



# Paul's Epistle to the Galatians

## Chapter 1:1-5 with Introduction

by Tim Kelley

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As we continue to lay the foundations for a good understanding of the Paul's letter to the Galatians, it's now time to take a look at a number of contextual points that will help us in our study.

As you'll remember, we've already discussed the Acts 15 "Jerusalem Conference" and found that the issue at hand was not whether a non-Jew must observe the Torah or not, nor was it whether physical circumcision was still a requirement for God's people. Instead, the issue was whether a person was required to convert to Judaism in order to have a place in the Kingdom of God. We learned that circumcision was one of the many steps a proselyte had to complete in order to be considered a "Jew", and thus (in the Jewish mind) have a place in the kingdom of God.

We also studied the term "Mystery of the Gospel" and found it to be that God can use a rebellious people (the northern tribes of Israel) as a witness to His greatness and majesty. How can that be? Simply this – beginning with Moses, God's prophets proclaimed that Israel would turn from God's ways, but in the "end of days" He would begin to draw them back to His ways and back into fellowship with Him. This is precisely what was beginning to happen in the first century, and is again happening today – people (non-Jewish Israelites) were being drawn out of paganism and back into the Hebrew way. But again, just as was prophesied by the first century apostles, many of those who were drawn back were once again deceived and thus we've had nearly 2000 years of God's people teaching a message about the Messiah, but in many respects – it's been a false and misleading message. Never-the-less, God is still able to use these people as a witness, and these "non-Jewish Israelites" have filled that role by spreading their understanding of Messiah, as well as countless millions of Bibles, throughout every nation on earth.

We then looked at Paul's view of the end time and found that he thought the return of Messiah Yeshua was imminent. Thus, his letters have an air of urgency, obviously believing that Israel would need to join in with Judah before Messiah would return. And because Paul continually reminded us of his stance in regards to the Torah given at Mount Sinai, we can see that Paul had not set out to modify or change God's law.

Finally we briefly discussed the terms "under the law" and "works of the law" and saw that when used by Paul, both terms indicate the mindset of a person who thinks he can become righteous through Torah observance as opposed to someone who – like Abraham – was found righteous because of his belief in the promises of God, and showed his belief through obedience.

So with that said, let's begin our verse-by-verse study of Paul's letter to the Galatians.

► <sup>ESV</sup> **Galatians 1:1-2** Paul, an apostle- not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead- <sup>2</sup> and all the brothers who are with me, To the churches of Galatia:

Paul was an apostle, a Greek term that simply means that he's a "sent one". . . someone sent by a person or congregation for a specific purpose. The Greek word *apostolos* (Strong's 652) is used in the Septuagint to translate the Hebrew word *shalach* ( שָׁלַח - Strong's 7971), a word that also means "to send". One of the places we find this word is in Malachi.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Malachi 3:1** "Behold, I send my messenger

In his day, Paul would have been called a *shaliach* (שְׁלִיחַ), the noun form of the verb *shalach*. The noun form is not found in the Bible. Instead, the Tnakh uses phrases such as "she sent her maid" or "send my messenger" as we see in the Malachi passage above.

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Apostolos comes from the root words apo (Strong's 575) which means to separate from, and stello (Strong's 4724) which means to set in order or prepare. Thus, an apostle is one who is separated out and prepared for a specific purpose. An apostle (a shaliach) did not imply a person of power or authority, but simply that you were sent out with a mission or a message. Probably the earliest example was that of Eleazar, Abraham's servant –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Genesis 24:4** but will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac."

All the apostles were sent out:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 10:16** "Behold, I am sending (apostello) you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 8:14** Now when the apostles (apostolos) at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent (apostello) to them Peter and John,

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 13:1-3** Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers . . . <sup>2</sup> While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." <sup>3</sup> Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent (apoluo) them off.

Though Yeshua's disciples (Peter, James, John, etc. ) were sent to the Jews (the "circumcision") , Paul was specifically called to be sent to a specific people, the children of Israel –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 9:15** But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the **children of Israel**.

The Young's Literal Translation makes it even more clear by showing that the "sons" and "kings" were the children of Israel –

<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;

So Paul was an apostle, sent by Messiah Yeshua, to the (non-Jewish) children of Israel. This is very important to understand if we are going to understand Paul's message to the Galatians.

Who then, are the Galatians? Are they Gentiles, Jews, or someone else? Just as it's important to know that Paul was specifically sent to a particular people, it's also important, in fact key, to the understanding of Paul's epistle. Since Paul did not apprise us with a clear knowledge of the problem he was facing with the Galatians, we can gain insight by knowing who the Galatians actually were.

Let's review again a couple of background points.

As we saw in the "[Mystery of the Gospel](#)" teaching<sup>1</sup>, the Jews of the first century were well aware of the existence and the presence of the "exiled" northern tribe Israelites. During His last Feast of Tabernacles, Yeshua was teaching in Jerusalem, presumably at the Temple, and He told some of his followers –

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 7:33-35** Jesus then said, "I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me. <sup>34</sup> You will seek me and you will not find me. Where I am you cannot come."

He was, of course, talking about His eminent crucifixion and ascension to His Father, but his listeners were puzzled, so they asked themselves –

(verse 35) . . . "Where does this man intend to go that we will not find him? **Does he intend to go to the Dispersion** ("diaspora" Strong's 1290 – scattering) **among the Greeks** and teach the Greeks?

What was the "dispersion" mention by these followers? Were they scattered Jews who had settled among the Greek people? No, that's not possible. At that time, the Jewish people were pretty much located in three different areas of the Middle East, Egypt, Babylon, and Israel. They knew who they were

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.amiyisrael.org/articles/MysteryOfGospel-v2.html>

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and where they were. They never referred to themselves as being dispersed until after they were exiled from the land of Israel after the Bar Kokhba Rebellion in 135 AD, probably 80 years after Paul wrote this epistle. Obviously, there were small pockets of Jews located through Asia Minor, in fact there were even Jewish synagogues in various communities in those areas as well, but they were not considered "scattered exiles". In fact, many of those communities may have well been established as a part of the Jewish proselytizing efforts that we see mentioned by Yeshua –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 23:15** Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.

The term *dispersed* (KJV) and *dispersion* (ESV) come from the Greek word *diaspora* (Strong's 1290), which is the same word used in the Septuagint (LXX) to describe one of the curses that would come upon the Twelve Tribes of Israel if they failed to walk in His ways.

<sup>LXE</sup> **Deuteronomy 28:25** The Lord give thee up for slaughter before thine enemies: thou shalt go out against them one way, and flee from their face seven ways; and thou shalt be a dispersion in all the kingdoms of the earth.

As history points out, all the Israelites eventually rebelled and were dispersed throughout the world. This dispersion took place in two parts. The northern ten tribes (called Ephraim or Israel in the scriptures) were dispersed beginning around 720 BCE, but the southern tribes (Judah, Benjamin, and Levi) were not dispersed until 135 CE when the Romans forced them out of Jerusalem and eventually out of Israel altogether, more that 100 years after Yeshua was crucified.

Now that we know it was not the Jews that were dispersed, the followers of Yeshua must have been referring to their Israelite brothers from the northern ten tribes. These were Israelites who were not Jews, but were just as much descendants of Jacob as were the Jews. These were the ones who Yeshua was probably referring to when He said –

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 10:16** And I have other sheep that are not of this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

These "sheep" most certainly were the northern ten tribes, the ones who were scattered eight hundred years before the Jewish dispersion. By bringing them back into the "fold", Yeshua would have begun the fulfillment of the prophet Micah –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Micah 2:12** I will surely assemble all of you, O Jacob; I will gather the remnant of Israel; I will set them together like sheep in a fold, like a flock in its pasture, a noisy multitude of men.

Yeshua coming on the scene in the first century was also a fulfillment of another prophecy concerning the gathering of the exiles - the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Isaiah gave many prophecies concerning the coming Messiah, including this -

<sup>ESV</sup> **Isaiah 11:12** He will raise ("nece" - lift up) a **signal** (a sign) for the **nations** (goyim) and will assemble the **banished of Israel**, and gather the dispersed of Judah **from the four corners of the earth**.

This prophecy includes two gatherings of two different peoples. The first is the gathering of the banished of Israel followed by the gathering of the dispersed of Judah. There again, Israel was banished 800 years before Judah was dispersed. Since Yeshua came between these two dispersions, He would become a sign to the former before He would be so for the latter. Shortly after His birth this was made quite clear by the visit of Simeon who had received a message from God that he would see the "salvation (Yeshua) of YHVH". In his comments, he said that Yeshua would become this sign -

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 2:25-34** Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel . . . (and) <sup>28</sup> he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said, <sup>29</sup> "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; <sup>30</sup> for my eyes have seen your salvation <sup>31</sup> that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, <sup>32</sup> a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people

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Israel." <sup>34</sup> . . . "Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a **sign** that is opposed.

Yeshua was indeed a light to the "gentiles"<sup>2</sup> while at the same time opposed by many of his Jewish brothers. Thus He could begin to the gathering of the northern tribes while at the same time, not gather the southern "Jewish" tribes . . . at least not at that point in time. Paul carried the sign, the banner you might say, of a lifted up (crucified Messiah) to the groups he visited and those who God was calling back recognized what was happening.

Since it's quite clear that the existence and locale of many of the "lost tribes of Israel" was known by the first century Jewish people, it now becomes more clear what was meant when The Lord said to Ananias -

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 9:15** But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the **children of Israel**.

Another, and probably one of the most obvious indications of the true identity of the Galatian people is word "Galatia" itself. Galatia was not a city, but an area. Paul's letter was sent to the "assemblies of Galatia", not the assemblies in Galatia. Though we're not exactly sure where this area was, we can assume that some of the specific assemblies he met with were located in this area. Most believe Galatia was the area between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea and directly north of Cypress. This area would have included Antioch and Ionium – both places Paul had set up congregations. Other cities in the area would have included Cappadocia and Pontus, cities which were both represented in the Acts 2 Pentecost gathering. This area is also mentioned in Peter's first epistle –

<sup>ESV</sup> **1 Peter 1:1** Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are **elect exiles** of the dispersion in Pontus, **Galatia**, Cap-padocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

Notice that Peter speaks of the same cities, including one not mentioned earlier – Bithynia, another city located in the same area. But did you notice what Peter called them? He called them "elect exiles". Many Christian writers focus on the fact that Peter called them "elect"<sup>3</sup>, but the words actually means "chosen ones", and in fact the Greek implies *chosen ones who were exiled to a place not their own*. Thus Peter is showing that the people he is addressing are actually chosen exiles, or more correctly – *chosen ones who had been exiled*.

Another indication that the Galatians were related to the Hebrews from the northern tribes is found in the word itself. The Hebrew word for captives, i.e. – people who had been captured and exiled (as was the case with the northern tribes of Israel) is *galut* ( גַּלּוּת – Strongs 1546)<sup>4</sup>. Could it be more than a mere coincidence that GaLuT and GaLaTia are pretty much the same word?

In his book "Galatians – Quick Reference Pocket Commentary"<sup>5</sup> – Avi ben Mordechai – a Hebrew Roots teacher and author, quotes as excerpt from the book "Missing Links Discovered in Assyrian Tablets" by E. Raymond Capt, a student of middle eastern archeology. This excerpt provides insight into the identity of the Galatian people. He writes –

" . . . a little later, about 280 B.C., vast hordes of Gauls from central Europe invaded the western portion of Asia Minor, the whole of which for many years they ravaged at leisure. They permanently maintained themselves at Phrygia, who gave their name to the northern portion, which became known as 'Galatia'. This is the region mentioned in Acts 16:6. Most Bible scholars

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<sup>2</sup> The book of Hosea shows quite clearly that the northern tribes of Israel (Ephraim) would become scattered and mixed throughout the nations and for all practical purposes, be considered to be "gentiles".

<sup>3</sup> Compare Isaiah 45:4 and 1 Peter 1:1. The Greek text in Peter's salutation literally means "the chosen ones dispersed in a place not their own"

<sup>4</sup> See Obadiah 1:20

<sup>5</sup> Avi ben Mordechai, *Galatians Quick Reference Pocket Commentary*, Millennium 7000 Communications, 2006, page xxx (preface)

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fail to recognize, in reading the epistle to the Galatians that it was written to a race of the Celts (Cimmerian Israelites)"<sup>6</sup>

Thus a pretty good case can be made that the Galatian people to whom Paul was writing were a part of the Lost Tribes of Israel that prophecy reveals will begin to be gathered after the first and/or second coming of The Messiah. This is significant because it shows that these people knew that they were Israelites, and as such, were probably familiar with the prophecies about them.

▶<sup>ESV</sup> **Galatians 1:3-5** <sup>3</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup> who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, <sup>5</sup> to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Paul's message was a message of *grace and peace*. It was for this message that he was sent out. Practically all of Paul's epistles begin with this salutation (or something similar to it)<sup>7</sup> as was that of Peter and John<sup>8</sup>. Grace and peace are the theme of the Priestly Blessing by which Aaron and his sons were to bless the children of Israel.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Numbers 6:24-26** The LORD bless you and keep you; <sup>25</sup> the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; <sup>26</sup> the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

Within this blessing is the connotation that YHVH would always have his face turned toward Israel so that He could be her protection and peace. With this blessing, Israel could always be assured that she was in the forefront of YHVH's thoughts.

Grace and peace are the messages of Psalm 85, a prayer that YHVH will restore favor (grace) to Israel. Within it we find YHVH forgiving and covering the sins of Israel, and the restoring of the relationship that was broken because of sin. Israel found herself under the *curse of the law* due to her disobedience to it, and as a result had become an *exiled* people, driven into lands that she had not known, and into societies that were foreign to her and to the ways of God. This is made clear through Moses' prophecy to the generation that was soon to cross the Jordan River and enter the promised land.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Deuteronomy 30:1** "And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you call them to mind among all the nations where the LORD your God has driven you,

Roughly 700 years after Moses foretold the destiny of Israel, the northern tribes found themselves in captivity, and then a couple of hundred years later, so did the southern kingdom of Judah

<sup>ESV</sup> **Daniel 9:11** All Israel has transgressed your law and turned aside, refusing to obey your voice. And the curse and oath that are written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out upon us, because we have sinned against him.

Sin is the problem, and God extends grace to those who repent and return the His walk, thus Paul's message is that of returning to God and his Torah so that you can find peace. .

<sup>ESV</sup> **Psalms 119:165** Great peace have those who love your law; nothing can make them stumble.

But returning to God is not enough, there is still a penalty to be paid for their sins, and Messiah Yeshua, Israel's husband and covering<sup>9</sup> came to pay that penalty for her. This is Paul's message, the purpose for which he was sent out: grace and peace come through Messiah Yeshua. If they accept His grace, and show it by turning back to His ways – the Torah – He will remove them from having to live under the

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<sup>6</sup> Capt. E. Raymond, *Missing Links Discovered in Assyrian Tablets*, Artisan Pub, 1985, page 145 - ISBN 0-934666-15-6

<sup>7</sup> Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesian 1:2; Phillipians 1:2; Collosians 1:2; 1 Thessolonians 1:1; 2 Thessolonians 1:2; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; Philemon 1:3

<sup>8</sup> 1 Peter 1:2, 2 Peter 1:2, and 2 John 1:3

<sup>9</sup> Psalm 85:2

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authority of evil rulers (the Romans) and re-establish them as the Kingdom of Israel, as it was under the leadership of King David.