

Galatians

Situation. Paul is clearly battling opponents who have settled in Galatia given the likely South Galatian location of Paul's readers, accepted also by archaeologists of Asia Minor, Acts 13–15 provides especially helpful background for the letter). These are Jewish Christians who would rather circumcise the Galatians—thus alienating them from their own *Gentile **CULTURE**—than allow Judean Jews back home to think that Christian missionaries were lax (4:29; 5:11; 6:12–13). Unlike Paul, a more seasoned missionary, these missionaries want to **IMPOSE THEIR OWN CULTURE** on the Galatians.

The Issue. At an earlier time, some Judean Christians had insisted that believers be **CIRCUMCISED** to be saved (Acts 15:1). Although the Jerusalem Council had apparently settled this issue, side effects lingered: could Gentiles be part of God's people without circumcision? Some of the strictest Pharisees may have required circumcision for salvation, but many Pharisees believed that any Gentiles who kept the few laws given Noah, or followed the Levitical requirements for strangers in the land, would be saved. But even for this more lenient class of Pharisees (cf. Acts 15:5), one could not become part of the people of God without circumcision; very few Jews were so lenient as to accept Gentiles on such terms. Indeed, circumcision had become even the major cultural symbol of fidelity to **JUDAISM**: attempts to restrict the practice led to revolts both before and after Paul's time.

Some Judean Christians were now arguing that one must become **CULTURALLY JEWISH** to become a full Jesus-follower, fully righteous; after all, the Bible itself made this requirement for one who wished to belong to God's people (Gen 17:10–14). Further, they may have reasoned, if Paul argued for **BAPTISM** (a post-Old Testament Jewish addition to circumcision), why could Judean Christians not require circumcision, even though it drove away potential converts? Paul argues forcefully against this view: those who submit to Israel's Messiah and receive the Spirit belong to the covenant and already have what circumcision merely symbolized.

Craig S. Keener, The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament, Second Edition. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic: An Imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2014), 523–524.

Author- God Through the Apostle Paul

Paul's Mood in This Letter 

1 Paul, an apostle—sent not from men nor by a man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised him from the dead— 2 and all the brothers and sisters with me, To the churches in Galatia:

3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, 4 who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, 5 to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

NO OTHER GOSPEL

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one, we preached to you, let them be under God's curse! 9 As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let them be under God's curse!

10 Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.

PAUL CALL IS FROM GOD AND NOT MAN

11 I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the gospel I preached is not of human origin. 12 I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.

13 For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. 14 I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased 16 to

reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles, my immediate response was not to consult any human being. 17 I did not go up to Jerusalem to see those who were apostles before I was, but I went into Arabia. Later I returned to Damascus.

18 Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days. 19 I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord’s brother. 20 I assure you before God that what I am writing you is no lie.

21 Then I went to Syria and Cilicia. 22 I was personally unknown to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. 23 They only heard the report: “The man who formerly persecuted us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy.” 24 And they praised God because of me.

Word Study

CULTURE- A. the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group B. the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization.

CIRCUMCISED- The cutting off of the foreskin of males that is practiced as a religious rite by Jews and Muslims as a religious and social custom or for potential health benefits

JUDAISM- the monotheistic religion of the Jewish people.
the Jewish people collectively.

BAPTISM- Baptism is a Christian sacrament that symbolizes a person's admission into the church and their identification with Jesus.

JUDAISERS- Judaizers were a group of early Christians who believed that Gentiles needed to convert to Judaism in order to be considered followers of Jesus. They were also known as the "circumcision party" because they believed that Gentile Christians should follow the Mosaic Law, including circumcision and Jewish feast days.

Three World Religions That Evolved From The Old Testament

