**The Israel of God**

*Galatians 6:16*

**Introduction**

1. **Galatians 6:16** – Paul said the blessings of peace and mercy (that are from God) are upon “the Israel of God.”
	1. “The Israel of God” are those who “walk according to this rule.”
	2. The rule – **Galatians 6:11-15** – boasting in, i.e. having confidence in the cross of Christ for salvation, not circumcision and the flesh.
	3. Essentially, the entire epistle addresses this problem – teachers who were binding the Old Law on others for salvation – Judaizing teachers.
	4. THIS VERSE **(v. 16)** WOULD HAVE ESPECIALLY DRIVEN PAUL’S POINT HOME AGGRESSIVELY – THE JUDAIZERS THINK THEY BELONG TO GOD AND RECEIVE SPECIAL BLESSINGS BY KEEPING THE LAW, BUT IN DOING SO THEY SHOW THEMSELVES NOT TO BE “THE ISRAEL OF GOD.”
2. There is a stark contrast between physical Israel and spiritual Israel in the New Testament.
3. The distinctions concerning spiritual Israel are important to understand and take part in if we are to be children of God today. (NOTE: This is something that can be forfeited, and we can lose our place in God’s family – apostasy.)
4. They Are Not All Israel
5. Children of the Promise
	1. **Romans 9:1-5** – Paul laments for his lost countrymen.
	2. The true Israel, the spiritual Israel, are those of the promise, not flesh – **Romans 9:6-13**
		1. Isaac (promise) not Ishmael (flesh) – **vv. 6-9**
			1. God promised a son to Abraham and Sarah.
			2. They took matters into their own hand, and Abraham conceived with Hagar (Sarah’s maidservant) and bore Ishmael.
			3. Later, God gave them a son through Sarah as promised – Isaac.
			4. HE, NOT ISHMAEL, WAS GOD’S CHOICE FOR THE BLESSINGS PROMISED TO ABRAHAM, AND THROUGH WHOM THE SEED WOULD COME.
		2. Jacob (God’s choice) not Esau (who according to the flesh had the birthright) – **vv. 10-13**
			1. Rebecca, Isaac’s wife, conceived and was pregnant with twins.
			2. Before they were ever born, so it would be of God’s choice, God chose the younger to be served by the older. (Contrary to what is normal.)
			3. JACOB, LATER NAMED ISRAEL, NOT ESAU, WOULD BE THE ONE THAT GOD USED TO BRING THE PROMISES.
	3. APPLICATION – the TRUE Israel, i.e. people of God, are chosen by none other than God. HIS CHOICE IS NOT FLESHLY ISRAEL, BUT ALL WHO HUMBLY COME TO HIM IN FAITHFUL OBEDIENCE TO ATTAIN THE RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH IS FROM GOD BY FAITH – **cf. Philippians 3:7-9** – Paul was of the Israel of God, not because of his flesh, but his submission in faith to God’s plan of righteousness – **cf. Acts 10:34-35** – Peter’s conclusion before preaching to and converting the Gentiles.
6. One New Man from the Two – **Ephesians 2:14-18** – God provided a way for ALL men, both Jew and Gentile (fleshly), to be saved in the same way – through Christ.
7. The scripture gives a contrast between those who were merely fleshly Israel, and those who, whether Jew or Gentile, became a part of “the Israel of God.” The same requirements stand today. We must examine ourselves to see that we are truly exhibiting the characteristics of “the Israel of God.”
8. Fleshly vs Spiritual Israel
9. Citizenship
	1. Fleshly:
		1. Physical birth – **2 Corinthians 11:22** (Paul to false apostles – likely Judaizers); **Philippians 3:5** (stock of Israel – pure blooded Jew).
		2. Such was not a choice, but simply a fact of circumstance.
	2. Spiritual:
		1. Desire for entrance into kingdom – **Luke 16:16** – by conviction everyone presses in. (It is a choice by persuasion.)
			1. **Acts 26:27-29** – Paul to Agrippa – he could have become a citizen of the kingdom.
			2. ***“altogether such as I am”*** – I.e. persuaded by the gospel to gain entrance into the kingdom.
		2. Jesus’ instruction – **John 3:3-5** – must be born again.
			1. This birth is not natural, but spiritual.
			2. This birth is BY CHOICE.
			3. **1 Peter 1:22-23** – this is a birth in obedience to the Spirit’s direction in the word.
			4. Results in new life – **Romans 6:3-4** – baptism to walk in newness of life. (Burial in water – born of water.)
			5. Sons of God – i.e. of God’s people – through faith and baptism, thus, heirs – **Galatians 3:26-29**
		3. **In Christ = new creation – 2 Corinthians 5:17 – THUS, PAUL’S WORDS – Galatians 6:15 – a new creation is what avails.**
10. Relationship to the Covenant
	1. Fleshly:
		1. Old Covenant given to physical Israel, so by birth, and then given the sign of the covenant.
		2. Circumcision – **Genesis 17:9-11** – sign of the covenant, a contract between God and fleshly Israel.
			1. Circumcision further commanded in the law – **Leviticus 12:3**
			2. Paul used this fact in his life to show how he could boast in the flesh more than his opposition **– Philippians 3:5 –** He was a true Jew, and was truly part of that covenant God made with Israel in the flesh.
			3. He would be their God, and grant them that which He promised if they kept His covenant.
			4. **Exodus 19:4-6** – Must keep His covenant by obeying Him. Be a holy nation to Him.
			5. **Deuteronomy 7:9** – keep His commandments.
			6. **Psalm 103:17-18** – keep covenant, obey precepts.
		3. Fleshly Israel was born into the nation, thus, born into the nation’s law. Given a sign of the covenant, to keep it always.
			1. Some had the great desire to obey, and did so by choice – **Psalm 119:9-11, 16**
			2. Most only served by rote constraint if they served at all – **Psalm 50:8-15;** **Jeremiah 6:10, 16-17**
		4. BUT THEY DID NOT KEEP IT – **Jeremiah 31:31-32** – new covenant. Why? Because they broke the first.
			1. Divine commentary – **Hebrews 8:7-9** – because finding fault with them.
			2. The New Covenant would not be a matter of fleshly ordinance – i.e. law that governed a physical nation, thus appealed to the one born into it – but spiritual – appealed to those who desired what it offered, i.e. SALVATION, and thus obeyed from the heart.
	2. Spiritual:
		1. Circumcision under OT – sign of covenant, not a choice of the baby, but showed they were a part of the covenant and promises, thus had to keep the law.
		2. Circumcision under the NT – spiritual – **Colossians 2:11-12** – baptism is the spiritual circumcision.
			1. Drawn to Jesus through teaching – **John 6:45** – thus come to know God.
			2. Drawn to Jesus by His sufficient sacrifice for sins – **John 12:32-33; 3:14-15**
			3. A decision made by the one who believes – **Mark 16:16**
			4. “BY PUTTING OFF THE BODY OF THE SINS OF THE FLESH” – WHEN “BURIED WITH HIM IN BAPTISM” – **Romans 6:11** – reckon selves alive to God, i.e. present bodies to righteousness in service to Him.
			5. Baptism is where our sins are washed away, and we are added to God’s family. IT IS A CHOICE OF DEVOTION TO GOD, A CHOICE TO KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS, I.E. HIS COVENANT (NEW).
				1. Coming to Jesus willingly in submission for the peace and rest He offers – **Matthew 11:28-30; 1 John 5:3**
		3. This understanding of the New Covenant, THAT THOSE WHO COME INTO THE COVENANT RELATIONSHIP DO SO BY THEIR OWN DESIRE TO SERVE GOD BECAUSE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM IS EXPRESSED BY JEREMIAH IN HIS PROPHECY – **Jeremiah 31:33-34**
			1. Obeyed God from the heart – written on heart – a motion of sincere love, not constraint.
			2. All know Him because it is a requirement of the NC to know Him for entrance. (Believe)
			3. All know Him intimately because of the forgiveness He offers through Christ’s sacrifice.
11. Justification
	1. Fleshly:
		1. Sought to be justified by law – required the perfect keeping of the Law – not possible **– Romans 3:9-20** – VERY LAW THEY BOASTED IN FOR JUSTIFCATION CONFINED THEM UNDER SIN.
		2. Seek to be justified by law, but still accept Christ? Contradiction.
			1. **Galatians 5:1-6** – Christ profits nothing; fallen from grace; true righteousness is by faith in Christ.
			2. The understanding Jew knew he stood condemned before God if righteousness came through the perfect keeping of the Law – **Romans 7:24** (Paul looking back on his condition without Christ under the Law.)
	2. Spiritual:
		1. Seeks to be justified according to God’s standard – by faith in Christ – **Galatians 3:21-29** – The law showed us sin, and brought us to the One that could justify us if we have faith in Him.
		2. Paul only boasted in the cross of Christ, because THAT was his salvation – **Galatians 6:11-16**
			1. **(v. 15)** – the circumcision of the flesh doesn’t matter, but the circumcision of the heart – i.e. the new creation in Christ Jesus.
			2. **(v. 16)** – the TRUE “Israel of God” are those who walk according to this rule – IN OTHER WORDS, THESE WHO CLAIM TO BE GOD’S PEOPLE BECAUSE OF THEIR FLESH ARE NOT GOD’S PEOPLE IN THE LEAST.

**Conclusion**

1. God never intended to choose one physical people to be the recipients of His promise of salvation.
2. His eternal plan was for men to be transformed by the saving power of Christ’s crucifixion.
3. Our attitudes and actions are to be from the heart, not out of a matter of rote, or constraint.