

## **Danger Signals in the Church.**

**What was the religious hybrid that so alarmed the apostle Paul?**

**“Who has bewitched you?”** he demanded of the Christians in Galatia.

When reading Paul’s writings regarding this subject, we can almost see the hair stand up on the back of his neck. Why was he so agitated by what we today call the **“Judeo-Christian”** concept? Paul exposed a religious hybrid by which Satan was attempting to dilute the Christ-centered faith with elements from the out-dated Old Covenant that Jesus had just nailed to the cross.

Most of Paul’s epistles were written to expose the danger of mixing the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ with Old Covenant practices. Jesus warned of the danger of trying to rip pieces from the New Covenant of grace and sew them onto the Sinai Covenant to make it look acceptable. Then Jesus re-emphasized the danger of such attempts by saying that one cannot pour the effervescent wine of the New Testament Gospel into the brittle wineskins of the Old Covenant. Mark 2:21,22 clearly indicates that **such a hybrid is anti-Christian!**

Jesus and His apostles knew that the Old Covenant religion of the day would not mix with the Gospel of Faith. The religious leaders also knew that the two could not co-exist. That is why they persecuted the followers of Jesus Christ! That is also why Paul dedicated much of his life to exposing the danger of trying to dilute the Gospel of Grace with the outdated practices of Old Testament types and shadows.

### **Are your eye-glasses fitted with New Covenant lenses?**

**John the Revelator wrote,**

*Anoint your eyes with eye salve that you may see.* Revelation 3:18.

**Paul wrote,**

*When Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts.* 2 Corinthians 3:15.

**Jesus said,**

**But blessed are your eyes because they see.** Matthew 13:16.

As a young girl, my sister had difficulty with her schoolwork until the teacher suggested that she have her eyes checked. When the optometrist fitted her with glasses and asked her how they felt, she replied that there was something wrong with them.

“Why?” Asked the doctor.

“Because I am seeing things that are not really there,” she answered.

“ Would you mind telling me what you see?” he encouraged.

She then proceeded to describe things in the room that she could not see without the glasses. The colors were more brilliant, and details that she had never noticed before, now stood out clearly. A whole new world of color and beauty opened up to her. Those eyeglasses gave her a new appreciation for details that she did not know existed. Even the faces of her father and mother seemed to take on new life. She was ecstatic!

### **Why did Jesus’ statements feel like an irritant to the religious leaders?**

The conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders was almost entirely over the interpretation of Scripture. They interpreted Scripture entirely by logic. Jesus viewed Scripture through the eyes of divine revelation.

*The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. 1 Corinthians 2:14.*

Jesus was viewing the Scriptures through New Covenant lenses. What He saw in Scripture was not visible without the anointing, or the eye salve, of the Holy Spirit. If we want to know what the Old Testament means, why speculate? It is best that we go to the Author of Scripture, and see how He interpreted it to His followers.

### **Examples of “new light” that could only be seen through New Covenant lenses.**

Scripture seemed to promise a deliverer from Roman oppression.

Jesus came to bring freedom from spiritual oppression. He ignored the Roman presence.

Manna in the desert spoke to Israel only of physical provision. They failed to see that it was a symbol of the coming Messiah.

Jesus described Himself as the real, “living Manna”, or food for the soul.

Looking through Old Covenant glasses, Peter understood that externals, such as unclean foods, could pollute the soul.

Jesus showed him that it was what came out of a person’s heart and mouth that polluted.

The Old Covenant forbade the drinking of blood, because the life was in the blood.

Jesus shocked His followers by telling them that they must be willing to ingest His blood, by faith, if they were to have eternal life. This claim repulsed many Jews. 1 Cor: 11:25.

Looking through Old Covenant glasses, the Jews understood that the “Seed,” of which God spoke to Abraham, referred to Abraham’s physical offspring through who He would bring salvation to the world.

Looking through New Covenant lenses, Jesus and Paul both corrected that view, and showed that Christ was the “Seed” who would bring salvation to Jew and non-Jew alike. It was Abraham’s spiritual offspring, those “born again” of the Holy Spirit, who are Abraham’s true children. Genetics have nothing to do with spiritual inheritance.

## **Modern misconceptions due to wearing Old Covenant eye glasses.**

### **1. Can Christians today be politically correct?**

Some people reading the book of Galatians, shudder at Paul’s blunt comments on Judaism. They conclude that he had become violently anti-Jewish! The man was not even careful to see that his speech was “politically correct” they say. According to some of today’s laws he would probably have been accused of publishing hate literature. For the sake of anyone who does not know the difference between being hateful or being compassionate, let us consider a few questions.

?? When Jeremiah warned Israel that God was sending the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem lest they repent, why did King Zedekiah condemn him as a hate monger?

?? When Jesus warned His people, Israel, that by rejecting Him as the Son of God, they were rejecting God and exposing their nation to destruction, was He guilty of a hate crime? Why was Jesus was condemned as an anti- Semitic?

?? There are times when it is the loving thing to be diplomatic and politically correct. At other times it is just plain cowardly, especially if you are avoiding the truth just to save your own skin, or to promote your own agenda. When he wrote the Book of Galatians, Paul knew that the disasters Jesus foretold were about to hit Jerusalem. Daniel 9:24 was nearing fulfillment! Paul refused to hide behind what was considered a “politically correct” stance. He loved his Jewish brethren more than he loved his own life, and as a result of trying to warn them, he was accused of being anti-establishment by the preachers of the day and stoned for being an alarmist.

Because Abraham’s natural descendents turned a deaf ear to those portions of Scripture that did not suit their political agenda, and to Jesus’ warnings, and to Paul’s warnings, their temple and city were destroyed. **Rejection of the truth did not, and never will annul prophecy.** When disaster finally did strike, it was not basically the Romans, but the fruit of Israel’s own pride that destroyed both the temple and the city of Jerusalem.

Each age has faced the same enemy, but in a different guise. In every case, it was not the enemy **without**, but the enemy **within** the hearts and ranks of God’s professed people, that initiated and brought about their falling away. In the book of Galatians, chapters 3 and 4, the apostle gave an accurate diagnosis of the condition in the Christian church of his day. Is it possible that the heresies he confronted in his day have returned to plague the church in our day? Let’s check a few basic misconceptions that can blind us to the dangers facing the church in our day.

## **#2. Which came first, Judaism or Christianity?**

We have seen that the Christ-centered faith was revealed to Abraham in the Everlasting Covenant. Genesis chapter 15 and Galatians 3:17. See Book #1, chap. 3. **That event preceded the Sinai Covenant by centuries!** How, then, can some preachers today say that the Christ-centered faith was founded on Judaism, which had its roots in the Sinai Covenant? This question should be a “no brainer,” yet it is amazing how many well-meaning people have never even thought about it. Let’s consider a few questions.

Was the New Testament church founded on the Sinai Covenant or on the covenant of Righteousness by Faith that God gave to Abraham?

Did the Apostles and Jewish believers in Jesus Christ ever abandon or separate from the true church that they established?

Isn’t the Church, the bride of Christ, one body composed of both Jews and none-Jews?

Doesn’t the New Testament teach that all racial divisions were torn down by Jesus? Ephesians 2:14-22 is one of numerous passages that makes it clear that in the body of believers called the “church”, race is not a consideration.

Are the believing Jews today, part of the true church? If not, why not?

If the “rapture” is to remove the church from earth, will the believing Jews be taken with the church, or will they be left behind?

According to the “secret rapture” theory, popularized since the 1820’s, which group of Jews will be left behind to evangelize the world, believing Jews or the unbelieving Jews?

Might the term “Gentiles”, as used prophetically, be an inter-racial term referring to any people who prefer man-centered, rather than God-centered religion?

These are some questions that have been glossed over in the past. Before we lock ourselves into a mind set that may not be scriptural, it is only fair to consider all aspects of this subject. The answers may have far reaching implications for our generation.

## **#3. Did God blind His people so they could not receive their Messiah?**

Some people get the weirdest ideas of what God is like. For example, we are sometimes told that the Jews have been "blinded to the Gospel" by God, and that for the past 2000 years they have not been responsible for rejecting Christ as the Messiah. No one stops to explain who blinded them **before** Christ was crucified! These people say that the Jews are the innocent victims of a spiritual blindness that God put on them. “God made them do it”! The texts most often quoted in support of this view are;

*God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes so they could not see and ears so they could not hear, to this very day. Romans 11:8.*

*Israel has experienced hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. Romans 11: 25.*

### **“God Made Me Do It!”**

“Freedom of choice”, especially as pertaining to the Jews, is becoming a hot issue in many Christian circles today. Does the responsibility fall on God when blindness is experienced by rebels? Let us consider a parallel experience. When Pharaoh refused to let Moses lead Israel out of Egyptian bondage, what caused the hardening of his heart? It is taught by some, that God was playing games with Pharaoh. He first told Pharaoh to do something, and then purposely prevented him from doing it. That is not what happened! To explain, let me illustrate with an example from nature.

**The midday sun shines down on some butter and also on a piece of clay. The butter melts, while the clay becomes hard. The same sunshine melts one, but hardens the other. What makes the difference? Does the sun decide which one to melt and which to harden, or is it the nature of the material itself that determines what will happen?**

How can spiritual blindness be removed? Referring to Old Covenant Israel, Paul wrote,

*But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the Old Covenant is read. **It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away.** Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. 2 Corinthians 3:14-17.*

Who hinders people from coming to Christ? The Bible declares in 2 Corinthians 4: 3,4:

*And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. **The god of this age** has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Jesus Christ.*

It is the god of this age, Satan, who blinds people to the Gospel. Jesus said that the Father sends the rain on the just and the unjust. Jesus died for **all** mankind. The Scripture says He is not a respecter of persons. When the Holy Spirit touches our hearts, we will either become hardened, or if we are inclined Godward, we will become pliable and obey the voice of the Spirit. God does not shut anyone out from the benefits available through the sacrifice of His Son. **As God’s love is extended to us, it is the condition of our own hearts that determines whether we become hardened or softened.** Some are hardened in response to God’s love, while others become mellow.

The idea of blaming God for one's disobedience or hardness of heart, was first tried in the Garden of Eden when Adam blamed Eve, then Eve blamed the serpent. Then because God created the serpent, He was considered responsible for the whole Eden tragedy. This idea of

“passing the buck” was popularized in America by a well-known comedian some years ago when he coined the phrase, "**The devil made me do it**". Today some ill-informed Christians use the same reasoning when they say that the Jews cannot help it if they reject the Messiah, because theirs is a case of, "**God made me do it.**"

Presenting the Jews as less than responsible people, who would blame others for their own actions, is absolute nonsense. This would be an insult to any race! Instead of agreeing with God, that “Whosoever will, may come and drink of the water of life freely,” we are insulting the Jews when we say that they are not responsible for their own decisions!

Some even go so far as to teach that it is the responsibility of the Christian church to convince the Jews that Christ is the true Messiah, and if the Jews do not accept the Gospel message, it is the fault of the Christians for not getting through to them. Scripture does not condone the idea of blaming others for our own actions. According to John 1:9, the light of salvation has appeared to **all** people. Jesus never pressured people to accept Him. He only invited, and left the decision up to them.

#### **#4. What did Jesus mean by the prophecy He uttered in Luke 21:24?**

One of the roots for disharmony among Christians revolves around the meaning of a statement attributed to Jesus in Luke 21:24.

*They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.*

Taken in isolation, this text can be given several different meanings. When considered in context, their message is quite clear. Some have imagined that the term when “*the full number of the Gentiles has come in*”, indicates that the responsibility for proclaiming the Gospel to all the world will then be returned to the Jews. **Where does the Bible say that?** That is pure speculation with no basis in scripture! Fruitful communication depends on the Bible’s own definition of the terms used.

Much theology is built on theories as to what Jesus actually meant by that particular prophecy. Let us find a consensus, based on Scriptural definition, of the key words in that text. That, in turn may help us to understand the relationship between the Old Covenant Israel of the pre-cross era, and the New Covenant Israel of the post-cross era.

A popular view is that the “church age”, will be followed by a time when literal Jews will supercede the “church” and for a second time take over the task of evangelizing the world. **Let’s see how Scripture defines the words: “Jerusalem,” “Gentiles,” and “the times of the Gentiles.”**

**What meanings do New Covenant “lenses” reveal in these terms?**

A name that is taken for granted, with little thought as to Bible definition, is the identity of the “Jerusalem” that is spoken of in end-time prophecies. We will again quote Luke 21:24, especially noting the key words in that text. What exactly, in New Covenant terms, do those words mean?

*They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. **Jerusalem** will be trampled on by the **Gentiles** until the **times of the Gentiles** are fulfilled.*

#### **#4. What, or who, does “Jerusalem” refer to?**

As is evident from the verses that immediately follow this prediction by Jesus, He was addressing not only the impending destruction of the city of Jerusalem, but also events that are to occur just before His return in glory. **The second part of the above quotation is used as a link between the events about to occur in that generation, and events relating to the “end of the age”.** The prophetic picture Jesus addressed changed at that point, from the imminent destruction of Jerusalem to a parallel destruction of the world’s systems as we know them today. What was Jesus referring to when He spoke of “Jerusalem”?

There seems little doubt that His primary reference was to the literal city of Jerusalem that was soon to be destroyed. However, that prophetic utterance also appears to have direct reference to events preceding His second coming. How do we know? Please read the verses that follow the above quotation. These are specific to His second coming.

In Galatians 4:25 Paul wrote as follows:

*Now Hagar stands for Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to **the present city of Jerusalem**, because she is in slavery with her children. **But the Jerusalem that is above is free, and she is our mother.***

There is no question that Paul was here referring to two different “cities”, both called Jerusalem.

In Revelation 21:9 and 10 we receive further light on what “Jerusalem” refers to in prophecy. An angel invited John to,

***Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.** And he carried me away in the spirit to a mountain great and high, **and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.***

Here, John identified “Jerusalem” as the bride of Christ, or the true church. This is also borne out by Peter’s statement that the saints are “living stones” of which the New Jerusalem is composed.

*As you come to him, the living Stone - ...you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 2:4,5.*

It is evident from passages similar to the above, that the New Jerusalem is not built of dead stones and mortar as was the earthly city. Jesus is the cornerstone. He is alive! The saints are the living stones God used to create this celestial city. They are alive!

Abraham understood this principle, and that is why his eyes were not on the earthly, but on the heavenly Jerusalem of which he knew he would become an integral part. Hebrews 11:10.

In regard to Luke 21:24, could it be that Jesus was speaking about the spiritual warfare that His church experiences in this life? Revelation 13:7 adds weight to this view. Speaking of the antichrist beast that rules the earth at the present time, John wrote as follows:

*He was given power to make war against the saints and to conquer them.*

As verse 5 indicates, the antichrist forces called “Gentiles” are allowed by God to oppress the saints for a symbolic “forty two months”, or until,

*“the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled”.*

Then, when God’s clock strikes the midnight hour, the time of the antichrist forces (symbolically called “Gentiles”) will be over, and God’s people, the spiritual Jerusalem, will be set free. That is when the stone that Daniel saw cut out of the mountain without hands, will shatter all the structures built by man, and will fill the whole earth.

Now, before we get into an argument over this statement, let us see if we are really communicating, or only defending positions that we have become comfortable with.

Now, let’s get back to the prophetic statement we find in Luke 21:24. It says,  
*...and Jerusalem will be trodden down by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled – completed.*

What does that prophetic statement mean?

Would it be fair to see what meaning Jesus, the Master Teacher, and his disciple gave to the words, “**Jerusalem**” and “**Gentiles**,” and “**Times of the Gentiles**”?

When referring to the capital of Israel, there is no question that the city was called by the name, Jerusalem. This is evident from many statements, such as the challenge that the woman at the well put to Jesus as recorded in John 4: 7-26.

*Our fathers worshipped on this mountain (in Samaria), but you Jews claim that the place we must worship is in Jerusalem.*

To this Jesus replied,

*Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem...God is spirit, and his worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.*

Jesus was plainly taking her focus off any earthly locality, whether Samaria or Jerusalem, and directing her to look heavenward, to the real Jerusalem, the city that Abraham had his

heart set on. See Acts 7:5. God's presence is not confined to a piece of worldly real estate. Any place where God's Spirit is, is holy. **Real Estate is not intrinsically holy!**

### **God's time-line for Jerusalem and the nation of Israel.**

Before the cross, while Old Covenant Israel still had time on their side (the 490 year prophecy of Daniel 9:24 was not yet fulfilled), the earthly Jerusalem still had the potential to become the center out of which the knowledge of salvation through the Messiah would spread throughout the world. Jesus warned, that after Israel would turn their backs on Him for the last time, Jerusalem's days of grace would be gone. After recognizing that the Jews as a nation would reject Him and kill Him, Jesus made this declaration to the Jews:

*Therefore I tell you **that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.** Matthew 21:43.*

Jesus then capped this statement with a reference to Daniel 2:34,35 and 44,45;  
*He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed.* Matthew 21:44.

Here He predicted the crushing of the nation which refused to break in repentance before the Lord. The result would be that together with all the other nations represented by the statue Daniel described, the nation that rejected Him would be crushed and swept away by the wind. That event would be climaxed by God setting up a permanent kingdom which would not be controlled by any nation. **All** the world's systems, political, social and religious will be crushed by the stone Daniel saw cut out of a mountain by an unseen hand. Jesus included the cities of Israel in that final judgment. Matthew 11:20-24, 23: 38.

The New Testament refers to another "Jerusalem" which is not built of dead rocks such as the one in present-day Israel, but of "living stones" that have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the cornerstone around whom the faithful, as living stones, are placed to create a living city, vibrating with divine life. That Jerusalem, of which the earthly Jerusalem was only a shadow, is also called the bride of Christ. Revelation 21:2. 1 Peter 2: 4-7 calls that city of God a spiritual house, ruled not by men, but by God Himself. This will be fully realized when all things will be placed under the feet of Christ. Hebrews 10:12,13.

### **#5. Who are New Testament "Gentiles"?**

Galatians 4:21-31 is probably one of the clearest passages in Scripture that distinguishes between the earthly "shadow" which is called Jerusalem, and the Jerusalem that God recognizes. **In verse 25, Paul equated "the present city of Jerusalem" with Mount Sinai and Hagar.** He called the Jewish rulers in Jerusalem, at the time he wrote, children of Hagar who were still in bondage to a law that Christ had nailed to the cross. **He dared to call the unbelieving Jews, Ishmaelites!** In the language of the day, he said they were Gentiles!

Then in verse 26 he pointed the Christian believers heavenward to the real Jerusalem, which he said is our true mother. That is a living community made up of living saints who

recognized Jesus as the cornerstone of their existence. Being citizens of the earthly city did not give the Jews, or any one else, citizenship in the true Jerusalem. John 1:1-6.

Because of its rejection of the Savior, **Revelation 11:8** equates “the great city” (the earthly Jerusalem) where our Lord was crucified, with “Sodom and Egypt.”

It is evident that just as the New Testament shifts our focus from man’s works to the work that Christ continues to do on our behalf, so also, Jesus and His disciples lifted our eyes from the earthly structures built by man, to the spiritual city created through the blood of Christ. The Jerusalem of the Gospel is not a city built by men, but by God. Therefore, the Jerusalem that was to be trodden on by the heathen is not referring to an earthly city, but to the true church (saints) which has always been under persecution in this world of sin.

Revelation 13:7 also tells us that the beast power of the last days will,  
*make war against the saints and to conquer them.*

It is evident that the persecution the Jews have suffered throughout the ages is but a reflection, or reminder, of the persecution that the saints (the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem) have suffered at the hands of both Jews and non-Jews. As Galatians 4:29 says, Ishmael’s children (Gentiles) always did persecute the children of the free woman. This persecution will continue until Christ sets up His kingdom.

The term “Gentiles” (ethnos in Greek) is a general term used to apply not only to non-Jewish nations, but also to any people outside the family of Christ’s followers. The Jewish community referred to any people outside their genetic bloodline as belonging to the nations, or Gentiles. However, in a spiritual sense, the same word was used to identify any person, **Jewish or none Jewish**, who chose to stay outside the family of Christ. An example is 1 Cor. 5:1.

*It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans (ethnos or Gentiles).*

“Pagans” is another translation of the word “ethnos.” 1 Corinthians 10:20, 12:2, 1Thess. 4:5 and 1 Peter 2:12 also use the same word, ethnos, or Gentiles, in contrast to the local church. In simple language, anyone who rejects Jesus Christ as his redeemer, is a Gentile. Spiritually speaking, a Gentile is an “outsider” or foreigner to the Gospel of Christ, regardless of whether he is of Jewish or of none-Jewish blood. In the sight of God, the only blood that carries any merit is the blood of Jesus Christ.

In the New Covenant there is no distinction between people on the basis of race or sex as there was under the Old Covenant. The only distinction God recognizes in the human family today is between those who receive His Son and those who consciously reject His Son. All racial divisions have been removed at the cross. There is no Jew or Gentile in the body of Christ!

*For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by*

*abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. Ephesians 2:14-16.*

An example of how deeply the idea of racial exclusiveness had become ingrained even in the minds of the disciples, is found in Matthew chapter 15, verses 21 to 28. A so-called Gentile woman came to Jesus asking Him to heal her daughter. Knowing the prejudice that was in the hearts of the Jewish by-standers, as well as in the minds of His disciples, Jesus responded not only for the benefit of the Canaanite woman, but for His own followers. His disciples urged Him to send her away because she was becoming a nuisance. In other words, they did not consider her worthy of Jesus' time. So He addressed their prejudices first. They thought He came only for the Jews, so He spoke out their mindset:

*I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.*

In reality Jesus was sent to minister and plant the Gospel of salvation among the Jews first. His purpose was to give them the privilege fulfilling the promise given to Abraham, that they could be His light bearers to the whole world, but the Jews mistook privilege for status, and because of pride and exclusivity, aborted their mission.

It is also important to notice who Jesus called the **“lost sheep”**. He said that it was the Israelites who were lost! He began His mission by gathering together twelve of those lost sheep, and transforming them into a company that shook the world. The majority who remained outside that fold eventually condemned Him and His followers to death.

How did Jesus' response to the woman who came for help harmonize with His **inclusive** mission as Redeemer of the whole world? John 3:16,17 states that the purpose of Jesus coming to earth was to save all people.

*For God so loved the **world** that he gave his one and only son, that **whoever believes in him** shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to **save the world** through him.*

Jesus was not contradicting the stated purpose His divine mission. He was not denying that so-called “Gentile” woman His divine love just because of the Jews' racial prejudice. **In healing her daughter His purpose was to create an even greater healing in the hearts of His own disciples, and prepare them to take the Gospel to the whole world.**

After His first apparent rebuff to the woman, He spoke out their venomous prejudice revealing their own thoughts, by implying that she was a dog. The humility with which she accepted the rebuke was a sharp contrast to the pride in the hearts of the disciples. By granting her request in this manner, Jesus performed a deep surgery in the hearts of His disciples. He began preparing them to take the Gospel of love to the whole world without prejudice.

Just as Jesus' ministry made no distinctions based on race, or on any other human trait, so also, the community of the saints who are called the "**bride**" and "**wife**" of Christ, are also referred to as the "**New Jerusalem.**" Revelation 21: 2,9,10 say that these are one and the same.

The saints, the true Jerusalem, are not divided by race or sex. **Only Gentiles are divided.** The saints are one body, united in Christ.

*Here there is no Greek, or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and in us all. Colossians 3:11.*

However, **writing in the colloquialism of the day**, while there was still a strong tradition of assessing one another by what race that they belonged to, Paul used the terms, "Gentiles" and "Jews" only to emphasize the truth that in Christ that divisive distinction has been done away. An example of this is Colossians 1:27 where Paul used that term to make the point that part of the mystery of salvation was the transformation of the two separated groups into one united family.

#### **#6. The time of the Gentiles is over.**

In this New Covenant era, who are the Gentiles or outsiders? Those who are not in Christ! So, when we read that the saints (the true Jerusalem) will be trodden on by the Gentiles (God's enemies) until their times are fulfilled, we understand that to be the time when God says, enough is enough, and He will put an end to sin. That is also the time when the stone that Daniel saw cut out of the mountain without hands, will strike the image on the feet, and the whole Gentile system, political, social and religious, will crumble into dust. That is when the saints, the New Jerusalem, are given dominion on earth. **The time of the Gentiles (sinners) will be over!** The true Israel, the New Covenant Israel, will then follow the Lamb of God wherever He goes.

Daniel 9:24-27 (this prophecy is studied in detail in our Book #3 – ANCIENT NATIONS RISE TO STRIKE AGAIN) also casts light on the question as to what "the times of the Gentiles" may refer to. In that prophecy we found that God gave to literal Israel a specific time frame within which they were to accomplish the purpose for which they had been selected for a special purpose.

In Daniel 9: 24 God outlined their specific assignment. They were commanded to do the following:

1. finish transgression,
2. stop their continuous pattern of sinning,
3. put an end to wickedness,
4. give evidence of a life of righteousness,
5. seal, or bind, the vision of their true calling in their hearts and most of all,
6. be prepared to anoint the most holy One, Christ, when He appears as the Messiah.

To accomplish this they were granted one final extension of time. Read the first phrase of verse 24. At the command to re-build the temple in Jerusalem God's clock would start ticking, and in exactly 483 years from that point in time, the Messiah would appear, and they were to be ready to accept Him, and to anoint Him, as Redeemer and Lord.

God's time clock began marking off the years when Ezra was commissioned to restore the temple worship in Jerusalem in the year 457 BC. Then exactly when Jesus was baptized and was anointed to begin His ministry in 27 AD, The final seven year period of the time allotted to the Jews began. Then, precisely 3 ½ years later, right in the middle of that final seven-year period (the 70<sup>th</sup> week), Jesus was cut off and crucified just as predicted in verse 26. He was rejected by the Jewish nation, but the atoning sacrifice for the whole world was made as His blood was shed for the redemption of mankind.

Finally, at the end of the 490 year extension of time that God had decreed for natural Israel to complete its commission, they drove the final nail into their own coffin by stoning Stephen, the first Christian martyr. That marked the end of Israel's calling to represent God's **all-inclusive love** to the world. They had failed in their mission, and as Jesus foretold, the kingdom was given to others. Matthew 21:43 and 23: 37-38.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem as He pronounced the verdict:

*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, **your house is left to you desolate.** Matthew 23:37,38.*

This marked the end of the earthly Jerusalem's spiritual significance, and of Old-Covenant Israel's place as carriers of the Gospel of faith to all nations. After that point in time, **the term "Israel" was used to refer to Abraham's spiritual children**, or those born of the Spirit. Likewise, **"Jerusalem" refers to the living body of saints** (except when specifically referring to the city that rejected Christ), who together under Christ, form a spiritual house where God's Spirit reigns.

Before we leave the subject of Daniel's prophecy, it is important not to miss the impact of verse 44 in chapter 2:

*In the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, **nor will it be left to another people.***

This closes the door on any idea that after "the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled", the following kingdom will be one that is dominated by another nation, Jewish or otherwise! The Jewish nation has had its turn for roughly 1500 years. The rest of the nations (nominal church) have had their turn. Humanity demonstrated that it cannot bring in righteousness! Now, God will take direct control and bring in the reign of unity and peace. The kingdom will not be left to another people!

The apostle Paul summarized this truth very concisely in Romans 9: 6-9.

*It is not as though God's word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned." In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.*

Just in case someone may be reading the above statement through pre-colored glasses, I will quote the same passage from the Message Bible which reflects its true meaning.

*Don't suppose for a moment, though, that God's Word has malfunctioned in some way or other. The problem goes back a long way. From the outset, not all Israelites of the flesh were Israelites of the spirit. **It wasn't Abraham's sperm that gave identity here, but God's promise.** Remember how it was put: "Your family will be defined by Isaac"? That means that **Israelite identity was never racially transmitted by sexual transmission, but it was God-determined by promise...** And that's not the only time. To Rebecca, also, a promise was made that took priority over genetics.*

When studying the chapters that follow Romans chapter 9, in which Paul defined what he meant by the term "**Israel**", it is well to remember his definition of the word "Israel". Unless otherwise indicated, **he applies the name "Israel" to the saints, Jewish and non-Jewish, who make up the true New Covenant Israel.** Paul was very careful to define his terms, especially what he meant by "Israel", before his exhortation in chapter eleven.

The spirit of antichrist, which John recognized even in his day (1 John 4:3), has during, and ever since that time, persecuted the church. In America, that persecution is not yet open hostility, but anyone who dares question the establishment soon discovers what it means to be marginalized or shunned.

The Jerusalem that is above, is the home that Abraham looked for. It was not the stones and mortar of an earthly city that has twice been completely destroyed along with its temporary temple. The real Holy City, is really the saints in whom Christ dwells by His Holy Spirit. We are the temples of God which make up that Holy City! Acts 7:48, 1 Corinthians 3: 16,17. At the present time God is allowing this true Jerusalem to be downtrodden by the antichrist spirit. Matthew 10:22, 24:9 and Revelation 13:7. Historically, God's saints have never been welcomed in this old world. The saints may be compared to salt, but to the wicked they are like salt in the eyes.

When the King of the New Jerusalem comes to complete His bride, by uniting the living saints with those who have preceded us, their time of waiting on earth will also be fulfilled. They will no longer be downtrodden. They will no longer be pilgrims longing for home. We will all have arrived! The prayer of Christ for a united body will be fully and openly

answered, and the saints will at last dwell together as members of our Mother City in heaven. That Jerusalem will never again be divided!

Why do so many of us find it so difficult to let go old concepts, even when we see they are flawed? Let us see how Paul struggled with the same mental blocks.

### **What were Paul's (Saul's) reasons for persecuting the followers of Christ?**

- 1) He loved God passionately.
- 2) He loved and obeyed the Scriptures as he understood them.
- 3) He was submissive to, and supportive of the established religious authority.
- 4) He championed the fight against anything the priests and Rabbis called heresy.
- 5) He considered Christ's emphasis on salvation through faith alone, as detrimental to the Mosaic Covenant that put the emphasis on keeping the law.
- 6) He realized that the teachings of Christ were incompatible with Judaism, and he recognized that **one or the other must go**.

### **Paul's reasons for opposing the teachings of Christ:**

- 1) Christ did not hesitate to correct God's "appointed" leaders.
- 2) Christ did not seem interested in delivering Israel from Roman domination.
- 3) Christ predicted the destruction of their center of worship, the temple itself.
- 4) Christ predicted the destruction of Jerusalem.
- 5) Christ extended the hand of redemption to sinners, while Judaism practiced exclusiveness from anyone they considered unclean.
- 6) Christ taught the equality of all races before God, while the Jews considered themselves to be favored to rule over all other ethnic or racial groups.
- 7) Christ emphasized the equality of men and women before God.
- 8) Christ emphasized the "New Birth" as the entrance into the kingdom of God. The Jews considered birth into Jacob's natural lineage, with circumcision, as the entrance to God's kingdom.

9) Paul had been so engrossed with the covenant of works that God gave to Moses on Mount Sinai, that the Abrahamic Covenant of Faith was relegated to the shadows of his mind.

### **A Hot Potato.**

The book of Galatians can be summarized in three words: **GOD HATES MIXTURES!**

In Revelation 3: 16 God said,

*So, because you are lukewarm - neither hot nor cold - I am about to spit you out of my mouth.*

Galatians starts with the same warning:

*I am surprised and astonished that you are so quickly turning renegade and deserting Him who invited and called you by the grace of Christ, the Messiah, [and that you are transferring your allegiance] to a different, even an opposition gospel.*

Galatians 1:6. (AMP)

An understanding of the Greek language helps us to get the real flavor of Paul's words. He said that the **perverted gospel**, which was being presented by the opponents of his teachings, was **not** another gospel of the same kind, but rather a gospel of a totally **different or opposing nature**. As we shall see, this **hybrid gospel** was a mixture of the outdated wine of the Old Covenant, with the effervescent wine of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul said that the two just don't mix!

Some claim that Paul was a renegade who twisted the Scriptures, and the teachings of Christ, to create a breach in Judaism and establish a following for himself. They argue that he placed Old Testament passages in a new light, thus undermining the Jewish faith.

### **Abraham knew that "The Seed" referred to Christ.**

For example; in Galatians chapter 3:16, Paul says that the "Seed" referred to in Genesis 22:18, did not refer to Abraham's natural posterity, as many preachers still teach, but to the one "SEED", who is Christ. His interpretation of that text challenged the heart of Judaism, which still holds that God was referring to Abraham's literal descendants. That red flag was enough to warrant a call to arms by his enemies! His critics overlooked the fact that Paul was quoting from their own Scriptures! That is exactly what Genesis 3:15 says, where God said that the woman's "Seed" referring to Christ, would crush the serpent's head! John 8:56.

That was the same "Seed" Paul was referring to. This statement by Paul was based first on Scripture, and then supported by revelation.

**Where did Paul get his revelations?** In Galatians 1:11,12. (AMP) we read,

*For I want you to know, brethren, that the Gospel which was proclaimed and made known by me is not man's gospel, - a human invention,...For indeed I did not receive it from man, nor*

*was I taught it; [it came to me] through a [direct] revelation  
[given] by Jesus Christ, the Messiah.*

Is it Scriptural that new revelations with ever-deepening insights should come to the New Covenant church? The New Testament faith is built on the premise that a living God will continue to direct His people to **new heights of glory** for His name's sake. In fact, continuing revelations and communication from heaven are the foundation of New Covenant Israel! That was fundamental to the faith which Jesus and the Apostles re-introduced. This experience is today realized by people who simply **believe with anticipation** that God still communicates with His people as He did in pre-Mosaic times.

Acts chapter 2, verses 17 and 18 summarize the experience known as Pentecost, with these words;

*In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. (See Joel 2:28).*

Paul was not the only recipient of fresh manna for the new church. As the Holy Spirit moved on the apostles' hearts, they all learned to share the same convictions. Paul could never have moved forward with enlightenment and emphasis on progressive growth, without the support of men like Peter, John, James and Barnabas.

### **Apostles cope with “state religion”.**

According to Paul, the established state religion had become so cemented in the minds of the Jewish leaders, that even their own Messiah could not move them. **That is what caused the split in their ranks.** God is not static! **God is not dead!** God wants to move His people ever onward and upward, and unless we follow the progressive leading of the Lord by His Spirit, we will fail to hear the Shepherd's voice. Read John 10:3. If God has nothing further to tell us, as some theologians insist, why do we need to hear and recognize His voice? The Christ-centered faith is a progressive faith. It is not static!

Paul taught that when Christ came, He came not only to **“confirm”** the Abrahamic (Everlasting) Covenant of faith, but to put an end to the Old Sinai Covenant of works. That shocked the Jewish leaders! They had twisted the Scriptures to make it appear that the Abrahamic Covenant of faith was incomplete, and that the Sinai Covenant was needed to complete it. This created a hybrid religion that proved more dangerous than outright paganism. Gal.4:8-11.

His clarifications showed that Jesus Christ had fulfilled (completed) every “jot and tittle” of the Old (Mosaic) Covenant. Although Paul's revelations should have clarified our understanding of the covenants for all time, many, even today, are still trying to combine the two.

The book of Galatians condenses the whole of the New Testament into one shining nugget. It is also a crisp summary of Paul's conversion and ministry. Here Paul expresses his hope for his Jewish brethren, and also his fears that future generations may become hardened in their old traditions, and fail to enter into the rest that Christ made available by His death and resurrection.

### **Paul's Credentials**

Paul's opening defense of his stand for Christ is stated clearly in the last part of Galatians chapter one. He makes it abundantly clear that his commission did not come from men, nor did his doctrine come from an accredited seminary, but from God, by revelation.

*I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.*  
Galatians 1:11,12.

### **Unity – The heart of Paul's mission.**

The new focus of Paul's ministry was to help bring reality to the prayer of Christ, that all, whether Jew or Gentile, might become one people under Creator God. According to 1Thessalonians 2:15,16, Paul's call for harmony between Jews and Gentiles, proved to be the main reason why he was persecuted by his natural brethren. That was also one of Paul's reasons for writing this epistle.

For 1500 years since Moses, the Judaic system had failed to bring peace to that troubled nation. Not only was Israel's strength being sapped by international conflicts, but inter-tribal warfare only subsided when their existence was threatened by outside enemies. It was evident that something was not right. When Paul realized that Christ was truly the Prince of Peace, and that He regarded all races as equal in God's sight, he knew that God had given to all mankind the key to healing the world's ills. Jesus Christ was the answer. The key to finding peace on earth was to first find peace with God the Creator, through Jesus Christ, the promised Messiah, who is the Prince of Peace.

### **Infiltration by spies.**

Galatians chapter 2 begins by telling us how Paul went to Jerusalem after fourteen years of working in Syria and Cilicia. He was led by the Holy Spirit to bond together with the other leaders in the Faith. Immediately he had to deal with spies who envied the new-found freedom of the followers of Christ, pressuring them to get circumcised. Their priority was to appease the traditional Jews, and thus preserve their exclusiveness, even at the expense of alienating Gentile believers. In verse 5 Paul says,

***We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.***

The challenge to compromise by being "politically correct" is not a new invention. It existed from the beginning of time, and was definitely "alive" in Paul's generation.

In verses 6-10 we see the gifts of wisdom and revelation in operation as the body of believers agreed that God had called some to minister to the Jews, while Paul and Barnabas were given a special anointing to minister to the Gentiles.

Then we read (with a little smug satisfaction) that even Peter, the champion of champions, was just as human as we are. Under pressure from Messianic Jews, who believed that the Gospel of Jesus Christ could be molded into Judaism, or visa versa, he slipped into a little hypocrisy. When he thought that he was unobserved, he fellowshiped and ate freely with his Gentile brothers. But when in the presence of brethren who were trying to walk in both covenants, he refused to eat with Gentiles. He was afraid of antagonizing his former associates. Paul rebuked him openly, and challenged him to stop walking the fence like a coward! Peter repented.

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**Herald:** “How many of you found this chapter was quite a pill to swallow?”

**Rabbi Benjamin:** “I have always made allowance for my fellow Jews who do not accept the Messiah, on grounds that God put blinders on them so that they could not see the Gospel light even if they wanted to. Now I’m shocked to see how blind I have been, to think that Jesus would die to save us, and then deliberately make it impossible for us to accept that salvation. This is a perfect example how dangerous it can be to casually take isolated texts out of context, and create a theology around them. No wonder that there is so much confusion among Christians.”

**Professor Clarity:** “The part that really challenged me, was the discussion on Jesus statement in Luke 21:24. I had never considered that certain Old Testament terms had a new, or different, application when used in the context of the New Covenant. I’ve read this several times, and I can see now, that the name ‘Jerusalem’ is also applied to the saints of God. But I must admit that my mental computer resists being re-programmed. I can begin to empathize with the early Christians who had to deal with the same challenges.”

**Rabbi Benjamin:** “If I hadn’t first studied the author’s book #1, *Abraham, Messenger to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, I think I would have difficulty understanding some of these concepts. The definition of ‘Gentiles’ really shook me. Without giving it any thought I just presumed that “Gentiles” always referred to anyone not of Jewish blood. It really shocked me to realize that the term is also used to identify any person, of any race, who refuses to accept the Son of God as his, or her, redeemer. I think that definition is Scriptural, but it rather scares me. How many more pegs am I required to move?”

**Reporter Hunt:** “It is evident that Paul was directly challenging the ‘Judeo-Christian’ concept. It shocks me to find such a direct challenge in the New Testament! I’m not a theologian, but I thought the Judeo-Christian concept was entirely Scriptural. On the surface of it, the term ‘Judeo-Christianity’ seems to make so much sense!”

**Reporter Holmes:** “I thought that New Age ideas were just emerging recently. Paul talks of bewitching ideas in his time. Is ‘New Age’ really that old? Did Paul have to cope with it back then?”

**Herald:** “Would someone like to comment on Paul’s reasons for his obvious concern? Would depending on works of the law, as well as on grace, nullify a person’s salvation?”

**Professor Clarity:** “Doesn’t the concept of salvation through faith alone, set the Christ-centered faith apart from every other world religion? If this is true, how can we expect other religions to find harmony with the Christ-centered faith without losing their own foundations?”

**Herald:** “Still another question, my friends; in view of this, is there any hope of uniting the world under the banner of a common religion?”

**Hunt:** “Since the 911 episode, encouraging the different religions to accommodate one another, seems to have become a popular trend. I also wonder, how will the Christ-centered faith fit into this move toward unity? This issue will have to be faced before long.”

**Rabbi Benjamin:** “As Messianic Jews we have felt that our brothers could not be held responsible for not accepting Christ, because we thought the Bible said that God hardened their hearts. However, the writer pointed to texts such as 2 Corinthians 4: 3,4 which bluntly state that it was Satan, the god of this age, who blinded the minds of those who consciously decided to reject truth, so that they could not see the light. That puts a whole new slant on the picture, doesn’t it?”

**Holmes:** “The illustration of the sun’s effect on butter and clay seems to clarify that concept as far as I am concerned.”

**Benjamin:** “One of the main reasons conservative Jews still do not accept the New Testament, is because Jesus and all the New Testament writers seem to contradict Old Testament traditions which they say ended at the cross. If such is really the case, then we are being introduced to a refreshingly new harmony.”

**Herald:** “Here is something for you to consider. Since the beginning of time, people have tried to come into harmony, using every conceivable method imaginable. The problem is that the proposed solutions have been as varied and self-serving as the people themselves. Are we willing to admit that, ‘the leopard cannot change his own spots’? Would another 6000 years make any difference? Must the Prince of Peace, who gave us the Golden Rule, impose an end to the rule of violence?”

**Hunt:** “If nations, as well as individuals, persist in their present courses, I see no end to trouble until the Almighty says, ‘enough is enough’. When will we ever learn? This world surely needs the Prince of Peace instead of the god of war.”