

SPIRITUAL ISRAEL

***Out of All Nations
Or
Out of the Nation of Israel?***

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SPIRITUAL ISRAEL:

Out of All Nations or Out of the Nation of Israel?

A large segment of Christianity is being taught that God no longer has a plan for *physical Israel* under the New Covenant, and that He is now working with only a *spiritual Israel*.

Many Christians attempt to use Galatians 3:26-29 as justification for this "spiritual Israel" doctrine:

For ye are all the children of God by faith in [the] Christ Jesus.* For as many of you as have been baptized into [the] Christ have put on [the] Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in [the] Christ Jesus. And if ye be [the] Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:26-29)**

*Yeshua is the Hebrew spelling of our Savior's name and is the author's preference. For a more detailed explanation, read our tract *The Sacred Names of God*.

** All Scripture quoted from King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Many Judeo-Christian writers conclude that the above passage proves that God is no longer working with physical Israel under the New Covenant, but only with a spiritual Israel (people from all races of mankind who have been saved in Yeshua the Christ). Leonard C. Lee in his book, *Clouds Over America*, wrote the following concerning physical Israelites under the New Covenant:

God rejected the Israelites as a nation. [1](#)

The Israelites have now passed off the stage of action. [2](#)

Their nationality is of no significance in

the ultimate purposes of God.3

Mr. Lee further concluded:

Since God rejected the Israelites as a nation, we can look for the fulfillment of His purposes only in spiritual Israel.4

Mr. Lee then attempted to explain how this takes place, using Galatians 3:26-29 to support his claims:

Those [of other races] who are grafted into Christ, the root, the true vine, will become spiritual Israel and will receive all the blessings and promises made to ancient Israel.5

In his book *Just Before Dawn*, Cornelius Vanderbreggen Jr. wrote:

Here [Galatians 3:26-29] are words addressed not to physical descendants of

Abraham, but to saved [non-Israelite] Gentiles. They are informed that because of their faith in Jesus Christ they are Abraham's seed. In other words, spiritually they are his descendants or his children, for they have believed in the same One in Whose coming he believed!

[6](#)

Dr. Ed Moore wrote the following in his periodical *The Last Trump*:

Hence, we can begin to see that being the children of Abraham has nothing to do with race.[7](#)

Even the Catholics make the same claim. Pope Pius XI is quoted as saying:

Spiritually, we [anyone of any race who has come to Christ] are Semites.[8](#)

As a minister who once taught this "spiritual

Israel" doctrine, I feel it is imperative to take a closer look at this passage and at the arguments employed by those trying to justify the teaching of a "spiritual Israel" under the New Covenant. However, before doing so it should first be understood that even *if* this particular passage does seem to spiritualize Israel, it does not invalidate the sixty or more New Testament passages that clearly deal with Israel on a physical basis.*

*Please refer to Chapter 2 of *God's Covenant People - Yesterday, Today and Forever* for a list of sixty New Testament passages that clearly teach God's New Coveant plan for *physical* Israel.

Taking the foregoing into consideration, we can now ask: "Does this passage spiritualize Israel in the sense that many modern-day preachers and Christians claim?"

Definitions

Those who believe in and teach a "spiritual Israel" under the New Covenant will find that *their* interpretation of this passage in Galatians is totally dependent upon *their* definitions of the words "Jew" and "Greek." They *assume* the word "Jew" is synonymous with the term Israel or Israelites - descendants of any or all of the twelve sons of Jacob. They also *assume* that the word "Greek," when used in contrast to the word "Jew," means any or all non-Israelites.

IF THEIR DEFINITIONS FOR THESE TWO WORDS ARE CORRECT, THEN THEIR INTERPRETATION OF THIS PASSAGE IS ALSO CORRECT!

However, it must also be understood that:

IF THEIR DEFINITIONS FOR THESE TWO WORDS ARE INCORRECT, THEN THEY HAVE ARRIVED AT THE WRONG CONCLUSION!

As an example, if your mother had taught you when you were a child that a turkey walked on four legs, had a tail, and said "moo," then more than likely whenever you spoke of turkeys you would be making erroneous conclusions based on the original definitions given to you by your mother. Initially, it would be difficult to convince you that your basic understanding of turkeys was incorrect because your mother (preachers, college professors, denominations, etc.) couldn't be wrong! How much more so if a whole society had been taught the same way? However, the number of people, and so-called authorities, who falsely believe and teach a lie does not make it true.

This is exactly the scenario we find ourselves

in today. Modern-day teachers have taught that all Israelites are Jews, and that everyone else is either a Gentile or a Greek. However, the commonly accepted definitions of "Jew," "Gentile," and "Greek" are incorrect. Once the correct definitions are given, a different light is shed on Galatians 3:26-29 and on the remainder of Scripture as well.

Correct Definitions

JEWS - The Biblical use of the word "Jew(s)" refers to the descendants of the house of Judah which was composed primarily of the two tribes Judah and Benjamin. The word "Jew(s)" *never* refers to all twelve tribes as a whole or to the ten-tribed house of Israel.*

*For a more exhaustive explanation please refer to Chapter 1 of *God's Covenant People - Yesterday, Today and Forever*.

GREEKS - For the most part, the word "Greek(s)" is used in the Bible interchangeably with the word "Gentile(s)" as illustrated in 1 Corinthians and several other locations:

For indeed Jews ask for signs, and **Greeks** search for wisdom; but we preach [the] Christ crucified, to Jews a

stumbling block, and to **Gentiles** foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and **Greeks**, [the] Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Corinthians 1:22-24, NASV)

Consequently, the word "Greek" in Galatians 3:28 could be replaced with "Gentile" without doing harm to the intent or meaning of Galatians 3:26-29.

GENTILES - The word "ethnos," from which the word "Gentile(s)" is derived, has at least five Biblical applications:

1. Translated "gentiles" - used in reference to non-Israelites - Acts 7:45.
2. Translated "gentiles" - used in reference to heathens - I Corinthians 12:2.
3. Translated "nations" - used in reference to a multitude of people; specifically the whole

human race - Acts 17:26.

4. Translated "nation" - used in reference to the Jewish people, descendants of the house of Judah - Luke 7:3-5.

5. Translated "Gentiles" - used in reference to Israelites, descendants of the house of Israel. Romans 9:24.*

*For a more exhaustive explanation please refer to Chapter 1 of *God's Covenant People - Yesterday, Today and Forever*.

As can be seen, there is more than one possible application for the word "ethnos." It can refer to either Israelites or non-Israelite gentiles. It is foolish, if not dishonest, for anyone to randomly select the interpretation which happens to suit his doctrinal position and apply it to a particular passage. The context must be taken into consideration and

studied to determine which of the interpretations is the correct application.

The Context of Galatians

So what does the context of Galatians tell us about these Greeks or Gentiles? We should begin by asking: "To whom was the book of Galatians written?"

Paul, an apostle ... and all the brethren which are with me, unto **the churches of Galatia**. (Galatians 1:1-2)

With the understanding that the word "church" means those "called out" or "saved in Yeshua," it is obvious that the Apostle Paul was addressing this epistle to those of Galatia who had responded to the call of salvation. We must now ask, "Who were these Galatians who responded to the gospel?" If we turn to the first epistle written by the Apostle Peter we find an important clue in answering this second question:

Peter, an apostle of Jesus [the] Christ, to the **strangers scattered** throughout Pontus, **Galatia**, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.... (1 Peter 1:1)

The phrase "strangers scattered" is also rendered "sojourners of the dispersion," [9](#) "Israelite resident(s) in Gentile countries," [10](#) and is the same Greek noun as found in James 1:1:

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus [the] Christ, to **the twelve tribes which are scattered** [dispersed, NASV] **abroad**, greeting.

With this understanding, 1 Peter 1:1 can be interpreted and understood to say:

Peter ... to the strangers, **Israelites of the dispersion** scattered throughout Pontus, **Galatia**, Cappadocia, Asia, and

Bithynia....

Many of the Israelites, after being taken captive by the Assyrians, migrated and made their residence in the country of Galatia. These Israelites were some of the people Peter addressed in his first epistle. Thus it would be safe to say that when the Apostle Paul, who was contemporary with the Apostle Peter, wrote to those in Galatia, he was writing to some of these same people. This, alone, does not prove that the "Greeks" mentioned in Galatians 3:28 were Israelite Gentiles, but it certainly deserves consideration in our attempt to discover their identity. Let us now examine the context of Galatians 3:

Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. (Galatians 3:7)

This verse is also often quoted in an attempt to

spiritualize Israel in the New Testament. But this verse taken alone as it is translated in our modern English versions of the Bible does not support the concept that Israel is merely spiritual. *If* the word "they" spoken of in this verse refers to non-Israelite Gentiles, then one must conclude that the *children of Abraham* are *spiritual children* rather than *physical children*. On the other hand, *if* the word "they" refers to literal Israelites from either the house of Judah or the house of Israel, then one must conclude that only those physical Israelites who are of faith are to be considered *true children of Abraham*. The remaining physical Israelites would be an anathema, just as the house of Israel had become when God divorced her (Jeremiah 3:8; etc.) at an earlier time in her history.

Nothing can be proven by proponents of either position using this verse as it is translated in most of our modern-day English versions.

However, if one takes a look at *The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament* by Pastor Alfred Marshall, another clue is provided which helps determine the correct interpretation:

Know ye then that the [ones] of faith, **these sons** are of Abraham.[11](#) (Galatians 3:7)

In other words, those who are already physical sons (Israelites) *and* who are of faith are reckoned as being *truly* "of Abraham."

We find a similar expression in 1 Peter 3 which acts as an additional witness:

Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear. (1 Peter 3:6, NASV)

Peter wrote his first epistle to Israelites of the dispersion; consequently, verse 6 can be interpreted and understood to say:

...you [who are the physical daughters of Sarah] have [truly] become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear. (1 Peter 3:6)

Even when using the literal translation of Galatians 3:7 we are not provided enough evidence to determine the correct application for the word "Greek" in verse 28. Therefore, further study in Galatians 3 is necessary:

But before faith came, **we** were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the Law was **our** schoolmaster to bring us unto [the] Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, **we** are no

longer under a schoolmaster. (Galatians 3:23-25)

Who are the "we" whom Paul is addressing in these verses? Clearly they are the same people as the "ye" (you) whom he addresses in verses 26 and 27:

For **ye** are all the children of God by faith in [the] Christ Jesus. For as many of **you** as have been baptized into [the] Christ have put on [the] Christ.
(Galatians 3:26-27)

The "ye" in verses 26 and 27 is represented as either "Jew" or "Greek" in verse 28; thus we can safely conclude that the "we" of verses 23-25 are both Jews and Greeks. Paul described those people, who are both Jews and Greeks, as being "under the law." Which people had been given the law or were considered under the law? This description fits only one group of

people - Israel. Consider carefully the Scriptures quoted below:

Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance [possession, NASV] **of the congregation of Jacob.**

(Deuteronomy 33:4)

For He established a testimony in Jacob, and **appointed a law in Israel**, which He commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children. (Psalm 78:5)

...who are **Israelites, to whom pertaineth** [belongs, NASV] the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and **the giving of the law**, and the service of God, and the promises. (Romans 9:4)

Those Scriptures plainly teach what every

preacher across this land already knows: the Law was given to the Israelites, it belonged to them, and they were under its requirements. It not only was given to the Israelites as their possession, it was given *exclusively* to Israelites as their possession. This exclusiveness is made clear in the following passage:

He sheweth his words to Jacob, his statutes and his judgments ["laws," Moffatt translation], **unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments** ["commands," Moffatt translation], **they have not known them.** Praise Yah! (Psalm 147:19-20)

This irrefutable evidence correctly identifies the "Greek(s)" of Galatians 3:28. They can be no one else but Israelite Gentiles. Let us look at further evidence which confirms this

conclusion. In our examination of the context thus far, we have reviewed the three verses immediately preceding the passage in question. Let us now examine the five verses which immediately follow it:

Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.
(Galatians 4:1-5)

We are provided with three clues in this passage. "**Under the law**" is the first clue

which has already been reviewed from verses 23-25.

The second clue is uncovered when we are told that Yeshua came to "**REDEEM them that were under the law.**" Notice it says nothing about redeeming those who were not under the Law. Why not? Why would Yeshua not want to redeem non-Israelites as well? Simply put, He could not! He *could purchase* them, but He *could not redeem* them. The reason is simple when one understands that the word "redeem" means to "buy back". Only people who had once been the possession of Yahweh could be bought back or redeemed. Which people had previously been Yahweh's possession?

"... 'Now therefore, if ye will obey my [Yahweh's] voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be **a peculiar treasure** [possession, NASV] **unto me**

above all people; for all the earth is mine; and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the **children of Israel.**" (Exodus 19:5-6)

For thou [Israel, see Deuteronomy 6:4] art an holy people unto YHWH thy God; YHWH thy God hath chosen thee to be **a special people unto himself** [a people for His own possession, NASV], **above all people that are upon the face of the earth.** (Deuteronomy 7:6)

It is quite clear, only Israelites had been the "possession" of Yahweh, and only Israelites who had subsequently been divorced and rejected by Yahweh could be bought back or redeemed by Yahweh. Both Old and New Testaments attest to the accuracy of these statements:

"And the **Redeemer** shall come to Zion,
and **unto them that turn from
transgression in Jacob**, saith YHWH.
(Isaiah 59:20)

Blessed be the Lord God of **Israel**, for
he hath visited and **redeemed his
people**. (Luke 1:68)

But we [the two on the road to Emmaus
with Yeshua after His resurrection]
trusted that it had been **he** [Yeshua]
which should have redeemed Israel.
(Luke 24:21)

Once again we have evidence which points us
to the correct choice in identifying the
"Greeks" spoken of in Galatians 3. They must
be Israelite Gentiles because only Israelites
could be redeemed by Yeshua.

The third clue is found in the word "**adoption**."

To whom do the Scriptures say the adoption belongs?

Who are **Israelites, to whom pertaineth** [belongs, NASV] **the adoption**, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and service of God, and the promises.
(Romans 9:4)

It is conceded that this verse does not harmonize with what many Christians have been taught concerning the adoption, i.e., that anyone of any race can receive the adoption. However, I hope that you are honest enough to lay aside any previously held misconceptions and to accept what the Apostle Paul clearly teaches. With this evidence from Romans 9:4, only one conclusion can be drawn concerning the identity of the Gentiles (Greeks) in Galatians 3 - they are Israelites to whom "belongs the

adoption."

The context of Galatians 3 helps us to correctly identify the Gentiles as Israelites. This conclusion is supported by the Apostle John:

The Jews therefore said to one another, "Where does this man intend to go that we shall not find him? He is not intending to go to the **dispersion** ["Israelite resident(s) in Gentile countries." Strong's Exhaustive Concordance] **among the Greeks**, and teach **the Greeks**, is He?" (John 7:35, NASV)

In addition to the previous three clues, note the emphasis placed on the words "if" and "then" in verse 29 of Galatians 3:

And *if* ye be [the] Christ's, *then* are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:29)

Keeping in mind what we have already discovered, we can understand this verse to say: "Only Israelites (either Jews or Gentiles) *in the Christ* are reckoned as true descendants of Abraham." In other words, Paul was dealing with Jewish [Judahite] Israelites who were under the misconception that simply being a physical descendant was all that was necessary to be considered an heir of the promises. In contrast, Paul is pointing out that physical descent alone is not enough under the New Covenant. Physical descendants are *only* considered "heirs according to the promise" *if* they are *also* spiritual sons of Abraham through salvation in Yeshua the Christ.

This is not to say that people of other races could not and cannot become proselytes to the covenants which belong to the Israelites (Isaiah 56:3-7, etc.) and thus receive benefits derived from those Covenants. However, one

does not have to distort Galatians 3:26-29 in order to prove that point.

In conclusion, Paul once again states:

For ye are all the children of God by faith in [the] Christ Jesus.... (Galatians 3:26)

The "ye" (you) in verse 26 is identified in verse 28 as being:

1) "Jews" who are descendants from the house of Judah, and

2) "Greeks" who (in this context) are descendants of the house of Israel who had been under the Law, divorced by God, and dispersed to Galatia whom Yeshua came to redeem and to whom belonged the adoption.

Does This Passage Spiritualize Israel?

It certainly *does*, but not in the sense that so many today are claiming. This passage declares that only *Abraham's physical descendants*, who have become *spiritual descendants* through salvation in Yeshua the Christ can be considered *true descendants of Abraham*. [12](#)

Romans 2:28-29 & Romans 9:6

Two other passages are often used in the attempt to make Israel in the New Testament a "spiritual" group of people from all races who have been saved in Yeshua. Each of them will be examined briefly:

Romans 2:28-29

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

The Apostle Paul is simply addressing Jews (Judahites) who have the same erroneous outlook as previously described in our study of Galatians 3. These Jews assumed that physical descent alone was enough. Paul is *not* declaring to non-Israelites that they can spiritually become "Jews"; instead he is declaring to Jews that unless they (as Israelites) are circumcised of the heart (saved in Yeshua the Christ) they are not to be reckoned as true Jews or Judahites at all.

Keep in mind that even *if* Paul were addressing this to Gentiles, he identifies the

Gentiles in Romans 9:24-26 as Israelites
(descendants from the house of Israel).

Romans 9:6

Not as though the word of God hath
taken none effect. For they are not all
Israel, which are of Israel.

There are two ways in which this verse by
itself can be interpreted:

1. "Israel" is comprised of **more** than just
physical Israelites.
2. **Not all** physical Israelites are
considered Israel.

Note

Option 1 implies inclusion, an addition of
people.

Option 2 implies exclusion, a subtraction of
people.

Since we have two possible options for interpreting this verse, we must allow the context to be the determinant in choosing the correct interpretation. Does the context imply an inclusion or an exclusion? Read the verses which immediately follow verse 6, and it becomes abundantly clear that Apostle Paul's intent was an exclusion.

First, the physical line of Ishmael is excluded (verse 7-9). Next, the physical line of Esau is excluded (verses 10-13). Verses 14-22 explain God's sovereign right to do this. Next, the majority of Israelites from both the house of Judah and from the house of Israel are also excluded (verses 23-27).

The Apostle Paul's point in writing verses 6-26 was to illustrate that only a remnant of all Israel (from both the house of Judah and the house of Israel) will be saved (verse 27). Not all physical Israelites are considered true Israel in

God's sight. This conclusion harmonizes completely with what we have already discovered from Galatians 3:26-29 and Romans 2:28-29.[13](#)

Endnotes

1. Leonard C. Lee, Clouds Over America (Washington: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1948) p. 71.
2. Lee, p. 71.
3. Lee, p. 74.
4. Lee, p. 71.
5. Lee, p. 75.
6. Cornelius Vanderbreggen, Jr., Just Before Dawn (Hiawassee, GA: Reapers Fellowship, 1988) p. 35.
7. Dr. Ed Moore, The Last Trump (Jan./Feb., 1991) p. 7.

8. Pope Pius XI, The Point (October, 1958) p. 18.
9. Alfred Marshall, The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958) p. 908.
10. James Strong, "The Greek Dictionary of the New Testament," The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible (Thomas Nelson Publishers: 1990) p. 23.
11. Alfred Marshall, The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958) p. 747.
12. For this same study on audio cassette tape, write MISSION TO ISRAEL, P.O. Box 248, Scottsbluff, NE 69363,

and request *Defending Identity*.

13. For a more in-depth study of Romans 2:28-29 and Romans 9:6-27 on audio cassette tape, write *Mission To Israel* and request *Objections of a 2nd Modern-Day Preacher - Part 6*.

This has been an excerpt from:

***Gods Covenant People:
Yesterday, Today and Forever***

The resource book for the Christian Israel Identity message. This book proves that God continues to have a plan for physical Israelites under the New Covenant. It exposes the impostors and establishes who Israel is today from the Scriptures, archaeology and history and discloses why this is of such significance to us. This 460 page book consisting of 14

chapters, in excess of 700 quotes with footnotes, over 30 early American and European testimonies, and more than 40 Biblical, archaeological, and historical proofs of Israel's modern-day identity.