

There is No Distinction between Jew and Gentile

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[0 : 00] to Acts chapter 15, and there we'll be reading verses 1 through 12.

Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.

And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren.

When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them.

[1 : 36] But some of the sect of the Pharisees, who had believed, stood up, saying, It is necessary to circumcise them, and to direct them to observe the law of Moses.

The apostles and elders came together to look into this matter. After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, Brethren, you know that in the early days, God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe.

And God, who knows the heart, testified to them, giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he also did to us.

And he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.

Now, therefore, why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke, which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

[3 : 13] But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus in the same way as they also are.

All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

Thank you, Gary. And the big news in this passage of Scripture, of course, has to do with the Gentiles. And this is real news.

In fact, it was shell-shocking news. It was cataclysmic news. It was the kind of news that no respectable Jew would have ever considered could be true for a moment, that God was going to minister to Gentiles in the same way as he had the Jews.

So, what or who is a Gentile? A Gentile is anyone who is not a Jew, which is about 99% of the world's population.

[4 : 29] Probably everyone here is a Gentile. Unless you are a direct descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, you are a Gentile.

Makes no difference if you're Chinese or Russian or American or African. You are a Gentile if you are not a Jew. The Scriptures make it very clear that the Jewish nation was the spearhead nation through which God was to reach the entire world.

And it was also the nation that would be responsible for producing the Messiah, the one who should come, promised all the way back in Genesis 3.

Now, the reason that we are giving so much time and attention to this for our Sunday morning sessions has to do with the seriousness of the issue.

Because if you do not understand what is involved in what was being read this morning, the distinction between Jew and Gentile, and how that middle wall of partition is broken down, and how that God is doing a different thing now than what He was doing in the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and that if you do not follow the upgrades that God has made available, you will

find yourself believing in and ministering in an outdated, outmoded message.

[5 : 58] We have such a message in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and in the early chapters of the book of Acts, where the great emphasis is upon the coming of the kingdom of God.

As you move on through the Gospels and the Acts, it becomes very apparent that this kingdom of God has never come to be. It is not now established.

There is a kingdom that does exist at the moment. It is a spiritual kingdom to which Paul refers in Colossians when he says that all believers have been transformed, or transferred, if you will, from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light of his dear son, Jesus Christ.

So we are, as believers, in a spiritual kind of kingdom that is comprising the body of Christ. But, the kingdom of God of which the Bible most frequently speaks has to do with the rule and reign of God come down on planet Earth.

Physically, literally, set up, established here, Jesus Christ is ruling and reigning in Jerusalem, Israel is installed as the head nation, and all of the Gentile nations flow into it.

[7 : 23] That has never happened. Nothing close to it has ever happened. But it is going to happen, just as surely as the return of Christ is going to happen.

And the best thing that we have to base these future, but yet unfulfilled, prophecies on, are the prophecies that have been fulfilled, quite literally.

And they are so many, I could not begin to enumerate them. But the scriptures are replete with them. We've had that in other studies. So, we are giving time and attention to this because of the confusion that surrounds the issue.

And I fear that much of Christendom, most of Christendom, is literally in that confusion, just as yours truly was for several years until I came to see these wonderful truths.

And these truths have opened the Bible to me in a way that would otherwise be impossible. It has actually made things fit. Made things come together.

[8 : 26] Enables you to make sense of things. Passages of scripture that are so difficult to get a handle on that you just cannot, well, I gave you this handout.

This was an article. You've probably already read it. It was made available to you a couple of weeks ago. It appeared in the April 7th issue of the Wall Street Journal. And it's called Reviving Faith by Taking Up Serpents.

This is a group of people down in Tennessee who I am sure with very sincere, honorable intentions are attempting to prove and demonstrate their faith in God and also attempting to validate their connection with God by being able to handle serpents, deadly serpents, cottonmouth moccasins, rattlesnakes, and so on.

Have them slithering around, handling them, letting them coil around them, etc. as a demonstration of their faith. And what in the world do you base that on? Where do you get that?

Well, it's right there in Matthew, in Mark chapter 16, that they shall take up serpents and if they are bitten, they'll not be harmed.

[9 : 44] You know, Paul actually did fulfill that. You recall on the island of Malta when he was shipwrecked and he went to pick up a stick to throw it in the fire and a serpent, a deadly viper that was known to everybody on the island, bit him.

on the hand. And immediately, all of the locals who witnessed that scene thought, uh-oh, he's a goner.

He'll be dead in a few minutes. And all he did was shake it off. But could we do that today? These dear folk down in Tennessee say, well, if you have enough faith, you can.

man. And if you have enough faith, you can speak in tongues. And if you have enough faith, like the early church in Acts chapter 2, you can replicate all of the miracles that they did and thus demonstrate and validate that God is present and among you.

So why aren't you doing that? Our Pentecostal brethren believe that they are doing that. And they are trying very sincerely and very hard to do that. I don't know how they deal with the apparent inconsistencies that crop up in their group when some of the people die.

[10 : 58] People that you pray for die. Because, you know, death is the order for now. Do you realize that? It is appointed unto man once to die.

I don't care how good the doctors are, you're going to die. And so am I. And that's not really the issue. The issue is, what then? That's the issue.

Death is inevitable. We are going to die. So, some of these dear folk almost give us the impression that if you had sufficient faith, you'd be able to be healed and cured of whatever, I suppose, including old age.

Frankly, I would like to see it applied to just my teeth. For starters, in my ears. You know, this morning, I had an awful time finding my glasses.

I took my glasses off so I could put my hearing aids in. Then I forgot where my glasses were. Good grief. Someone said old age is not for sissies.

[12:00] And they're right. It isn't. And there are a few other things that I would have, you know, repaired summarily too. But as we age, everything goes south.

it droops and bags and sags and drags and hangs down. Nothing is uplifting about this unless you go get a face lift.

Did anybody ever get a face droop? No? You get face lifts, don't you? Because the skin, the muscles in your skin and the tissue loses its elasticity and it just doesn't even care anymore. Just lets go. and down everything comes. So, I remember reading a story that was just interesting. And frankly, I don't believe a word of it, but I believe somebody was either self-deceived or they were just flat out lying.

I don't know which it was. But anyway, there was this person in Michigan, well, you might know it'd be Michigan. Person in Michigan, and by the way, they have wonderful TV commercials, almost makes me want to go up there for vacation.

[13:08] If you're in Michigan. Anyway, this person was supposed to have had a mouthful of really bad teeth that needed all kinds of dental attention. And he was prayed over.

And you know what God did? Isn't this wonderful of God? Changed all of those bad teeth, all of those fillings that needed to be replaced and everything.

He changed them into gold. Gold fillings. gold in your teeth is better than the originals the way he made them?

I think not. So if the Lord's going to heal me of any of my teeth or fillings, I would just assume that he'd give me the real McCoy back again, the actual thing that can't be improved upon that's the best there is.

And I'm not belittling or making fun of them. I'm just saying it's sad. It is tragic that people get their confidence and hopes built up in things like this, in healing, and sometimes sincerity is almost never questioned, unless somebody is just in it for the money and they are a charlatan and a phony with an R-E-V before their name.

[14:33] And there's some of those out there too. And television is full of them. You've seen that like I have. But people get disillusioned, disheartened, when they feel that God doesn't come through for them.

They hear these testimonies of other people, but it doesn't seem to work for them. What's wrong with them? What's God got against me? Aren't I spiritual enough? Or whatever. And it's disillusioning, and it's confusing, and some of these people just bow out.

They just drop church, they drop reading their Bible, they drop everything, because God didn't come through for them like he does for others. And do you know what so much of it is based on? It's based on a misunderstanding of these various passages that we're talking about. That's why this is so important. This is critical stuff. You've got to be able to understand the progression of revelation and the progression of doctrine as you move through the Bible.

people. And you've got to stay up with the latest word that has been made available to us. And the latest word that has been made available to us in this day and age has to do with the abundance of the revelations that Jesus Christ gave after the Gospels, after his resurrection, after his ascension, when he communicated numerous truths to the apostle Paul, that had never been revealed before.

[16:02] They were kept secret in God until they came through Paul. And you say, well, what's the big deal about Paul? Paul was simply God's chosen vehicle through whom he wanted to reveal his latest word in the same way that John the baptizer was an earlier vehicle through whom God revealed his will at that time.

God's will and method changes. No, no one is saying God changes. He doesn't. He is immutable. He doesn't change. But God does change his methodology and he changes the directives that he has provided for his people because of what is happening in humanity.

humanity. God compensates for changes that are taking place in humanity. A great change that he compensated for, huge change that he compensated for, was the rejection of Israel of their Messiah.

And in connection with that rejection, God took the nation of Israel, set them aside, brought in a whole new entity, completely different that included Gentiles.

[17 : 25] That was a bombshell. Who in the world ever heard of such a thing? That's what Acts 15 is all about that we read earlier. And it is in verse 3.

They were sent on their way by the church. They were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles. prophets. We don't have any idea how dynamic that was, how different that was.

In a completely Jewish society, such as is found here in Acts 15, to introduce these outsiders into the commonwealth of Israel is unheard of.

I'll tell you what it would almost be akin to. It would almost be akin to the Israelites in the Old Testament shaking hands with the Philistines, and the Perizzites, and the Debusites, and the Hivites, all of the pagans around them that were into all kinds of idol worship, polytheism, many gods, child sacrifice, all of the rest of that stuff, of welcoming them aboard.

Can you imagine? Well, they're coming from two different worlds. You couldn't do that. In fact, God had even told them and warned them not to do that. So now we've got Gentiles coming into the picture.

[18 : 47] And the one person that God is going to use to introduce Gentiles into the Jewish community of faith was one who didn't want anything to do with it.

And that was Peter. And I'm not going to take you back to Acts 10 now because we spent a little time there. But I do want to remind you that Cornelius was a Roman army officer.

He was a God-fearer. What does that mean? Well, a God-fearer was not a Jew. He was a Gentile. But he was a Gentile who rejected all of the pagan deities and came to believe that Jehovah was the only true God and that he was the God of Israel.

If you were not a Jew and you came to that conviction, that made you a God-fearer. And that's exactly how Cornelius is described in Acts chapter 10.

[20 : 01] I think it's verse 1 or 2. He was a God-fearer. And you know, this is a beautiful thing. This is a beautiful thing. God will not allow anyone to search for him without being found.

Cornelius is described as a man who searched for God. You know, the most wonderful prayer that any unbeliever can pray is this.

Oh God, I don't know if you can hear me. I don't know if you're even there. I don't even know if you exist. But if you do, I want to know you.

Would you reveal yourself to me? Would you find some way to get truth to me so that I can know you? I can promise you God will not allow that prayer to go unanswered.

Cornelius had already come to the conclusion that there was but one God and it was the God of the Israelites. And you've got to keep in mind that Cornelius being a Roman army officer was looked upon as an enemy of Israel.

[21 : 27] He was an occupier. He was there as a foreigner and not at all appreciated by the Jews but hated by the Jews.

And do you not see how that would make it even more difficult for a non-Jew to come to faith and trust in the God of the Jews being the only true God? Can you not see how that would be a quantum leap?

After all these people were not friends. They were enemies. And the Romans held the Jews under their thumb or under their boot you might say. They exacted taxes from them.

They oppressed them in every way. And there was extreme hatred between the Jew and the Romans. And yet Cornelius was a sharp enough guy and open enough to the truth that he recognized these Jews may be under our feet.

We may be occupying them. We have dominated them and subjugated them. But you know what? I'm still convinced that their God is the only true God there is.

[22 : 38] Now I don't know how he came to that conviction but Acts 10 says he did and he was praying for more light. And an angel appeared to Cornelius and says Cornelius you need to send for a man who can give you information that you are seeking and his name is Peter and he is lodging with a friend miles away you send a couple of your men there and you find Peter and bring him

back here.

So he dispatches a couple of his soldiers and they go several miles it's not two or three miles I don't remember exactly how far it is it's probably 20 30 40 miles something like that.

And they finally get to the house where Cornelius is where Peter is staying and in the meanwhile God's doing something on Peter's end. He lets down this great sheet from heaven. Peter is up on the housetop because it's common for people to be on the housetops in Israel.

They are flat roofs you go up there for sunbathing you go up there for picnics you go up there for all kinds of activity sleep up there at night when it's real hot. Peter was up on the housetop praying and it was about noon and he fell into a trance and he saw in this vision a great sheet let down from heaven and in this sheet were all kinds of animals clean and unclean all mixed up and since it was lunchtime the voice in the vision said rise Peter kill eat satisfy your hunger be reminded this is all in a vision and Peter shrinks back and says why I couldn't do that these are unclean animals here I couldn't eat one of those and the voice said that which God has cleansed call thou not common that is really profound if you understand what this is all about what God is saying is there is going to be an amalgamation there is going to be a homogenizing there is going to be a bringing together of these two foreign elements clean and unclean animals and what was he talking about he is talking about Jew and Gentile unheard of and Peter says nothing doing this is a trick of the devil

I am not having anything to do with it so there and the whole thing is repeated again and he still refuses this is one hard headed Jew and the vision comes down the third time and Peter did everything in threes including denying the Lord and the third time Peter says okay I don't know what this is all about but I I get it I guess God is in it there's a knock at the door Peter goes to the door and there's some Gentiles standing there well who are you what do you want our boss Cornelius said that we should come and find you and bring you back with us and you'll tell him the things that he needs to know Peter says really Gentiles and I'm supposed to go with you to this house of these [26 : 21] Gentiles I don't think so and then he remembers this sheet what's this all about is there a connection what's God doing and these men prevail upon him and Peter says okay okay I'll go but I'll tell you what I'm going to take some reinforcements with me and Peter got six Jewish friends to go with him and they make this trek all the way to the coast of Israel Caesarea and there they go to the house of Cornelius and Cornelius is waiting eagerly he can't imagine what this message is that Peter has to convey but it's something that has to do with God so Cornelius went around and rounded up all of his friends and neighbors who were interested in this and they wanted to know what this is all about too what's going on and when

Peter gets there he finds Cornelius and his family and all of his friends and they're all sitting there waiting to hear these wonderful words whatever they are and Peter used the keys that God gave him in Matthew 16 when he said I give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven but wait a minute isn't the kingdom of heaven just for Jews no no no it is not just for Jews it is through Jews for everybody but it is through Jews it is through Israel this just must really greet the Adolf Hitler types but these are God's chosen people and he's going to make his word good through the Jew so Peter goes and lo and behold he tells them about this

Jewish Messiah who was crucified and buried and raised again from the dead and now Peter knows come with me quickly as we close to Acts chapter 10 now Peter knows by this time and by the way Acts 10 is several years after the resurrection several years after the resurrection there are no Gentiles who came to faith in Jesus as their Messiah until years after the fact and when they were coming to faith some of the Jews wanted to prevent them because they thought this was exclusively Jewish and here in Acts chapter 10 and in verse 40 Peter comes to the end of his message and he says God raised him up on the third day and granted that he should become visible not to all the people but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God that is to us who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead and he ordered us to preach to the people and solemnly to testify that this is the one who has been appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead and verse 43

I just love it to death look at what that verse says of him Christ all the prophets bear witness that through his name everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins and Cornelius says that's it that's it that's what I need to hear my sin what am I going to do about my sin forgiveness comes through Christ that's what I've been waiting to hear and he believed right then and there on Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and God responded with Pentecost number two this is Pentecost for the Gentiles different from Acts chapter two and Peter was still speaking the Holy

Spirit fell on all those who were listening to the message and all the circumcised believers who had come with Peter were amazed these are fellow Jews and they are struck because these people they aren't Jews they're Goyim they're Gentiles and they were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the Gentiles also for they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God I am satisfied there were probably several different languages involved there that were a hindrance to communication but when the Spirit of God enables them to speak in a language they had not learned the language barrier is gone this is the Tower Babel reversed this is a miraculous manifestation but do you understand God isn't doing this today if you're going to the mission field you still have to go to language school and learn

[31 : 59] Portuguese and learn Bantu or learn whatever the language is of the people to whom you're ministering if this were the day and age of the miracles such as there are in the book of missionaries ought to be able to be sent to any foreign field without learning any language and just stand up and speak the local language perfectly but it doesn't work that way because it's not supposed to that is passe this is the day and the age of grace we are not anticipating the kingdom and we do not preach repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand we preach believe on the Lord Christ provides salvation from your sin that's the big ticket item today compared to that nothing else matters not who you are not your income not who you married not where you work this is the only thing that really matters whether you are in

Christ Cornelius was a child of the transition and these people including Peter they lived with one foot in each dispensation they spanned the time for the anticipation of the kingdom and the introduction of the church so they lived through both of these times that's what produced all the confusion and the book of Acts is a book that can be terribly confusing it can also be wonderfully reconciling when you understand the plan and program of God is changing it is a glorious thing to behold I've given you a very abbreviated message and somewhat of a review of what we've had today because of our time constraints so next week we will be into new material and I've got some excellent questions that have been submitted Father we are so thankful for the clarity with which these things are revealed when we really look for the clarity rather than just take for granted what has always been taught by so many we are thankful that men like Dr. Charles Baker and Cornelius Stamm and Paul Sadler and others compatriots with them who've seen these glorious truths and have devoted their lives to the proclamation of this message thank you for the clarity that it brings to our thinking thank you for the additional peace and security that it affords to our position in Christ and thank you for just accommodating yourself to the whims and the changes of humanity as you have we bless you for it and Father if there is anyone here today like Cornelius of old looking for answers searching for you we know you will respond and we pray that they will continue to seek if they have not found the peace that belongs to them in Christ that they will seek until they find it because we know you are more eager to provide it than they are to find it we pray in Christ's name and for his sake amen