

ISAIAH 33:6

# STABILITY

HEBRAIC UNDERSTANDING FOR OUR TIMES

## Abraham's Faith and God's Chosen People

BIBLICAL STUDIES  
BY  
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# Abraham's Faith and God's Chosen People

By John D. Garr, Ph.D., Th.D.



The biblical concept of election is founded in the sovereignty of God. It is God who has sought a man and a people with whom he could have relationship. As Abraham Joshua Heschel has said, history is not a record of man's search for God but of God's search for man. Jesus, himself, confirmed this truth in John 4:23: "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is *seeking such* to worship him."

This fundamental truth helps us to understand

that history is linear and covenantal. Salvation history started somewhere (with creation) and ends somewhere (with the Messianic Age), and it is based on God's sovereign covenantal election of a people to be uniquely his. This kind of special relationship implies an agreement, for which the scriptural term is covenant. So we may state from the outset that God's chosen people have been and remain those with whom he has established his covenant.

### **GOD'S FIRST COVENANT WITH HUMANITY**

Immediately after the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, God made this promise in his declaration to the serpent: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; *he shall bruise your head*, and you shall bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). Later in Noah's time, immediately following the flood, God established a covenant with all the earth declaring that he would never destroy the earth again with water (Genesis 9:8-17). Neither of these events, however, represented a covenant with an individual, electing him above all others.

In Bible history, the first time that Yahweh, the Eternal God, entered into a covenant with anyone is found in Genesis 15, where Abraham was chosen

because of his implicit faith in God's Word. Abraham had left his father's house in Haran of Syria to look for the land to which God had sent him, and when he finally came into the land, he implored the Lord in this manner: "Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit [*this* land]?" (Genesis 15:8). God required Abraham to make a sacrificial offering, after which he spoke to him in this manner: "To your descendants have I given this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the River Euphrates . . ." (Genesis 15:18). The record continues, declaring that "On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram."

Abraham, therefore, was the first man with whom God entered into a covenant, promising a special relationship with him and with his children forever. "The Lord appeared to Abram and said to him . . . 'I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God' " (Genesis 17:1, 7-8). The seal of God's covenant was to be the rite of circumcision.

This agreement between God and Abraham

brought about a startling transformation. Abraham, who was a Babylonian by birth and a Syrian by nationality (Genesis 11:31), became the father of another nation, the nation of faith in the Eternal God. As far as God was concerned, Abraham was transformed from a Gentile into a chosen vessel to father a holy nation that would bear his name among the Gentiles.

From the time that Abraham had crossed over the river Euphrates, he had been called a Hebrew from the word *eber*, meaning to cross over. His leaving the land of Ur of the Chaldees and later departing from his father's house in Haran of Syria were the acts of faith which prompted God to extend his promise and covenant to Abraham. So, after the making of the covenant, Abraham became more than a Hebrew—he became the father of the faithful.

Just as God had promised Abraham, it was some four hundred years before the benefits of his covenant became reality (Genesis 15:13). Through those ensuing years, Abraham's progeny through his promised son Isaac were God's chosen people because of the Abrahamic covenant. The children of Abraham continued to be known as Syrians until after the time of Jacob as Deuteronomy 26:5 declares: "My father was

a Syrian, about to perish, and he went down to Egypt and sojourned there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous." Still, the children of Israel were a chosen people within the nation of Syria. While seventy souls entered into the land of Egypt during the time of the famine, at the end of four hundred years, six hundred thousand men, together with women and children, were ready to be delivered from the slavery into which they had been forced.

### **ISRAEL, A COVENANT NATION**

A profound deliverance was effected by God's intervention through the hand of his servant Moses. The children of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob passed through the Red Sea and gathered before the great mountain of the Lord called Sinai to make a covenant with God that would transfer them into his holy nation, chosen above all the people of the earth (Deuteronomy 10:15). When this covenant was made, however, it merely amended the covenant that Yahweh and Abraham had made four hundred years before, for it could never replace or abrogate that covenant: "The law, which was four hundred and thirty years later, cannot annul the [Abrahamic] covenant that was confirmed before by God in Christ,



that it should make the promise of no effect”(Galatians 3:17).

Speaking expressly and shockingly to them, God delivered the Ten Commandments to the Israelites as they stood in fear and awe before Sinai. Both Israel and the entire world heard the proclamation of God’s commandments that day (Exodus 19:18-19; Psalm 68:8; Hebrews 12:26). Israel, however, responded affirmatively to God’s command, saying, “All that you have said we will do and we will hear.” Israel had such faith in God’s Word that they agreed to do his commandments before they understood (heard) them! So, God chose all of Israel as his nation and established his covenant with them; however, the Word of God tells us that at that same time he made further selection and separated a part of Israel to be a special people unto him. “When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language, Judah became his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion”(Psalm 114:1-2); “Moreover he rejected the tent of Joseph, and did not choose the tribe of Ephraim, but chose the tribe of Judah, Mount Zion which he loved” (Psalm 78:67, 68). The tribe of Judah, then, became a peculiarly chosen people unto God—a nation within a nation, as it were. It was Judah to whom God entrusted his sayings. And, it was Judah, more than all of the

other tribes of Israel, that was zealous for the law and the Word of God.

### THE ORIGIN OF THE TERM *JEW*

As time progressed, particularly following the reigns of David and Solomon, the tribe of Judah, with Benjamin and much of Levi, became even more separated from the rest of Israel in the divided kingdom. The northern tribes followed Jeroboam while Judah, Benjamin, and Levi followed Rehoboam, Solomon's son. God's wisdom in choosing Judah above the others is validated in the fact that Judah continued to maintain God's religious system while the ten tribes entered into idolatry and experienced the first Diaspora when God brought the Assyrian armies against them.

It was during this time that the members of the tribe of Judah came to be known as Jews, a contraction of the word *Judah* (*Yebudah*). The first scriptural record of this term is found in 2 Kings 16:6. Initially the term *Jew* was applied in derision by others and was not a means of identification developed by the bearers of the name (as is also the case with the term *Christian*, an aspersion against the early believers in Jesus first used in Antioch). Through succeeding generations, this term came to be synonymous with God's chosen people, so much so that members of

other tribes came to be called Jews also (Acts 19:14, 34; 21:39).

From that time, the term *Jew* came to connote the chosen people of God. Jews as a nationality included the Hebrews who had made a covenant to become God's chosen people. The term *nationality* is a particularly apropos description of the Jews. While the more common usage of the term *race* is sometimes applied to them, in the strictest sense of the meaning of this word, Jews are not a race within themselves.

### **HOW DID ONE BECOME A JEW?**

In the pre-Christian era, there were two ways in which one could become a Jew. First, one's being born of Israelite parents automatically made him a Jew through the covenant to Abraham and his descendants. Secondly, provision was made for those who wished to accept the law of God through faith to become fellow citizens with those Jews of fleshly lineage. From the very outset of the exodus, the Lord said, "And when a stranger . . . wants to keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land" (Exodus 12:48). Leviticus 19:34 reconfirms this position: "The stranger who dwells among you shall

be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself . . .” For those Gentiles who would be included in Israel there were certain initiation requirements, including circumcision, ritual immersion, sacrifice, and learning the Torah.

Is it possible that those Gentiles in the flesh actually became Jews? As far as God was concerned their acceptance of the terms of the covenant between himself and the children of Israel transformed them into Jews just as it had transformed Abraham, the Babylonian/Syrian, into a Jew. Though at first they were called proselytes and were considered second-class citizens by many elitist Jews, those who accepted the covenant of God eventually became recognized as Jews. The exclusivity of the Jews did not obviate the impartiality of God. According to Isaiah 56:3-7 the Gentiles who accepted God's covenant were to have a place in his house *better than* that of sons and daughters.

Since God has no respect of persons, the thing which made Abraham the chosen of God (in a sense, the first Jew) can make any man a Jew. As Abraham's selection was totally predicated upon his faith in God, so in both Old and New Testament eras, becoming chosen of God was by faith in God to accept his will and system for that particular era. This

faith transformed a Syrian into a Hebrew, and it has transformed many strangers of various nationalities into Jews.

Such was the case in the days of Esther. We are told that when the Jews were given permission to defend themselves on the day on which Haman planned their genocide, “many of the people of the land *became Jews*, because fear of the Jews fell upon them” (Esther 8:17). Apparently, many of the people of the Persian empire so believed in the protection of the Jews by their God that they were willing to become Jews. Whether their instinct was faith or self-preservation, the simple fact is that the Scripture tells us they “*became Jews.*”

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, the Eternal God continued to recognize those who accepted his covenants as being his chosen people or Jews, as they came to be known. It was in his divine plan, however, to make the way easier so that all men might become his chosen. In the fullness of time, it was the covenant that he had made with Abraham that prompted the Father to send his Son, made of woman under the law to redeem them that were under the law (Galatians 4:4-5). Zacharias, the father of John, prophesied: “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel; for he has visited and redeemed his people, and has raised up a

horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David . . . to perform the mercy promised to our fathers and *to remember his holy covenant*, the oath which he swore to our ancestor Abraham . . .” (Luke 1:68-69, 72-73). Jesus was the fulfillment of God’s promise, “In Isaac your *seed* shall be called” (Hebrews 11:18).

### THE COVENANT FOR JEWS ONLY

From the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus practiced the covenantal religious system under which he had been born. He staunchly maintained that the Jews alone (including those Gentiles who had fully embraced the covenant of Judaism) were God’s chosen people. He declared that he was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 15:24) and admonished his apostles not to go in the way of the Gentiles (Matthew 10:5-6). Jesus well knew that the law of God (Torah) was to go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3). He knew that to the Israelites alone belong “the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises” (Romans 9:4). It was of the Israelites “from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came” (Romans 9:5). Even when addressing one of these lost sheep of Israel (a Samaritan), the

Savior declared: “We know what we worship: for salvation is [from] the Jews” (John 4:22).

In his conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob, however, Jesus predicted that a time would soon come when a change would take place in the practice of God’s chosen religion, which also implied a change in the manner of God’s choosing his people. He declared that the true worshipers of the Eternal God must begin to worship him in Spirit as well as in truth. Until that time, the people had worshiped Yahweh in a system that had been given by God and was a revelation of divine truth; however, the worshipers had carried out their ritual by an obedience to the commandments that was often lifeless. The time was coming that those who would offer acceptable worship to God would have to do so willingly and with the motivation of the Holy Spirit. The Messiah declared that since God is Spirit, they who worship him must do so in Spirit as well as in the truth which he has given (John 4:24). This is why Paul, himself a Pharisee, declared, “. . . the letter [*of the law*] kills, but the Spirit gives life” (2 Corinthians 3:6). Mere ritualistic obedience would no longer suffice: the worshipers must worship in Spirit as well as in truth. Indeed, the *hendiadys* of John 4:24 can be interpreted to mean that the true worshipers must worship the Father in

the Spirit, *which is the truth*. It can also be interpreted that they will worship in *spiritual truth*.

### EXTENDING THE COVENANT FOR ALL PEOPLE

Since the covenants of God until that time had pertained only to the natural children, Jesus could not direct his earthly ministry outside that sphere; however, when the time came for the new covenant to be established to renew and expand the Abrahamic covenant and its Sinai emendation, the Word of God predicted that others besides the fleshly Jews would have access to that covenant. Isaiah had foretold this great event: "I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness . . . I will keep you and *give you as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles*" (Isaiah 42:6). Simeon, the priest who dedicated the Son of God, reiterated it in Luke 2:32. Jesus claimed it in Luke 4:18.

In John 10:11-16, Jesus set the stage for expanding the covenant to the Gentiles on the basis of spiritual rather than physical fulfillments of God's Word. He declared, "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring . . . *and there will be one flock and one shepherd.*" The Son of God predicted that there would be a time when there would be one religion for all men, one fold in which all God's sheep



would be gathered together. What had been required of Israel physically would now be required of the Gentiles spiritually (e.g., circumcision).

Prior to the time when the new testament in the blood of Jesus was sealed through the testator's death (Hebrews 9:15-17), the message of the Messiah had been directed only to the children of the fleshly covenant. After the death and resurrection of the Son of God, however, his commission to his disciples was this: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15); "You shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

As the door of salvation was opened to the Gentiles, the immutable principle of accepting God's covenant remained constant. Psalms 50:5 tells us that only those who have made a covenant with God are qualified to inherit with Christ. The new covenant that Yahweh made with Israel and the rest of the world through the death of his Son was this: "I will put my laws in their mind and write them on their heart; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Hebrews 8:10).

The renewal and expansion of God's covenant was made available to the entire world, including the Gentiles, and was to be predicated upon only one

thing—faith. This was the covenant which God made with the world: “That whoever believes in him should . . . have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Inclusion among God’s chosen people was contingent upon accepting by faith that Messiah Jesus is the everlasting atonement for sin. Just as Abraham was justified by faith, so all the just “shall live by faith” (Romans 5:1; Galatians 3:11).

Confession of faith in the atoning death and glorious resurrection of the Jewish Messiah effected the rebirth and the spiritual circumcision of the heart that Moses (Deuteronomy 10:16) and Jeremiah (4:4) had predicted. The believer’s subsequent baptism in water was an outward demonstration of his death to sin, his burial, and his resurrection to newness of life. It was a fulfillment of Judaism’s requirement that converts to Yahweh’s religion immerse themselves in the *mikveh*. Those who were baptized became catechumenes and were taught the Word of God in like manner as proselytes to Judaism were taught the same Torah. They also participated in the one sacrifice for sin under the new covenant—Jesus, himself—and they shared in the new sacrificial system of praise, prayer, and worship of God in the Spirit (Hebrews 13:15-16; Revelation 5:8; 8:3; Philippians 4:18).

While previously God’s covenants had applied

to the *fleshly* lineage and had been sealed with the *fleshly* sign of circumcision, the Messiah established a *spiritual* covenant which by a *spiritual* birth translated the believer into the *spiritual* Israel, the spiritual kingdom of God, which then functioned alongside natural Israel in God's election. The principle of becoming chosen of God by making a covenant with him remained constant.

### THE ABRAHAMIC COVENANT OF FAITH

The great similarity between the covenant of Abraham and that of Christ is immediately noticed. Both were given because of faith, and both promised an inheritance. Paul notes this similarity in Galatians 3:6-8, 13-14, 26, 29: "Just as Abraham 'believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the nations by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed' . . . Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law . . . that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. . . . For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. . . . And if you are

Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

The Abrahamic covenant, then, was not abolished in Christ, but rather was extended by him to all men, both Jew and Gentile. All believers in Jesus, Jew and Gentile, become the spiritual children of Abraham by virtue of their faith. This is further explained in Romans 9:6-8, 23-26: "For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, 'in Isaac shall your seed be called.' That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed."

### **THE RENEWED COVENANT OF THE TORAH**

The covenant of the Torah given at Sinai was a system of praise, worship, and service that came to be called Judaism by the time of the first century A.D. This Judaism was never obviated or superseded by the ministry of Jesus. Since Jesus, himself, confessed that he had not come to destroy the Torah (law) but to complete it (Matthew 5:17), the new covenant was not a totally unexpected religion but a renewal of the first covenant on the basis of a better sacrifice. It was another step in God's unfolding

plan for the ages and the religion that he had given and would perfect.

It was not that the first covenant was bad and the second good. The first covenant was good (Romans 7:12), and the second was better (Hebrews 7:19-22). The new covenant expanded the Sinai covenant in the same way in which the Sinai Covenant had expanded the Abrahamic covenant. The Abrahamic covenant was of grace and faith as Hebrews 11 demonstrates. The new covenant brought an expansion of the grace and truth which the Sinai covenant manifested restrictively. The Sinai covenant needed only perfection (completion) and renewal, not abrogation and supersession.

### **GENTILES BECOME SPIRITUAL JEWS**

Ephesians 2:11-13 expands upon the thought of Gentile inclusion: “Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh . . . were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the *covenants of promise*, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been made near by the blood of Christ.” Those who were formerly nothing more than “Gentiles in the flesh” and aliens from Israel and its covenants, were now translated into the

kingdom of God (Colossians 1:13), becoming his chosen people (in effect, becoming Jewish or naturalized citizens of Israel).

Paul declared that to the apostles alone was revealed this mystery that the Gentiles should be accepted before God on equal terms with the Jews: “. . . [this] mystery . . . in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets: that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ through the Gospel” (Ephesians 3:5-6).

The Abrahamic covenant and its more far-reaching implications then were applicable not only to the children of the flesh but also to the children of faith. Circumcision, the fleshly sign in which the Jews according to the flesh had come to trust, was totally secondary to the spiritual faith which Abraham had had when he was chosen of God. “For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the law are heirs, faith is made void . . . Therefore, it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the *promise might be sure to all the seed*, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are

of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all” (Romans 4:13-16).

In Romans 2:25-29 the apostle Paul further explained the principle of faith and obedience to God through which the Gentiles could be accepted before God on equal terms with the Jews. “For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? . . . For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor 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, and not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.”

### **CHILDREN OF FAITH *COUNTED AS FLESHLY* CHILDREN**

A Gentile’s having the righteousness of God, then, is *counted as* circumcision so that he, in effect, becomes Jewish. Since the righteousness of God is solely the person of Jesus Christ (Romans 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30), the Gentile as well as the Jew receives righteousness through faith in Jesus. This faith righteousness is

then *counted as* circumcision of the flesh so that circumcision becomes a spiritual experience rather than a fleshly rite. The Greek word translated “counted as” is *logizomai*. It is the same word used in Romans 4:3: “Abraham believed God, and it was *accounted to* him for righteousness,” and in Romans 9:8: “The children of the promise are *counted as* the seed.” Just as Abraham’s faith was *counted as* righteousness, so the substitutionary righteousness of Christ in the heart of the uncircumcised believer is *counted as* circumcision and the reborn child of the promise of God is *counted as* the fleshly seed.

This is the principle upon which a Gentile by circumcision of the heart (rebirth) can become a spiritual Jew. The spiritual Jew is the spiritual seed of Abraham through faith. What the apostle is saying here is that both fleshly Jews and fleshly Gentiles can become spiritual Jews through the circumcision of the heart. This does not replace the natural Jews in God’s covenantal purposes, for the gifts and callings of God, both natural and spiritual, are irrevocable (Romans 11:29).

Some have suggested that the spiritual seed utterly replaced the natural Jews and that Christianity superseded Judaism. This position is based on an arrogant ignorance of hundreds of prophecies of the



Old Testament and the writings of the apostles. Anyone who honestly studies the New Testament in the context of its first century culture, history, and grammar instantly recognizes the continuity of biblical faith.

Others have suggested that only fleshly Jews who believe upon Christ can become spiritual Jews. Those who propose this argument state that Gentiles who believe upon the Messiah are called spiritual Gentiles, an argument that falls short on two points:

(1) The term *spiritual* does not always denote spirituality or a higher plane of maturity in the Spirit of God. It is used to reveal something of the spirit, or the intangible, as opposed to something of the flesh, or the tangible. Such is the case in 1 Corinthians 15:44, where we are told that there is a natural body and a *spiritual* body; in Ephesians 5:19, where we are admonished to sing *spiritual* songs; in Ephesians 6:12, where the nature of our warfare is described as being against *spiritual* wickedness in high places; and in Revelation 11:8, where Jerusalem is *spiritually* called Sodom and Egypt. While *spiritual* can be an adjective denoting spirituality, it is also used as a substitute for the prepositional phrase *in spirit*.

(2) By the time of the New Testament, the term *Jew* had become the word which was used to identify God's chosen people, whether they were of the tribe

of Judah, Benjamin, Levi, or whatever. If the Gentiles were “fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of his promise” (Ephesians 3:6) and were no more strangers “from the covenants of promise” (Ephesians 2:12), then they most surely could be recognized as “Jewish” or chosen of God.

And, indeed, this was the case, for we find Peter, the apostle to the Jews, making this statement: “To the pilgrims of the dispersion . . . you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house . . . You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people . . . who once were not a people but are now the people of God” (1 Peter 1:1; 2:5, 9-10). This specific quotation of Hosea 1:6, 9 shows us that Gentiles who have experienced the rebirth are considered spiritually and prophetically to be “Israelites.”

### **NATURAL INHERITANCE: COVENANT PROVISION**

By accepting the Lord Jesus Christ and his righteousness, the Gentiles became a part of God's holy nation, his chosen people. They became spiritual Jews and children of Abraham. As such, they also became heirs of the world, as God had promised to Abraham (Romans 4:13).

This is the reason that the kingdom of God will

be established in the nation of Israel rather than in some other nation of the world. The camp of the saints of the Most High God will be in the Holy City for the thousand years of the kingdom of God upon the earth (Revelation 20:9). The inheritance of the land from the Euphrates to the river of Egypt is promised to the children of Abraham, both the natural and spiritual Jews, who will reign with Jesus Christ for one thousand years over the entire earth from his headquarters in Jerusalem, Israel.

The identification of the spiritual Jews of today is simple. Those who believe upon Messiah Yeshua (Christ Jesus) are the children of the promise, the seed of Abraham through faith. They have come alongside natural Israel as spiritual partners in the promises and covenants of God.

### **GOD'S CHOSEN COVENANT RELIGION**

If there is only one God, then there is only one religion for all mankind, both Jew and Gentile according to the flesh. Paul declares this to be true in Ephesians 4:5: "One Lord, one faith . . ." There is not, as some would have it, a religion for the Jews, called Judaism, and a religion for the Gentiles, called Christianity. And, in the ranks of believers in Jesus, there is not one religion for the Jews, called Messianic Juda-

ism, and another different religion for the Gentiles, called Christianity. Ultimately, there is only one faith or religious system for all men.

It is not necessary for us to persuade the believer that God is an unchanging God. Everyone knows that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). Since the Lord is Yahweh who changes not (Malachi 3:6), then we must emphatically assert that if Judaism were ever his chosen system of praise, worship, and service, then in some form it must remain such.

But what effect did the ministry of Messiah Yeshua have on Judaism? The truth is revealed in the nature of the Eternal God as a Perfecter. God simply does not discard what he has done in one era in favor of a totally different thing in another. What he does do is to modify and restructure in order to bring about perfection in the linear development of his plan for the ages. Jeremiah 18:1-6 reveals the nature of the work that the Son of God did in Israel. He took the same marred lump of clay that God had been molding for centuries and from it re-formed a vessel of honor.

The role of Jesus as a reformer is very specifically applied to the religious system called Judaism in Hebrews 9:8,10: “. . . the way into the Holiest of All was

not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing . . . concerned only with and foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until *the time of reformation.*” Jesus was a reformer, not an innovator. His purpose was to perfect what God had done through centuries of dealing with the Israelites by introducing the new covenant sealed in his own blood. He declared to the Jewish leaders who thought that he had come to introduce some new religion, “Think not that I have come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I have not come to destroy, but to *fulfill*” (Matthew 5:17).

Through the Messiah, the yoke of Judaism was made easy and the burden light (Matthew 11:28-30), for those parts of Judaism that were rendered superfluous through his becoming the perfect atonement once for all, were nailed to his cross, leaving only the eternal immutable principles of God intact, with a new order for their observance. Whereas the Judaism of the first covenant had become for many a burdensome, ritual-filled religion, the Judaism of the new covenant became a vibrant, exciting, Spirit-filled way of life. Whereas fleshly Jews had gravitated toward a largely ritualistic religion, old covenant Judaism, spiritual Jews (both Jews and Gentiles who have believed upon Jesus) have inherited a spiritual religion, new covenant Juda-

ism.

If those who believe on the Son of God are the true seed of Abraham, the spiritual Jews, then it is only fitting that their religious system be the reformed Judaism of the New Testament or new covenant. And so it was: New Testament Christianity was a Judaism among the many Judaisms of that day. And so it must be: today's over-Hellenized, over-Latinized Christianity must reconnect with its Jewish roots, rebuild its Hebrew foundations, and return to its Judaic heritage. In order to realize its fullness, Christianity must be restored to the religion which Jesus and the apostles practiced.

### **IRREVOCABLE COVENANTS AND NATURAL ISRAEL**

God's plan to include the Gentiles did not require the exclusion of the Jews. Natural Israel, the Jews according to the flesh, continue in covenantal relationship with God. Romans 11:29 tells us that the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. For this reason and for this reason alone, the natural, physical benefits of the covenant that God made with Abraham and his lineage according to the flesh still pertain to the fleshly Jews. Romans 9:29 declares that except the Lord of *Sabaoth* had left Israel a seed, they would have

been as Sodom and Gomorrah; however, Yahweh's promise was that a remnant would be saved. Indeed, this is the proof of God's immutability: "For I am the Lord, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob" (Malachi 3:6). Because God can never change, his personal commitments to the children of Abraham continue to be fulfilled.

### **TORAH STILL A SCHOOLMASTER**

In Galatians 3:24, Paul declared that the law (Torah) was a schoolmaster to bring Israel to Messiah. In the Hellenic world, of which Galatia was a part, a schoolmaster (*paidagogos*) was a family servant whose responsibility was to protect the children, to train them in proper etiquette and deportment, and to accompany them to their teachers. The law, then, was designed by God to be a means of protecting Israel and keeping them from the evils of the Gentile world until they could be brought to Messiah, their teacher.

The purpose of the Torah has never changed. Through the centuries and even to this day it has remained as a guardian of the Jewish people, ensuring the continuity of their faith in Yahweh, the only God. It has maintained the Jewish people as a distinct and recognizable entity in the world despite unrelenting attempts by the tyrants of history to effect their geno-

cide. If it ever were a schoolmaster to bring Israel to Messiah, the Torah (law) remains so today and will remain so until the time that Messiah comes to teach Israel all his ways.

### **A PROPHEPIC RESTORATION**

God's plan for the Jewish people and the nation of Israel is a threefold restoration: the land of Israel is to be restored to the people of Israel; the people of Israel are to be restored to the land of Israel; and the people of Israel are to be restored to their God. The Zionist movement that has brought millions of Jewish people back to the land of Israel from the dispersion among the nations and has brought about the reestablishing of the nation of Israel in a part of the land which God promised to Abraham is a direct result of the faith of those Jews in God's promise to Abraham. Their faith in God's covenant has brought the fleshly benefits to them even though they have not come to faith in Jesus as Messiah. Through this means, the land has been restored to the people, and the people have been restored to the land.

The next stage of restoration is for the people of Israel to be restored to God. A large percentage of the Jewish world population is either non-observant, secular, agnostic, or atheistic. A move of God must



take place to turn the hearts of the Jewish people and the nation of Israel back to God and to his Word. Then, and only then, can they come to understand that the one from among them who brought Israel's light to the Gentiles is, indeed, Messiah.

### **ALL OF GOD'S COVENANT HOLY ONES INHERIT**

The great purpose of God in returning the land of Israel to the people, bringing the Jews again from the Diaspora, and turning their hearts again to God is to set the stage for Israel's national day of salvation (Zechariah 12:10; 13:1; Romans 9:27) and the subsequent coming of Messiah. When this great prophetic event occurs, those who are of the faith of Abraham, God's chosen people of every generation—both Jew and Gentile—will inherit the earth, just as Jesus promised (Matthew 5:5; 25:34). Yahweh God's four-thousand-year-old covenant with Abraham will have been made sure to all the seed, both the natural and the spiritual (Romans 4:16), and they will rule and reign with Messiah over all the earth for one thousand years in a kingdom that will continue to reflect the nature of its unchanging God by being patterned after biblical Judaism.



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