

<http://jewinthecity.com/2009/04/is-a-convert-considered-just-as-jewish-as-a-person-who-was-born-jewish/>

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IS A CONVERT CONSIDERED JUST AS JEWISH AS A PERSON WHO WAS BORN JEWISH?

I was raised as a Muslim, a traditional Muslim, but I never felt that way, so when I was about 15 years old, I called myself a non-believer. As a part of Muslim belief we were taught about the biblical stories about Moses and Christianity as well, and I was fascinated by the Jewish religion (sorry about my English, I am not very good at it). I studied Economics at college and I was always into social studies and personally read a lot about history. I am now 23 years old and I believe that there must be an order in the world and I feel Judaism very close to my heart. The question is that it's a very common belief around here is that 'you cannot become Jewish but could only born as one'. I wonder if I could be assumed as a real Jew if I converted, or if it would never be like being born and raised as a Jew? I would be very glad if you could answer this for me.

Sincerely yours,

Galia

Dear Galia,

Thanks for your question. You can 100% convert and if you do it in accordance with Jewish law, you will be considered Jewish by everyone. **The Torah itself speaks about conversion. Moses's wife, Tzipora was a convert, and the most famous conversion story in Judaism is written about Ruth in the book of Ruth.

You must keep something in mind though: not only do we not proselytize within Judaism, we don't take converts unless they are truly sincere. While a Jewish life is a rewarding one, there are also many responsibilities that it entails. I personally feel that it's well worth it, but when a person attempts to convert, a rabbi will try rather hard to dissuade him from doing so. This is not because we don't allow conversion or consider converts to be real Jews, but rather because we don't want someone taking on the obligations of being Jewish if they're not serious about follow through with them.

Once a person converts (according to Jewish law), not only is he considered 100% Jewish, you'll be glad to know, the Torah instructs Jews to treat the convert especially nice because it reminds us that we were once "strangers in a strange land." Meaning we should be extra sensitive to those coming from a different place as well.

Good luck with your journey, whatever you decide.

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<http://www.beingjewish.com/conversion/becomingjewish.html>

Becoming Jewish.

The pros and cons and how to do it.

(Please note that if your mother was Jewish before you were born, whether observant or not, then by Jewish Law you are also Jewish, and you do not need to convert. Please contact an Orthodox Rabbi for guidance.)

So, you want to become Jewish. I applaud your goal.

Becoming Jewish is, as you realize, a significant and life-changing event. It is not a small matter by any means.

But before you start, consider a few things. When a Gentile wants to become Jewish, the Rabbis are required to try to dissuade him. Only the very sincere make it through the entire process. And the process can take a long while. It may not turn out to be easy.

Becoming Jewish means that most of what you were taught about spirituality until now will be irrelevant, and in many cases wrong. You must drop the religious beliefs taught you by whatever other religion(s) you once followed or read about. People sometimes ask me, "Can I convert to Judaism and still believe in Jesus?" The answer is no. This is not something negotiable in Judaism. Jewish doctrine about G-d is core and inviolate. Non-Jewish beliefs about G-d invalidate a conversion (and Jesus is a prime example of a non-Jewish belief about G-d, no matter what anyone tells you). So this could be a major change for anyone contemplating conversion to Judaism. If this is difficult for you, then you should not be considering conversion at all.

You must also accept the fact that it is Hashem's Torah that defines what is right and what is wrong, what is spiritual and what is mundane, what elevates a person and what lowers him. Human beings do not make those determinations, and every such decision that a Rabbi makes is based on Torah precedent, i.e., established Jewish Law.

Your life style will also change, as well as the way you think about many things. Even the meaning of some words will change, especially if you have been Christian: words like "confession," "heaven," "patrilineal descent," "Messiah," "savior," and others.

It also means that your relationships will change. Not all your friends will be happy that you've become Jewish. Worse yet, your family members might disown you, as often happens.

When your parents, your siblings, even your children, sit down to eat a meal, you will often not be allowed to join them. You won't even be able to attend some of their joyous occasions. It is forbidden for a Jew to enter most non-Jewish places of worship. If your own baby sister gets married in a church, you will not be able to attend. If you have non-Jewish children from before you converted, you will not be allowed to attend any occasion they make in a church or any religious gathering. (If this occurs, make sure to consult with an Orthodox Rabbi before making any decision. There may be a solution.) Nor will you be allowed to celebrate Christmas or Hallowe'en, or any other religious holiday except the Jewish holidays.

And you will have to learn many rules. You will have to wear less revealing clothing all year round (which in the summer can make you feel hotter); you will have to be concerned wherever you go about the food you can buy and eat; you will have to make sure that you don't carry anything in your pockets

outside your home on the Sabbath, and many other considerations. You will need two sets of dishes, two sets of pots and pans (and at least one more set for Passover), and you will have to keep different types of food separate. You will have to wait six hours after eating meat foods before eating dairy foods. Judaism will guide your steps and your thoughts every moment of your waking life.

As a convert to Judaism, you will be a Jew -- a full-fledged Jew. Think about the word "Jew" for a minute. It's a title we bear proudly, yet it's a word that comes from many mouths as a curse and insult. Of course, that's silly. It's like when a little boy thinks he's insulting a girl by calling her "girl!" Not only is it not an insult, but it should be borne proudly and openly.

When I was thirteen years old, my friend and I were riding our bicycles through the side streets of Brooklyn, New York, when some Gentile boy (a little younger than us, it seemed) yelled at us jeeringly, "Jew!" I turned around and yelled back at him, "Thanks!" My friend almost fell off his bike laughing. I couldn't -- and still can't -- understand the attitude of that kid and people like him. I dress in what is an unmistakably Jewish style. I have noticeable payos (sidelocks, as per the Torah's Commandment in Leviticus 19:27). I'm obviously not trying to hide the fact that I'm Jewish. Did he really think I'm embarrassed to be a Jew?

The answer is probably yes. Granted he was a kid, but it is a very prevalent attitude even among some adult groups. In the minds of many people who wouldn't consider themselves racists or bigots, being a Jew is such a lowly thing that they are sure and positive that we must feel degraded about being Jewish. It doesn't help to explain to them that we are proud of being Jews, because they can't see any reason we should be proud of being Jewish.

These days most people don't say things like that out loud anymore. But racism and anti-Semitism still exist, and Jews still suffer from it -- especially converts. I have a friend who almost lost his job because he was a convert. No, it's not what you think. His boss could never have gotten away with firing him because he had converted to Judaism. What happened was a coworker of his was a born-again Christian who felt that my friend should be punished for leaving Christianity to become Jewish. So he filed an accusation of malfeasance, or some such thing, and had my friend hauled before an inquiry panel, expecting him to defend two years' worth of financial decisions from records and memory. This is no reflection on all Christians today. But bear in mind that there are some Christian groups (mostly fundamentalist Protestant, I am told) that work very heavily on missionizing to Jews, and I imagine that they probably dislike people they consider lapsed Christians.

This story is unusual only in the particulars, I fear. There are people out there (not necessarily religious people) who do not like it when non-Jews become Jews. And some of them may be close to you.

Anti-Semitism should not be considered dead at all. It still shows up in various forms and sizes. It doesn't take a Holocaust to harm Jews. Lately the news has been buzzing with bigotry and racial incidents. Bigoted groups are growing in America. Some even call themselves "churches" and claim non-profit status. Many of these groups target Jews in particular.

When you join the Jews, you become equally responsible, and suffer with us together. When Jews have sinned, sometimes all the Jews take part in the punishment.

So, consider this: Judaism teaches that you do not have to become Jewish to go to heaven. The righteous of all nations merit a share in the eternal World to Come. The basics of it involve keeping the Seven Laws of the Children of Noah.

After the Flood, Hashem the Creator made a covenant, an agreement, with Noah and his children, involving seven commandments, along with details of the laws pertaining to those Seven Commandments. Those who keep the Seven Commandments and their details are Righteous Gentiles according to the Torah. Since they keep the "Seven Commandments of the Children of Noah," they call themselves "Bnei Noah," the Children of Noah. When a Ben Noah lives in Israel, the Torah refers to him as a "Gair Toshav," a resident alien.

You might consider joining a group of Righteous Gentiles. There is a growing movement in the United States and other countries of what is called the Noahide or the Bnai Noah Movement. They have a presence on the Internet as well. You can find out more about them by visiting one of their Yahoo groups, at: Rachav's B'nai Noah Group.

There are many advantages to this approach. As a member of the Bnai Noah (a man would be a ben Noah; a woman would be a bas Noah), you can be righteous and still eat pork. You can drive your car to the movies on the Sabbath; you can dress any way you want, and you won't need two sets of pots, pans, and dishes. If you do any of this after you have become Jewish, you have sinned. And once you have become Jewish, the Torah says you are always Jewish, even if you stop believing.

If this hasn't dissuaded you from converting to Judaism, read on.

Before anything else, I must warn you of this: do not announce or mention your intentions in a public forum over the Internet, such as a bulletin board or email list, or anything like that. If you do, you are likely to get dozens of emails from every sort of crank and idiot that exists on the Internet: from people giving you bad advice to fundamentalist Christians yelling at you for wanting to become Jewish. It isn't worth the annoyance. I've had a number of people write me and tell me of such experiences happening to them, and I fully believe this happens. I have also received similar emails from Christians, just for speaking of such topics on my web site.

And now to the subject at hand.

First of all, be aware that the observance of Judaism is a joyous, fulfilling, and very elevating lifestyle. It is complete, and envelopes a person's entire life. While I described it above in terms of its difficulties, these things are not at all inconvenient to those committed to Torah observance. They are, each and every one of them, an opportunity to fulfill the will of Hashem. A major requirement in Judaism is to fill our lives with joy, to serve Hashem with joy, and to constantly be grateful to Hashem that he gives us what we need to serve Him with joy.

And once you are Jewish, you can merit the highest of rewards in the World to Come.

So, if you are absolutely set on doing this, do it right.

There is only one way to become Jewish. Only one way. There are no improper ways that work. The one way is through an Orthodox-Jewish Beit Din (Court).

To begin, you need to find a Rabbi.

Most Rabbis are not qualified to work with potential converts, and there are some qualified Rabbis who are too busy to do it or are incapable for other reasons. So don't be offended if the Rabbi you call pushes you off with what sounds like an excuse. The excuse may be real.

And when you find a Rabbi that works in conversions, he's not going to make it easy for you, because Jewish Law says he must continue to dissuade you, and he will do so by various means. He may push you off a few times, he may not show up for scheduled meetings; there's no telling what he will do to test your sincerity and perseverance. If you are sincere, don't give up. Keep on politely calling or meeting with the Rabbi, until something happens. The Rabbi is following the Torah's Law, so if you give up you can't blame the Rabbi.

One question often asked me is "Can I become Jewish if I was 'denomination X'?" The answer is "yes." When you become a Jew, you leave behind whatever you were in the past. It does not matter if you or your parents were Hindu, Muslim, any sort of Christian, pagan, atheist, Native-American, Asian, African, French, German, or whatever you may have been. It doesn't even matter if you were an anti-Semite. You shed your past like shedding a skin. As the Talmud says, it is as if you are a newborn.

Another person asked me if she should expect to be punished or chastised for having been a Gentile or a Christian. The answer is a very emphatic NO!

It is important that you understand another fact. If you want to have a proper conversion to Judaism, it must be done through Orthodox Rabbis. By Jewish Law, any conversion done by any other means is invalid. This is no small matter.

According to Jewish Law, there are certain legal criteria for conversion, and there are numerous legal criteria stating who is permitted to convert and who is not. **If someone converts outside of the Torah's Laws, he is a convert outside of the Torah's Laws, but the Torah Law itself will not consider him or her a convert to Judaism. The Torah commands us not to change the Laws of the Torah. Whoever changes those Laws, is outside of Torah Law. All the more so, anyone who creates or joins a movement whose very nature denies the eternal nature of the Torah's Laws.

Therefore, it is important to find an Orthodox Rabbi who is willing to help you convert.

There are a number of ways to find a Rabbi. You can start by looking in your local phone book under "clergy," or under "synagogues." If this doesn't help, look for a local Chabad House. Chabad is a world-wide organization dedicated, among other things, to helping Jews find their way back to Judaism. They will also often help potential converts, but they do not seek to do this.

If you cannot find a Rabbi in your phone book, you can also search over the Internet. (See some links below.)

One place to look is at the Union of Orthodox Congregations web site. There you will find a partial list of synagogues throughout the world. Try one near you. Perhaps someone at one of those synagogues can direct you to a Rabbi who can help you.

If you find a Rabbi over the Internet, and you develop an e-mail relationship, do not rely on that alone. It is important to meet your Rabbi face to face. You will also have to begin taking lessons and classes, and slowly start joining a congregation, when your Rabbi tells you it's time to do that. (Read my article, "Your First Visit to a Synagogue.")

You will also need to get involved with an Orthodox-Jewish family, because that is the only possible way to internalize Judaism. Judaism cannot be learned entirely from books, and it was never meant to be. So get yourself invited to homes for the Sabbath. Read my wife's article "The Kindness of Strangers," to learn more about how to do this..

It is impossible to properly fulfill Judaism unless you are part of a Jewish community and congregation. Unless yours is some kind of unusual circumstance (and I can't imagine what sort of circumstances those might be), your Rabbi will insist that you move to a neighborhood with a Jewish presence, where you will have easy access to an Orthodox community, a synagogue, kosher food, Rabbinical advice, and many other necessities of Jewish life.

You will have to study a great deal. And then you will have to study more. And when you have converted, you will have to keep studying constantly. Get used to that, because Torah study is the hinge upon which all of Judaism swings. Judaism demands ongoing and constant study of Torah and all aspects of Judaism. The Study of Torah is in itself one of the Commandments of the Torah, and applies to every Jew: scholar or unlearned. There is, thankfully, no end to Torah study, and one must keep growing and broadening in Torah study for as long as one lives. And your Torah study should not be limited to the abstract. Your Torah study should also have some bearing on your relationship with Hashem, whether it be by enhancing your Love and Fear of Hashem, or by enriching your performance of the Commandments, by improving your relationship with other people, or by improving your self-discipline and devotion to Hashem through the Commandments and Laws, or in any other sense that is related to Judaism. The Torah must be a part of you, move within you, be the one guiding force in your life.

For this to happen, it will always be necessary for you to have a close relationship with an Orthodox Rabbi. The reason for this is not because you are or will be a convert. It is required for every Jew, whether born to it or converted to it.

It will also be necessary to schedule regular study periods. This is also a necessity for every Jew, except for mothers who are overwhelmed with taking care of their children. And even they must study at least a little periodically. It is most preferable to attend regular classes, or to study with a personal study partner. Ideally, you should have a combination of both.

When your Rabbi feels you are ready for conversion, he will test you on the materials he gave you to study. Then he will bring you before a Bais Din (also pronounced Beit Din), that is, a Jewish Court, and set up an appointment schedule. The Rabbi may still try and dissuade you a bit, and the Bais Din certainly will try. When they are satisfied that you should be converted, and that you are sincere, they will set up the actual arrangements. The actual arrangements will also involve going to a mikvah, and for men circumcision as well.

Men who are already circumcised undergo a ceremony known as "Hatafas Dam Bris." This means that a small drop of blood is taken during the Bris ceremony.

There are one or two conversion procedure guides available online. One can be found in the files section of the Orthodox Conversion to Judaism Yahoo list, which is an online support group for Orthodox-Jewish converts and for those seeking to convert to Orthodox Judaism. I strongly recommend joining this group. Among many other good resources, they have a file called "Beis Din Conversion Syllabus." This is the syllabus for the Jewish Court in Sydney, Australia, and will not be precisely the same as the syllabi at all other Jewish Courts, but using this will give you what you need to know.

I also recommend Rabbi Aryeh Moshen's The Gerus Guide. It's a very extensive and detailed step-by-step guide through the entire process that helps you learn just about everything you need to know to convert.

You can also receive a geirut procedure manual from the National Council of Young Israel's Department of Rabbinic Services, by calling 212-929-1525, extension 285. I have not seen this manual, but it is mentioned by the Geirut Commission.

Again, let me remind you that the process of conversion will be a long and difficult one, requiring a great deal of study. You will have to learn to read Hebrew, for one thing. (For an amazing page with many links to Hebrew pages, emails, and online classes, visit the Hebrew Resources website. Also, you can call 1-800-44-Hebrew for free classes in Hebrew. I am told they are very good, and they have an excellent reputation.) There are also a great many good books in English (until you are proficient in Hebrew) to study about Judaism. Unfortunately, there are also many bad books out there. Consult with your Rabbi (or another expert) about each book.

The study of Jewish history is good, but probably not paramount. (Biblical History should be learned, at least the highlights, as some of it is rather basic.) Jewish Law and Ethics is probably the most important study. You should also study the Chumash (the Five Books of Moses) with a good translation, until you have learned Hebrew. A good combination for study is Rabbi Kaplan's The Living Torah (a fairly good translation of the Chumash -- definitely one of the best in existence, maybe even the best) along with a five-volume set called The Midrash Says. (For a store I personally know and trust, visit Tiferes Stam Judaica.)

Above all, one of the most fundamental rules in Judaism is respect and honor for the Rabbis and Halachic authorities. Any book that is not firm in that focus is to be completely rejected. This is a problem with many popular books these days, particularly books by Joseph Telushkin.

It is very important to make sure that the author of any book you read is Orthodox, and that the author represents authentic Halachic Judaism. Books by people like Harold Kushner will send you in the wrong direction. The theology and philosophy of Judaism is equally as important as the fulfillment of the Commandments. Someone who fulfills all the Commandments yet has incorrect beliefs about G-d and mankind, is not fulfilling the Torah and Judaism. This is one reason why so much Torah study is necessary even before you convert.

A large chain of retail stores has the motto: "An educated consumer is our best customer." This is true about Judaism as well. The more you know about Judaism, the better you can fulfill it.

And the better you fulfill it, the more you have fulfilled yourself.

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For databases with names of Rabbis and synagogues, try these links at the bottom of my wife's article.

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Herman's Comments supported by scripture.

Exodus 12:38 (KJV)

38 And a mixed multitude went up also with them; and flocks, and herds, even very much cattle.

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43 And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof:

44 **\*\*But every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof.\*\***

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48 And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; **\*\*and he shall be as one that is born in the land:\*\*** for no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof.

49 One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among y

These scriptures make it clear that the Israelites were not limited to those who were born in the land. Those of the mixed multitude who were circumcised were just as much a Jew as those who were born in the land. The criteria for being a Jew always was that you either be born a Jew or that you keep the commandment even if you were not born a Jew. Racism as it is associated with nationalism is a current day philosophy. Yes Jews hated people of other races, but it was not because of their race, it was because of their relation as a nation with their God. Gentiles as a nation was against God. Yet is a gentile in the Old Testament accepted Jewish law and tradition, the Israelites by law had to accept them unconditionally.

As for the new testament.

Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham (Galatians 3:7 N

If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:29 NIV).

For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles — Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 3:1-6 NIV).

As these Scriptures show, today's church represents the spiritual "seed" of Abraham more truly than one who is simply Abraham's physical descendant without sharing his faith.

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<https://www.levitt.com/essays/luke/>

Was Luke a Gentile?  
by Thomas S. McCall.

Dr. Thomas McCall, the Senior Theologian of our ministry, has written many articles for the Levitt Letter. He holds a Th.M. in Old Testament studies and a Th.D. in Semitic languages and Old Testament. He has served as Zola's co-author, mentor, pastor, and friend for nearly 30 years.

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Introduction.

As we speak and teach the Word, we often mention that the whole Bible is a Jewish book, and that all the writers of the Bible, Old and New Testaments, were Jews. Frequently, someone asks the question, "What about Luke, wasn't he a Gentile?" This has been taught throughout church history for so long and so consistently, that it is assumed without question it must be true. However, when you study how this conclusion was reached by biblical commentators, you realize how slender their evidence is. The idea that Luke was a Gentile seems to be based more on tradition than any strong biblical evidence.

Importance of the Question.

It may not seem important whether or not Luke was a Gentile, but when you think about the magnitude of his work, the issue becomes truly significant. By counting the pages written by Luke in both his Gospel and Acts, it is clear that Luke wrote more pages of the New Testament than any other writer, including Paul and John. If Luke was a Gentile, then the Lord entrusted more pages of New Testament revelation to a Gentile than to any other writer. This would be remarkable, to say the least.

Personally, as a Gentile Christian, I would love to have one of "our guys" as a writer in the canon of Scripture, so I am naturally reluctant to find otherwise. However, the evidence appears overwhelming to me that Luke was, in fact, a Jew. The matter cannot be settled conclusively, because the Scriptures never specifically tell us Luke's background, but the arguments for his being a Jew appear to far outweigh those for his being a Gentile.

Arguments for Luke Being A Gentile.

Usually, biblical commentators simply assert that Luke was a Gentile, without offering any proof at all, as it is so universally believed. Some commentaries, though, present arguments for sustaining the concept of the Gentile background of Luke. Chief among these arguments are the lists from the Epistle to the Colossians.

The Lists in Colossians.

In Colossians 4, the Apostle Paul closes his letter by listing the various people who are with him as he writes the epistle, and some of those who are addressed. In these lists Paul makes mention of some who are of "the circumcision" (Col. 4:10–11), and are, therefore, Jews. Although it is not perfectly clear which men are referred to, they are presumably the previous three: Aristarchus, Mark and Jesus called Justus. Paul apparently does not include Tychicus and Onesimus, mentioned before in verses 7–9, as being in the circumcision group.

Later in this same chapter, in verse 14, Paul refers to Luke, the beloved physician. The argument is made that, as Luke is not mentioned in the list of those of "the circumcision", he therefore must not be a Jew.

However, this is very slim evidence, indeed. In the above reference, Paul is speaking of his fellow workers in the preaching ministry. However, Luke was not ever described as being actively involved in the work of preaching, but was rather Paul's personal physician and historian. It would not be appropriate to put Luke in the list with those who were active in the preaching ministry, regardless of background.

Thus, there are reasons other than background why Luke would not be included in the list of "the circumcision." It is risky to build a concept on evidence which is so weak, and this is the strongest evidence in the Bible that those who believe Luke was a Gentile use to prove their point.

The Name and Profession Arguments.

Proponents have also argued that the name Luke (Lucas) is, in itself, evidence that he was a Gentile. However, the very names mentioned in Col. 4 as being in "the circumcision" are Gentile names: Aristarchus, Marcus and Justus. Paul's name itself is a Roman name, which he used throughout his ministry among the Gentiles, instead of his Hebrew name, Saul. In the same way Peter's Hebrew name was Simon. The fact of the matter is that most Jews who lived in the Diaspora used two names: one, a Jewish name, which was used in the synagogue, and the other, a Gentile name, which was used in business. So Luke could well be the public name of a Jew who lived among the Gentiles.

Others have actually claimed that Luke's profession as a physician would be evidence that he was a Gentile. This would assume that there were no Jewish doctors in the Roman world. Such an idea is preposterous. Christ referred to physicians in Israel on several occasions:

"Physician, heal thyself..." (Luke 4:23)

"They that are sick have need of a physician..." (Matt. 9:12)

There is as much reason to believe that Jews were in the medical profession in ancient times as they are today.

Thus, none of the arguments supporting the idea that Luke was a Gentile are strong. It is helpful, then, to turn to the arguments that Luke was a Jew.

Arguments for Luke Being a Jew.

There are several arguments that support the idea that Luke was a Jew. As has already been stated, there are no specific statements as to the background of Dr. Luke. Therefore, the only way we can know anything about Luke's background is from inferences in the Scriptures.

The Rule: Oracles Given to Jews.

After showing the sinful condition of the Jewish people, explaining how the Jews are just as much subject to sin as are the Gentiles, Paul asks the question, "What advantage has the Jew?" His answer was "Much every way, chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:1–2). The main advantage that Paul recognizes in the Jewish people was that when God gave revelation to the human race, He gave it to and through the Jews. He did not utilize the Gentile people for this purpose. This was the rule: that Jews were the vehicle for revelation. If Luke was an exception, the burden of proof is on those who would claim that he is an exception.

Thus, one has to prove conclusively that Luke was a Gentile before one should abandon the clear rule about the Jewish writing of Scripture. We must assume that Luke is a Jew unless the evidence is so overwhelming that we must conclude he is a Gentile. As we have seen above, the evidence from the lists in Colossians is so weak that it does not meet that criterion. Gentiles are blessed in many ways, especially during this Church Age, but God has never indicated that He has changed His rule of using only Jews to record His revelation.

#### Trophimus, Not Luke, the Cause of Paul's Arrest.

Dr. Luke was a constant companion of the Apostle Paul from the time that he joined the missionary apostle when he sailed from Troas to Europe. Luke accompanied Paul on his fateful last return trip to Jerusalem, and was an eyewitness to the arrest of Paul in the Temple in Acts 21. The crowd was greatly agitated by the presence of Paul in the Temple, and charged him with bringing Gentiles into the Temple precincts. This was a crime punishable by death. Luke explains that Paul never did bring any Gentiles into the Temple, but he was seen on the streets of Jerusalem with "Trophimus an Ephesian." Apparently, Paul brought Trophimus with him to Jerusalem so that the apostles and the mother church there could see first-hand the fruits of his labor among the Gentiles. Even though the charge was false, they were able to spread the rumor among the people, and cause a near riot against Paul on the Temple Mount, and for this reason he was arrested.

The point is that, when the Jewish people wanted to accuse Paul of bringing a Gentile into the Temple, they chose Trophimus. Why didn't they choose Luke, who was also with Paul, and was an eyewitness to these events? If Luke were a Gentile, it would have been far easier, and far more believable, to accuse Paul of bringing Luke with him into the Temple, rather than Trophimus. The fact that Luke was not mentioned in the accusation is a strong indication that he was not a Gentile. Luke was with Paul on several occasions when they made the various trips to Jerusalem in order to report on their missionary efforts to the apostolic church. The issue was never raised about Luke being a Gentile, although he was there in Jerusalem with Paul.

As Luke was not controversial when he traveled with Paul to Jerusalem and the Temple, our assumption must be that he was also a Jew. Thus, there was no mention of Luke as a problem when Paul was arrested.

#### Luke's Intimate Knowledge of the Temple.

Another argument for the idea that Luke was a Jew is that he showed such an intimate knowledge of the Temple, more than any other of the Gospel writers. When he described the announcement to Zacharias concerning the birth of John the Baptist, Luke went into considerable detail to describe the rotating selection of the Levitical priests for service according to their families. He further described the position of the priest before the altar of incense, where the angel appeared to Zacharias (Luke 1:8–20).

The fact that Luke alone of the four Gospel writers gives this account, and he does so with such vivid detail, argues for his being a Jew, familiar with the Temple procedures. One could even speculate that Luke might have been a Levite as well, as he knew so much about how the Temple operated. Is it logical to assume, without question, that Luke was a Gentile, when he had such a clear understanding of the most intimate workings of the Temple, where no Gentile was allowed to go?

#### Luke's Intimate Acquaintance with Mary.

Yet another argument is the striking intimacy that Luke had with the mother of Jesus, Mary. He relates the story of the birth of Jesus primarily from Mary's point of view, and then said that she hid these

things “in her heart” (Luke 2:19, 51). How did Luke, of all the Gospel writers, get so close to Mary that he was able to find out what she had hidden in her heart? As close-knit as the Jerusalem church was, and as difficult as it must have been for Gentiles to have gotten to the “inner circle” of the apostolic leadership, it seems highly unlikely that Luke could have gotten that close to Mary if he were a Gentile.

Actually, it appears that Luke might have served Mary for a time as her personal physician. This is speculation, but how else could he have had such a close relationship with her, so that he could draw from her the details she had hidden in her heart, and had discussed with few others? Luke would have had the opportunity to consult with Mary on the occasions when Paul made his reporting trips to Jerusalem, and especially while Paul was in prison in Caesarea for two years. Such access would have been quite understandable if Luke were a Jew, but would have been most unlikely if he were a Gentile.

Conclusion.

My conclusion is, then, that we must infer that Luke was a Jew. The idea that he was a Gentile appears to be based on nothing more than wishful thinking and tradition. The biblical evidence strongly supports the position that Luke was a Jew, and we should always believe the Scriptures over tradition, when there is a conflict between the two.