



# Paul's Epistle to the Galatians

## Chapter 1 , Verses 11-24

by Tim Kelley

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Beginning in verse 11 of this chapter and continuing in chapter 2, Paul makes a point to show the Galatians that he is not just another visiting emissary from Jerusalem. Though we don't know the identity of the perpetrators – the ones who brought the different gospel – Paul apparently wants to not only distance himself from them, he also wants the Galatians to see that the gospel message he's been preaching is from a different source than theirs. Paul's source was not a yeshiva - as a student in a rabbinic school, but it was Messiah Yeshua himself.

Before continuing, let's review what we've seen so far:

- The gospel message is not a message about Messiah Yeshua, but is instead a message about His role in restoring the Kingdom of God to Israel.
- That the perpetrators were not presenting a new gospel, but were presenting a different twist on the gospel that Paul is very upset with.
- The motivation for presenting the new twist is for the purpose of pleasing men, not God.

So with that, let's continue . . .

►<sup>ESV</sup> **Galatians 1:11-12** For I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel.<sup>1 12</sup> For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Apparently, the gospel that was being preached by the perpetrators was what might be considered *typical* in the Jewish community of the day – that is, if you want to be a part of the people of God, you'll have to convert to Judaism. This was the normal message, it is what was being taught by all the rabbinic schools, but it wasn't the message Paul was delivering.

With the background we have so far, we see that the Galatian people were more than likely descendants of the 10 "lost" tribes of Israel, and as such, were already a part of the covenant. They didn't have to convert to Judaism in order to be a part of the covenant, they were part of it by birth. What's more, we've seen that the "gospel" message of Messiah Yeshua was the same message as the prophets who came before Him – that YHVH, the God of Israel, would scatter Israel throughout the nations because of their sins, but in His time, He would begin to gather them back as a people.

Though Paul was fully aware of the *typical* gospel, the one that had been taught for decades, and obviously, the one he had been taught, Paul's view of the gospel was greatly altered while on the road to Damascus. It was on that road, as Paul was beginning to escalate his persecution of the believers, that Yeshua opened the understanding of the scriptures to him. Paul, being a Pharisee of the Pharisees, was well versed in scripture, he knew the prophecies, he was just not able to put it all together. He was a fulfillment of the Isaiah 6:9 prophecy -

<sup>LXE</sup> **Isaiah 6:9-10** Ye shall hear indeed, but ye shall not understand; and ye shall see indeed, but ye shall not perceive. For the heart of this people has become gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

Yeshua reiterates this prophecy in Matthew 13:14 where He applies it to His audience, but shows His disciples that not only would they understand, they would actually see the things that the prophets spoke of but were not be able to see. But it all comes through revelation.

The Greek word for revelation is *apokalupsis* (Strong's 602) which simply means *to lay bare*. It comes from a root word that means to *expose or lay open what has been veiled or covered*. It's first used in the

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New Testament by the old man Simon who had been promised that he would not die until he laid eyes on Israel's messiah. In his blessing to God he said.

<sup>KJV</sup> **Luke 2:29-32** Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: <sup>30</sup>  
For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, <sup>31</sup> Which thou hast prepared before the face of all  
people; <sup>32</sup> A light to **lighten** the Gentiles, and the **glory** of thy people Israel.

In this passage, the word *lighten* is *apokalupsis* – to reveal, to lay bare. Simon was saying that Yeshua would reveal the gentiles (which we know is a reference to the lost tribes) – He would begin to expose them, show them who they were. It's also noteworthy that the word for *glory* in this passage is *doxa* (Strong's 1391), and though it's almost always translated *glory*, it can also mean *judgment*. Thus it's quite possible that Simon's understanding was that Yeshua would not only reveal the lost tribes, but that because of what He would do, Israel's judgment would be finished.

Paul – being raised in the strictest code of rabbinic law - just couldn't see the forest for the trees. He needed a revelation. He needed to understand the prophecies based on what they really meant, not what he had been taught they meant. He probably had to go back to the beginning, just as Yeshua's disciples had to.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 24:25-27** And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" <sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

When you just can't understand a passage of scripture, it's always best to just go back to the beginning and start over again.

► <sup>ESV</sup> **Galatians 1:13-14** For you have heard of my former life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it. <sup>14</sup> And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.

Paul continues to distance himself from the perpetrators. He wanted the Galatians to understand that not only was his gospel different from the typical gospel taught in the rabbinic schools, but that he was also different. The Paul who had once aligned himself with the Jewish leadership was now a different person. He had made changes in his life, not only in regards to his walk, but also in his outlook towards others.

The Greek word used for *Judaism* ("Jews' religion" in the KJV) is *ioudaismos*. It's only used twice in scripture and both times in this chapter. According to the commentaries, it implies the strict code on conduct by which the religious Jews conducted their lives. This would include both the written and oral Torah. Notice that Paul connects his former conduct in Judaism with the persecution of the ekklesia. Yet he is not stating that he is departing from Judaism, just from certain aspects of it. He apparently, as a result of Yeshua's revelation, sees that the part of Judaism that compelled him to persecute God's people was not scriptural, or was at least a perversion of the scriptures.

To further emphasis the change that he had made, he states that he was more advanced in understanding and applying Judaism (the code of conduct) than others his age, and he showed it by his excessive desire to apply the traditions (*paradosis* – Strong's 3862) he'd been taught.

We must be careful to clearly see what Paul is, and is not saying here. He's not saying that he set aside the traditions and stopped observing them. He's just showing that he was overly zealous in their application. In fact, Paul elsewhere states that the disciples of Messiah should continue in the *paradosis* – traditions of the fathers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thes. 2:15; 2 Thes. 3:6

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►<sup>ESV</sup> **Galatians 1:15-17** But when he who had set me apart before I was born, and who called me by his grace, <sup>16</sup> was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with anyone; <sup>17</sup> nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

Paul said that he was “set apart” before he was born. This could be taken a number of ways. For instance, Paul was a Pharisee, and the Pharisees were *separatists*. The word Pharisee comes from the Hebrew word *parash* (פָּרַשׁ - Strong's 6567) which means to *make distinct, distinguish*. If you consider that God expects us to look and behave differently than the world behaves, you might say that we are all Pharisees. On the other hand, Yeshua said at his last supper –

<sup>NKJ</sup> **John 17:15** "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.

Yeshua never taught that His followers should go off to a desert island and form a commune in order to be separate from the world. He just prayed that they'd be protected from evil influences. Unfortunately, the Pharisees taught a physical separation from the world, i.e. – anyone who was not Jewish. This teaching is something that is not taught in scripture.<sup>2</sup>

Another way to see this would be the same as it was for Jeremiah or John the Baptist, both men who were called to be prophets while still in their mother's womb.<sup>3</sup> Paul could have been indicating that the path he had followed in life was to prepare him for what he was called to do. By his own words he showed that he had been brought up to be extremely knowledgeable in the law of God (both written and oral), unwavering in its adherence, and zealous in applying it. These are all attributes he would need as he prepared to buck some of the Jewish traditions, the Jewish leaders, and even some of Yeshua's disciples.

His upbringing in Pharisaic Judaism prepared him to be used by God, and thus when God was ready to put him to work, he was ready. Notice that, just as the gospel had to be revealed to Paul (vs. 12), the Messiah had to be revealed to him, or better – *in him*, as well. You might notice that the ESV uses the phrase “reveal his Son *to* me”, whereas the KJV says “reveal His Son *in* me”. The word *in* that is used here is from the Greek word *en* (Strong's 1722) which is never translated as *to* in the KJV. So why do the modern translators use the word *to*? I would suppose it's because they want us to think that Paul was fully unaware of Yeshua's existence before his “conversion”. But the likelihood of that being the case is somewhat null.

I suspect Paul knew, or at least knew of Yeshua. It's possible that he may have been one of those who attempted to trip Him up in regards to the Torah. With Paul's extensive knowledge of the scriptures, he would have probably recognized Yeshua as the Messiah, but apparently, it was not in God's timing.

I suspect Paul had a battle going on within his mind. He probably saw a number of Messianic qualities in Yeshua, but was just unwilling to accept Him as being the Messiah. Like many others of his day, he expected the Messiah to free them from the Romans and once again establish Israel as that *shining light on the hill*. But Yeshua died without establishing the kingdom. Never-the-less, Paul was fully aware of the common understanding that there may be two Messiahs, or that the one Messiah would come at two different times – once as Messiah ben Joseph (Messiah, the son of Joseph), and the next time as Messiah ben David.<sup>4</sup> So this prophet – Yeshua – probably consumed a lot of Paul's thoughts. You might say that Yeshua was in him, just not understood by him. This all changed when what was *in* him began to make sense *to* him. And of course, what was *in* him was revealed on the Damascus road. Once that revelation took place, Paul readily accepted it along with the role he had been trained to fill - that of bringing the good news of the Kingdom of God to the non-Jewish believers.

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<sup>2</sup> Matt. 9:11; Mark 2:16; Luke 5:30

<sup>3</sup> Jeremiah 1:4

<sup>4</sup> Luke 7:16-22

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<sup>YLT</sup> **Acts 9:15** And the Lord said unto him, 'Be going on, because a choice vessel to Me is this one, to bear My name before nations and kings -- the sons also of Israel;

Notice again that Paul was to preach *among the gentiles*. He was going to those who were *among the Gentiles*, not necessarily to the gentiles. This phrase is used all through the NT by all the apostolic writers, and it's a clear reference to those people who are dwelling with the gentiles, but are not necessarily gentiles. If Paul had wanted his audience to believe he was preaching to gentiles, he would have simply said so, but he didn't.

We should also note that Paul's message was "the gospel". The Greek word *euaggelizo* (Strong's 2097) is what is translated as *preach* in this passage, but it simply means *to bring good news*, and as we saw earlier, the *good news* is the message that God was beginning the restoration of the kingdom.

Note that Paul says that he was *called*; it doesn't say that he was *converted*. Calling and converting are two different things. When a person is *called* (*kaleo* – Strong's 2564), in many cases he's *called* to fulfill a role, such as being an apostle. Israel was *called* (*qara* – Strong's 7121) to be a light to the nations, to fulfill a role, a function. But to be converted means to return back to something. The Greek word for *convert* is *epistrepho* (Strong's 1994) and is equivalent to the Hebrew word *shuwb* (שׁוּב – Strong's 7725) which means to *return*. Paul didn't need to convert. He was already walking the correct walk, he just needed to modify it a little, and that's what Yeshua was leading him to do.

According to Paul's testimony, once he understood the role of Messiah Yeshua, he didn't search out other believers to see what they knew about him, nor did he consult with Yeshua's disciples – those who knew Him best. Apparently he did not want their interpretation of the Messiah's role to interfere with what Yeshua was personally revealing to him. Instead, he went into seclusion at the place where others had gone before. Though the text doesn't come right out and say it, it's safe to assume that when Paul said Arabia, he meant Mount Sinai.<sup>5</sup> This is where Torah was first given, where Elijah fled from Jezebel<sup>6</sup>, where Yeshua likely fasted before starting His ministry, and where Paul learned more about Yeshua before starting his ministry.

It's interesting to note that, just as Paul returned to Damascus after spending time at Mt. Sinai, so did Elijah.

►<sup>ESV</sup> **Galatians 1:18-24** Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and remained with him fifteen days. <sup>19</sup> But I saw none of the other apostles except James the Lord's brother. <sup>20</sup> (In what I am writing to you, before God, I do not lie!) <sup>21</sup> Then I went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. <sup>22</sup> And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. <sup>23</sup> They only were hearing it said, "He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy." <sup>24</sup> And they glorified God because of me.

Three years after his Damascus road experience, Paul finally decided to meet with Peter, one of Yeshua's disciples, but it wasn't just a visit. Paul wanted to check him out. Notice the Young's Literal Translation of this passage –

<sup>YLT</sup> **Galatians 1:18** then, after three years I went up to Jerusalem to enquire about Peter, and remained with him fifteen days,

Paul wanted to enquire about Peter. The Greek word used for *visit* (see in the KJV) is *historeo* (Strong's 2477) and means to *examine* or *investigate*. In our culture, a historian is someone who studies history in order to determine why certain things were done a certain way and how it impacted future events. This is what Paul was doing. He wanted to know what happened during those years Peter was with Yeshua, and what had transpired since.

Why did he choose Peter? Paul understood that his mission was to go to the gentiles, or more correctly, the non-Jews. He had learned that Peter had been the first to "break ranks" with traditional Judaism and

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<sup>5</sup> See Galatians 4:25

<sup>6</sup> 1 Kings 19:14

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had actually visited a Gentile – even eating in his home. This would have been huge departure the traditions of the Jews, especially for a Pharisee like Paul. So by going directly to Peter, Paul would have been able to compare what he had learned by revelation from Yeshua with Peter's testimony.

While visiting with Peter, Paul apparently visited with James as well. This would have been appropriate since by then James had become recognized as the head of the believing community. I doubt Paul was looking for approval from James since Paul clearly understood that it was not Peter, James, or the other apostles who had commissioned him. Paul had been *sent out* by Messiah Yeshua himself!

After providing this testimony in his letter to the Galatians, Paul finishes by making a clear statement that what he had just said was absolute truth. He basically took an oath. It was so important that his audience knew beyond any shadow of doubt, that his message - the good news that he was bringing – was not derived from the normal Jewish interpretation of the scriptures, but was what was given to him by Yeshua – the risen Messiah. This would clearly separate his message from that of the perpetrators of “the different gospel”.

Continuing with his testimony, Paul showed that after his 15 day meeting with Peter, he went directly to Asia Minor to begin spreading the gospel. Apparently none of the believing Jews from those areas recognized him, but his reputation had preceded him – they knew what he had done years before. It's apparent that the three years of inactivity by Paul had been noticed by the believers, and thus they were willing to look past his past and accept the “message, if not the messenger”.

So as we close this first chapter, we've seen that –

- Paul was sent out by God, not by any synagogue or group of men
- The Galatians were more than likely a remnant of the 10 lost tribes who had been scattered 700 years earlier
- The gospel message is that God was beginning to restore them to fellowship with Him
- That there were other people coming into the fellowships that Paul had reached, teaching them a different aspect of the gospel and that Paul considered that aspect to be repulsive
- The good news that Paul was sharing came directly from the scriptures as revealed by Messiah Yeshua, and was not tainted by the Judaism of his day.

Shalom Alecheim