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Witness in Jerusalem
1:1 to 8:4

30-33 AD

The hope of **Isra'el** has always been the return of **the Anointed One** to set up **His** Kingdom. The prophets spoke of it, and **Jews** of every age long for it. But, because of **the Oral Law** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ, to see link click Ei – The Oral Law**), when **the Messiah** finally did come – they missed **Him** (see the commentary on **The Life of Christ Ek – It is only by Beelzebub, the Prince of Demons, That This Fellow Drives Out Demons**).



The Talmud teaches that the world is like a human eyeball. The white of the eye is the ocean surrounding the world, the iris is this continent, the pupil is Jerusalem and the image of the pupil is the Holy Temple. The focal point of **the Jewish people** is **Jerusalem**. To **them**, all roads lead to **the Holy City**. And as a result, **they** were self-centered, even though the salvation of **the Gentiles** through **Isra'el** was foreshadowed much earlier. Moses wrote: **I will bless those who bless you, but whoever curses you I will curse, and in you all the [Gentile] families of the earth will be blessed (Genesis 12:3),** and **Isaiah** reminded them that **the Messiah Himself** would be **a light for the [Gentile] nations,** and **that [He] would be [God's] salvation to the end of the earth (Isaiah 49:6b).** But those words seem to have been forgotten and by

the time of **Christ,** Pharisaic Judaism was entrenched. The Pharisees were prideful, stubborn, judgmental, arrogant, and self-righteous. They viewed **the Gentiles** as mangy dogs, unworthy of salvation. Something had to change. But how?

ADONAI intervened, and **He** sent **His Spirit** at Shavu'ot ushering in the Dispensation of Grace. All the first believers were **Jewish,** "**To the Jew first and also to the Gentile" (Romans 1:16).** And as the c grew in **Jerusalem (1:8)**, they experienced joy and pain. There is always pain with growth. **God** enabled **His** apostles to perform signs and miracles to authenticate **His** gospel message. But Pharisaic Judaism resisted. Many times in life, circumstances force us to grow and expand beyond our comfort zone. This was the case for the new Messianic community at that time.

The tipping point of the resistance was the stoning of the Greek speaking **Jew** named **Stephen**. As a result, there was a crescendo of persecution in this section that became so severe that a great deal of the early Messianic community was scattered to nearby regions, which paradoxically aided the mission and expansion of the new Messianic community –the very thing that the persecutors sought to snuff out.[8] Sooner or later the believing **Jews** in **Jerusalem** would need to deal with those new **Gentile** converts to the faith. Were **they** dogs to be shunned, or fellow believers to be embraced? They would face that decision sooner than they anticipated.