

Jews And Gentiles Becoming One New Man Under One Shepherd

'You Gentiles were separate from Jesus, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. Now in Jesus, you who once were far off are made near in the blood of Jesus. He is our peace, Who made both (Jews and Gentiles) one (body) and broke down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in the flesh the hostility, the law of commandments contained in ordinances so He could create in Himself 'one new man' of the two (Jews and Gentiles), making peace, to reconcile them both (Jews and Gentiles) in one body to God through the cross, having killed the hostility (through His blood and the cross). Jesus came and preached peace to you who were far off and to those who were near. Through Jesus we both (Jews and Gentiles) have our access in one Holy Spirit to the Father. You (Gentiles) are no longer strangers and foreigners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints (holy, righteous Jewish people) and of the household of God, being built on the foundation of the (Jewish) apostles and (Jewish) prophets, Jesus Himself being the Chief Cornerstone in Whom the whole building (the whole body of believers worldwide), fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord in Whom you also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit' (Ephesians 2:12 to 22).

The world was shocked, stunned and ashamed to learn of the extent of Nazi atrocities during WW2. Six million innocent Jewish men, women and children were cruelly slaughtered. We cannot forget their torture and deaths along with several million 'dissidents' the Nazi's called, 'useless mouths' that needed feeding, like Christians, people of other faiths, Gypsies, the aged, infirm, mentally slow, deformed, deaf, blind, anyone who disagreed with the regime or who disliked Hitler. Although Hitler claimed to be a 'Christian' he put to death all genuine born-again, Holy Spirit filled Christians. His form of 'Christianity' was a heartless, empty religion, not a genuine heart-felt intimate relationship with God through Jesus. All were put to death in various ways but gassing in the concentration camps became the Nazis chosen way to exterminate the innocents. The murderous regime began by slowly euthanasing people in institutions for the disabled, then the aged who were in care and slowly the killing covered all areas of Nazi occupation. How did this ghastly and shocking time in modern history begin? The Nazis justified their actions by referring to the writings of well known 'Christian' authors and leaders including Martin Luther, the former Roman Catholic-turned-reformer. Luther's writings were filled with anti-Semitism. He said the most deplorable, despicable and disgusting things about the Jewish people.

Not all people agreed with Luther and some died opposing his views. This writer's own uncle, Doctor Eugene Aviet, was arrested in Belgium (or France) and taken to a concentration camp because he was a Christian, a medical doctor and he openly disagreed with Hitler. As a doctor, the Nazis tried to use him in the most evil of ways, but he refused to inject Jewish people with air or a substance like bleach or formaldehyde into their veins. Any medically trained person would know what that would do to the victim. The terrible idea was one of the many evil experiments Mengele was doing to children. Another of his experiments was to turn brown-eyed children into blue-eyed by injecting their irises with a mild solution of bleach to make them look more 'Aryan'. The child was then murdered and their artificially changed blue eyes were kept in a jar of formalin. My Uncle Eugene refused to take part in any of the horrendous experiments and for his efforts, what he refused to do to the Jewish children, was done to him but he never gave in, even when he was injected with a syringe full of air. He somehow sent secret messages out to his family to tell them what was really happening in the camps, but there was nothing they could do to help him. His torture lasted a very long time, possibly months until he finally died. Eugene's body has never been found and was probably cremated. His desperate attempts to save Jewish children and his incredible bravery have never been acknowledged and have been forgotten by almost everyone. He truly was a righteous Gentile. This story was told and retold to me by Eugene's sister Mabel, my grandmother who survived the war. The Holocaust must never ever be forgotten.

One of the most evil things Luther accused the Jewish people of is deicide, killing the Son of God, our Messiah. That accusation alone has caused much persecution of innocent Jewish people. If people care to read the Bible they will see it was solely the Romans who killed Jesus. The Jews called for His death but in reality, did not lay a hand on Him. The Romans arrested Him, flayed Him, beat Him, nailed Him to the cross, watched Him die then stabbed Him. Jesus said, "I am the Good Shepherd. I know My own and I am known by My own just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father. I lay down My life for the sheep (the Jewish people). I have other sheep (Gentiles) not of this fold. I must bring them also and they will hear My voice. They will become one flock with one Shepherd. The Father loves Me because I lay down My life so I may take it up again. No one takes My life away from Me but I lay it down by Myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it up again. I received this commandment from My Father" (John 10:14 to 18). Here again, Jesus says Jews and Gentiles will be one flock with one Shepherd.

There is some confusion about what is meant by, "The Jew first and also the Gentile." 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Jesus for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, for the Jew first and

also for the Gentile ... God will pay back everyone according to their works; to those who with patience do well, who seek God, He will pay back glory, honour, incorruptibility and eternal life. To those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, will be paid back wrath, indignation, oppression and anguish on every soul of mankind who works evil, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. Glory, honour and peace go to every person who works good, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile, for there is no partiality (or favouritism) with God' (Romans 1:16; 2:6 to 11). These verses have nothing to do with the erroneous replacement theology. It means all people will be judged on Judgement Day according to the works each individual has done on earth, good or bad. 'We must all be revealed before the Judgment Seat of Jesus so each person may receive the rewards in the (resurrected) body according to what they have done, whether good or bad' (2 Corinthians 5:10). Every person who has ever lived will receive a resurrected body but not everyone will go to heaven. 'Those who have died and are buried in the dust of the earth will awake, some to everlasting life and some to shame and everlasting contempt' (Daniel 12:2).

The initial covenant with God's chosen race was established with Noah, an ancestor of the Hebrew people. God said to Noah, "I will establish My covenant with you" ... "As for Me, behold, I establish My covenant with you and with your offspring after you" (Genesis 6:18; 9:9). Noah's Hebrew descendent Abraham became the forefather of the children of Israel who were later referred to as Jews. The verbal covenant of promise the Lord established with Noah was passed on to Abraham when it became an eternal covenant of blood through circumcision (Genesis 17:10). It continued with Isaac, Jacob and the children of Israel. The Lord strengthened the blood covenant with Moses and the Israelites by putting it in writing (Ten Commandments, Exodus 31:18) and it then became a written blood covenant of promises and divine love (Deuteronomy 6:5; 7:6 to 9). The promise became a blood oath then a written contract and finally it grew to become similar to a solid marriage contract complete with a love relationship between God and His spiritual royal princess 'wife', the people living in Jerusalem and the rest of Israel (Ezekiel 16:1 to 14), complete with vows when all of the children of Israel agreed to obey the Lord wholeheartedly with the word, "Amen" (Deuteronomy 27:15 to 26). The Jewish people had a monopoly on the God of Israel. They matured to become a righteous people, a holy nation, a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6). Gentiles were strangers to the covenants and were utterly without hope. For the covenant to be effective, both parties had to shed blood and at the cross of Jesus, God shed His blood to make the covenant eternally binding. Even then, Jesus went to the lost sheep of Israel first and largely excluded Gentiles. "I was not sent to anyone but the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24). Some time after Jesus was resurrected, the apostles began teaching the Gentiles about the Messiah. Only then did God open the door to the covenant and Gentiles were able to be included in God's master plan for salvation, so the Gentiles did not receive the salvation message for thousands of years after the Hebrews. From then onwards, everything God does, He does with the Jewish people before He includes the Gentiles. The same applies today and the same will apply on Judgement Day. That is what is meant by, "The Jew first and also the Gentile." To fulfil the promises God made to Abraham, He made sure salvation for Gentiles could only come through His chosen people, the Jews (John 4:22).

Christianity is an extension of Judaism. The Hebrew writing on a 2,000 year old parchment scroll of the whole Bible compiled by a Jewish scribe, is still so clear it enables us to trace the development of early Christianity back to its Judaic roots. Jesus was a Jewish Man, born in Israel to a Jewish family who spoke Hebrew, followed Jewish customs, obeyed the Laws of Moses, celebrated the feasts of the Lord, attended synagogues and was taught solely from the Old Testament. Jesus preached from the Old Testament and regularly quoted from it. In the beginning of the new church all the believers in Jesus were Jewish. They thought like Jews, lived like Jews, spoke Hebrew and were zealous for God. Gentiles were included later. The early church was started by Jewish people, living in Israel, within the Jewish culture who bravely went out and spread the message of salvation to an unbelieving, pagan world. Gentiles are grafted into an already existing covenant relationship with God. It is vitally important for all believers to study the Hebraic roots of Christianity. We must remember, the early church did not have the New Testament. It had not yet been written. They only had the Biblical truths written in the Tenach – the Hebrew scriptures – the Old Testament. The 'church fathers' decided to separate the Gentile religion from our mother faith – Judaism. To establish and legitimise the Catholic faith from Judaism, they de-legitimised the Jewish people, forbade any participation of the Lord's feasts, celebrations and worship, they minimised the Old Testament as being virtually unimportant, they stopped believing the prophecies regarding the Jewish people and Israel as being literal, and they interpreted the prophecies as promises for the church. The replacement theology took root. The church fathers claimed God had finished with the Jewish people because they had rejected the Messiah and so He had 'created' the church to replace Israel. They began calling the church, 'Spiritual Israel'. The church began to persecute the Jewish people in earnest. If you believe the church has replaced Israel, you will need to change your way of thinking. The Lord in His infinite mercy has included the Gentiles in His master plan for salvation, but He has never excluded the Jewish people.

Study again the opening verses. Gentiles were separated from Jesus, alienated from Israel, without hope and without God. Through the blood and cross of Jesus, Gentiles could be grafted into the vine of salvation if

they choose to accept His sacrifice and do not turn from Him again after being saved. Paul, the Jewish Pharisee who became an apostle wrote the following, 'I ask then, did God reject His people? Absolutely not! I am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject His people whom He foreknew ... If the first fruit is holy, so is the lump. If the root (Judaism) is holy, so are the branches (the Jewish people). If some of the branches were broken off and you (Gentiles) being a wild olive (unsaved and unclean) were grafted in among them and became partaker (of salvation) with them of the root (Judaism) and of the richness of the olive tree, do not boast (or gloat) over the (lost) branches. If you boast, remember it is not you who supports the root, but the root supports you (Judaism supports Christianity, not the other way around). You will say, "Branches were broken off so I might be grafted in." True. By their unbelief they were broken off and you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear, for if God did not spare the natural branches (the Jewish people), neither will he spare you. See then the goodness and severity of God. Severity towards those who fell but goodness toward you if you continue in His goodness otherwise you also will be cut off. If they do not continue in their unbelief they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. If you were cut out of what is by nature a wild olive tree and were grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree, how much more will these, who are the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? Do not be ignorant brothers, of this mystery, so you will not be wise in your own conceits. A partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in and so all Israel will be saved. As it is written, "There will come out of Zion the Deliverer. He will turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Israel). This is My covenant to them when I will take away their sins." Concerning the Gospel, the Jews are enemies for your sake. But concerning the election, (they are God's elect) they are beloved for the forefathers' sake. The gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. As you in time past were disobedient to God but now have obtained mercy by their disobedience, so these (the Jews) also have now been disobedient. By the same mercy shown to you, they will also obtain mercy. God has shut up all mankind to disobedience so He might have mercy on all people' (Romans 11:1 & 2; 16 to 32).

In the above text, Christians are referred to as a wild olive branch grafted onto the olive root of Judaism. Many Christians believe that verse to mean the blossoming early church was grafted onto a withering root of Judaism, replacing the original olive tree. In nature that is impossible. For a grafting to flourish, the twig to be grafted on and the root system must be healthy. A twig will not blossom if the root is withered. Our root extends back to Abraham and that means there is only one olive tree representing Jews and Gentiles, both being spiritually fed by the same blood or sap of the tree. When God made the covenant with Abraham, initially it was only for the Jewish people but the Lord already had Gentiles in mind when He said Abraham's Descendent (Jesus) would bless all families. Although the Jewish people have suffered for their disobedience, God will always keep His covenant with them and has never forgotten them nor has He discarded them. God likens His love for the children of Israel to a mother's love as she nurses her child. 'Can a mother forget her nursing child? Should she not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, some may forget but I will not forget you. Behold, I have imprinted you on the palms of My hands. Your boundaries are continually before me' (Isaiah 49:15 & 16).

Modern Christians need to think the same way the early Christians thought. Christianity emerged from an established, strong, ancient faith. Judaism does not need Christianity to explain its beginnings, but Christianity certainly needs Judaism to explain its beliefs. Imagine if things were reversed and Jews persecuted Christians? There would be an outcry, yet Christians have been persecuting Jews for 2,000 years. That is why there is so much distrust between the two groups. The birth of the nation of Israel in 1948 made many Christians look at the promises made to Israel, promises many Christians believed were for the church. Suddenly, the ancient prophecies were being fulfilled very literally. Genuine believers could not help but take notice. Israel was called Israel once again. Jewish people began returning to their rightful homeland. The pure language God spoke about was once again being used in the whole of Israel. The united front was being formed. 'I (God) will give to the people a clear and pure language from pure lips so they may all call on the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one united shoulder' (Zephaniah 3:9).

There are many believers today who have a deep love for the Jewish people and for Israel. They notice what God says about blessing the descendants of Abraham, and how through Abraham's Descendent Jesus, people around the world will be blessed. 'I will bless those who bless you and I will curse him who curses you. In you will all of the families of the earth be blessed' (Genesis 12:3). "Comfort, comfort My people," says your God. "Speak comfortably to Jerusalem and call out to her, her warfare is accomplished, her iniquity is pardoned" (Isaiah 40:1 & 2). 'Most certainly I tell you, what you did for one of the least of these My brothers (the Jewish people) you did it for Me' ... 'What you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do it for Me' (Matthew 25:40 & 45). Israel and the church have a future destiny together. By the mercy of God together with the blood of Jesus, we both are being moulded together as one special body of people who will ultimately live in the presence of God in the new heaven and new earth, created by God for His own special people. 'I (Apostle John) saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth have been destroyed and the sea is no more. I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God,

made ready like a bride adorned for her groom. I heard a loud voice out of heaven saying, "Behold, God's dwelling is with people. He will dwell with them and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God' (Revelation 21:1 to 3). God loves Israel and always has. Anyone who accepts the Hebrew Bible – the Old Testament as the authentic Word of God will come to the same conclusion. God has a special and deeper love for all those who love Jesus and He comes down to them. "Anyone who has My commandments and keeps them, that person is one who loves Me. Anyone who loves Me will be loved by My Father and I will love them and will reveal Myself to them" ... "If someone loves Me, they will keep My word. My Father will love them. We will come to them and make our home with them" (John 14:21 & 23).

Some Jewish people are confused because all people who believe in Jesus call themselves Christians, but there are two distinct types of Christian – sheep and goats. Sheep are people who believe the literal words of the Bible and support Israel as much as they possibly can. They heed the above verses by comforting, supporting and loving the blood family of Jesus. Goats are people who embrace the replacement theology often persecuting Jewish people, who accept the lie of the rapture theory and live carnal lives, who are full of the prosperity teaching and feel no need to connect with Israel or the Jewish people in their communities. Hitler, all his cronies and all of the Germans who stupidly followed and obeyed his orders were 'goats'. The contrast between the two groups is vast and the final outcome could not be more extreme. Jesus spoke about nations, but nations are made up of individual people. After talking about nations for two verses, Jesus speaks to individual people. 'All nations will be gathered before Jesus. He will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will set the sheep on His right hand but the goats on the left. The King will tell those on His right hand, 'Come, blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom of God prepared for you from the foundation of the world ... He will say to those at His left hand, 'Depart from Me you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his fallen angels' (Matthew 25:32 to 34 & 41).

The pain of persecution Jewish people have suffered at the hands of professing Christians cannot be healed instantly. They need to know there are genuine believers who love them and will do all we can to show our love for them. Christians should not be surprised if some Jewish people reject us, treat us with contempt or cannot believe we are genuine. They have after all, been suffering dreadful persecution for 2,000 years from people who claim to love Jesus. Our love for them should never be based on them 'converting' to Christianity. We need to love them for who they are and Whom they represent. They are the ones who brought salvation to the world. They knew God thousands of years before Gentiles did so they are already several paces ahead of us. There are differences of opinion but there are many similarities too. Jews and Gentiles both believe in the One True God Who is the Creator of the universe, the earth and every living thing, and mankind was created in the living image and likeness of God. We both know God rules the world and He works through humans. We both know there is spiritual life after we leave this world. We both share the same Word of God. We both abhor idolatry and sin. We both have an ongoing relationship with God through prayer and we both embrace the presence of the Holy Spirit. We are both looking for and longing for the Messiah. Before He comes though, there is need for restoration. The church will need to be restored so it functions with power like the early church did and they need to embrace the Jewish people living in their communities. The relationship between believers, both Jews and Gentiles will need to be fully restored and that is slowly happening right now. When Jesus comes, the relationship between God and the Jewish people will be fully restored and it will be better than it ever was. We need to respect the Jewish people and their point of view regarding the Bible even if it differs from our own. One day Jews and Gentiles will be completely reconciled and united under one Shepherd. We must not forget to humble ourselves before God's first chosen people because God is always with them. 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "In those days ten men from all languages of the nations will take hold of the robe of him who is a Jew saying, 'Let us go with you for we have heard God is with you'" (Zechariah 8:23).

Amen and God bless you.

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