

SETTING THE TABLE I

THE JEWISH DISCONNECT AND THE FOURTEENTHERS

This chapter will clarify a major segment of Jewish history that has not been accurately told before—not by Christian sources, by Jewish encyclopedias, or Dimont’s Jewish histories. Specifically, it discusses the complete disconnect with all things Jewish that occurred when the early assemblies—with their many Messianic Jewish believers—were taken over by Rome.¹

To the Jews, these believers in Christ became “Christians” who were therefore no longer acknowledged as truly Jewish. To the Roman Christians, these people were “Judaizers”² who continued to keep their Jewish customs while refusing to go along with the new Roman teachings. Therefore neither side has told this story accurately, as both sides rejected these early Messianic believers. We will cover at least some of the story of these early Messianic Jews and the rejection and persecution they suffered, for this sets the stage for the complete disconnect.



Early Messianic Jews were derisively called “Quartodecimans,” a Latin term with a heretical sound to it; anyone with that strange name must have been a heretic, or so we have been told. However, once we translate this simple term meaning “Fourteenthers” into English, it becomes evident who Rome thought the heretics were—those Jewish believers who observed the 14th day of Nisan,³ as their families had done since the time of Moses. Nisan was the Israelite month in which the Passover was to be celebrated each year—on the 14th day.

NIV Numbers 28:16 “On the fourteenth day of the first month the LORD’s Passover is to be held.”

1 Emperor Constantine gave the Roman Church the power to impose unanimity of doctrine to unite the empire.

2 “Judaizer” is a term for one who seeks to bring the New Covenant believer back into Old Covenant laws.

3 In the Hebrew calendar, Nisan is the first month of the Ecclesiastical year (seventh month in the civil year). The Passover was to be sacrificed each year in this month, in the afternoon of the 14th day.

Throughout this discussion, I will use the English translation of “Fourteenters,” as it more accurately describes who these people were. Just as the Protestants would later be called heretics and be punished by Roman authorities, so it was with the original Messianic Jews.

Before delving deeper into this part of Jewish history, though, it is important to realize that many Jewish people were scattered from Israel to the region between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean, then known as Asia. Paul spent much of his time preaching and teaching among these “Asiatics,” as they were called. Peter also wrote to these Jews of “the dispersion” (*diaspora* in Greek):

^{NAB} 1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, **to the chosen sojourners of the dispersion** in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, **Asia**, and Bithynia,

Although the Asiatic assemblies were to a large degree Jewish, they also contained many Gentile believers. But from this history, we can see that Jewish concepts and customs were more prevalent among them than the traditions that would develop later in Rome.

In the book of Revelation, the Messiah directed John to write to the seven assemblies that were spread across Asia:

^{DBY} Revelation 1:4–5 John to the seven assemblies **which are in Asia**: Grace to you and peace from *him* who is, and who was, and who is to come; and from the seven Spirits which *are* before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth

^{DBY} Revelation 1:11 saying, What thou seest write in a book, and **send to the seven assemblies**: to Ephesus, and to Smyrna, and to Pergamos, and to Thyatira, and to Sardis, and to Philadelphia, and to Laodicea.

Jesus understood that these believers in Asia were already facing persecution and difficulties, so he specifically directed John to write words of comfort and teaching to them. It’s worth emphasizing this point, because Rome painted these Asiatics as a fringe group of heretics, and mocked them as “Quartodecimans” for refusing to observe the rituals that had developed in Rome.

Proud Rome had taken over Israel and destroyed the Temple, so it definitely was not going to take instructions on religion from its vanquished foe. As history played out, this was how the complete Jewish disconnect occurred.