

## **Faith Matters # 6 – The Church – the New Israel – March 26**

When the disciples & followers of the resurrected Jesus were discovering they were a brand new faith community, they had their first serious dispute. Should they allow non-Jews to be included in their faith community? After all, Jesus had been a Jew, & the disciples were all Jews – descendants of Abraham, the people of Israel.

But non-Jews, that is Gentiles, people beyond Israel, were starting to become followers of Jesus. **Saul** offered to stamp out this new faith community of Jews and Gentile believers. They were a threat to the temple in Jerusalem. He argued that foreigners could not be the people of God because they were not Israelites. But the resurrected Jesus stopped Saul in his tracks, and the Holy Spirit commanded Saul, “Go, for I will send you far away to [preach to] the Gentiles”! (Acts 22:21).

Remember, we are Gentiles, non-Jews.

So Saul, now renamed Paul, travelled far and wide proclaiming Christ as Saviour, Lord, Messiah, to both Jews and non-Jews. He realized God was doing a new thing as the Old Testament prophet Isaiah had declared (42:9; 43:19). Paul reminded the young churches that Abraham’s descendants were to be a blessing to **all** peoples. He declared that these new believers – so us, too – were now descendants of Abraham by adoption\*. They had become the New Israel.

What a revolution! The world-wide Christian faith community, including you and me, is the New Israel. And hopefully, we can help all people of all races and nationalities, including Jews, to discover the Messiah, the Saviour, the King of Israel, our King and theirs.

So at worship, when we pray for Israel, we are praying for the world-wide Church.

\* Romans 8:15, 23; 9:4; Galatians 3:6-9; 4:5; Ephesians 1:5.

(by Rev. Willard Pottinger, Erskine Presbyterian Church, Hamilton)