

Resurrection Life of Jesus Church

THE EARLY CHURCH

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PART 11: A RADICAL CHANGE

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When God made the covenant with Abraham and his descendants, it excluded the rest of the human race. There was a provision for the people not related to Abraham that allowed them to join the covenant if they acknowledged the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and were willing to follow the commandments contained therein.

Ruth, a Moabite, was one such example of a conversion story.

“And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.” (Ruth 1:16)

She is listed in the genealogy of Jesus as the wife of Boaz, the great-grandfather of King David.

“And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse; And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias.” (Matthew 1:5-6)

The Talmud is a compilation of discussions, interpretations, and commentaries on the Mosaic law and serves as the central text of Rabbinic Judaism.

It teaches that only Jews have a soul and can be saved. Gentiles are relegated to the same category as animals with no property rights and no legal rights whatsoever. The Talmud is filled with distilled hatred and discrimination against Gentiles.¹

Jesus spoke against the authority of the Talmud. **Matthew 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13**

The hateful Talmud – not the Mosaic law – specified that Jews were not allowed to mingle with Gentiles or to go to their homes and share a meal with them. It was necessary for the Holy Spirit to override this heretical teaching.

“And he (Peter) 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)

Prior to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, He did not allow the disciples to preach to Gentiles.

¹ Dilling, Elizabeth: THE JEWISH RELIGION – ITS INFLUENCE TODAY, The Noontide Press, 1983, pp.16-17



“These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Matthew 10:5-6)

It came as a shock when the resurrected Jesus commanded the apostles to go beyond the geographical boundaries of Israel and preach the Gospel to everyone – including the Gentiles.

“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

THE GENTILES

Even though the eleven apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit with the 70 others and the 39 women, the Gospel was only preached to the Jews and those visiting Jerusalem from around the world. **Acts 2:5-12**

The first sermon on the day of Pentecost saw 3,000 Jews accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior and baptized in water. **Acts 2:41**

Peter and John concentrated their preaching to the people on the temple ground, where Gentiles were incidentally not allowed. **Acts 3:1-2**

Another 5,000 Jews came to Christ from such preaching. **Acts 4:4**

As far as the apostolic leadership was concerned, they were not about to start preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles since their Talmudic mindset believed only Jews could be saved despite the explicit instructions of Jesus which said otherwise.

RETURN OF JESUS

The apostolic leadership believed that the second return of Jesus was imminent and would take place during their lifetime. They had no long-term plans for the church and simply lived from day to day waiting for Jesus to come back and set up His kingdom.

The New Testament as we know it was not written until 25 years after the ascension of Jesus. Peter realized that he was coming to the end of his life and decided to write down instructions for the next generation. **2 Peter 1:12-18**

DIVINE INTERVENTION

It is obvious that the apostolic leadership were not going to change their minds about the Gentiles. In one way they lived in a twilight zone, still going to the temple daily and observing the sacrifices before the prayer time. Keep in mind this was after the crucifixion of Jesus and sacrifices were no longer needed. **Acts 3:1**

The only way there could be a change in the minds of the Christian leadership was for the Godhead to do an intervention. For this action they needed a Gentile and selected a

Roman army officer, knowing how much the Jews hated the occupation army. Cornelius was a centurion commanding a unit of one hundred soldiers. He had abandoned the Roman gods and believed in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He had not been accepted into the official faith of Judaism, but he prayed nevertheless and gave money to the poor. **Acts 10:1-2**

The Godhead sent an angel with the message that his prayers had been heard in heaven. Cornelius was to send soldiers to Joppa and find a man who would provide further instructions to the Romans. **verses 3-8**

It is noteworthy that this angel was fully aware of the Gospel and knew about the death and resurrection of Jesus. He was aware of the need for people to repent and be born again. However, since angels cannot be tempted, they are not allowed to preach the Gospel; doing so would cause Lucifer to cry “foul” and claim that God was cheating in this epic struggle.

The apostle Peter needed to be warmed up and the Holy Spirit provided a vision of unclean animals with instructions to rise up, kill and eat one of the animals. Peter knew what Jesus had stated in Leviticus chapter 11 and responded that he had never eaten anything unclean and certainly was not about to start now. **verses 9-14**

The Holy Spirit told Peter not to write-off something that God considered good. **verses 15-16**

Peter was mystified as to what the vision meant. **verse 17**

In the meantime, the delegation from Cornelius arrived at the house where Peter was lodging. It was necessary for the Holy Spirit to intervene and instruct Peter that these Gentiles were sent by God and he was to go with them. **verses 18-21**

After the delegation informed Peter what Cornelius had seen, Peter violated the Talmudic law by inviting the men into the house for the night and then set out with them the next day to meet Cornelius. **verses 22-23**

It was an odd sight as the delegation from Cornelius with Peter and some of his followers – Jews and Gentiles – walking a whole day from Joppa to Caesarea together. When they arrived to the home of Cornelius, Peter found it was packed with Gentiles, eager to hear from a Jew, as to what God wanted them to do. **verse 24**

Cornelius treated Peter like a deity and Peter responded by telling him that he was just a man. Peter told the assembled group that it was against the Talmud for him and his companions to fraternize with Cornelius, who responded by telling Peter about the angel’s message. **verses 25-33**

THE GREAT REVELATION

The scales fell from Peter’s eyes as he recognized Gentiles were not animals as taught by the Talmud. While this may not seem revolutionary today, it was an astounding revelation for the early church. Gentiles had souls and could receive salvation just like the Jews. Jesus died for the human race, not just for the people of Israel. **verses 34-43**

Peter shared the Gospel and unbeknownst to him, the Gentiles believed what Peter spoke about Jesus and repented of their sins. This action took place quietly inside each of them, and although Peter could not see it, it became evident when the Gentiles were baptized in the Holy Spirit. This baptism is something that only happens to born again believers. **verse 44**

Peter was astonished, as were the rest of the Jews present, with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit evident in the people they looked down upon. Yet, God was plainly showing that there is no distinction; everyone is equal in the eyes of God. The new believers were baptized in water and Peter stayed for a while before returning to Jerusalem. **verses 45-48**

CONFRONTING THE APOSTOLIC LEADERSHIP

The exciting news of what took place in Caesarea preceded Peter's return to Jerusalem, but the Talmudic prejudice reared its ugly head, and instead of rejoicing in the fact that Gentiles had value in God's eyes, the Jews debated Peter's fraternizing that had violated the Talmud. They were so focused on their rabbinically taught bias that they missed the big picture.

Gentiles had been baptized in the Holy Spirit!

Peter was viewed as a traitor because he shared the Gospel with the Gentiles. The Jews were so worked up that they failed to realize that another spiritual outpouring – such as the original day of Pentecost – would not have occurred without the Holy Spirit's involvement! This fact did not carry any weight with them. **Acts 11:1-3**

Peter defended his actions in delivering a powerful message of what had taken place in Joppa and in the home of Cornelius. **verses 4-17**

When the apostolic leadership heard the conclusion, the scales also fell from their eyes and they accepted the truth that Jesus had died for the human race – not just for the Jews. The church was no longer a Jewish church; it was now a church for all nations. **verse 18**

SUMMARY

There are not many Christians who have thought about how the early church developed after the day of Pentecost. Jesus laid the foundation through His death on the cross, when he paid for the sins of the human race.

Jesus did not lay out how the church was going to operate, but simply gave a big picture of going out into the whole world and preaching the Gospel, healing the sick, casting out demons, curing the lepers, and opening the eyes of the blind.

Jesus knew the apostles were not ready to hear what the future would hold because of the Talmud's influence. The church of Jesus was the work of the Holy Spirit.

“I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.” (John 16:12-14)

This Holy Spirit is still with us today and will continue to be with us until the end of the world.

Remember, it's not so important how you begin your life after salvation, but how you finish it!

Do you have an ear to hear with?