

## Issues with "Divine Invitation Theology" Part 4

**Issue #4: This new teaching incorrectly asserts that the Scriptures mandate Jewish and Gentile distinction within the believing community.**

This new teaching claims that maintaining Jewish and Gentile distinction is a prime directive of the Scriptures. This new teaching claims that Acts 15 and Acts 21 gives Jewish and Gentiles believers different standards of righteousness. It recognizes that the Torah mentions some commandments that are gender-specific, and others that relate only to the Levites and the Priests. Taking into account that both native-born and those not native-born are identified in the Torah, it extrapolates that there must be distinctive commandments for Jew and Gentile as well. It presents as Galatians 5:3 as its irrefutable proof that Gentile believers and Jewish believers are to be distinct. It claims that within the community of believers there is a difference between being Jewish and being Gentile.

*And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.*

Galatians 5:3

**Bereans Online responds:**

Rightfully, this new teaching sees the horrible atrocities inflicted upon the Jewish people that resulted in the theft of Israel's identity by the early Christian church. Rightfully, it is concerned about how often times, Gentiles have lead Israel astray. But regarding the need to maintain a separate and distinct identity ***it is wrong***. There is only one identity for the believer and follower of Messiah: ***In Him, we are One People***.

As we have seen regarding Acts 15 and 21, this requirement to maintain distinction is ***false***. But arguing that the Apostles only obliged Gentile believers to some mythical "moral" code plus the four dictates of Acts 15:20; 29; 21:25 ***misses the entire point***. Those that espouse such a theology are focused on the righteous standard (or their view as to what that standard is) at expense to the greater picture: ***One People in Messiah***.

While it is clear that there are clear distinctions in some commandments regarding male, female, and priest etc., nowhere does the Torah permit that method be extrapolated to distinction between native born and those who were not native born.

The fact is, there are clear and explicit instructions found within the Scriptures that tell us how Gentiles and Jews are to be identified within the singular People of G-d - and it isn't to be distinct and separate. Arguing as it does that Galatians 5:3 is irrefutable proof that there is a distinction and that it is to be maintained takes the passage completely out of its historical and grammatical context. Let's include the verse ***preceding*** Galatians 5:3 this time:

*Indeed I, Paul, say to you that **if you become circumcised, Messiah will profit you nothing.** And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.*

Galatians 5:2-3

As we have already seen, the “become circumcised” here is not speaking of the physical act of undergoing circumcision, but rather the act of going through ritual conversion to Judaism. It is ironic that some of the very scholars that this new teaching uses in commentary on this verse themselves **promote** ritual conversion. Some of those commentators say that ritual conversion is a perfectly acceptable path for a believing Gentile if they desire to “*take hold of the full yoke of the Torah.*” And yet, Paul indicates that would be a disastrous decision. This new teaching counters that the use of the word “law” cannot refer to man-made traditions (the “Oral Torah”) because that is not how Paul refers to traditions. And yet the Apostolic Scriptures have many places that the Greek “*nomos*” [law] does not refer to the Torah, but rather to man-made laws.

What this new teaching fails to do, is to compare the usage of the phrase “whole law” [*holos ho nomos*] elsewhere in Scripture. If *holos ho nomos* simply means “obedience to all the Torah commandments” as this teaching purports, then there are some difficulties such a view brings to this passage that uses the same phrase:

*For whoever shall keep the whole law [*holos ho nomos*], and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.*

James 2:10

Whatever it means, clearly, to keep “*the whole law*” [*holos ho nomos*] is not desirable – for Jew or Gentile. So in simple and plain language, this says what Paul himself says to such a person, “*Messiah will profit you nothing.*” (Galatians 5:2)

If Paul was telling people not to keep the whole Torah (Jew or Gentile, because the context of Galatians 5:2-3 tells us that this is linked to ritual conversion which is abhorrent), then of course he was a false prophet. So was Paul speaking simply about “keeping the commandments” when he uses the phrase, “*a debtor to keep the whole law.*” **Clearly not.**

*And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, “Unless you are **circumcised according to the custom of Moses**, you cannot be saved.”*

Acts 15:1

Is ritual conversion (“circumcision” as it is described here) “according to the **custom of Moses**” – clearly not. As we have seen, there was (and is) great confusion between what is written and what is transmitted by tradition.

When Paul and James use the phrase, “whole law” they were using a phrase that denotes the entire “law” – both written and oral. They were **not** referring to the written Torah. It is made clear when you see what the man-made process of ritual conversion included:

1. Commitment to keep the "whole law" – both written and oral
2. Circumcision
3. Immersion
4. Offering made in the Temple

It was a well-known test of loyalty for proselytes to commit to the "written Torah" and the "oral Torah" – the "whole Torah."

*Our Rabbis taught: A certain heathen once came before Shammai and asked him, "How many Torahs have you?" "Two," he replied: "the Written Torah and the Oral Torah." 'I believe you with respect to the Written, but not with respect to the Oral Torah; make me a proselyte on condition that you teach me the Written Torah only. But he scolded and repulsed him in anger. When he went before Hillel, he accepted him as a proselyte. On the first day, he taught him, alef, bet, gimmel, dalet; the following day he reversed them to him. "But yesterday you did not teach them to me thus," he protested. "Must you then not rely upon me? Then rely upon me with respect to the Oral too.*

b.Shabbat 31a

As we know from the account of Peter's vision and his response to it in Acts 10, there was great confusion between what was "tradition" and what was Torah. Just like today in normative Judaism, the "whole law" is not simply the written text of the Torah. Ironically, as we saw in issue #3 of this series, this new teaching makes the point that to "keep the whole law" (Galatians 5:3) requires adhering to the rabbinic definitions of things such as *kashrut*, Sabbath keeping, and ritual circumcision, etc. What does this teaching really believe about Galatians 5:3? Is the "whole law" the written Torah, or is in the "Torah + tradition"?

No beloved, Galatians 5:2-3 is not speaking of a distinction between Jew and Gentile as this teaching purports. Instead, Paul is making the case that ritual conversion (aka "circumcision" aka "keep the whole law") is a bad thing, for both Jew and Gentile. He is making the same case as Yeshua did:

*"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea **to win one proselyte**, and when he is won, you make him **twice as much a son of hell as yourselves**.*

Matthew 23:15

Beloved, please remember this: there are **no** instructions either in the TaNaKh, or in the Apostolic Scriptures that tell us that **we must** maintain distinct "Jewish identity" and "Gentile identity." **None**. In fact we read of just the opposite - there **must not** be distinction:

**One ordinance** shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger [ger, Gentile] who dwells with you, **an ordinance forever** throughout your generations; **as you are, so shall the stranger** be before HaShem.

Numbers 15:15

Therefore remember that you, **once [former] Gentiles** in the flesh - who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands - 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 G-d in the world. **But now in Messiah Yeshua 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, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances [man-made rules of distinction], so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that **He might reconcile them both to G-d in one body** through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

...the mystery...that the Gentiles should be **fellow heirs**, of the **same body**, and partakers of His promise in Messiah through the gospel.

Ephesians 2:11-16; 3:6

Beloved, the Torah is not a "cultural expression" meant for Jewish people. It is the self-revelation of the Almighty.

*Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; **those who hold her fast are called blessed.***

Proverbs 3:17-18

**We remain steadfast that there is only One King, there is only One People, and that we have been given One Torah.**