

Has God Excluded Anyone?

Sunday 5/19 at 8:00 & 10:45 | Monday 5/20 at 7 PM

Fifth Sunday of Easter – 2019

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ: Has God excluded anyone? **No!** The Bible says that God “desires **all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth**” (1 Tim. 2:4 ESV). Since all people sinned, *God removed all sins through the finished work of Jesus!* So what’s the problem?

- Sometimes **congregations** exclude people by making rules beyond the Bible – *like no smoking, no drinking, or no tattoos.*
- Other times **people** exclude themselves by rejecting *God’s Word, God’s Son, or God’s gift of eternal life.*

In the Bible *prior to Acts chapter 10*, many concluded that God was *for the Jews* but **NOT for the Gentiles**. God said to Moses from the burning bush, “I am... the God of **Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob**” (Acts 7:32 ESV). All of those men were *God’s chosen people...* and later *their descendants were called Jews*. However, in today’s text from **Acts 11**, God wants us to know that He **made everyone, loves everyone, and made the way to heaven for everyone through Jesus!**

1. **The Situation:** **¹ Now the apostles and the brothers who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles** [*ἔθνη, nations, non-Jews*] **also had received the word of God** [*meaning they had been admitted into the Christian Church*]. **² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him, saying,** **³ “You went to uncircumcised men** [*thus non-Jews*] **and ate with them.”** // From a Jewish

*perspective, it was wrong for Peter to enter the house of a Gentile and eat with them, and much worse to baptize them and receive them into the Christian Church. Why? Based on the laws given to Moses (Gen. 17:14; Lev. Ch. 11), ◀circumcision was required and ▶only kosher foods were acceptable. The problem: Many did not understand that *those laws pointed to Jesus' first coming* and, when He came, *He fulfilled those laws for everyone* (Matt. 5:17; Col. 2:16-17). There were two groups of Jews who needed more information:*

- a. The apostles and the brothers: They believed in Jesus, *but thought He was only for the Jews.*
- b. The circumcision party: They believed in Jesus, *but thought circumcision and kosher foods were still required.*

2. **The Explanation:** As Peter explained, he was in Jerusalem at a meeting of the congregation:

- a. The vision: ⁴ **But Peter began and explained it to them in order:** ⁵ **"I was in the city of Joppa [a port where Jonah had boarded a boat to flee from doing God's will] praying, and in a trance I saw a vision, something like a great sheet descending, being let down from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to me. ⁶ Looking at it closely, I observed animals and beasts of prey and reptiles and birds of the air. ⁷ And I heard a voice saying to me, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat.' ⁸ But I said, 'By no means, Lord; for nothing common or unclean has ever entered my mouth.' ⁹ But the voice answered a second time from heaven, 'What God has made clean, do not call common.' ¹⁰ This happened three times, and all was drawn up again into heaven.**

// From those words, you can tell that Peter was similar to those of the circumcision party – *he was completely opposed to eating unclean food!* So he was determined to *follow God’s Word!* Also, as some food was unclean, *so Gentiles were unclean!*

- b. The Gentile encounter: ¹¹ **And behold, at that very moment three men arrived at the house in which we were, sent to me from Caesarea** [*about 34 miles away from Joppa*]. ¹² **And the Spirit told me to go with them, making no distinction** [*between Jew and Gentile*]. **These six brothers** [*Jews who believed in Jesus*] **also accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house.** ¹³ **And he told us how he had seen the angel stand in his house and say, ‘Send to Joppa and bring Simon who is called Peter; ¹⁴ he will declare to you a message by which you will be saved, you and all your household.’** // When the Holy Spirit told Peter to go, *he and six others headed for Caesarea.* Then, *hearing the story of Cornelius,* it corresponded perfectly with ♦Peter’s vision and ♦the precise timing of when the men arrived where Peter was staying in Joppa. Take note: In **Acts 10** the Bible describes Cornelius as “**a devout man who feared God... gave alms generously... and prayed continually to God**” (v. 2 ESV), *but he was not yet saved!* That would happen **by God** through Peter’s message!
- c. The work of God: ¹⁵ **As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as on us at the beginning** [*so by the Holy Spirit they were speaking in languages unknown to them*]. ¹⁶ **And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he said, ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’** // We know from the Bible that the Holy Spirit is given in connection with

Baptism ([Acts 2:38](#)), but here God did something special to make it clear that *salvation is for everyone!*

3. **The Conclusion:**

- a. God made things clear: Peter said to those at the meeting: ¹⁷ **If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?** // It was not Peter's work, but God's work – *He saved them!*
- b. Eternal life is for everyone: ¹⁸ **When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life."** // All who heard were quiet, marveling at God's work, and giving Him the glory. Consider these passages on **repentance to life:**
 - i. ^{NAS} **Romans 2:4** "Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?" // *Think about that!*
 - ii. ^{NAS} **2 Corinthians 7:10** "For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation..." // God's work of sorrow shows us our helplessness to save ourselves **and** makes us open to Jesus and His work as the way of eternal life!

This Week's Challenge: *Since heaven is open to all through Jesus, tell someone that good news!*

Let Us Pray: Dear Father, TY for including us and all in Your sin-removing work! *Let us tell others that good news!!!*