Jews, Gentiles & the Church

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Before the cross of Christ, mankind was divided into two groups: *Jews*and *Gentiles* . The Old and New Testaments both make very clear what caused this distinction. It was the covenants God had made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and with their descendants through Moses. These covenants were *for Israel alone* and separated her from all other nations on the face of the earth, making God's "chosen people" absolutely unique. Israel was segregated from other peoples by the Mosaic law and by her special relationship with the One who calls Himself "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (**Lev:20:24**,26, etc.).

The important distinction between Jews and Gentiles is maintained consistently throughout the Bible: "...so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth" (Ex 33:16); "...for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people that ye should be mine" (**Lev:20:26**); "And what one nation in the earth is like thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem to be his...own people for ever" (**1 Chr:17:21-22**  
  
); "...ye [Gentiles] were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God..." (**Eph:2:12**).

After the Cross a new entity came into existence—the *church* that Jesus Christ promised He would build (Mt 16:18). As a result, there are now three divisions of mankind: *Jews, Gentiles* and the *church* . Paul tells us that we are to "Give none offence, neither to the *Jews* , nor to the *Gentiles* , nor to the *church of God* " (**1 Cor:10:32**). It is absolutely essential to understand that these three groups exist side by side in today's world, to distinguish between them, and to recognize that God deals with each differently.

Essential also is an understanding that the church was created through offering to both Jews and Gentiles a "new covenant" relationship with God. This did not bring Gentiles under the Jewish Mosaic law (as some erroneously teach), but delivered from it those coming into the church, both Jews and Gentiles. Paul explains that Gentiles who were "aliens ...of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise" have been "made nigh [to God] by the blood of Christ" (**Eph:2:13**).God has "broken down the middle wall of partition between [Jew and Gentile]; having abolished in his flesh the [Mosaic] law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain [Jew and Gentile] one new man" (**Eph:2:11-22**).

These scriptures (and many others) make it clear that the church did not replace Israel, but came into existence as a new and third entity comprised of both Jews and Gentiles and distinct from each. As surely as Gentiles continue to exist outside the church, so does Israel, with all of God's promises and plans for her remaining in full force. God also has unique plans for the church, differing from those for either Israel or the Gentile nations.

A major error of Reconstructionists such as North, Rushdoony, DeMar and Bahnsen (an error that is also taught by Jay Grimstead's Coalition on Revival) is their claim that the law of Moses was for all mankind; and that it provides the moral basis both for the civil government of Romans 13 and for the conduct of Christians today. On the contrary, the law which unsaved civil magistrates enforce under Romans 13 could*not* be the Mosaic law, because that was given exclusively to the Jews. It is rather the moral law that Romans 2 says is written by God in every human conscience.

That the Mosaic law was never intended for Gentiles and is not applicable to the church is clear from many scriptures in addition to those quoted above. Consider: "For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them...[and] hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law" (Deut 4:7-8); "He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath noeut dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them" (**Ps:147:19-20**  
  
). As already noted, the Mosaic "law of commandments" that distinguished Israel from the rest of the world was "abolished" by the cross of Christ in the process of creating the church out of both Jews and Gentiles who have been made into "one new man."

Failure to accept the above teaching of Scripture leads to grievous errors which plagued the early church and are being revived today. Foremost, of course, is*legalism—* the idea that to be a Christian one must obey the laws of Moses. This causes confusion both as to justification and sanctification: the means of being delivered from sin's future penalty, and from its present power in our lives. The Scripture makes it clear that neither of these involves keeping the Law. The suggestion of "Judaizers," that the church was under the Mosaic law, was rejected as heresy by the apostles and elders when they met in Jerusalem specifically to consider this subject shortly after Pentecost (Acts 15). Paul thoroughly refuted the Judaizers' teachings in his Epistle to the Galatians.

Certainly through keeping the Law "there shall no flesh be justified" (**Rom:3:20**). Justification comes as a free gift of God's grace through the finished work of Christ. Nor can one be sanctified (i.e., gain the victory over the practice of sin) by keeping the Law, because of the weakness of human flesh. The good news is that "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh," God accomplished in "sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin" (**Rom:8:3-4**  
  
). The New Testament presents to the Christian a much higher standard of moral and ethical conduct than that of the Mosaic law. We are empowered to live this higher standard because Christ himself, by the Holy Spirit, has come to indwell our hearts and to live through us a supernatural life pleasing to God. The glorious result is the death of self and a new life of faith (**Gal:2:20**) that produces the fruit of the Spirit (**Gal:5:22-23**).

There are many serious consequences to the growing delusion that the church is Israel. Christ said that those who "say they are Jews, and are not" are in fact "the synagogue of Satan" (**Rev:2:9**,3:9)! Some of those who teach this lie (like Greg Bahnsen) are brilliant. He has his doctorate in philosophy from USC. Yet the errors they make are so elementary as to betray a basic anti-Jewish sentiment, which they deny, but which seems to have blinded them to the obvious.

Bahnsen, for example, quotes **Psalm:89:34** ("My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips.") to prove his contention that "God's covenant is one unchanging moral code through Old and New Testaments" (*By This Standard* , p 44). Yet Psalm 89 has nothing whatsoever to do with a *moral code* but is all about the covenant God made with David that "His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me" (v 36). This is the covenant the angel Gabriel reaffirmed in telling Mary that the One conceived in her of the Holy Spirit would reign on the throne of His father David—a covenant which Bahnsen perversely claims is no longer in force in spite of the very verse he misapplies which declares that it is!

Bahnsen habitually quotes Jesus's statement, "...one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law...," to support his contention that the church is under the Mosaic law, but deliberately leaves out the rest of the sentence. Far from teaching that the Law would always be in force, Christ declared that it *would pass away when it was fulfilled* , and that He had come *to fulfill it* : "I am [not] come to destroy the law...but to*fulfill* [it]....One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, *till all be fulfilled* " (**Mat:5:17-18**  
  
). His life, death, burial and resurrection accomplished this fulfillment and made possible the new covenant relationship with God whereby those in the church are "justified by faith without the deeds of law" (**Rom:3:21-30**).

Does this "make void the law"? No, it "establish[es] the law" (v 31) as that which made Israel unique. That same law was the barrier between Jew and Gentile and is still applicable to Jews, but for those now in the church, both Jews and Gentiles, it has been fulfilled and abolished in Christ.

Those who teach that the church is Israel go on to claim that the church is heir to all of the promises given to Israel. This is as ludicrous as claiming that "the land of Israel" is now "the land of the church." Clearly the church has no relationship to the land God gave to Israel. Hear God's promise: "...though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee...He that scattered Israel will gather him...they shall come and sing in the height of Zion...they shall not sorrow *any more at all"* (**Jer:30:10-11** ; 31:3-14; etc.)

The preservation of the Israelis as an identifiable people, in spite of the proverbial "wandering Jews'" 2,500-year diaspora from the promised land, and the establishment of Israel in 1948, constitute irrefutable proof for the existence of the "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" and the validity of His Holy Word. Therefore, to insist that Israel no longer has any claim to her ancient homeland, and that her return thereto is a mere coincidence, denies one of the most persuasive arguments for belief in God and the gospel. It dishonors Him and His Word, and is not only illogical but evil!

My language may seem strong, but it is justified in view of the monstrous errors that grow from this one delusion, as well as by the severity of Christ's "synagogue of Satan" indictment. It may seem innocent enough to claim for the church **2 Chronicles:7:14**, but this scripture that has become such a popular favorite simply does not apply to the church. While Christians may make spiritual applications to themselves from God's admonition to Israel to "humble themselves, and pray, and seek [His] face, and turn from their wicked ways," the "land" He promised to heal as a result was *Israel* and *only Israel* , not the United States or any other country.

Gary North's latest book, *When Justice is Aborted* , begins with God's promise to Joshua that He would help him to conquer the land of Canaan—then, on that basis, in a typical reconstruction/kingdom/dominion misapplication of Scripture, justifies a Christian takeover of the world. The Forceful Men organization, codirected by muscleman John Jacobs, recently sponsored a large conference in Phoenix featuring leading charismatic speakers who promoted the same error. God's exhortation to Joshua to "go in and possess the land [of Canaan]" was presented as inspiration and justification for a "Joshua generation" of macho-minded Christians taking over America and the world. In fact, Joshua himself had no authority from God to take over any land outside of the prescribed boundaries specifically given to Israel (**Gen:15:18**; **Num:34:1-12**; etc.).

I know of no better way for Christians to clarify in their hearts and minds the important points above than to personally visit Israel with God's Word in hand. There you will see the Bible being fulfilled today before the eyes of the world in "the promised land." I confess that I used to consider Christian tours of the Holy Land a needless luxury and wanted no part of them. Last June, however, my wife Ruth and I joined a tour of Jordan, Israel and Egypt at the persuasion of a friend. It was an awesomely inspiring and informative experience.

The second coming of Christ becomes clouded in confusion if we fail to remember that the Lord comes in a different and specific manner for "*Jews* , *Gentiles* and the *church* of God." For His bride He comes secretly to "rapture" her to His Father's house of many mansions, where He has prepared an eternal dwelling place for her. For Israel, in the midst of God's judgment for her rejection of her Messiah, surrounded by the armies of the world and about to be destroyed, He comes visibly in power to rescue her, to judge her Gentile enemies, and to establish the millennial kingdom with headquarters in Jerusalem. May God help us to "love His appearing" and to witness with a clear voice concerning these soon-coming events. **TBC**