

The Old Paths

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“The Gentiles”

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In his book, The Kingdom of Promise And Prophecy, brother R.L. Whiteside made the following statement, “Instead of recognizing that God was working out through them his plan for the redemption of the world, the Jews concluded God cared for no other people. The promise to Abraham and their own prophets should have taught them the truth, but they were too much wrapped up in themselves to see the truth.” (p. 31)

Sadly, this sentiment is alive and well today. Sometimes, when folks read the Old Testament, they get “tunnel-vision,” and tend to think that God cared for no nation but the Jews for all those years before Christ. When folks read Christ’s promise to die as a sacrifice for everyone (Matt. 20:28; etc.), inevitably, some will ask, “What about all the Gentiles in the Old Testament?” Did God have no intention of saving any Gentiles until New Testament days? Was every Gentile person living in Old Testament days condemned to Hell? Many of the Jews living at the time evidently thought so. Perhaps folks today think the same as well. What is the truth?

God’s Plan For Redemption Is All-Inclusive.

From the first prophecy concerning Messiah to the last, it is evident that God intended for all

mankind to be saved from sin. Simeon understood this truth, for, as he held the Christ-child in his arms, he said, “*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel*” (Lk. 2:29-32). Simeon understood to whom Christ was sent. While Christ was on earth, He made it abundantly clear that His purpose was to save everyone from sin (Matt. 20:28, 26:28; Lk. 19:10; Mk. 16:16; etc.).

Since this is true, one might ask why the emphasis upon the Jews throughout the Old Testament? Yes, Gentiles are mentioned from time to time, but the Old Testament primarily focuses on Jewish history. Why is this? Because

The Jews Were God’s Agents For Bringing Salvation To The World.

God promised Abraham, “*In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice*” (Gen. 22:18). Galatians 3 shows us that this promise was fulfilled, and that it was Christ that God was talking about at that time (Gal. 3:8, 16). In order to fulfill that promise and bring Messiah into the world through the seed of Abraham, it is necessary to keep this bloodline “pure” so that Messiah is born of the seed of Abraham, and blesses the world, just as was promised. Read Matthew 1 and Luke 3 and see how that both Joseph

(Christ’s step-father) and Mary (Christ’s mother) belonged to the seed of Abraham. “*It is evident our Lord sprang out of Judah ...*” (Heb. 7:14). Therefore, the Jewish nation became the agency through which Christ and salvation came!

Romans 3:1-2 declares that it was an advantage to have been a Jew in those days before Christ because “*unto them were committed the oracles of God.*” God had a relationship with them in order to keep this “bloodline” intact. God had humanity’s salvation in mind all through those years. Sadly, many Jews became proud and boastful in this truth, instead of being appreciative that they had been chosen to bring the Savior of mankind into the world. While they were people chosen of God, they were not the only ones God was intent on saving! He wanted to save everyone (and still does, II Pet. 3:9).

In thinking about the plans God had for the Jews in bringing Christ into the world and saving mankind, please remember

The Jews Did Not Exist Until Abraham.

Does this statement surprise you? Go back and read Genesis 1-12, and you will see that God’s “special people,” the nation which would bring Christ into this world, had its beginning with Abraham. These people who claimed Abraham as their father (Lk. 3:8; Jn. 8:33, 39) were exactly right by beginning with him, because no person before Abraham was a Jew! In the language of today, they would all have been considered “uncircumcised”! Just think, Adam, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Melchizedek, Methuselah, Noah, Shem, Ham, Japheth, Job, and many others from the early days of this world’s history were not Jews! Would we say all these people

“*Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.*” (Jer. 6:16)

were condemned to Hell since they were not Jews? We know God's answer. He commended the life and faith of Enoch (Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5). Too, God praised the actions of Noah and Job (as well as Daniel), saying, "they should deliver but their own souls by their righteousness" (Ezek. 14:12-20). These men, though "uncircumcised", were not forgotten by God!

In fact, the apostle Paul makes a point of showing that Abraham was called by God "in uncircumcision" so that he might be "father" by faith to both the circumcised and uncircumcised people (Rom. 4:9-17). The Gentiles could follow the Lord if they wanted to do so, and many Gentiles did just that. Please consider these Gentiles in your study: Jethro ("the priest of Midian," Ex. 2:16, 3:1), Ruth (Moabite, Ruth 1:4), Rahab (Canaanite, Josh. 6:25; Jas. 2:25-26), Naaman (II Kings 5:14-19), The Centurion of Luke 7:1-10, and Cornelius (Acts 10-11) just to name a few.

The Gentiles Had A Law

How is it that the Gentiles could follow the Lord? Could some of them have become Jewish proselytes? Yes, this would have happened to some. Yet, even for those who did not become proselytes, they were still subject to a law. The Bible shows us that they had a law. Let us begin by looking in the book of Romans. This book lets us know that where there is no law, there is no sin, because sin is not imputed when there is no law (Rom. 4:15, 5:13). Get the principle, please: Where there is no law, there is no sin. However, if there is sin imputed, it means there is a law.

Now, let us look at the Old Testament and see God's dealings with the Gentiles. Back in

Genesis 15:16-21, God promised that Abram's children would inherit the land, but only after "the iniquity of the Amorites" had become "full." In other words, the conquest of Canaan by Joshua and the Israelites not only fulfilled God's "land promise", but the Jews also served as instruments of divine punishment for the sins committed by the people of Canaan! They were being punished by God for sin; i.e., for their transgression of divine law!

In addition to this, we can observe the work of such prophets as Jonah, Obadiah, Amos, Nahum, and others. They were sent to the Gentiles and told them to repent of their sin, and in some cases, basically told the Gentiles to "brace themselves" for coming punishment because of their sin. Therefore, when we read about various prophets going to the Gentiles to condemn them of their sin, we know the Gentiles had a law to which God held them accountable!

Further, we know the Gentiles had a law because folks like Pharaoh (an Egyptian, Gen. 13) and Abimelech (a Philistine, Gen. 20) understood God's rule for marriage in that He expects one man and one woman to be married for life (Gen. 2:18-25)! Consider also Job who understood God had a law to which people were subject. Remember, he continually offered sacrifices to God on behalf of his

children in case they had sinned against God (Job 1:5).

Finally, Romans 2:14-15 says, "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law (the law of Moses, JJ), do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."

Conclusion

God did not "forget" about the Gentiles for the 1500 years that the law of Moses was in effect. He loved them, and by selecting the Jews as His "chosen" nation, He was preparing the way for all people to be saved from sin, i.e., through Christ! Therefore, when we come to the New Testament, the apostle Peter (as well as others) had to learn that he "should not call any man common or unclean" (Acts 10:28). God's plan was unfolding through the ages until such a time that Christ could come in "the fullness of the time..." (Gal. 4:4). It was all mankind, Jews and Gentiles, that God wanted to save, and now, thanks be to God that we can be saved! Regardless of race, age, or gender, we can be a Christian and be saved from our sins when we follow what the Lord has said (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; I Cor. 15:58)!



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