

Galatians Unearthed Part 1: Peter's Endorsement and Warning; Five “W” Questions; II Galatians (12/9/2017)

The following text is a message from Corner Fringe Ministries that was presented by Daniel Joseph. The original presentation can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VK1efA1nebg&feature=youtu.be>

***Portions of this document have been edited from the video message to better present a written document. All the Scripture verses are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted and are in the red text. Therefore, it is recommended that this document is printed in color. The Hebrew is to be read from right to left.**

I'm excited to begin a new series based on Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. I've titled this Galatians Unearthed because we are going to unearth the historical context and intent of Paul for writing to the Galatians. We are not going to base this on presuppositions of the Christian Church and its traditional ideas and concepts or written summaries and commentaries on Galatians. We are simply going to the source and listen to what the Apostle Paul has to say and the context by which he said it.

When it comes to evangelical Christianity today, you'll be hard-pressed to find another book in the Bible that carries as much weight, clout, and emphasis as the book of Galatians carries. This is especially true pertaining to matters of the Law. I can almost guarantee anytime you have conversations with your believing friends, believing family members, people in Bible studies, pastors, or professors of seminaries regarding the Law, the book of Galatians is going to come into the conversation.

I don't think the impact this book has made on Christianity can be measured. In fact, I would argue, and I understand this is going to be a bold statement, I would argue that the book of Galatians is the most influential book in all of the history of Christianity for shaping and forming doctrine. I believe it is the most influential book there is in the entire Bible. Let me make another bold statement. I would also say at the very same time it is the most misunderstood book in all of Christianity. What does that tell you? On the one hand, I have the most influential book for shaping and forming Christian doctrine, yet on the other hand, I have the most misunderstood book. That tells you this is going to be a really interesting study.

With that said, I want to open up today with some commentary from one of the much respected Bible scholars, F.F. Bruce. I would consider him a scholar's scholar. He is an impressive apologist for defending the reliability of the New Testament. He has some commentary on Paul's Epistles to the Galatians regarding its special placement in the first known canon of Scripture. Listen to this commentary—[The traditional criterion in the canonical arrangement of the Pauline letters, as far back as it can be traced, appears to have been \[in a\] descending order of length.](#)

This would be called stichometric. In other words, the larger books come first, and the smaller ones come later. If you look at your modern Bibles, that is how it is laid out. You find the big Pauline epistles such as Romans and 1 & 2 Corinthians first. Then you get into the smaller ones. This is traditional and how you would normally place the books in order.

F. F. Bruce continues—[But Marcion, who about AD 140 was the first person \(so far as is known\) to compile a 'closed' canon of Christian writings.](#) In other words, Marcion is responsible for the first known Christian Bible, the closed canon. The history of Marcion is he was deemed a heretic by the early church. He had some Gnostic tendencies and some really interesting things that he stood on and vehemently preached. It was the separation of law and gospel. He taught that the God of the Jews, the God of the Old Testament, is not the God of the New Testament. The God of the New Testament is a loving, graceful God; the God of the Old Testament is hateful and prone to inflicting vengeance.

So Marcion has this closed canon of Christian writings. F. F. Bruce continues—[deviated from this principle of arrangement by taking Galatians out of its stichometric sequence and giving it pride of place at the head of his Apostolikon.](#) In other words, Marcion totally changed the traditional way of putting these books together. He took Galatians out of its order and put it to the head. Galatians received the pride of placement in Marcion's Bible.

Bruce goes on to say—[Tertullian, our first witness for Marcion's order, agrees with him to this extent, that he too holds Galatians to be 'the primary epistle against Judaism.](#) Now it is ironic that Tertullian agreed with Marcion because Tertullian specifically dedicated a lot of his work to refuting, rebuking, and rebutting Marcion. Bruce continues—[Marcion's placing of the epistle has not prevailed, but its primacy of importance among the writings of Paul has been widely, though not universally, acknowledged from that day to this.](#)¹ When we look at our Bibles today, we find Romans being the first Pauline epistle; it is not Galatians. So the point here is from the very inception we find Galatians receiving this special place at the head of the table.

Listen to what Martin Luther has to say—[The Epistle to the Galatians is my epistle; I have betrothed myself to it: it is my wife \(Catherine\).](#)² Think about how dramatic that statement is. There's no deeper affection he could have possibly expressed than likening the Epistle of Galatians to his own wife. That is the ultimate example of intimacy and respect because a wife has special access to the husband's heart that no one else has. This is exactly what Luther is conveying about Galatians in that it has a special place in his heart.

This is what he is conveying. If you have any doubts about what he is saying, look at what he goes on to say later on in his life—[If they took my advice, they would print only the books containing doctrine like Galatians.](#)³ Think about the gravity of that statement and what Luther is really conveying especially when you know the history of Luther in how he talks about faith, his understanding of faith, his understanding of liberty, and what that really means. This is a powerful statement! So when we look at history and the way this book has been perceived, it's not hyperbole to say this epistle had been given the most preeminent seat in all of Christianity.

The first thing I want to do before we break into the book itself is to share with you a warning given to us by the Apostle Peter specifically concerning the letters of Paul. This warning is like a preamble and is included in the New Testament because it's meant to be a preamble to every one of Paul's epistles. This is what we find in 2 Peter 3:15—[and consider that the longsuffering of our LORD is salvation--as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you.](#)

The first thing I want to mention is Peter, a pillar of the faith, refers to Paul as their beloved brother. Peter is giving the Apostle Paul the right hand of fellowship. He is his brother; Peter is commending him. Peter supports Paul.

This is critical information, especially for today when you have anti-Pauline people simply reacting to Paul's works because they, themselves, are antinomian which means anti-law. These people really are not fans of Paul when they come to this discovery that Torah has not been done away with; it is still relevant today. But then they still struggle with the Epistles of Paul and begin to write him off, and Paul really takes a beating.

I want to be very clear on something first. Paul's epistles can stand on their own. But you need to know this; Paul has external support. It is not just him going around saying, "I was called or was anointed to preach the gospel." He has other pillars of the faith claiming he is an authentic apostle. This becomes a significant problem for those who are anti-Pauline. That mentality doesn't work because Paul has the support of the highest of the highest men of the day.

The first thing to know is Peter and Paul are in total support of one another. The second thing to notice is Peter credits Paul, "According to the wisdom given to him." Peter identifies Paul as having wisdom. It must have been extremely profound for Peter to have mentioned it because people would walk in Peter's shadow in order to get healed. This same guy identifies Paul as having profound wisdom.

The last thing Peter states in this verse is— **has written to you.** 2 Peter is written to Gentiles. Peter is specifically talking to Gentiles and acknowledging, "I know the Apostle Paul who has great wisdom. He is my brother. He has written to you."

So with this backdrop, Peter goes on and says in 2 Peter 3:16—**as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand.** Did you catch that? He says—**some things [are] hard to understand.** Peter is warning these Gentiles, "Paul has a profound amount of wisdom, but when he says specific things in his epistles, some of these things are hard to understand."

That is Peter speaking to the Galatians. Peter is a man anointed with the Ruach HaKodesh. Some incredible miracles were done through this man, and he himself, having read Paul's letters, identifies some of these things as hard to understand.

Now he goes on and says this—**which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures (2 Peter 3:16).** I want to point something out. Untaught in what? In economics, physics, mathematics, or chemistry? No. They are untaught in Torah, the Word of the LORD and the prophets. Those men, who are ignorant of the Torah and the prophets, are the ones in danger of twisting Paul's words. They do the same with the Torah and the prophets; these people are unstable. Paul is warning the people not to do the same thing when reading Paul's epistles.

Continue in 2 Peter 3:17—**You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked.** This is the preamble. Every time we enter into an Epistle of Paul's, remember this warning. Be careful because you're entering into dangerous territory. This is where many who are untaught and unstable have twisted Paul's words to their own destruction. If you think this is not a big deal, and you can say potato or "potahto," and you can interpret Paul's epistle one way, and I interpret it in another way, I'm afraid it doesn't work that way because of what Peter said. He said life and death are at stake.

Put that into context for a second. It does matter how you interpret Paul's letters because it could mean your life. This is the warning of Peter. So as we enter into this study, we are going to be taking heed of this warning.

I want to give you a heads up. Today we're just going to be setting the stage and kind of getting the landscape of the Epistle of Galatians. This will be the backdrop. We are going to start by asking five questions. Those are who, what, when, where, and why. These are the basics, and we're going to get them out of the way.

The first one is who wrote this epistle? Let's check this out by going to Galatians 1:1—**Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father who raised Him from the dead)**. The first thing we read tells us Paul wrote it because he tells us right in the beginning. However, it's not always that simple, unfortunately.

This is what you call internal evidence because within the epistle itself we have evidence, which is Paul's name. The problem comes when you understand what was going on in the early first century and into the second century. There were impostors, forgers, who were playing on Paul's good name. In fact, there are actual pieces of evidence such as the Epistle to the Laodiceans and the Epistle to the Alexandrians. These were Gnostics who crafted the letters, and they used Paul's name. Therefore, it is important to start breaking this all down to look at the authenticity of the author. Peter has declared that Paul is the real deal; he is legitimate. But we need to make sure that Paul actually wrote this epistle.

The first thing we have is Paul's name at the beginning of Galatians. What else do we know? We can look at the writing style because, this for scholars, is absolutely monumental. The writing style tells so much about an author. It is like leaving D.N.A. or a fingerprint at a scene because everyone has this unique writing style. When people email me, I don't even have to know their names because I get so many emails from different people I know how they write and their communication style.

It is the same thing for those of us who have spouses. We understand how they communicate. Make no mistake, as many hours as I have put into studying Paul, I know him. When you spend that much time studying him, you know his writing style. Galatians lines up perfectly with other epistles that are known to be written by Paul. So the writing style is very important; there's no question about that. The author is definitely the Apostle Paul.

Another proof is there are things mentioned in this epistle that even if you were going to forge, like the Gnostics were doing early on, you would not mention specific events that happened where you had interaction with other people such as we find in Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. These interactions are with men like Peter. We find that Paul actually rebuked Peter. Let me tell you something; if you're forging a document, you're not going to make a statement like that. That's not going to happen. So internally we have all this evidence that leaves us with no doubt this is definitely the Apostle Paul.

Then we have external evidence. The early Church fathers all declared Paul. There was no debate; there wasn't even a question as to the authenticity of this epistle. Let me take it a step further and share with you some commentary from J.B. Lightfoot. This is what he says—**The Epistle to the Galatians is found in all the known Canons of Scripture proceeding from the Catholic Church in the second century. It is contained in the SYRIAC and OLD LATIN versions, completed, it would appear, some time**

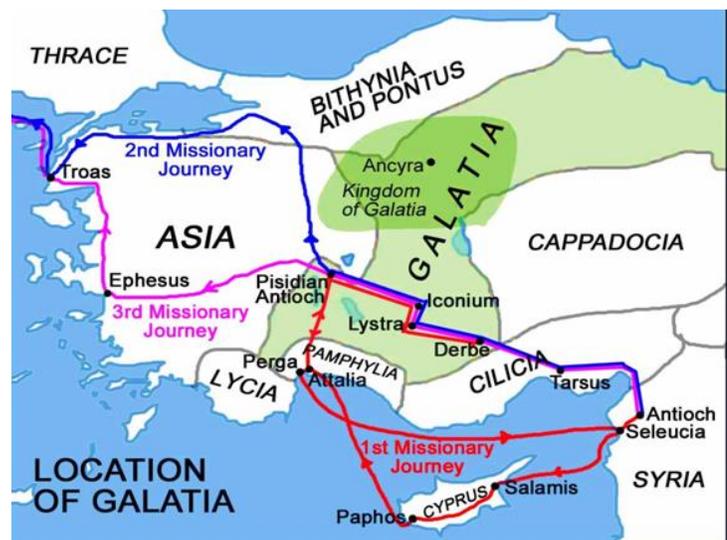
before the close of the century. It is distinctly recognized also in the Canon of the Muratorian Fragment (probably not later than 170 A.D.).⁴

This is a huge statement! It casts out any shadow of doubt that Paul's epistles are absolutely authentic. We then find out Galatians was also part of the Muratorian Fragment which wasn't found that long ago. I have a copy of it. The Muratorian Fragment is a list of books they considered inspired, or what we would call Scripture. In that list is the book of Galatians. I don't want to get too deep into it, but there are some interesting things that are said in this Muratorian Fragment that appear to be in response to Marcion's canon of the Bible in that it was the first canon of closed canon Scripture. So it is beyond dispute that Paul is the authentic author of Galatians.

We move on to the next question which is to whom and where was it written? That is easy. It is written to the Galatians in Galatia. While that may sound overly simple, there is some debate because there are a few people that say, "Well, we think Paul is actually addressing a specific ethnicity of people regarding Galatians." The preponderance of the evidence rests somewhere else in that this is actually a geographical location where people would reside.

On the map, you can see this highlighted portion is Galatia. You will also notice there are some important cities you should recognize in the book of Acts such as Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch. So when we're thinking about Galatians, this is what we need to be thinking about. This is a geographical location with cities.

Our next question is when this epistle was written? It is estimated 49-50 AD, but some will even stretch it out to 57 AD. Regardless, this is a small time frame that narrows it down.



When you think about the time period this was written, what do you think about? There are two huge markers in this era. We have Yeshua being crucified and resurrected in 30 AD. Then we have the Temple being destroyed in 70 AD. Smack dab in the middle of this Paul pens this Epistle to the Galatians. What does that tell you? We know Yeshua died and rose from the grave in 30 AD, and here we're not even twenty years later, and the gospel has already spread like wildfire in full force. In 49 AD, Claudius was kicking the Jews out of Rome. That is very significant to this time period. Persecution was rising, and there were a lot of things going on at that time.

On to our next question. Why did Paul write this epistle? We're going to jump ahead in Galatians 1:6-7—⁶ I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel. ⁷ which is not another. Paul is writing to the Galatians because they're turning to another teaching; they're turning to a gospel which is not another. What does he mean by that? He means this—they're still coming and preaching Yeshua, Jesus, as the Messiah. He wants the Galatians to follow Yeshua because He is the Christ. But the expression of how Yeshua was being presented was

being tweaked just a little bit. The expression of how you walked that faith out was being tweaked just a little bit. That is the—**which is not another.**

Continuing in Galatians 1:7—**but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.** So, obviously, the reason Paul wrote this Epistle to the Galatians is he was looking to pull these people he has sewn into out of the fire of deception. He wanted to restore some spiritual sanity.

So we've looked at the who, when, where, and why. Now we come to the what. What is this epistle all about? What perverse teaching have the Galatians accepted? What truth is being compromised in Galatia?

Before I answer that, I want to show you how others have answered this question in a traditional light. I have a piece from the Marcionite prologue. I want to set this up for you first. Marcionite prologues were little commentaries written before the actual epistle appeared. I want to be clear, the traditional church that rebukes Marcion unanimously agree with his prologues. Even to this day, scholars will mention in their works they were in complete harmony with the prologues.

As we go through this, keep that in mind. **The Galatians are Greeks. They at first received the word of truth from the Apostle Paul, but after his departure, they were tempted by false prophets to turn to the Law and circumcision [for salvation]. The apostle calls them back to the true faith, writing to them from Ephesus (Marcionite prologue).** Taking a look at the ending, this piece is one of the only places where we have any historicity regarding where Paul was when he wrote Galatians.

Having said that, what is the analysis? It is they are turning back to the Torah and circumcision [for salvation]. Both are specifically mentioned. This is critical as we continue.

Let me show you another one. I want to take you to the fourth century to look at an early church father, John Chrysostom. He was the Archbishop of Constantinople. This is what he said— **Some of the Jews who believed, being held down by the prepossessions of Judaism, and at the same time intoxicated by vain-glory, and desirous of obtaining for themselves the dignity of teachers, came to the Galatians, and taught them that the observance of circumcision, Sabbaths, and new-moons, was necessary, and that Paul in abolishing these things was not to be borne.**⁵ In essence, he says the very same thing the Marcionite prologue says. It is all about their going back to the observance of the Law in teaching them it's necessary to observe the Law [for salvation].

I love the last part that states—**Paul in abolishing these things.** If you pay attention to the little details, you will know where people are coming from and how they're processing information. It doesn't say, "Yeshua, Jesus, came and abolished these things." John Chrysostom actually mentions Paul as being the one who abolished these things. That is very interesting.

With that said, I want to take you to the earliest Latin commentator known as Gaius Marius Victorinus. This is what F. F. Bruce quotes from him—**The sum of the letter is as follows: The Galatians are going astray because they are adding Judaism to the gospel of faith in Christ, observing in a material sense the Sabbath and circumcision, together with the other works which they received in accordance with the law. Disturbed by these tendencies Paul writes this letter, wishing to put them right and call them back from Judaism, in order that they may preserve faith in Christ alone, and receive from Christ the hope of**

salvation and of his promises, because no one is saved by the works of the law. So, in order to show that what they are adding is wrong, he wishes to confirm [the truth of] his gospel.⁶

So this is the commentary from Gaius Marius Victorinus regarding what he saw in the Epistle to the Galatians. This, again, is the same thing John Chrysostom and the Marcionites saw. They saw this as the Galatians returning to the Torah [for salvation].

Fast forwarding we go to Martin Luther. He begins the preface to this epistle in the following manner—[The Galatians had been brought by St. Paul to right Christian belief, from the law to the gospel. But after his departure there came the false prophets, who were disciples of the true apostles, and turned the Galatians back again to believe that they must attain blessedness through the work of the law, and that they were sinning if they did no\[t\] hold the work of the law, as according to Acts 15 certain highly-placed people in Jerusalem insisted.](#)⁷

So as you go through all of this commentary, it just gives you a little more appreciation and insight regarding the general consensus and historical analysis. The problem is in Galatia they are turning back to Torah. The idea was this would be for salvation.

Now let me ask the million dollar question. Is that the problem? You have to ask that question because the Torah is very careful to share wisdom with us so we don't follow the crowd simply because they're the majority or they have a conviction in what they believe. You don't do that. At the very least, you have to ask, "OK, with all these commentaries in Christianity throughout the different generations; is that a correct analysis?" Is it safe to say they're right on the money, or is there something off here?

This is exactly what we are going to endeavor to find out, because I promise you if you identify the problem in Galatia, it will unlock unbelievable doors for you in Scripture, and something magical will happen. I can say this because I've taught on Galatians before, and many people came back to me and said, "You know, there were all these different passages that were all inconsistent with one another. It appeared they were not cohesive, and there were all these looming questions. Then through this study in Galatians, everything came into perfect harmony." Their eyes saw, and the Scripture came alive. I can't tell you how many testimonies I've had like that.

We are going to go through this and challenge Church history's traditional thinking regarding the book of Galatians. We are going to do it structurally and not with pre-suppositions or opinions.

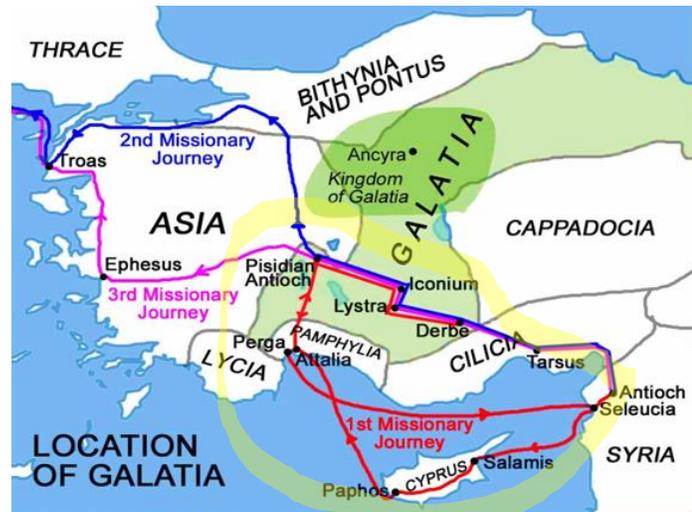
To kick this off, the first thing I want to do is point out the name given to this book. We just commonly call it Galatians. In my opinion, that is not a very good name. It has a much better name that would dramatically impact your understanding and your perspective of this letter by simply changing the name. And what would that be? The name would be 2 Galatians. I say that because the letter we have in our New Testament with the headline Galatians is not the first letter to the Galatians. This thought doesn't come out of some crazy New Testament pseudepigrapha. This isn't some crazy kook ball Gnostic work that I'm claiming. This is legitimate.

The letter I'm talking about is actually in the New Testament. There is another letter written before Galatians that was written is found in the book of Acts. So I want to take you to the book of Acts and give you a really powerful historical perspective behind the book. I'm going to begin in Acts 13. Believers are in Antioch, and you need to understand something about Antioch of Syria. Antioch of Syria

was a stronghold, a force to be reckoned with in the faith. It was kind of what I call the sub hub of Jerusalem. I say this because there were prophets, teachers, and apostles dwelling in Antioch of Syria. This city was a powerful hub and major influence.

Paul and Barnabas are in Antioch of Syria, and the Holy Spirit comes down and tells the people, "Separate to me Paul and Barnabas for the work I have for them." So that happens, and then we come to Acts 13:4 and read—**So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they (Paul and Barnabas) went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.**

So here you have Antioch of Syria, and you follow the red line. You find they went through Cyprus. Ultimately, we're going to find they're going to come to Pisidia in Antioch. They are going to go to Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. Then they are going to make their way back. This gives you a little imagery as to what was going on here.



Now I want to jump to Acts 14 because we're going to pick up the story here. Acts 14:21—**And when they had preached the gospel to that city (Derbe) and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch.** So Derbe was the end of the forward journey. Now they want to go back to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch.

Why would they do that? We find out exactly why in Acts 14:22-23—**strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."** ²³ So when they had appointed elders in every church and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the LORD in whom they had believed. In other words, they are going back to these cities in Galatia to establish churches. This is critical because this is the spread of the gospel.

Moving on to Acts 14:24-26—**And after they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia.** ²⁵ Now when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. ²⁶ From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed. So now they've come back home to Antioch of Syria where the prophets are located. And it specifically says in Acts 14:27-28 **Now when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.** ²⁸ So they stayed there a long time with the disciples.

It is critically important you see the testimony they gave in this powerful hub of believers. They mentioned to them the door of faith had been opened to the Gentiles. I want to be very clear on something; this is not what their Jewish brethren were expecting to hear. They were expecting to hear how many synagogues they had turned upside down and all the wonderful things which they had done.

I skipped over a lot of portions, but if you read Acts 14, you find when Paul and Barnabas went to Antioch, the Gentiles caught wind of it. The text says they begged Paul and Barnabas to preach the

Word to them on the next Sabbath. The Gentiles were begging for this Word because they were hungry. We are told in the very same passage on the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear this message. The whole city was impacted by the gospel. This is the impact of the anointing of the Holy Spirit on Paul and Barnabas. It blew a door open that no Jew in his right mind, at that time, would have ever expected. They never thought Gentiles would be coming into faith.

You need to understand to a Jew in the first century this wasn't even a concept. This wasn't on the radar. In fact, the Torah says Jews were to be totally separate from the pagans. Given that, you can understand why that was the frame of mind at that time.

So think about this transition in the first century. You want to talk about Yeshua flipping the world upside down to His people in this transition. You have the transition from the baptism of John the Baptist to a baptism of fire through the resurrection. That's a serious transition. Then you move from a sacrificial system for sin into a system of atonement that was done once and for all. We also have the transition of the priesthood in the order of the Levites, the sons of Aaron, to the order of Melchizedek. Are you feeling the weight of this transition? It is total craziness!

For the Jews, the world was flipped upside down. Now the Gentiles are starting to pour into their nation. These are the Gentiles the Jews had been pushing off and staying away from their entire lives. Paul and Barnabas are now telling them the door of faith had been open to the Gentiles.

We move to Acts 15:1—**And certain men [believers in Yeshua] came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."** Do you want to know what the problem is in Galatia? Right there is the problem.

From the very beginning of the book of Galatians, from the very first verse till the very last verse, this book is all about circumcision. I'm going to tell you if you understand that information, that information will impact your time in the book of Galatians. It is going to impact it profoundly.

If you understand that information, as you go through the rest of Paul's epistles, you are going to find Paul is completely consistent with every epistle, and all the words that he speaks are in perfect harmony. And guess what? They are in harmony with the Torah and the prophets.

It is powerful to think of that. So you need to understand the number one issue in the first century, the most controversial issue, was the fact Gentiles were coming into the faith and whether or not they had to be circumcised. When you see this for what it is, it is going to unlock all these amazing doors of understanding.

Well, how do Paul and Barnabas handle this situation with these men who are their own brethren? Acts 15:2—**Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them.** So these men who are Jewish believers come down from Judea, and they tell the Gentiles they can't be saved unless they are circumcised. At that moment, Paul and Barnabas went toe to toe with them, and they wouldn't back down. It got heated! The way it is described in Scripture is they—**had no small dissension and dispute with them.** Imagine how hot the debate was that was going back and forth? The Jews who came down from Judea wouldn't budge, and Paul and Barnabas wouldn't budge.

The verse continues in Acts 15:2—**they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.** So the contention became so hot, and the issue was so critical, there was only one way to resolve it. That was to take it to Jerusalem which was the highest court in the world in the eyes of Israel. This court was considered the Supreme Court, and whatever it decided was the final decision.

What's interesting to me is what Paul, Barnabas, and these men from Judea, agree to do. They agree to follow the instruction of Torah. They knew what had to be done about this disagreement because they were listening to the Torah. Let me show you in Deuteronomy 17:8—**If a matter arises which is too hard for you to judge, between degrees of guilt for bloodshed, between one judgment or another, or between one punishment or another, matters of controversy within your gates, then you shall arise and go up to the place which the LORD your God chooses.**

Look at that. What was this dispute? It was a matter of controversy. Where were they supposed to go? They were to—**go up to the place which the LORD your God chooses.** What place was that? It was Jerusalem. They're following Torah.

The verse goes on in Deuteronomy 17:9—**And you shall come to the priests, the Levites, and to the judge there in those days, and inquire of them; they shall pronounce upon you the sentence of judgment.** This is simple. Whatever the priest or judge in Jerusalem decided, it was then gospel truth. At that point, you had to accept the decision. In fact, if you look further on in Deuteronomy 17, you will find if a person rejected that decision, they were to be killed. That's how powerful of a court this was. This was the Supreme Court of Israel.

There is something very important to note here. During Paul's day, the Sanhedrin, which is what is being described here, was fully functioning. I want you to go through the New Testament and notice some things. Yeshua was brought before the Sanhedrin. Peter and John in Acts 4 and 5 were brought before the Sanhedrin. Paul himself was brought before the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin was still in full operation in Paul's day. So when this dispute arose in Antioch, they were to turn to the Sanhedrin.

Why do I bring this up? Where am I going with this? Let me ask you the question, where did Paul and Barnabas go when they went up to Jerusalem? Let's go back to the verse in Acts 15:2—**Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question (emphasis added).**

That's fascinating because this was to be brought to the priests. This was to be brought to the Pharisees. However, they didn't bring this to them. They brought this matter to the apostles. What does that tell you as we're looking at this? It tells you the LORD established a new court in Jerusalem. He established a new Sanhedrin.

Do you want to talk about a crazy transition period? The Sanhedrin was still intact. Everything was operating perfectly. Then Yeshua came and established His own Sanhedrin to bring the highest matters to. And this matter of the Gentiles coming into the faith could not have been more controversial than this. Yet this matter is presented to the apostles.

When did this transition take place? Remember the conversation Yeshua had with Peter that we find in Matthew 16:13-17—¹³ When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” ¹⁴ So they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” ¹⁵ He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” ¹⁶ Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” ¹⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.

Yeshua goes on in that conversation and says this to Peter in Matthew 16:19—**And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.** Do you understand when you're looking at Deuteronomy 17 that whatever the Sanhedrin, this council that was established by God in Jerusalem, declared, that was the final verdict? If you didn't receive it, you were killed. If you rejected their decision, you were to die. Do you know what that is called? It is called you're killed if you reject it. You are going to die. Do you know what that's called? It is called— **whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.**

What Yeshua was telling Peter was He was giving Peter and the rest of the apostles the keys to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever they bound on earth would be bound in heaven. In other words, whatever judgment they rendered would be confirmed in heaven.

You need to feel the weight of that as we continue into next week. You need to understand this Jerusalem Council we're going to read about and what they declared. This council was not just established here on earth; it was bound in heaven. That is the secret to understanding Paul's anger and his frustration with what is going on in Galatians. The further we get into this, the more this is going to make sense to you.

We didn't cover a whole lot today; we covered just a little bit. However, the more we get into this, the heavier it's going to get in dealing with all those questions and statements Paul makes and all these questions regarding the Torah itself.

On the heels of that, I want to take you to Matthew 19, so you can feel the weight of what we're going to get into next week. Matthew 19:27-28—²⁷ Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?" ²⁸ So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Think about these apostles who were in Jerusalem and were part of the Jerusalem Council. We are going to read about them next week and the decision they render. We will read about the implications of that decision and their authority and power. Remember these very apostles who are judging men are the same apostles who in the age to come are going to sit on twelve thrones judging all the righteous men we've read about in the Bible.

That is profound; that is humbling. That makes you go into this study with humbleness. When you realize you are going to read about their decision and what they state, you feel the weight and gravity of this. The Apostles knew the gravity of it, but there were others who were not respecting that.

References

1. Bruce, F. F. (1982). *The Epistle to the Galatians: A commentary on the Greek text. New International Greek Testament Commentary (1–2)*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.
2. Martin Luther, Seekendorf de Lutheran. L. 1. § 85. p. 139. *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. A revised text with introduction, notes, and dissertations. 1874 (J. B. Lightfoot, Ed.) (4th Ed.)*. Classic Commentaries on the Greek New Testament. London: Macmillan and Co.
3. Martin Luther, George, T. (1994). Vol. 30: Galatians. *The New American Commentary (183–184)*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.
4. J.B. Lightfoot, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. A revised text with introduction, notes, and dissertations. 1874 (J. B. Lightfoot, Ed.) (4th Ed.)*. Classic Commentaries on the Greek New Testament (57). London: Macmillan and Co.
5. John Chrysostom, (1889). *Commentary of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Galatians* Anonymous & G. Alexander, Trans.). In P. Schaff (Ed.), *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series, Volume XIII: Saint Chrysostom: Homilies on Galatians, Ephesians*.
6. Bruce, F.F. (1982). *The Epistle to the Galatians: C. Marius Victorinus Afer, In Galatas, introd. (Ed. A. Locher, 1)*.
7. Luther's Werke, WA: Die deutsche Bibel, 7, 172f. Bruce, F. F. (1982). *The Epistle to the Galatians: A commentary on the Greek text. New International Greek Testament Commentary (1–2)*. Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co.