



MBS007

A MESSIANIC BIBLE STUDY FROM ARIEL MINISTRIES



JEW, GENTILE, CHRISTIAN



By Dr. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum



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*and I will make
of you a great
nation, and I will
bless you, and
make your name
great; and you shall
be a blessing
Genesis 12:2*

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

This study is titled “Jews Gentiles Christians.” We are going to try to carefully define what all these terms mean and try to draw distinctions where the Bible does and erase distinctions where the Bible does. The whole issue in definitions of Jews, Gentiles, Gentile believers, and Jewish believers has a tremendous amount of confusion.

I. DEFINITIONS

One source of possible confusion is the term “Jewishness.” What really constitutes Jewishness? Who is a Jew? Does the term denote a religion, a race, an ethnic group, or a nationality?

In contrast to Jew is the term “Gentile.” Who is a Gentile? This, too, needs a clear-cut definition.

Another confusing term is “Christianity.” Is a Christian one who is born of Christian parents? Can one become a Christian merely by joining a church or by being baptized?

Then there is the term “Hebrew Christianity” or “Messianic Jewishness.” Who is a Hebrew Christian, a Messianic Jew or, as such, a person is sometimes called a “Christian” Jew? How is it possible for a person to be both Jew and a Christian? Can the terms “Hebrew” and “Christian” be reconciled, or should those identifying themselves by both terms be classed as schizophrenics?

These questions are important especially for those involved in the ministry of Jewish evangelism. In fact, it is almost impossible to convey

clearly, what the gospel is all about until there is first a clear conveyance of what these terms mean. As soon as one uses some of these terms to a hearer, and the hearer understands them to mean something different from what the speaker means by them, there is confusion and lack of communication. Many times Jewish people simply turn away from the gospel because of a lack of understanding, or confusion.

A. Jewishness: Who Is A Jew?

We come then to the issue of who is a Jew. There are few topics in the Jewish world that have been more debated than this one. To this day, there is no consistent definition.

1. A Public Opinion Poll

A public opinion poll was conducted in order to try to determine what the definition of a Jew would be as Jewish people understood it. Fifteen hundred Jewish families were canvassed with the following results:

12% declared that a Jew is a person whose father or mother is Jewish or who has a Jewish spouse.

23% claimed that a Jew is a person who considers himself a Jew.

19% held that a man born to a Jewish mother or who converts to Judaism is a Jew.

13% said a Jew is one who lives in Israel or who identifies with the Jewish State.

13% stated that a Jew is one who observes the Jewish religious practices.

11% answered that a Jew is one who is raised and educated as a Jew.

9% said they could not define it.

These results were recorded in the Jerusalem Post of November 25, 1968. Of the definitions listed, only one excludes the Messianic Jew, but at the same time, it also excludes a large number of other Jews who do not observe Jewish religious practices. The other five definitions would by no means rule out the Messianic Jew.

2. The Hebrew Christian or Messianic Jewish Definition

The Messianic Jewish definition has an objective standard; it goes back to the very source of Jewishness, the Scriptures. The further any definition departs from the Scriptures, the foggier it gets. The Messianic Jew is forced to define Jewishness in the biblical sense of the term, for to him, the Scriptures are the source of authority. Hence, the Messianic Jewish definition can also be called the biblical definition.

The biblical basis for defining Jewishness lies in the Abrahamic Covenant in Genesis 12:1-3: *Now Jehovah said unto Abram, Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, unto the land that I will show you: and I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and be you a blessing; and I will bless them that bless you, and him that curses you will*

I curse: and in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

It is further described in two other passages.

Genesis 13:15-16: *for all the land which you see, to you will I give it, and to your seed for ever. And I will make your seed as the dust of the earth: So that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then may your seed also be numbered.*

Genesis 15:4-5: *And, behold, the word of Jehovah came unto him, saying, This man shall not be your heir; But he that shall come forth out of your own bowels shall be your heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and number the stars, if you be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall your seed be.*

Later, the Abrahamic Covenant is confirmed through Isaac in Genesis 26:2-5: *And Jehovah appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt. Dwell in the land which I shall tell you of. Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you, and will bless you. For unto you, and unto your seed, I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore unto Abraham your father. And I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and will give unto your seed all these lands. And in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.*

Verse 24 states: *And Jehovah appeared unto him the same night, and said, I am the God of Abraham your father. Fear not, for I am with you, and will bless you, and multiply your seed for my servant Abraham's sake.*

After Isaac, it is reconfirmed through Jacob in Genesis 28:13-15: *And, behold, Jehovah stood above it, and said, I am Jehovah, the God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac. The land whereon you lie, to you will I give it, and to your seed. And your seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south. And in you and in your seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And, behold, I am with you, and will keep you, whithersoever you go, and will bring you again into this land. For I will not leave you, until I have done that which I have spoken to you of.*

From the Abrahamic Covenant a simple definition of Jewishness can be deduced. It lies in the repeated statement that a nation will come through the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and thus defines Jewishness in terms of nationality. But unlike the view of many Israelis, this nationality is not confined to the State of Israel alone; it includes all the Jewish people no matter where they are. It is a nationality based on descent.

Biblically speaking, the Jewish people are a nation. Today we are a scattered nation but we are, nevertheless, a nation. We are a nation because we are the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The implication of this definition is that no matter what a Jew does, he can never become a non-Jew; no matter what the individual Jew may

believe or disbelieve, he remains a Jew. A Negro who is a believer, Moslem, or Buddhist remains a Negro. A Chinaman who becomes a believer remains Chinese; a Chinaman who remains a Buddhist also remains Chinese. The same is true of the Jew, whether Orthodox, Reform, atheist, or communist. If a Jew chooses to believe that Yeshua (Jesus) is his Messiah, he, too, remains a Jew. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can change the fact that he is a descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!

At this point, the problem comes up of children of mixed marriages. These children are usually designated half-Jewish and half-Gentile. The theology of Judaism teaches that Jewishness is determined by the mother: if the mother is Jewish, then the children are Jewish. But again, this is a departure from the biblical norm and is therefore rejected by Messianic Jewishness. In the Scriptures, it is not the mother who determines Jewishness but the father; consequently, the genealogies of both the Old and New Testaments list the names of the men and not of the women, except in cases where a mother was notable in Jewish history. Thus, if the father is Jewish, the children are Jewish. King David was definitely Jewish although his great-grandmother, Ruth, and his great-great-grandmother, Rahab, were both Gentiles.

B. Gentile: Who Is A Gentile?

If the Scriptures are used as the objective standard, then the definition of a Gentile is equally simple. A Gentile is simply anyone who is not a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. In short, a Gentile is anyone who is not a Jew. The implication again is that no matter what a Gentile does, he can never become a non-Gentile.

But this raises the question of Gentiles who have converted to Judaism: can they properly be called Jews? On the basis of Scripture, the answer is, "No." The Jew is the nationality; the religion is Judaism. Acceptance of Judaism by a Gentile does not make him a Jew, but a proselyte. We see the distinction between Jews and proselytes in Matthew 23:15: *Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is become so, ye make him twofold more a son of hell than yourselves.*

It should be noted that these evangelists for Judaism are not said to seek to make one a Jew, but to make one a *proselyte*.

A second passage is Acts 2:10, which is at the end of a list of place-names, showing the origins of the multitude that had come to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. The list ends with the phrase *both Jews and proselytes*. Again, there is that same distinction.

Acts 6:5 provides us with a third example: *And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus a proselyte of Antioch.*

In this passage, a distinction is made between *Nicolaus* and the rest. The others were all Jews who had accepted Yeshua as the Messiah, but *Nicolaus* was a *proselyte*, a Gentile convert to Judaism who had accepted Him.

The final example is found in Acts 13:43: *Now when the synagogue broke up, many of the Jews and of the devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas; who, speaking to them, urged them to continue in the grace of God.*

The same distinction is clearly made again; Gentile converts to Judaism are never given the title of Jews.

The chief Old Testament example of a Gentile convert to Judaism is Ruth. Many Gentiles have tried to claim Jewishness on the principle of conversion based on Ruth's story. But Ruth is consistently called "a Moabitess" both before and after her acceptance of the God of Israel. This can be seen in Ruth 1:22; 2:2, 6, 21; 4:5, 10.

The conclusion is that a Gentile cannot do anything to become a non-Gentile.

C. Christianity: Who Is A Christian?

We next attempt to find out who is a Christian. The Messianic believer is forced to go to the Scriptures again to determine the true definition. The New Testament divides the world into three groups of people: Jews, Gentiles, and Christians according to I Corinthians 10:32. It plainly teaches that no one can ever be born a Christian; everyone is either born a Jew or born a Gentile. A Christian, however, is either a Jew or Gentile who has made a personal decision to become a believer in Jesus the Messiah. He is not one who merely holds a church membership or is baptized. These may follow the personal decision, but they cannot be the cause of one's becoming a Christian.

A Christian is a Jew or a Gentile who has come to realize that a man is born in a state of sin, and, for this reason, is separated from God. Thus, the penalty for sin must first be paid if he is to come to know God in a personal way. However, being a sinner, an individual Jew or an individual Gentile cannot by himself pay the price or penalty for sin. This was the purpose of the Messiah, whom many Jews and Gentiles know to be Jesus. At His death, the Messiah became the substitute for sin and, thus, paid the penalty for it. Both the Old and New Testaments teach that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

For example, in the Old Testament Leviticus 17:11 says: *For the life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that makes atonement by reason of the life.*

In the New Testament, this is stated in Hebrews 9:22: *And according to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission.*

The clear teaching of both the Old and New Testaments is this: “without the shedding of blood there cannot be any forgiveness of sins.” Under the Law there was a temporary provision made by the shedding of animal blood. But the Messiah was to be the final blood sacrifice for sin. It is those who believe in the Messiahship of Jesus, among the Jews and among the Gentiles, who are biblically to be classed as *Christians* in Acts 11:26. Again, it is not a matter of baptism and it is not a matter of church membership. There is nothing else anyone can or must do to become a Christian except to believe on Yeshua.

The basic content of faith, that is, what one must believe to be a Christian, is found in I Corinthians 15:1-4: *Now I make known unto you brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which also I received: that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he has been raised on the third day according to the scriptures.*

The content of faith is the gospel, involving the substitutionary death, burial, and Resurrection of the Messiah. What is the gospel? The gospel is three very simple and basic points: first, Yeshua died for our sins; secondly, He was buried; and thirdly, He rose again on the third day. There is nothing more to the gospel than this. That which determines whether or not a person is a Christian is his willingness to place his faith, or belief, in Yeshua as the substitute for sin.

What he must do is described in John 1:12: *But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name.*

A person who, at some point in his life, personally received the Messiah as the One who made atonement for sin, experienced what it is to become a Christian. Thus, if anyone says that he was born a Christian, this is an obvious sign, according to the New Testament, that he is not. Becoming a Christian is an experience by which one comes to know God through Jesus the Messiah and by which the sin separating the individual from God is removed. Christians are made, not born.

In summary: the New Testament teaches that everyone is born either a Jew or a Gentile; and Christians are Jews and Gentiles who believe in the Messiahship of Jesus.

D. Hebrew Christianity or Messianic Jewishness: Who Is A Hebrew Christian or Messianic Jew?

We finally come to the point toward which we have been working: defining Hebrew Christianity or Messianic Jewishness. In the common view, the term “Hebrew Christianity” is a contradiction. One can be either a Jew or a Messianic believer; but to be both at once is, in that view, an impossibility.

One Jewish writer stated that the term “Jewish Christian” challenges logic. Another writer limited the title to Jewish believers in the Messiah during the first century but not thereafter. This view was held

by a number of my former professors at the American Institute of Holy Land Studies. They used the term “Jewish Christians” in relation to Jewish believers during the first century but did not recognize the term as valid for Jewish believers today. But they never explained what they considered to be the difference between the first century Jewish believers and those of the twenty-first century.

What, then, is a Hebrew Christian? If a Jew is a descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, which we believe to be the proper, biblical definition; and if a Christian is one who has personally, by his own decision, accepted Yeshua of Nazareth as his Messiah; then a Hebrew Christian is a Jew who believes that Yeshua is the Messiah. By faith, Jewish believers align themselves with other believers in the Messiah, whether Jews or Gentiles, but nationally they identify themselves with Jewish people.

A Messianic Jew, therefore, must acknowledge that he is both a Jew and a believer in the Messiahship of Jesus. If a Jew accepts baptism solely to lose his identity as a Jew, he is by no means to be considered a Messianic Jew; he is a renegade, a traitor, and an apostate.

A Messianic believer is proud of his Jewishness. He is also proud of his faith in the Messiahship of Yeshua. The experience by which a Jew becomes a believer is just as much a mystery as that by which a Gentile becomes a believer. The experience can be described, but it cannot be explained. The center of this experience is the person of Jesus the Messiah, although the causes, which brought it about, may differ. Perhaps it was the testimony of another Messianic Jew, the printed word, preaching, or the reading of the New Testament. The causes vary, but the results are always the same: Jesus the Messiah becomes the object of faith and trust.

E. Conclusion of Definitions

It is clear from the Scriptures that Messianic believers never lose their Jewishness. Jewishness and Messianic Jewishness are not contradictory terms; each complements and fulfills the other. This is one of the reasons Jews often prefer to call themselves “completed Jews” rather than “converted Jews.” The term “converted” means “you were this, but you are no longer that.” When we use the term “converted Catholic,” usually we mean that the person used to be Catholic, but he is no longer Catholic. Or we say that he is a “converted alcoholic” and mean that he used to be a drunk, but he is no longer a drunk. However, we cannot properly use the term converted Jew. This implies that a believer used to be a Jew, but he is no longer a Jew. Jewish believers always remain Jews without exception. Jewish believers do not refer to themselves as converted Jews; we are converted sinners. We are completed Jews because belief in the Messiahship of Jesus completes our Jewishness; it does not negate it.

The best evidence of this is the great Apostle Paul who affirmed both

his Jewishness and his faith in the Messiahship of Yeshua. Let us look at three examples from his own writings on this.

First, in Romans 11:1, Paul says: *I say then, Did God cast off his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.*

In Romans 11:1, Paul clearly affirms himself to be both a Jew “of the seed of Abraham,” and an Israelite “of the Tribe of Benjamin.” In subsequent verses, he also clearly affirms himself as being a member of the Remnant according to the election of grace.

Another verse in which Paul clearly affirms both his Jewishness and his faith in Jesus the Messiah is II Corinthians 11:22: *Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I.*

Whereas in Old Testament times the terms Hebrews, Israelites, the seed of Abraham, and Jews were kept distinct, by the time of the New Testament, these terms were synonymously used. That is why Paul called himself a Jew, a Hebrew, and an Israelite. Notice that even after he became a believer, he does not say: “used to be” an Israelite; “used to be” a Hebrew; “used to be” of the seed of Abraham. He uses the present tense.

The third place where he clearly reaffirms this is in Philippians 3:4-8: *though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh: if any other man thinks to have confidence in the flesh, I yet more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless. Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ.*

In this passage, more extensive than the other two, again Paul clearly affirms himself to be both a Jew and a believer in the Messiahship of Jesus. What Paul did, Jewish believers must still do. We must reaffirm both our faith in the Messiahship of Yeshua and confirm our Jewishness as well.

In conclusion, we would say that Jewishness and Messianic Jewishness are in full agreement. This concludes our discussion on the definitions of Jews, Gentiles and Christians. We have not exhausted the topic itself because we have not yet clearly shown that there is a continuous distinction between Jewish believers and Gentile believers as well.

II. THE BIBLICAL BASIS FOR THE MESSIANIC JEWISH DISTINCTIVE

Christians can become highly emotional when something they have held as truth is challenged. Often this is good, especially when it is a

doctrine vital to faith that is in question. At other times, such emotional responses can blind one to what the Bible may really say in contrast to what is held to be true. One particular area involves the idea of a Messianic Jewish distinctive in the Body of the Messiah. Many times when the idea that the Bible distinguishes between Jewish and Gentile believers is postulated, verses are quickly quoted to the contrary, often out of context. “Galatianism” is the accusation often thrown against the one making the distinction, although few who make the charge really know the exact nature of the Galatian Heresy.

I well remember an incident that occurred in homiletics class during my school days. It was my turn to preach. The sermon I had prepared had nothing to do with Messianic Jewishness in any way, but in an illustration which I gave, I used the term “Hebrew Christian” only once in passing. This was enough, however, for the professor to become aroused. When I finished, the professor challenged my use of the term “Hebrew Christian.” His attack began with, “I wonder what Arnold would say to ...” and then he quoted a favored text about there being no difference between Jews and Greeks. When he finished his discourse, he quickly continued with the class and gave me no opportunity to satisfy his “wondering.” Yet, as we shall see, the Bible does teach that there is a Messianic Jewish distinctive in the Body of the Messiah.

A. The False Views

Emotionalism is not the only problem that prevents an understanding of this doctrine. Two false views, which only tend to confuse the issue, are circulating among many believers. One false view is that Gentiles, when they become believers in the Messiah, become “spiritual Jews.” The second view is that when a Jew and a Gentile become believers in the Messiah, all distinctions between the two are erased. The Gentile loses his “Gentilism,” to coin a word, and the Jew his Jewishness, for there is no difference between the two whatsoever. Before the basis of the Messianic Jewish distinctive can be fully understood, we first need to deal with these two false views.

1. Gentile Believers Are Spiritual Jews

The first false view is that Gentiles become “spiritual Jews” upon believing in the Messiah. Logically, if believing Jews are spiritual Jews and believing Gentiles are spiritual Jews, then in the Christian realm there are no distinctions, since all are spiritual Jews. Yet the Bible presents no such picture.

a. The Meaning of Spirituality

Perhaps the greatest problem with the term spiritual Jew is its use of the word “spiritual” to indicate some kind of national or racial transformation of the Gentile to a Jew. However, the Bible never uses the word “spiritual” in this sense.

What is spirituality? Spirituality involves three things: first, regeneration, second, the Holy Spirit, and third, time. This means that spirituality only involves the believer; it is produced by the Holy Spirit who brings the believer into a mature relationship with God; and, obviously, this takes time. As Dr. Charles Ryrie states, “Spirituality is a grown-up relation to the Holy Spirit.”

A spiritual person is a believer who is under the control of the Holy Spirit. It is nothing more than that. So, if a Gentile is under the Spirit’s control, he is a “spiritual Gentile.” Likewise, a Jew who is under the Spirit’s control is a “spiritual Jew.” There is no crossing of national lines; a Gentile remains a Gentile, and a Jew remains a Jew. Their spirituality is based on their relationship to the Holy Spirit.

b. Biblical Passages

But some will argue that all this is mere semantics and will use certain Bible texts to show that in some way Gentiles become Jews, whether by spiritual transformation or by some other mystical act. One of these passages is Galatians 3:6-9: *Even as Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. Know therefore that they that are of faith, the same are sons of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying, In you shall all the nations be blessed. So then they that are of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham.*

Thus, if Gentile believers become “the children of Abraham by faith,” does that not make them spiritual Jews? Not at all! Even in the physical realm, not all the children of Abraham are Jews. Arabs are as much the descendants of Abraham as Jews, but in no way can they be classified as Jews. What is true of the physical realm is also true of the spiritual realm; being children of Abraham by faith is not enough to make one a Jew.

What, then, is the meaning of this passage? To begin with, it should be noted that the context is concerned with the question of whether salvation is by works or by faith. The Hebrew term for “children” or *sons* often has the meaning of “followers.” The point is that Abraham was declared righteous on the basis of faith and not on that of works. The true followers of Abraham, then, are those who are considered righteous on the same basis as Abraham, who practiced faith rather than works to attain salvation. The Gentile Galatians were never said to become Jews, rather, children of Abraham. Being a child of Abraham is not enough to make one a Jew.

Another verse often used is Galatians 3:29: *And if ye are Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, heirs according to promise.*

Since Gentiles become part of “the seed of Abraham,” does this not in some way make them spiritual Jews? Again, the answer is negative; there are members of the physical seed of Abraham who are not Jews. The same is true in the spiritual realm.

The meaning of this verse can best be understood if compared with Ephesians 2:11-13: *Wherefore remember, that once ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands; that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ.*

And Ephesians 3:6: *to wit, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.*

These Ephesians passages clarify what is meant by the Galatians statement of becoming heirs to the promises. It does not mean that Gentile believers become Jews in a mystical way, but rather that they become *partakers* in the blessings of the Jewish covenants and receive this privilege by faith. This act does not make them spiritual Jews, but spiritual Gentiles. Even by being *partakers*, they do not share in all the facets of the covenants but only in the spiritual blessings involved in them. Things such as inheritance of the Land and circumcision, among others, are not appropriated by believing Gentiles. These elements are exclusively for the Jew.

The third passage for this idea is Romans 2:28-29: *For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*

Since a “true Jew” is someone who is so *inwardly*, does not a believing Gentile meet that standard and so, inwardly at least, become a Jew? But to say this of Romans 2:28-29 is to ignore the entire structure of the Book of Romans. The basic outline of the first three chapters is as follows:

Salutation	1:1-7
Introduction	1:8-15
Theme	1:16-17
The World Under Condemnation:	1:18-3:30
Gentiles	1:18-2:16
Jews	2:17-3:20
Conclusion	3:21-30

The section in which Romans 2:28-29 is found is strictly a Jewish context; the Gentiles are nowhere in view, for Paul has finished with them in 2:16. This verse can be better understood if taken as the words of a believing Jew speaking to non-believing Jews. In doing so, he is using a play upon words. “Judaism” has the root meaning of praise. What this Messianic Jew is saying to non-Messianic Jews is that outward Judaism is not enough to make one righteous before God; this requires a “Judaism of God.” The verse can be paraphrased: “Whose Judaism is not of men, but of God.” The true Jews are those Jews who are so, both “outwardly” and “inwardly.”

2. No Difference Between Jews and Gentiles

The first extreme argues against all distinctions by saying that all believers are Jews. This second extreme tries to make all believing Jews into non-Jews; usually by employing, out of context, one or more of three passages, having a phrase to the effect that “there is neither Jew nor Greek.” But a careful study of the very same passages, in their contexts, will show that the distinction between Jews and Gentiles is erased only in certain areas and not in all. Furthermore, a study of the text in the light of related passages clearly indicates that, in other areas, the distinction is still very much in effect, even within the Body of believers.

The first of the three passages is I Corinthians 12:12-13: *For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit.*

The clear teaching of this passage is that entrance into the Body is by Spirit baptism. This is the only way, and it is true for all, both Jew and Gentile. There is no difference. This is all that can be deduced from this passage, and no more.

The second passage is Galatians 3:28: *There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female; for ye all are one man in Christ Jesus.*

The context of this passage deals with the matter of justification by faith. This is the only way anyone can be justified, whether Jew or Gentile. So in justification, there is no distinction between the two. That alone can be deduced from this passage, and no more.

The third passage is Colossians 3:11: *where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all.*

The context is again the key to understanding this passage. Verses 5-11 are concerned with “putting off the old nature and putting on the new nature.” This is the true and only way toward maturity and spirituality for any believer, Jew or Gentile. Again, no more than that can be deduced from this passage.

The conclusion we are drawing is obvious. In the areas of justification, membership in the Body, and growth toward maturity, the procedure is the same for Jew and Gentile without distinction. However, this does not mean that in every area the distinctions are forever erased between the two.

B. The Evidence for Distinction

As stated earlier, the study of these very same passages in the light of related passages will show that instead of teaching against all

distinctions, the reverse is true. When critics of the Messianic Jewish distinction refer to the above three passages, often only the “Jew and Greek” statement is cited, and the rest are ignored. My homiletics teacher used this technique. But these verses not only state that there is no difference between Jews and Greeks, they further state that there is no difference between bond and free, male and female. Yet the custom is often to avoid quoting the latter portion for reasons which will become apparent as we proceed. Now let’s consider what the Bible has to say about the two latter groups and see if indeed the three passages teach that all distinctions are erased.

1. Bond and Free

There are five passages dealing with the issue of “bond and free.” The first passage is Ephesians 6:5-9: *Servants, be obedient unto them that according to the flesh are your masters, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not in the way of eyeservice, as men-pleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as unto the Lord, and not unto men: knowing that whatsoever good thing each one does, the same shall he receive again from the Lord, whether he be bond or free. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, and forbear threatening: knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with him.*

The second passage is Colossians 3:22-4:1, which reads: *Servants, obey in all things them that are your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing the Lord: whatsoever ye do, work heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the recompense of the inheritance: ye serve the Lord Christ. For he that does wrong shall receive again for the wrong that he has done: and there is no respect of persons. Masters, render unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven.*

The third passage is I Timothy 6:1-2: *Let as many as are servants under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor; that the name of God and the doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but let them serve them the rather, because they that partake of the benefit are believing and beloved. These things teach and exhort.*

The fourth passage is Titus 2:9-10: *Exhort servants to be in subjection to their own masters, and to be well-pleasing to them in all things; not gainsaying; not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.*

The fifth passage is I Peter 2:18: *Servants, be in subjection to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.*

In all of these passages, the believing slave is to be in subjection to his master, even when the master is himself a believer. The believing master is never commanded to release his believing slaves, which

would be the practical outcome if all distinctions have indeed been erased. But the believing freeman is still a freeman, and the believing slave is still a slave. How, then, are these passages consistent with the three verses cited earlier? Consistency is no problem. As far as membership in the Body, justification, and spirituality are concerned, the way is the same for the freeman and the slave. But once in the Body, these distinctions still exist.

2. Male and Female

Seven passages of Scripture show that all distinctions between male and female certainly have not been erased. Subjection is the keynote to them all, as seen in position and function.

I Corinthians 11:3-10 points out that the woman should keep her head covered in the assembly: *But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonors her head; for it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven. For if a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn: but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be veiled. For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man: for neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man: for this cause ought the woman to have a sign of authority on her head, because of the angels.*

In I Corinthians 14:34-35, women are forbidden to speak in the church. This is to the extent that if she has any questions at all, she is to seek answers from her husband at home: *let the women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but let them be in subjection, as also says the law. And if they would learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home: for it is shameful for a woman to speak in the church.*

Ephesians 5:22-25 points out the key idea of subjection: *Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it.*

In Colossians 3:18-19 we again have the idea of subjection. The husband is admonished to love his wife as the means of subjecting her. *Wives, be in subjection to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them.*

In I Timothy 2:11-12, women are forbidden to teach men, for in so doing they are exercising authority and overstepping their place of subjection: *Let a woman learn in quietness with all subjection. But I permit not a woman to teach, nor to have dominion over a man, but to be in quietness.*

In Titus 2:1 and 3-5, the teaching of younger women to be in subjection to their own husbands is part of sound doctrine, and violation results in the word of God being blasphemed. Verse 1 states: *But speak you the things which befit the sound doctrine.*

Verses 3-5 state: *that aged women likewise be reverent in demeanor; not slanderers nor enslaved to much wine, teachers of that which is good; that they may train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sober-minded, chaste, workers at home, kind, being in subjection to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.*

I Peter 3:1 again points to subjection: *In like manner, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, even if any obey not the word, they may without the word be gained by the behavior of their wives.*

Verse 7 states: *Ye husbands, in like manner, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel, as being also joint-heirs of the grace of life; to the end that your prayers be not hindered.*

Now if all distinctions between male and female are erased, there would be no need for all these separate rules and injunctions. Do these passages, then, contradict the others, which indicate no distinction between the male and female? Obviously not. Again, in the areas of membership in the Body of the Messiah, justification, and spiritual maturity, the formula is the same for both. There is not one way of salvation for the man and another for the woman. Spiritual maturity does not have separate systems, one for the male and another for the female. Both have entered the Body in the same way. But once in the Body, the man is still a man, and the woman is still a woman; and they differ in position and function.

C. Conclusion

To summarize, we have seen that the Bible does not support the idea of Gentiles becoming “spiritual Jews” when they believe. Rather, they are “spiritual Gentiles” when they are controlled by the Holy Spirit. Spiritual Jews are Jews who believe and who have a proper relationship to the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, the Bible does not say that all distinctions between Jew and Gentile are erased when they believe. While it is very true that the way is the same for both, this does not mean that all other distinctions have been eradicated as well, any more than all distinctions between bond and free, and male and female, have ceased to exist. The way of salvation, Body membership, and spiritual maturity is the same for both Jews and Gentiles, but in other areas, distinctions remain.

III. THE MESSIANIC JEWISH DISTINCTIVES

The question that now remains is: “What are the Messianic Jewish distinctives in the Body of the Messiah?” In what way, by position and

function, does the Jewish believer differ from the Gentile believer? The basis of the Messianic Jewish distinctive lies in four lines of biblical truth: the Abrahamic Covenant, the Doctrine of the Remnant, the Doctrine of the Olive Tree, and the Doctrine of the Israel of God.

NOTES

A. The Abrahamic Covenant

The Abrahamic Covenant is found in various passages in Genesis. In Galatians 3:15-18, a unique distinction is drawn between the Abrahamic Covenant and the Law of Moses: *Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it has been confirmed, no one makes it void, or adds thereto. Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He said not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to your seed, which is Christ. Now this I say: A covenant confirmed beforehand by God, the law, which came four hundred and thirty years after, does not disannul, so as to make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance is of the law, it is no more of promise: but God had granted it to Abraham by promise.*

The point being made here is that the Law of Moses did not disannul the Abrahamic Covenant. The human illustration used is that of a human contract in antiquity. Once it was signed, it could not be changed. While additions could be made later, these additions could never nullify any point in the original. The Abrahamic Covenant was signed by God Himself when He appeared in the form of fire and walked between the animals, which Abraham had prepared (Gen. 15:17). While the Mosaic Law, coming 430 years later, added to it, the Law could in no way change it. Through the cross, however, the Mosaic Law, the addition, was rendered inoperative, but the Abrahamic Covenant, the original, is still very much in effect.

It is the continuity of the Abrahamic Covenant that provides the first basis of the Messianic Jewish distinctive. The Covenant had four primary features to it. First of all, God promised to make a great nation of Abraham; this means the Jews as a whole. The Jews, then, are a nation because of their origin from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Secondly, to this nation God has promised a Land, once called Canaan, often called Palestine, but now the Land of Israel. It is totally irrelevant whether the Jews are in the Land or outside the Land, or whether anyone else may control it by conquest or any other means; the Land belongs to the Jews by divine right. Thirdly, those that bless this nation will be blessed, and those that curse it will be cursed. This perhaps can be viewed as God's foreign policy to the Gentiles in their relationship to the Jewish people. Finally, the sign of the covenant for the members of this nation was circumcision, to be performed on the eighth day after birth.

Since the Abrahamic Covenant is still very much in effect, these four features also involve the Messianic believer both in his position and function. First of all, Messianic Jews are still Jews, for they, like other Jews, are descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Secondly, the

homeland for the Messianic believer is the Land of Israel, and this is where his primary loyalty should be despite his place of residence. Believing Jews are in the Diaspora, but they are also in the Galuth, the Exile. Thirdly, the Gentile relationship to the Jews in the blessing and cursing aspects are as true for Jewish believers as for other Jews. Messianic believers who are blessed or cursed because of their Jewishness will find the blessers blessed and the cursers cursed. Finally, there is the matter of circumcision. Since Jewish believers still fall under the other provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant, they fall under this one as well. It is my conviction that Messianic Jews should have their sons circumcised on the eighth day.

But does not the Book of Galatians argue against the practice of circumcision? Yes and no. Circumcision for Gentiles, circumcision on the basis of the Mosaic Law, and circumcision for justification or sanctification are all wrong. The Book of Galatians condemns circumcision as a means for justification. Except for health and medical reasons, there is never any need or requirement for Gentile circumcision. Furthermore, Messianic believers who circumcise on the basis of the Law of Moses are also wrong, since the Law ended with the Messiah. But this same book clearly states that the Abrahamic Covenant is still very much in effect with all its features, and this includes circumcision. So circumcision on the basis of the Abrahamic Covenant is right and proper, and it is my conviction that it is still very much in effect for Jewish believers. Paul, who taught the Gentiles not to circumcise, did not so teach the Jews; this is clear from Acts 21:17-26, and from Acts 16:1-3 when he had Timothy circumcised. It was not circumcision per se that was ruled out, rather, circumcision on the basis of Mosaic Law.

B. The Doctrine of the Remnant

The second basis of the Messianic Jewish distinctive is described in Romans 11:1-7. The question here is whether or not God has cast off his people Israel. Paul answers in the negative. His proof is himself; he is a Jew who believes in Yeshua. The critic may argue that the Jews who believe are a very small minority; so does it not follow that the nation has indeed been cast off? Again, the answer is negative. What is happening now, Paul explains, is what has always happened throughout Jewish history; that is, it is always the Remnant that believes. This was true in Elijah's day, and it is true today. The fact that the majority do not believe is not evidence enough that the whole nation has been cut off. The point is that in Israel, past, present and future, it is the Remnant that is faithful to the revelation of God. This is also true in this present Dispensation of Grace; the Messianic believers are the Remnant of Israel today. The Remnant is always in the nation, not outside of it; the Messianic Jews, the present-day Remnant, are part of Israel and the Jewish people. Their Jewishness remains distinct.

Isaiah 1:9 and 65:8 point out that it is the Remnant that is keeping Israel as a whole alive. Because of the Messianic Jewish Remnant, God did not permit the success of the many attempts throughout this age to wipe out the Jewish people. Again we see position and function in this basis of the Messianic Jewish distinctive.

C. The Doctrine of the Olive Tree

The third basis of the Messianic Jewish distinctive is found in Romans 11:16-21 and 24. In this tree there are two types of branches representing Jewish believers and Gentile believers. The Jewish believers are the *natural branches*; that is, we correspond to the very nature of the tree, it is as if the tree and the *natural branches* have the same blood type. The *wild olive branches* are the Gentile believers. It is clearly stated that the presence of these branches in the tree is *contrary to nature*, the blood type is different. There is an obvious composite difference between the two, which makes them distinct from each other.

D. The Doctrine of the Israel of God

The fourth basis of the Messianic Jewish distinctive is seen in the narrow use of the term *Israel*. It should be pointed out that the term *Israel* is never used of Gentiles, whether they are believers or not, nor is it used of the Church; it is used only of Jews. In Romans 9:6-8, Paul states something significant. For a proper understanding of this passage, it is important to keep it in its strictly Jewish context. The point being made is that there are two Israels: Israel the whole composed of all Jews; and Israel the elect, composed of all believing Jews, which is the “true Israel of God.” Both groups are Jews and both groups are called “Israel,” the difference being that the Jews who are of Abraham by faith as well as by flesh are the true Israel. Israel the whole, the Israel of the flesh, failed; but the elect of Israel, the Israel of God, have not failed. Jewish believers, then, are part of Israel the whole, but in particular, they are the Israel of God. Gentile believers are not in this group. It is a position that is distinct with Messianic Jews.

In Galatians 6:16 Paul says: *And as many as shall walk by this rule, peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.*

The Book of Galatians is concerned with Gentiles who were attempting to attain salvation through the Law. They were deceived by thinking they had to be circumcised on the basis of the Law of Moses. Paul states that the important thing for salvation is faith. He then pronounces a blessing on two groups who would follow this rule of salvation by faith alone. The first group is the *them*, the believing Gentiles, to and of whom he had devoted most of the epistle. The second group is the *Israel of God*. These are the believing Jews who followed the rule of salvation by faith alone.

E. Conclusion

It is clear, then, that the Messianic Jew is a distinctive element in the

Body of the Messiah, and this distinctiveness is based on four lines provided in the Scriptures. The distinction involves position and function. All are equal, yet distinct. Both Jews and Gentiles are on equal footing with God, because God is not a respecter of persons. We are different only in position and function.✠

NOTES

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