

The Jerusalem Council

A. Introduction

1. The Jerusalem Council was a leadership body that existed in the early Church around A.D. 50¹. The first mention of the Jerusalem Council in Scripture was in Acts 15.
2. The transition from this age to that of the Millennial Kingdom will culminate in the restoration of all things (Acts 3:21).
 - a. The Jerusalem Council will form a part of this restoration work that God will bring to pass.
 - b. It will take place progressively, as:
 - i. The Jewish people come to the faith in Yeshua as Messiah (Rom. 11:23, 26);
 - ii. The one new man is formed between Messianic (Jewish) and Gentile (non-Jewish) believers (Eph. 2:14–16);
 - iii. Gentile believers re-discover and return to the Jewish roots of their faith (Rom. 11:17–18);
 - iv. The Jewish remnant is restored as the head of many nations, and not the tail (Deut. 28:13).
 - c. The restoration of the Jerusalem Council is one of the many fulfillments of how the gifts and the call of God for the Jewish people are irrevocable (Rom. 11:29).

B. The Jerusalem Council

1. The Biblical basis from the New Testament
 - a. In the New Testament, Acts 15 is the clearest passage that talks about the Jerusalem Council. The Jerusalem Council is thus also termed as the “Acts 15 Council”.
 - b. Crucial to the understanding of the Jerusalem Council is the historical context of Acts 15.
 - i. During the time of the book of Acts, the city of Rome witnessed the birth of the early Church during the first century following the day of Pentecost in A.D. 33.

¹ *Apostolic Council at Jerusalem*. Philip Schaff: New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge, vol. I: Aachen - Basilians – Christian Classics Ethereal Library. (n.d.). <https://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/encyc01.html?term=Apostolic+Council+At+Jerusalem>

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- ii. On Pentecost, the Jewish disciples of Jesus saw that diaspora Jews and proselytes present in Jerusalem embraced their faith (Acts 2:10; 6:5). They subsequently brought the Gospel back with them as they returned to their own nations.
 - iii. The early disciples functioned as missionaries sent to the surrounding nations, preaching the Gospel to diaspora Jews. As the Gospel spread to these nations, more Gentiles came to the Christian faith. It was in this context, that controversies subsequently arose with regards to the Gentiles' practice and observance of the faith (Acts 15:1–2, 5).
 - iv. A council, consisting of several of the early apostles, convened in Jerusalem to address these issues, thus birthing the Jerusalem Council.
2. The Biblical basis from the Old Testament
- a. There are several passages in the Old Testament that evince an understanding of the Jerusalem Council (although the term “Jerusalem Council” itself is not directly referenced or quoted of in these passages).
 - b. These passages provide a biblical picture of the hierarchy of leadership that God appoints over His people. This principle is biblical and consistently seen in Scripture.
 - i. Historically, these leaders were known as “judges” (Judg. 2:16).
 - ii. This hierarchy of leadership in the global Church will be restored at the End of the Age as the Jerusalem Council is restored.
 - iii. Ultimately, the fullness will be seen at the second coming of Christ, when He will grant leadership and counsel to nations (Isa. 2:3; Mic. 4:2).
 - c. Exodus 18:13–26
 - i. Moses was appointed as a judge of the people to address disputes (Exo. 18:13, 15). He was responsible for making known to the people the law of God, and teaching them the ways in which they ought to walk and perform (Exo. 18:20).
 - ii. Upon Jethro’s advice, Moses was instructed to appoint leaders under him who possessed vital qualities: they feared God, were men of truth, and hated covetousness (Exo. 18:21). They would judge and rule over the people of Israel (Exo. 18:25–26).
 - iii. This hierarchical system of rulers and leaders was employed to settle cases of disputes among the community.
 - d. 2 Chronicles 19:8
 - i. During King Jehoshaphat’s reign, judges were set in place to administer judgement and address controversies (2 Chr. 19:5, 8). These judges were primarily Levites, priests and the elders of Israel (2 Chr. 19:8).
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- ii. They were to govern in the fear of God, showing no partiality nor receive bribes (2 Chr. 19:7, 9). They were to judge against any trespass of the law and commandments of God.
3. The role of the Jerusalem Council (from Acts 15)
 - a. The role of the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 was similar to that of the judges in Israel's history. The key difference was that God's people now comprised of both Jewish and non-Jewish descent (in Acts 15), as opposed to just a Jewish one (in the time of the judges).
 - b. Leadership of Jewish and Gentile Believers
 - i. The early Jewish disciples began to see masses of Gentiles come to the faith as the Gospel was preached (Acts 13:46).
 - ii. It was during this period that the council convened and assumed leadership over the Church (Acts 15:22).
 - iii. The council comprised of several early disciples of Jesus, some of whom were apostles in Jerusalem. This included apostles and leaders of both the Jewish congregations (Peter, James and John) and the Gentile congregations (Paul and Barnabas).
 - c. Settling controversial issues regarding the faith
 - i. A controversy arose when "*certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren*" that the newly-professed Gentile believers were subjected to the same regulations and observances of the law, as like their Jewish brethren (Acts 15:1).
 - ii. To the Gentile believers, these Jewish "common practices" were foreign and unknown, and thus not adopted nor practiced.
 - iii. One controversy pertained to the communal differences in lifestyles and diet.
 - Under the Mosaic law, Jewish believers were subjected to various dietary restrictions (Lev. 11:1–23) which were not observed by the Gentile believers.
 - Questions were raised when both groups were associated together, especially during their meals (Acts 10:28; 11:3; Gal. 2:11-16).
 - iv. Another controversy pertained to the observances of the Jewish law, which was broadly divided into three main categories: Ritual law, civil law and the family law. These laws covered religious observances, legal disputes and family matters².

² Introduction to Judaism Major Categories Jewish Law Study Guide. (2024a, July 30). <https://library.fiveable.me/introduction-to-judaism/unit-4/major-categories-jewish-law/study-guide/Meq4OW55dNh5GLAZ>

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- These laws were not required of the Gentile believers in entirety, as opposed to the Jewish believers.
 - Questions arose as to whether these laws (i.e. circumcision of males) also applied to the Gentiles.
- d. Process of settling the controversy
- i. Controversies were brought to the Jerusalem Council to be resolved (Acts 15:2, 6). Apostles and leaders met to resolve the question of which regulations and observances were required of the new Gentile believers, and which were to be kept solely by the Jewish communities.
 - ii. The process of handling the controversy:
 - Apostles and elders came together to consider the matter (Acts 15:6) through a corporate discussion.
 - Members of the council shared accounts on the work of God. Peter spoke of the inclusion of the Gentiles in the faith (Acts 15:7–11); Barnabas and Paul bore witness to the miracles and wonders that God had done in their midst (Acts 15:12).
 - Mutual submission and godly respect were present among members. This was evident through the way they addressed each other as “*brethren*” (Acts 15:7) and “*beloved*” (Acts 15:25)³. They came together in prayer and discussed the issues.
 - James, who likely was the leader facilitating or taking charge of the discussion, eventually made a decision (Acts 15:19). This decision was made through prayer, based on the foundation of Scripture, and by the leadership of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:28).
 - The conclusion was made known through a written statement brought by leading men to the various churches throughout the region (Acts 15:19–20, 22–23, 30). This brought clarity and encouragement to congregations (Acts 15:31).
4. The Influence and Impact of the Jerusalem Council
- a. The Church, comprising of both Jews and Gentiles, saw the Jewish apostles and elders in Jerusalem as having the ultimate authority over believers (Acts 16:4).
 - i. This was possible because both groups of believers recognised each another as part of a common Jewish faith.
 - ii. The early Gentile believers saw their salvation as the fruit of God’s mercy which had grafted them into the commonwealth of Israel (Eph. 2:12).

³ Asher Intrater, *Alignment*, Revive Israel Media, 2017; Pg 110.

Similarly, the early Jewish believers saw the grace of God that was powerfully at work among the Gentiles (Acts 10:44–47; 13:42–48).

- b. The hierarchy of leadership made it possible for decisions and directions from the Jerusalem Council to be communicated, and even embraced by all believers.
 - i. The highest level of authority was seen in the Jerusalem Council, which consisted of apostles, elders and possibly other offices (Acts 15).
 - ii. Following the Council, there were apostles and prophets who went out to plant congregations. These laid the foundations for the congregations through their teachings and would subsequently oversee them (Acts 14:1, 21, 28; 15:34–36).
 - Peter, James and John (among others) were known to lead and plant congregations in Jerusalem.
 - Paul and Barnabas (among others) did so for the Gentile nations.
 - iii. Lastly, there were elders appointed to lead each congregation (Acts 14:23; Titus 2:15).

C. Restoration of the Church's Jewish Roots and Its Implications

1. God's work of restoration in the Church is currently taking place⁴ to birth forth the establishment of the Jerusalem Council at the End of the Age.
 - a. This will take place in various stages:
 - i. The re-discovery of and returning to the Jewish roots of the Christian faith, which began in the 1940s (Rom. 11). To date, the global Church is beginning to see and understand God's sovereign election of Israel.
 - ii. Recovery of the 5-fold ministry which began in the mid 1800s (Eph. 4:11–12). This will include the 5-fold ministry restored among the Jewish remnant.
 - iii. Raising up of the international *Ekklesia*. The *Ekklesia* refers to an assembly of believers who are "*called out*" to partner with Jesus to execute His assignments with given authority⁵.
2. This work of restoration comes in line with the chronological timeline of the Church and of Israel.
 - a. During the first 2000 years of Church history (from Abraham's call to Jesus' crucifixion), the Jewish people executed God's salvation plan.
 - b. After Pentecost, the Church was birthed. During a brief period of 37 years (A.D. 33 to A.D. 70), both the Jewish and Gentile believers came together to walk out

⁴ IHOP One Thing Ministries: Decline and Restoration of Man and the Church Timeline (Chart). <https://www.onethingministries.net/wp/wp-content/Decline-and-Restoration-of-Man-and-the-Church.pdf>

⁵ Strong's #1577 Bible Tools. <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/ekkllesia.html>

this salvation plan. This is the initial fulfilment of God's call for Abraham that all nations will be blessed in him (Gen. 12:3; 18:18).

- c. For the next 2000 years, there was a reversal of roles and the Church became predominantly made up of Gentile believers. This number continued to grow as the Gospel spread to the nations⁶.
 - d. Today, this is changing. Since the rebirth of Israel in 1948 and the return of Jerusalem to Israel in 1967, there has been a growing number of Jewish people returning to the land. There has also been a significant increase of Jewish people coming to the faith in Yeshua⁷.
 - e. Progressively, the global Church is beginning to see and understand God's election of Israel (Rom. 11:11–12). There is a growing re-discovery and recognition of the Jewish roots of the Christian faith, especially among the international *Ekklesia*.
 - f. Once again, Jewish and Gentile believers are coming together as one body. In 2020, Messianic believers and Gentile believers, especially those from the Arab nations, came together for the observance of the Global Passover and Last Supper. This was a major step towards the fulfilment of the John 17 oneness that Jesus had prayed for.
3. This restoration work of the Church and of Israel holds implications for the global Body of Christ, including both the Jewish and Gentile believers.
 - a. These implications include:
 - i. The need for reconciliation and coming together of Jewish and Gentile believers;
 - ii. An understanding of the biblical practices (i.e. abstaining from consuming of blood) that are to be practiced or observed by both Jewish and Gentiles alike;
 - i. The alignment of the Gentile Church to God's election of Israel and embracing of their Jewish brethren;
 - ii. The need for Jewish believers to recognise that their Gentile brethren also form part of God's salvation plan.
 - b. Ultimately, the coming together of both "brothers" (the older brother being the Jewish people and the younger one being the Gentiles) will form the family of God.

⁶ Nickens, M. (2009a). Church History Timeline: A.D. 30 - 99. <https://studythechurch.com/church-history/timelines/first-century>

⁷ Ingrid Anderson, Associate Director of Jewish Studies. (2018, November 13). *Why the history of messianic Judaism is so fraught and complicated*. The Conversation. <https://theconversation.com/why-the-history-of-messianic-judaism-is-so-fraught-and-complicated-106143#:~:text=Messianic%20Jews&text=Specifically%20they%20believe%2C%20as%20do,to%2020%2C000%20live%20in%20Israel>. Center, C. (2022, May 30). *The Caspari Center Survey released: The Israeli messianic movement has more than tripled in the last 20 years - Caspari center*. Caspari Center - Caspari Center. <https://www.caspari.com/2022/02/07/the-caspari-center-survey-released-the-israeli-messianic-movement-has-more-than-tripled-in-the-last-20-years/>

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4. Presently, there are ministries on the ground that are laying the foundation for this work of restoration.
 - a. Towards Jerusalem Council II (TJCII)⁸ was set up to bring repentance and reconciliation between the Jewish and Gentile segments of the Body of Christ.
 - i. It is led by the International Leadership Council (ILC) consisting of Jewish and Gentile leaders who broadly represent different international churches and ministries.
 - ii. While the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15 faced challenges caused by the inclusion of the Gentile believers, TJCII is working towards a smooth inclusion of the Jewish followers of Jesus back into a predominantly Gentile Church.
 - iii. It sees a need to be an advocate for and a place to accept the Jewish believers with their Jewish identity and practice, without forcing them to renounce their own culture and traditions and to accept the present Church practices.
 - iv. They are advocates for the unity of the Messianic and Gentile believers (one new man), seeing how the grafting back of the Jewish people to the olive tree is bringing back "*life from the dead*" (Rom. 11:15).
 - v. They also recognise that the Messianic remnant is needed for the return of Jesus and the fullness of redemption.
 - b. Tikkun International⁹ is connected with a team of Jewish leaders (at different times consisting of the leadership of Dan Juster, Eitan Shiashkoff, Michael Brown, Paul Wilbur, Dan Finto and David Rudolph).
 - i. They meet annually to discuss common issues relating to all believers.
 - ii. These include mutual accountability and counselling, ordination of senior leaders, arbitration of problems between leaders, foundational theological questions, and strategies for cooperation.

D. Restoration of the Jerusalem Council in the Last Days

1. At the End of the Age, the Jerusalem Council will be restored with God-given authority.
2. In Acts 15, the Jerusalem Council was seen as an assembly of esteemed and recognized Jewish leaders who were given the authority and leadership role over the Church.
 - a. At the End of the Age, it will likely consist of apostles and elders (Acts 15:2) who would lay the foundation that congregations are built upon (Eph. 2:20; 4:11–12). It may also consist of other roles in the five-fold ministry, namely: Prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (Eph. 4:11).

⁸ *Mission*. TJCII. (2024, November 1). <https://www.tjcii.org/mission/>

⁹ Asher Intrater, *Alignment*, Revive Israel Media, 2017; Pg 111

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- b. The council will comprise of God-appointed and ordained men and women with delegated authority¹⁰.
 3. The Jerusalem Council will provide direction and leadership to the global Body of Christ which consists of both the Jewish and Gentile believers.
 - a. The council may address key foundational and theological issues that confront the Church¹¹.
 - b. The leadership role of the Jerusalem Council will be an expression of Romans 11:18, which says: *“Do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you.”*
 - i. The natural “branches” of the olive tree refer to the Jewish people, while the wild “branches” refer to the Gentile believers who have been grafted in as part of the olive tree (Rom. 11:24).
 - ii. The oracles of God (Rom. 3:2) and divine entrustments (Rom. 9:4–5) have been given to the Jewish people. It is with this heritage that they will nourish the rest of the Body of Christ¹², similar to how a root supports the branches of a tree.
 4. The restoration of the Jerusalem Council is an integral part of the nation of Israel walking in her call, partnering with Jesus to disciple nations in the ways of God.
 - a. As foreshadowed in the reign of King Solomon, kings and nations will come to Jerusalem to seek counsel and wisdom (1 Kings 10:24; 2 Chron. 9:23).
 - b. The law and the word of God shall come forth from Zion (Isa. 2:1–4; Mic. 4:1–5).
 5. It will be a fulfilment of the End-Time promise of God’s glory being seen upon Israel and kings coming to her light (Isa. 60:1–3). Ultimately, the fullness of this glory will come when Jesus returns and establishes His throne in Jerusalem.
 - a. Then, Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the Lord (Jer. 3:17).
 - b. In the Millennial Kingdom, nations will go up to worship King Jesus who will reign and rule from Jerusalem (Zech. 14:16).
 - c. It shall be glorious as all nations give glory unto King Jesus alone (Ps. 86:9; Isa. 11:10).

E. Prayer Pointers

1. Pray for God’s grace upon the establishment of the Jerusalem Council (Jude 3; Zech. 4:6–7).

¹⁰ Asher Intrater, *Alignment*, Revive Israel Media, 2017; Pg 105, 108.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Intrater, A. (2025, January 22) *What are the Jewish Hebrew Roots Part Two*. Tikkun Global. <https://www.tikkunglobal.org/post/what-are-jewish-hebrew-roots-part-two>. Intrater, A. (2025, January 29). *What are the Jewish Hebrew Roots Part Three*. Tikkun Global. <https://www.tikkunglobal.org/post/what-are-jewish-hebrew-roots-part-three>

- a. For the enduing of grace and courage upon Messianic believers who have been called to this role and position;
 - b. For God to grant them greater authority and elevate them to a position of leadership in His perfect timing.
2. Pray for God to prepare and make ready Messianic believers, especially the young ones, to arise to the fullness of this call to be part of the Jerusalem Council (2 Thess. 1:11–12).
- a. For the refining and strengthening of their character to walk in holiness and faithfulness;
 - b. For God to grant them wisdom and knowledge of His heart, will and narrative for Israel and the nations;
 - c. For a deeper communion with the Person of the Holy Spirit and His increased activity in their midst;
 - d. For the fashioning of their hearts to possess the humility of Christ and love of God for the nations.
3. Pray for the Gentile Church to return to the Jewish roots of their faith and align to the work of restoration that God is doing (Col. 1:9–10; Phil. 1:9–11).
- a. For God to fill many with the knowledge of His will concerning the restoration of the Jerusalem Council;
 - b. For the Gentile Church to recognize the God-ordained role of leadership given to the Jewish people and to come into agreement with Him;
 - c. For the removing of every offence or hindrance in hearts or mindsets and that God will bring many into alignment with His restoration work.