

# JEWES AND CHRISTIANS PRAY TOGETHER AT THE DISMANTLED "WALL"

**S**pending a season of prayer at the Wailing Wall at Jerusalem's Temple Mount a few years ago, I witnessed the arrival of an enthusiastic group of Koreans for prayer. Focusing on one of their party, they laid hands on him and prayed with old-fashioned Pentecostal exuberance for him to become Spirit-filled. I watched curiously as several rabbis and security guards came around the now sole Korean still ecstatically speaking in tongues with his face against the Wall, as tears of joy and shouting tongues poured forth. The rabbis studied him closely from all angles with looks of complete bewilderment. Finally some turned to me and asked, "Is he Jewish?"

Paul referenced in Ephesians 2, a second "wall" that had once carefully demarcated between Jews and Gentiles but had now been entirely dismantled by our Peacemaker as He "broke down the barrier of the dividing wall." The old wall of partition was fully destroyed by Christ 20 centuries ago and cannot make a comeback today or ever; that wall has no potential for resurrection.

## GOD HAS CHOSEN THE JEW

Recently I listened to an intense college panel discussion centering on the proper biblical relationship between Jews and Gentiles and their respective privileges and obligations. Reflected in the dialogue were the standard double-minded dispensationalist teachings suggesting, on the one hand, that the "Church and the Chosen People" represent two entirely different programs in God's economy and have very distinct eschatological destinies; but, on the other hand, that Jews and Gentiles are expected to be deliberately uniform in their cultural faith expression so as to not raise a wall of hostility or distinction between the two people groups.

To secure a proper focus on the unique function Paul's "all Israel" is to play in God's economy, it is important to remember the following maxim: "God chose the Jews because He loved the Gentiles."

Rather than God's chosen people, Israel, being elected for lofty status in God's kingdom or handpicked extraordinary privilege, was chosen before Isaac had been conceived to execute a distinct assignment, to perform a particular mission task. God chose to create the Jewish people that He might have a full nation of ambassadors ready to communicate the responsibility of all nations to serve the God of Israel. "All Israel" was and remains God's prime choice among mission agencies to carry the good news of salvation in Jesus to all peoples.

Paul recognized his personal Jewish responsibility to carry the gospel to Gentiles. But he never lost sight of "all Israel's" corporate calling to perform the same apostolic

ministry. He was but one Jew among the multiplied millions who were under divine obligation to carry the gospel, certainly to Israel, but equally to all nations. This is why Paul mandated preaching the gospel "to the Jew first" and the other 12 apostles primarily labored among "the circumcision." Because without God's chief mission agency — Israel, embracing Jesus — God's Jewish ambassadors would fail to discharge their divine assignment leaving the world in perpetuated darkness even should two full millennia transpire.

In the interim, those Gentiles coming to faith in Christ would need to successfully execute their own mission to Israel, e.g., provoke Israel to spiritual jealousy with the result of the salvation of "all Israel" (Romans 11:25,26).

## THERE ARE NO SURROGATES FOR ISRAEL

Paul recognized Gentile believers to be no substitute for Israel on either the short-term or long-term basis. Paul would wholeheartedly reject any handy fabrication of a Gentile church replacing Israel in God's program either permanently or even for a 2,000-year dispensationalist hiatus. Any notion of God's replacement of the patriarchal progeny of Israel with some alternative group is entirely foreign to Scripture, Old and New Testaments, and only finds its origin in late second-century anti-Jewish theological polemics and the perpetuation of related theological errors.

Rather than replace Israel even temporarily, the Spirit of God inspired Paul to write that the middle wall of hostility between Jews and Gentile believers had been entirely dismantled by the Cross. All believers, regardless of their ethnicity or cultural styles, are part of the one people of God. The God of all unity enjoys human variety and wants it all to be fully employed for His glory. Human distinctives between Jews and believing Gentiles do not override their spiritual unity in the Lord.

## GENTILES HAVE JOINED THE COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL

For this reason, Paul can celebrate the reality that Gentile believers have now been made part of the “commonwealth of Israel.” Jews and other believers together formulate the one people of God. Gentiles are not grafted onto a specially prepared Gentile tree; they are grafted onto Israel’s olive tree. Ethnic groups do not form a new orchard of trees, one for every people group. No, there is only one tree, Israel’s patriarchal-rooted olive tree. To Paul, Gentile believers derive their new faith identity by their spiritual identification with Israel as they have joined God’s one people.

The God who loves variety does not prefer one humanly fabricated culture over another. All cultures are flawed

## HOSTILITIES TO “ALL ISRAEL” AROUND AROUND THE WORLD AND ARE MAKING STRONG INROADS INTO AMERICAN SOCIETY AS WELL.

and subject to Holy Spirit scrutiny, including Jewish culture. But with God, cultural choice is never the issue. All ethnics can practice whatever culture they prefer as long as the Holy Spirit has been given opportunity to properly address those cultural aspects of offense to God. But with all their matchlessness and idiosyncrasies, all ethnics are to employ their sanctified cultural expressions for the glory of God.

## THE ENTIRE COMMONWEALTH IS UNITED IN MISSION

Being fully joined to the one people of God, Gentile believers are partnered in the Jewish mission of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus to all men everywhere. Until the day that “all Israel” embraces Christ, Israel remains the backslidden people of God. Messianic Jews and Gentile believers are equally responsible to proclaim the gospel to the whole

house of Israel with the Gentiles believers having the distinctly mandated duty to successfully provoke Israel to spiritual jealousy. According to Paul, when such spiritual fullness of the Gentiles becomes sufficiently actualized, “All Israel will be saved.”

There is no place for national, ethnic, or cultural pride, or one-upmanship of any variety in the kingdom of God. We are all equally saved. We are all one in Jesus. We are each and every one jointly mandated to proclaim the gospel to all men everywhere. We are commonly responsible to culturally relate to the people within our respective groups so as to effectively give all God’s loved ones the gospel in the language they can hear and in a framework they can understand.

## RENEWED EXPRESSIONS OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN CHRISTENDOM

In our day the latent anti-Semitism of the 1930s and 1940s has resurfaced with profound fury. Hostilities to “all Israel” abound around the world and are making strong inroads into American society as well. The massive Jewish embrace of Christ in the early Pentecostal decades of the 20th century was immediately followed by the harshest expressions of anti-Semitic attitudes in Europe in particular. The Holocaust came on the heels of one of the greatest Jewish-Christian revivals in European history. There is dreadful present correspondence between the tremendous Pentecostal move of God among Jewish people that we are experiencing the world over, with tens of thousands of Jews coming to faith during the past three

decades in many nations including the United States, Israel, Russia, Argentina, and South Africa, and this current rise in anti-Semitism.

Some 250,000 Jewish Christians were among the 6 million Jews destroyed by

western anti-Semites during the years of Nazi terrorism as documented in Mitch Glaser’s 1998 Ph.D. dissertation completed at the Fuller School of World Mission. Now, at the beginning of the 21st century, Western civilization is again experiencing a dangerously steep rise in demonically inspired anti-Semitism at this very season when Jews, throughout the United States and the entire Jewish world, are showing wonderfully improved readiness to hear and positively respond to the gospel.

While the “wall of partition” is gone forever, erring saints can rebuild the walls of narrow-mindedness, pride, and prejudice. When the General Council of the Assemblies of God in its 1945 session passed its resolution condemning all forms of anti-Semitism, it was not just in response to World War II and the Holocaust. General Superintendent E.S. Williams expressed his shock that even Pentecostal pulpits had been used to incite anti-Semitism. In fact, the baseless *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a forgery suggesting Jews were conspiring to take effective control of the world, found repeated support in the *Pentecostal Evangel* in the 1920s. Editor Stanley Frodsham only officially repudiated support for the *Protocols* in the 1930s. Happily, he later became an outspoken enthusiast for Israel’s destiny in God and Assemblies of God Jewish evangelism.

Pentecostals need to keep in mind and celebrate our spiritual union with “all Israel” as we have been joined to the “commonwealth of Israel.” Our corporate efforts to bring the Pentecostal gospel to the Jewish world can result in the salvation of the entire Jewish people, those still called to proclaim Christ to all nations. ■



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