“Christians Who Made History – The Apostles”
Session 3: Jews and Gentiles
Can Dogs Be Saved? – The Great Paradigm Shift
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January 27, 2019

I. Contentions in today’s church

II. Major division in 1st century church: just who is eligible to receive the Good News?

A. Let’s throw out the NT and understand this thoroughly Jewish plan of salvation.

B. The first and the CHOSEN

1. Promises to Abram: great blessing, land, greatness, countless descendants (nations/kings), blessing all the families of the earth; “I will be your God forever.”

Gn 15:5-6

2. “Then he believed in the Lord; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.”

Gn 17


Ex 19:5

1. “Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My Special treasure among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

2. Jews – separate and unique. And CIRCUMCISION was the sign to prove it. Sorry ladies.

D. Jesus. The ultimate Jew.

1. With very rare exceptions: Jews ONLY!

Mt 15:24

2. Syrophoenician – “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel!”

Jn 4:22

3. “You don’t know what you worship; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews!”


E. Many coming to Christ by faith. All Jews. Only Jews. All circumcised. ≠ Christianity, but Judaism. Very Jewish. Circumcision of the heart is coming. And now it’s come.

Ac 6:7

Dt 30:6

Ac 7-8

G. Saul leads the righteous ethnic cleansing against those who want to change the foundation of Jewishness and destroy the traditions of Moses – “kill the apostates! Breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord...”

Ac 9:1; 22:4

II. Time for the Other Sheep

Ac 8
H. And then – Philip happens. Leave it to a mere deacon to toss a flare into the gas tank. “Those half-breed bastard Samaritans – are you kidding me?!”

1. Apostles investigate. “oy vey – what is this world coming to?”

Ac 9

Ac 10
J. Time for school. Let’s start with Peter.

1. Vision and Cornelius, the Gentile. Lesson: No partiality with God. Saved and filled. Shock and amazement; and probably dismay.

Ac 10:45

Ac 11:1-3
2. “Peter – you don’t know what you’re doing!”

11:17-18
3. “...who was I to stand in God’s way?...they quieted down and glorified God, saying, ‘Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life!’”


K. The simmering pot begins to boil over in Antioch.

Ac 15:1-2
1. “We Jews have to work really hard to be the CHOSEN of God – and you’re letting the Gentiles in for FREE?! On equal footing with us – Abraham’s descendents of faith?

Ep 2:11-22 ←That’s Crazy Talk!!

Ac 15:7-13,19
2. Jerusalem Council; No burden of the Law!

Ac 15:21
3. Buuuuuuuuuu.....

III. Now, let’s write the Bible...

Rm 3:28;
4:2-3

A. Paul: “For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law. For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”

Rm 4:10-11
1. Cut to the chase: Abraham declared righteous before the Law of Moses and while being uncircumcised. He was a Jew of faith and not of the flesh.Declared righteous = salvation. Salvation comes from simply believing God.

Jm 2:21,24
B. James: “Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar?... You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone.”
Jm 2:14,26  
1. James’ point: What is saving faith? “What use is it, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but he has no works? Can that faith save him? For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead.”

Jm 2:19  
2. So what does dead faith look like? But isn’t that what Paul said: belief = salvation?

Gn 22: 10,12  
3. Sooooo, this is what saving faith looks like! At least from James’ perspective.

Jm 1:22,25  
4. James’ faith must DO. Do what? The Law? Good works (Mt 7:21-23, uh-oh)? Follow the Law of Liberty (as opposed to the Law of Moses) and “do the word” (v22). Say again?

Jm 1,2; Mt 7:12  
a. And just what might the Law of Liberty be? True religion. Practical righteousness. We do good works because we’re followers, not in order to be accepted.

Jm 1:18,21,22  
b. The “word” used by James here = the gospel; Ac 10:36ff

IV. Paul’s Ugly concession

Ac 21:17-28  
A. After living and preaching freedom from the Law, hotly debating the issue with the apostles and leaders of the church, and facing death numerous times to defend the truth, Paul faces one of his darkest dilemmas. And loses.

Coming up

February 3 - Well look at evidence for how the four gospels were written and when, and how they influenced one another.

February 10 - What happened after Acts 28?

February 17 – The heresies of the early Church

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