

**God's Treatment  
of  
Jews and Gentiles**

Were Gentiles ever rejected?

Were unclean animals a type  
of the Gentiles?

Did God cleanse the unclean  
animals?



The Bible Advocate Press  
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GOD'S TREATMENT OF  
JEWS AND GENTILES

"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:34, 35).

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The Apostle Peter had just learned a great truth when he spoke the words found in Acts 10:34, 35. As a Jew he had considered that the Gentiles were outside the fold of God; he had thought that the gospel of Christ did not apply to them. Now, he had been called to preach to a group of Gentiles, and he saw that God had accepted them.

How long had God accepted Gentiles who came to Him? Did God reject Gentile converts before the death of Christ on the cross? Were Gentile sinners *unclean* in the sight of God but Jewish sinners considered *clean*? In Peter's vision did the unclean animals represent Gentiles? Did God teach Peter through the vision that by the death of Christ both Gentiles and unclean animals were made clean? Is this why Paul could say, "There is neither Jew nor Greek ... for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28)?

It is important that Christians have the correct answers to these

questions in order to rightly understand God's requirements for us today. If, before the death of Christ, God separated mankind into two groups—one which could be saved, and one which was without the opportunity of salvation—and if such separation was based entirely on nationality without regard for faith or actions—then we must conclude that God was a respecter of persons. If this be the case, the statement by Peter was made to indicate a *change* of God's policy, in that He was no longer a respecter of persons. But we read in the Bible that God does not change, and we believe that His principles and policies are eternal.

What then is the answer? How did God deal with Jews and with Gentiles?

#### A SEPARATION

That there was a separation between Jews and Gentiles before the death of Christ is clearly taught in the following passage of Scripture:

"Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the

flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: but now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us: having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace" (Eph. 2:11-15).

How may we harmonize the thoughts thus far presented? To get our answer we must study the old Scriptures to see how God dealt with Gentiles and Jews under the old dispensation, and we must find out how the separation and "wall of partition" developed.

#### STRANGERS AND GENTILES

As we proceed there may be

some question about the use of *stranger* to mean Gentile. Therefore, it should be mentioned at this point that this interchange of words is based on Bible references. In Deuteronomy 29:22 the stranger is called one "...that shall come from a far land..." And in verse 24, referring to the same people, it reads, "Even all nations..." In Judges 19:11 and 12 the Jebusites, who were one of the native tribes in Canaan that Israel was to drive out, are called "...a stranger, that is not of the children of Israel..." Ruth was a Moabitess, one of a Gentile nation; and she is called "a stranger" in Ruth 2:10.

In one of the prophecies about Zion we note the parallel use of *strangers* and *Gentiles*: "And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee... that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought" (Isa. 60:10, 11).

Strangers and Gentiles were, thus, any people who were not Israelites by birth.

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#### THE LAW OF MOSES AND THE GENTILES

In establishing the Levitical priesthood, God gave a law through Moses which the Bible calls "the law of Moses." Moses gave it to the people of Israel as God had given it to him.

How did God deal with Gentile sinners and Israelite sinners under this law?

Regarding the keeping of the Passover, for instance, we read in Exodus 12:43 and 45: "... This is the ordinance of the passover: there shall no stranger eat thereof... A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof."

This refers to the Gentile sinner, one who had not accepted the true God. But was there any provision for the Gentile sinner so that he could accept God and be accepted by God on an equal with Israelites?

We get the answer in the same chapter of Exodus, from verses 48 and 49: "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

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it; and he shall be as one that is born in the land. . . . One law shall be to him that is homeborn, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among you."

SINNING ISRAELITES REJECTED

How did God regard those who were born as Israelites if they rejected Him and rebelled against His laws? The answer is found in many places in the Bible record, but one striking example is the first chapter of Isaiah. Here it is recorded that to sinning Israelites who would offer sacrifices and keep God's holy days, God said: "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them" (verses 13, 14).

Then God did reject Israelites, too, who were unfaithful or were in rebellion against Him. Thus, we see that God dealt with Israelites and Gentiles alike. Both were re-

ceived on the basis of their acceptance of God and His laws and their obedience to His laws.

An unconverted stranger (Gentile) was not to have any part in the holy Passover service. But if he joined with Israel and accepted circumcision as a token of his separation from the world, then he became the same as a homeborn Israelite, and the same law applied to him as to Israel.

BELIEVING GENTILES FULLY ACCEPTED

God has never been a respecter of persons in the sense of arbitrarily accepting some and rejecting others regardless of what they did or how they lived. But God has *always* made a difference between those who accepted and served Him and those who rejected Him. Gentiles who accepted God not only could take part in the Passover, but in everything else which God's people could do. Let us notice some examples:

1. *The burnt offerings of the believing Gentile were accepted.*

"And if a stranger sojourn with you . . . and will offer an offering

made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord; as ye do, so he shall do. One ordinance shall be both for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth with you, an ordinance for ever in your generations: as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord" (Num. 15:14, 15).

2. *The sins of the believing Gentile were forgiven through sacrificial offerings.*

"... And they shall bring their offering, a sacrifice made by fire unto the Lord, and their sin offering before the Lord.... And it shall be forgiven all the congregation of the children of Israel, and the stranger that sojourneth among them..." (Num. 15:25, 26).

3. *God decreed the same punishment for Israelites and Gentiles who committed sin.*

"And he that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death... as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land..." (Lev. 24:16).

4. *The cities of refuge were for both the native-born Israelite and*

*the stranger who had joined with Israel.*

"These six cities shall be a refuge, both for the children of Israel, and for the stranger, and for the sojourner among them..." (Num. 35:15).

5. *The strangers in Israel were to hear and observe God's laws.*

"Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law" (Deut. 31:12).

Thus we see that while God gave His laws especially to Israel, He also made full provision for the Gentile who would accept and believe. God did not make His law or the law He gave through Moses a "wall of partition" to separate Israelites and Gentiles.

STRANGERS AND THE COVENANT

In the 29th chapter of Deuteronomy, Moses reviews the covenant which God made with Israel. He speaks of the requirements and of

the promises of the covenant. He calls upon them to keep the covenant, and then lists those who should keep it. Notice: "Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp . . . that thou shouldst enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day. . . . Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; but with him that standeth here with us this day before the Lord our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day" (Deut. 29:10-15).

Yes, even the covenants of promise were made with the strangers, as well as with the homeborn Israelites. Then, why does the apostle Paul say in Ephesians 2:12 that the Gentiles were " . . . strangers from the covenants of promise . . . in days gone by? Keep this question in mind, for as we proceed in the study we will find a complete and conclusive answer.

STRANGERS TO WORSHIP  
IN THE TEMPLE OF SOLOMON

In his great prayer of dedication of the temple Solomon brought out the great truth that anyone of any nation who accepted the way of God was welcome to worship at the temple. The following is a part of that prayer: "Moreover concerning a stranger, that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake . . . when he shall come and pray toward this house; hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for . . ." (1 Kings 8:41, 43).

That the temple was for all peoples who would accept the way of the Lord is brought out even more clearly in the record of the dedication that is found in 2 Chronicles, a part of which reads as follows: "Moreover concerning the stranger, which is not of thy people Israel, but is come from a far country for thy great name's sake . . . if they come and pray in this house; then hear thou from the heavens, even from thy dwelling place, and do according to all that

the stranger calleth to thee for; that all people of the earth may know thy name, and fear thee, as doth thy people Israel..." (2 Chron. 6:32, 33).

NO DIVINE SEPARATION OF GENTILE BELIEVERS FROM ISRAEL

Perhaps the most impressive text of all, which shows that God did not separate the believing strangers (or Gentiles) from Israel, is found in Isaiah 56, where we read: "Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying: The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people... the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it; and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people" (verses 3, 6, 7).

Is it not wonderful and glorious to know that God has always dealt with all people the same? Israel was chosen to be a holy people for a special work, but if any of them sinned and turned away from God, they were rejected. And those not of Israelite blood who heard of the Lord and who came and desired to join with the people of God were *always* free to do so, no matter what their nationality. The message of God has always been: "Whoever will may come." The record as far back as Esther's time is: "... And many of the people of the land became Jews ..." (Esther 8:17). It was even as it is today, for many people of all nations became the people of God when they heard and accepted God's message.

THE WALL OF PARTITION

In spite of all the many places in the law of Moses and in the prophets which plainly say that God accepted the strangers (or Gentiles), as well as Israel, and that the strangers were welcome if they would accept the true God and would be treated as Israelites if they joined with Israel, still a wall of



partition grew up. Already in the time of Malachi there were those who were denying the stranger his God-given rights, and God said that He would be a witness against them for this because God does not change.

WHY AND WHEN DID SEPARATION COME?

Before the close of the books of the prophets a hint is given as to the coming separation and its cause. The reference is found in the last book of the old Scriptures: "And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts. For I am the Lord, I change not..." (Mal. 3:5, 6).

Many in Israel seemed to misunderstand the meaning of their calling as the people of God. They took the "holier than thou" attitude toward all Gentile nations, as described by Isaiah in chapter 65, verses 1-5. This attitude increased more and more after the Babylonian captivity, so much so that the Jews turned against the Samaritans who were of Babylonian and Jewish blood

and, if anything, hated them more than they did the full-blooded Gentiles. They considered it very wrong to have any dealing with Samaritans. But Jesus broke no part of the law of Moses, or any command of God when He talked with the Samaritan woman and then spent two days with the Samaritans. (This episode is recorded in John 4:1-43.)

ISRAEL THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

God had called Israel to be a special people. We read in Exodus 19:5 and 6, "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. ..." But as we have noticed from many verses of the Bible, this did not mean that salvation was for them exclusively so that no one but a blood descendant of Abraham could be saved.

As a "kingdom of priests" they had the key, as it were, to salvation for all peoples. Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple implies that the people of Israel were to make God known to the nations. He prayed, "Moreover concern-

ing a stranger, that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake; (for they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm;) when he shall come and pray toward this house; hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for..." (1 Kings 8:41-43). People from all nations could always come and join with Israel and become a part of that "holy nation."

Sometimes we think of heart conversion as being something associated only with the gospel. Paul emphasized that circumcision must be of the heart for one to be a true Christian. But the same is taught in the book of Ezekiel. "Thus saith the Lord God; No stranger, uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel" (Ezek. 44:9). Thus, strangers who were converted were said to be circumcised in the heart, as well as in the flesh.

Jesus tried in many ways to teach the Jews that they were people of God only if they were obedient and had the Spirit and love of God in their hearts. When He drove the moneychangers out of

the temple, He quoted from Isaiah's writing: "... My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer..." (Mark 11:17).

When the Jews thought they were safe as blood descendants of Abraham, John the baptist declared that God could raise up children to Abraham from the stones (Matt. 3:9).

#### THE LAWS AND TRADITIONS OF THE JEWS

During and after the Babylonian captivity, there developed among the Jews a great number of teachings and interpretations of the rabbis. These fill many books and are a mass of traditional teachings, known as the Talmud. The Jews considered these recorded traditions on a par with the Scriptures, and sometimes even in preference to the Scriptures.

Jesus condemned the people severely for taking their traditions above the Word of God. We read of this in Matthew 15, as well as in other passages, where He rebuked them as hypocrites for vainly worshipping God in accordance with their traditions while they disregarded God's Word (see Matthew 15:1-9). Jesus spoke of various traditions held by the Jews, but on one particular oc-

casian. He dealt with the ceremonial washing of pots and pans, as recorded in Matthew 16:10-20 and Mark 7:1-23. Along with His remarks He mentioned that there were "...many other such like things..." which the Jews did (Mark 7:8).

The Jews regarded these things as laws by which they were bound. Included among these laws was their attitude toward the Gentiles. They believed that if a Gentile came into the temple it would pollute that holy place. Such they considered to be a law of God, but it was only *their own tradition* as we have seen in our study of the law of Moses on this matter.

PETER AND THE GENTILES

It was very difficult for the early church to get away from the feeling of obligation to the laws of the rabbis which they had so long held as equal with the laws of God. This was especially true in connection with their attitude toward the Gentiles. In spite of the command of Jesus to carry the gospel to all nations, the disciples at first felt that it was only for the Jews.

God gave Peter a special vision to teach him the truth about this. It is re-

corded in the tenth chapter of the book of Acts. Here we read how Peter fell asleep and saw a vision of a great sheet let down from heaven. On this sheet were all kinds of animals. Those which God had designated as clean for food were mingled with others which were unclean for food. "And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter, kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean" (Acts 10:13, 14).

In Bible times it was not uncommon for people to kill an animal and immediately prepare it for food. The fattened calf was thus killed and prepared in the parable of the prodigal son. And so in the vision, it would have been possible for Peter to have prepared one of the animals on the sheet.

There were all kinds of animals on the sheet, and Peter could have selected one of those which he knew to be clean. But he would not take any of them. He put them into two classes: namely, "unclean" and "common." Evidently Peter considered the clean animals in contact with the unclean as being also unfit for food; therefore he called them "common."

Now, no law of God said that contact with *living* unclean animals made

either man or beast unclean, just as no law of God said that a Gentile was unclean because of his nationality. Sinners, whether Jew or Gentile were--- and are---in need of cleansing. for sin is uncleanness. The clean animals which Peter regarded as unclean could have been cleansed, just as the Gentiles whom Peter regarded as unclean could be cleansed from sin.

Then notice that when God answered Peter, He did not say He had cleansed the unclean animals. He simply said, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common" (Acts 10:15). What had God cleansed? The clean animals on the sheet did not need cleansing. What God was saying then was, "What I have called clean, you are not to call common or unfit for use." But in the symbolic meaning of *people*, *all* are sinners and *all* need to be cleansed by the blood of Christ. The point of difficulty with Peter was that he did not consider that the Gentiles were eligible to be cleansed by the blood of Christ. Peter thought that God was a respecter of persons and that nothing the Gentiles might do could change their condition.

PETER LEARNS THE MEANING

Peter was greatly puzzled about this

vision. He wanted very much to know the meaning. We read, "Now while Peter doubted in himself what this vision which he had seen should mean, behold, the men which were sent from Cornelius had made inquiry for Simon's house, and stood before the gate" (Acts 10:17).

The story which follows tells of the group of Roman Gentiles who came to ask Peter to travel with them to Caesarea in order to preach to a group of Gentiles who believed in God. The Spirit of God told Peter to go with them. When Peter arrived and saw the assembled group of Gentiles, he realized that he had found the meaning of the vision concerning the sheet. "And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean" (Acts 10:28).

We notice that Peter did *not* say he had been shown that he should not call any ANIMAL unclean. Peter said he had been shown that he "should not call any *MAN* common or unclean." Peter did not understand that the vision taught anything about animals, but that

the sacrifices, and if the Jews prevented Gentiles from doing this, then the Jewish use of the law of Moses made it a bar and made the Gentiles "aliens" and "strangers," leaving them "without hope."

By taking away the law of Moses and the temple with its sacrificial system, Christ took away from the Jews that wall which they had erected. Now no one can say that any people cannot come freely to God. And so, no people are any longer strangers, but rather all who believe become "... fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19).

A LAW OF SEPARATION STILL IN EFFECT

Israel of old was called to be a separate, peculiar people of God. They were not to intermarry with the Gentiles. Evidently God meant unconverted Gentiles, for Boaz was not condemned in his marriage to Ruth. A Gentile who accepted the true God.

Christians today are called to obey the same law of separation which God gave to Israel. First Peter 2:9 is almost a word-for-word quotation of Exodus 19:5 and 6. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should

its entire meaning had to do with mankind.

In the first part of the verse quoted immediately above, we notice that Peter said it was unlawful for a Jew to mingle with Gentiles. In saying this, Peter was *not* referring to any law found in the Bible. The law of Moses makes no such statement. The law Peter referred to was a part of those Jewish traditions which had been given by the rabbis. But because these traditions were so firmly fixed in the mind of Peter, God gave him the special vision to teach him what was already taught in the old Scriptures.

WHO MADE THE WALL OF PARTITION?

Now with all of this study in mind we again ask, who made the wall of partition which Paul speaks of in Ephesians 2:14? Surely we can see that God did not make it! The Jews by their traditions wrongly used the law of Moses, or added to that law, so as to bar the Gentiles from their rights before God. The law of Moses with its priests, sacrifices, and temple service could easily be used by the Jews to keep the Gentiles out. If salvation could be obtained only by coming to the temple and offering

shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." The true Christian people are not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers as Paul taught the Corinthians (see 2 Corinthians 6:14-18). Paul applied Isaiah 52:11 to Christians of our dispensation: "Depart ye, depart ye, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing; go ye out of the midst of her; be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord."

God is the same, always. He has always dealt with all people of the world in the same way. The call to us is still: "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2 Cor. 6:17). God still expects His people to be distinctly different, clearly separate from the people of the world.

NOT A LAW CHANGE,  
BUT A NEW REVELATION

The position of the Gentiles in God's sight did not change at the death of Christ. So far as the laws of God were concerned, nothing was done for the Gentiles above the Jews which made any difference in the manner or ease with

which Gentiles could find salvation. But God, through the Holy Spirit, brought a special revelation to the apostles about His attitude toward the Gentiles. Paul speaks of this in Ephesians 3:5 and 6. "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel."

Notice that it does NOT say that "in other ages for in Old Testament times the Gentiles were not fellowheirs and of the same body." We have seen from our study that believing Gentiles were always in the same position before God as believing Jews or Israelites were. But because of the false teachings of the Jewish leaders, this truth became hidden to the Jews. The King James Version, which we just quoted, says it was "not made known." Strong's Concordance shows that the Greek words here used can also be translated "not understood." The matter was fully made known in the Scriptures, as we can see by reading the many verses about the acceptance of strangers; but it was *not understood* until the Holy Spirit revealed it to the apostles.

The covenant made with Israel, called the "old" covenant only *permitted* the Gentiles to have a part. But all the while the "everlasting covenant" (Isa. 24:5) which was from the beginning, was for all peoples on a fully equal basis. In the covenant with Abraham, the promise of God was, "... In thee shall ALL families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:3).

Peter's vision and Paul's call to the ministry were a part of God's revelation of His regard for the Gentiles. The apostles then fully realized that although God had called Israel to be a special, peculiar people, a kingdom of priests and a holy nation, he had never barred Gentiles from joining Israel. The only change in the means of salvation for Gentiles in the Christian dispensation is that instead of just being *permitted* to join the people of God, they are now INVITED and URGED to do so. The people of God, the Christians, are now commanded to go to all the world with the gospel message of salvation.

A FALSE TEACHING—A REPROACH TO GOD

The teaching that God designated some animals as unclean for human food to be a type of the Gentiles' condition be-

fore the time of Christ, and that the death of Christ cleansed the Gentiles, thus bringing to an end the law of unclean animals, is not only entirely false, but is really a reproach against God. It would teach that God was a respecter of persons during the Levitical dispensation, or while the law of Moses was in effect, but now is not. God does not change, and He has never been a respecter of persons.

If unclean animals had been a type of the Gentiles before Christ, then it would have been impossible for Gentiles to have become children of God before Christ since it surely was impossible for any unclean animal to become clean. But our study has shown that Gentiles were always accepted if they accepted God and obeyed His laws. Israelites and Jews were always rejected as individuals if they rejected God and His laws. In all ages it has always been that "... in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts 10:35).

God still requires that His people use for food only those animals which He has said are proper for food. What God has *once* called unclean and sinful and an abomination, He does not *now* call clean and good.

Again, we remember that God does not change His great principles of right and wrong. Salvation is found through faith in Christ and obedience to God. The saints are those who "... keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12).

The commandments of God include the Ten Commandments, baptism, the Lord's Supper, the distinction of foods, and others. The world, or "Babylon," disobeys all of the commands of God, but let us heed the warning of Revelation 18:4: "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."

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