## Further Reading

### Some Special Books

In the course of our on-going activities, we will highlight a wide range of important literature impacting upon our apostolate. At this point we draw attention to some outstanding books, with links to sources where further information can be obtained.

1. **Many Religions — One Covenant**, by Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger. Ignatius Press. 1999.
2. **The Crucified Rabbi**, by Taylor R. Marshall. St. John's Press, Texas. 2009.
3. **Salvation Is From the Jews**, by Roy Shoeman. Ignatius Press, San Francisco. 2003.
4. **Second Exodus**, by Martin K. Barrack. Magnificat Institute Press, Houston, U.S.A. 1999.
5. **The Mystery of Israel and the Church**, by Lawrence Feingold, Miriam Press, St. Louis, U.S.A. 2008.

Volume I	<b>Figure and Fulfilment</b>
Volume II	<b>Things New and Old</b>
Volume III	<b>The Messianic Kingdom of Israel</b>
Volume IV	<b>The Messiah of Israel</b> (In preparation)

