

Not All Messianic Believers Are Jews

by
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There are some in the Messianic Movement who are teaching that all believers in Yeshua are Jews.¹ This view is the reverse of replacement theology (but equally incorrect) which holds that Israel has fallen from grace through its rejection of Yeshua, and that the Christian Church has therefore replaced it as God's people. Similar to replacement theology, the "all Gentile believers are Jews" theory promotes assimilation but, instead of directing all believers into the Christian Church to become Christians, it directs them into our congregations, telling them they are Jews.

This false teaching is seductive for Gentile believers in Yeshua who think that being a Jew is a preferred status that brings them closer to God. It isn't, and it doesn't. Scripture makes this clear in Romans 10:12:

"For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him."

And similarly, in Galatians 3:28:

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Messiah Jesus."

Ironically, these Scriptures are two of the ones most commonly used to incorrectly support the notion that Gentile believers are Jews. After all, does not Galatians say that there is neither Jew nor Greek? Yes! But it also says there is neither male nor female. If this Scripture were meant to be taken literally, it would lead to an absurd result (Similarly, Colossians 3:11).

What is actually true is stated in the very next verse, Galatians 3:29:

"And if you *are* Messiah's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."

But, you say, "If I become the seed of Abraham by faith in Messiah, doesn't that make me Jewish?" Romans 4:16 shows that it is not so, for it distinguishes between the two kinds of seed:

"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 ..."

Yes, Gentile believers in Yeshua become Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise – his seed by faith, that is -- not his physical seed. This connection to Israel is further explained in Ephesians 2:11-13:

¹ This concept has become institutionalized among those who call themselves "Messianic Israel" or "Ephraimites."

"That at that time you were without Messiah, 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 Messiah Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Messiah. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ..."

The NIV translation uses the term "citizenship in Israel" rather than "commonwealth of Israel" as does the NKJ. Breaking down the middle wall of partition has allowed Gentile believers to draw near – not becoming physical Israel, but becoming part of the Commonwealth -- citizens if you will. Consider an analogy to the Commonwealth of Great Britain. Canadians are members of the Commonwealth – in fact, as head of the Commonwealth, the Queen of England is their queen. However, Canadians are not English, and cannot become English without renouncing their Canadian citizenship and taking on English citizenship by saying to England: "From now on, your people are my people."

Finally, the apostle Paul demonstrates that there exists a distinction between Jews and born-again Gentiles for, in Romans 11:13-14, he speaks to Gentile believers about Jews, while calling those to whom he speaks "Gentiles":

"For I speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to jealousy *those who are* my flesh and save some of them."

He then goes on to explain in verses 18 and 19 that Gentile believers in Yeshua are grafted into the olive tree of Israel. However, although they become partakers of the root, they do not become natural branches:

"And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But if you do boast, *remember that* you do not support the root, but the root supports you."

Although Gentile believers are not automatically Jews, by virtue of their joining the Commonwealth of Israel, they do, however, along with born-again Jews, become a people of God:

"... even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved." And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God (Romans 9:24-26)."

"But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy (1 Peter 2:9-10)."

So, if Gentiles in a Messianic Jewish congregation are not Messianic Jews, what are they? They are Gentiles (some use the term Messianic Gentiles) who, in addition to their having joined the Commonwealth of Israel through their faith in Yeshua, have also committed themselves to live among and share community with their New Covenant Jewish brethren – the remnant of Israel who are the olive tree into which all Gentile believers are grafted.²

The community of Israel has always included Gentiles (Numbers 15:14-16; Deuteronomy 29:9-15 [Tanakh 8-14]) who have historically and, by God's design, contributed greatly to His redemptive plan for mankind. It is important for Messianic Jewish congregations to remember this and welcome committed Gentile believers into their midst – not as guests, but as citizens. It is also important for Gentiles who believe (certainly if they are married to a Jew) that they are called to join Messianic Jewish Communities to realize they are giving up something valuable of their former culture, and to reconcile themselves to it.

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² It is a priestly attribute of Israel (Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:8) to be the host olive tree into whom Gentiles are grafted when they become born-again in Yeshua (Exodus 19:6; Romans 3:1-2).