



GOOD NEWS

for the unsaved WORLD!

(#74)

Good News – The New Covenant and the Gentiles

THE NEW COVENANT WAS ORIGINALLY GIVEN TO ISRAEL.

For this is the covenant that I will make with **the house of Israel** after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.
Hebrews 8:10 (CSB)

How did Gentiles (non-Jews) get included?

This inclusion of the Gentiles was anticipated back when God made his covenant with Abraham – when he told Abraham that all peoples of the earth would be blessed through him (Genesis 12:3)! But it wasn't known till many centuries later how it would happen.

We can read about it in the book of Acts!

- The New Covenant blessing was first given to Israel.

"You are ... the heirs of the covenant that God made with your ancestors when he told Abraham, 'Through your descendant all the families of the earth will be blessed.'
When God raised up his servant, **he sent him first to you** to bless you by turning every one of you from your evil ways."
Acts 3:25-26 (ISV)

Refers to the New Covenant heart change!
- But it was ultimately offered to all.

And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, proclaimed the **good news** in advance to Abraham: "In you all the nations will be blessed."
Galatians 3: 8 (LEB)

TODAY, IT'S AVAILABLE FOR ALL! THIS IS GOOD NEWS!

THERE WAS NO REASON TO BE SURPRISED THAT THE NEW COVENANT WOULD BE OFFERED TO GENTILES.

- Abraham was told that blessings ... **all the peoples on earth** will be blessed through you.
Genesis 12:3b (CSB)
- The prophets mentioned a time when all nations would honor God.

"From **the nations** where the sun rises to **the nations** where the sun sets, my name will be great. Incense and pure offerings will be offered everywhere in my name, because my name will be great among **the nations**," says the Lord of Armies.
Malachi 1:11 (GW) [The complete fulfillment is yet to come.]
- The offer was part of the mission that Jesus gave to his followers.

Therefore, go and make disciples of **all the nations**, ...
Matthew 28:19a (NLT)

BRINGING THE NEW COVENANT TO GENTILES WAS A FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY!

- The prophet Isaiah said it would happen (= a prophecy about Jesus).

"I will also make you a **light for the nations**, to be my salvation to the ends of the earth."
Isaiah 49:6b (CSB)
- Jesus was recognized as the one who would do it (= by Simeon).

"... a **light for revelation to the Gentiles** and glory to your people Israel."
Luke 2:32 (CSB)

"For this is what the Lord has commanded us: I have made you a **light for the Gentiles** to bring salvation to the ends of the earth."
Acts 13:47 (CSB)
- Jesus commissioned his people – the "body of Christ" – to do it.

"The Great Transfer!"

When the Jewish nation* said "NO!" to the Good News and the New Covenant... → God gave the Gentiles an opportunity to say "YES!"

HERE'S HOW IT HAPPENED:

* (Individual Jews can still say "YES!")

The Jewish experience

A REJECTED OPPORTUNITY TO RECEIVE THE GOOD NEWS.

(Though, as individuals, many accepted it.)

THE OLD COVENANT OPPORTUNITY: The Jews had the opportunity to be a positive example for the world to see.

- But it required obedience to the covenant... something they weren't willing to do.

If you obey them carefully, you will display your wisdom and intelligence to the surrounding nations. When they hear about these laws, they will exclaim, "What other nation is as wise and prudent as this!"

Deut. 4:6 (NLT)

- As Moses said... ... I know how rebellious and stubborn you are.

Deut. 31:27a (NLT)

- As a nation, this necessary obedience never occurred. Their history was characterized by rebellion.

"You're just like your ancestors. They always opposed the Holy Spirit, and so do you! ...

You are the people who received Moses' Teachings... But you haven't obeyed those teachings."

Acts 7:51b, 53 (GW)

- Yet, even in the worst of situations, many individuals remained faithful to God.

WHEN ELIJAH THOUGHT HE WAS THE ONLY ONE LEFT, GOD SAID:

"Yet I will preserve seven thousand others in Israel who have never bowed to Baal or kissed him!"

1 Kings 19:18 (NLT)

- (In the future, the nation will turn to God – Romans 11.)

THE NEW COVENANT OPPORTUNITY: When this covenant came, the Jews had the first opportunity to receive its blessings.

"... the Good News... is God's power to save everyone who believes, Jews first and Greeks as well.

Romans 1:16b (GW)

"[God] told Abraham, 'Through your descendant [= Jesus] all the families of the earth will be blessed.'

When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning every one of you from your evil ways."

Acts 3:25b-26 (ISV)

- Later, the blessings would be offered to all people.

"[The prophets and Moses said] that the Messiah would suffer and be the first to rise from the dead as a light to Jews and Gentiles alike."

Acts 26:23 (NLT)

- The Jews were warned: Don't throw away this opportunity!

"Be careful, or what the prophets said may happen to you.

'Look, you mockers!
Be amazed and die!

I am going to do something in your days that you would not believe even if it were reported to you! "

Acts 13:40-41 (GW)

(See also Acts 28:25-27.)

- It was when they kept refusing to listen, that the "Good News opportunity" was offered to the Gentiles.

"Therefore, let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen."

Acts 28:28 (CSB)

*(Though the nation Israel rejected the Good News, many individual Jews have not done so – Romans 11:5.)

THE OPPORTUNITY LOST: The Jews (as a nation) could have been God's instrument for blessing the world. But since they rejected the Good News, God sent the apostles.*

Paul and Barnabas boldly replied, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you [Jews] first. Since you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, we are turning to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us:

I have made you
a light for the Gentiles
to bring salvation
to the ends of the earth."

When the Gentiles heard this, they rejoiced and honored the word of the Lord, and all who had been appointed to eternal life believed.

Acts 13:46-48 (CSB); see also Acts 22:21; 26:17.

* (These were Jews, sent as individuals. The Jews, as a nation, would persecute them.)

What might have happened if the Jews (as a nation) been willing to repent? Perhaps Jesus would have returned at that time.

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.

Acts 3:19-21 (NIV)

- Scripture says that, in the future, they will turn to God... and when they do, it will be a blessing for all people!

Now if the Gentiles were enriched because the Jews turned down God's offer of salvation, think how much greater a blessing the world will share when the Jews finally accept it.

Romans 11:12 (NLT)

The Gentile experience

AN UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITY TO RECEIVE THE GOOD NEWS.

A GOD-GIVEN OPPORTUNITY: Because of the Jewish rejection of the Good News, salvation was offered to the Gentiles

- Jesus sent the apostles to tell them.
Example: Paul.

[Jesus, in a vision to Paul] "... saying to me, 'Hurry! Leave Jerusalem, for the people here won't believe you when you give them your testimony about me.

- Paul describes the Gentile response:

"They will listen."

Acts 28:28b (GW)

... I will send you far away to the Gentiles!"

Acts 22:18b, 21b (NLT)

(See also Acts 13:46-48.)

OPPORTUNITY CREATES OBLIGATION: With greater opportunity comes greater accountability – Luke 12:48b.

- > **In the PAST...** God let the nations go their way, pursuing false gods, and living in ignorance of the truth.

In the past God overlooked such ignorance..."

Acts 17:30a (NIV)

"In the past, he let all nations go their own way."

Acts 14:16 (NIV)

They LIVED in sin... they DIED in sin.
God let them have the consequences of their choices, without "interfering" in their lives.

... without hope and without God in the world.

Ephes. 2:12b (NIV)

- This does not mean that people lacked an awareness of God. He revealed himself through creation and through his acts of kindness.

"Yet he has not left himself without testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy."

Acts 14:17 (NIV)

From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.

God did this so that men would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us.

Acts 17:26-27 (NIV)

- Romans 1-2 tells us that people suppress the truth they know about God. Because of this, they put themselves under God's wrath... and God has no obligation to intervene in the situation.

- > **NOW, at the PRESENT...** God has revealed the Good News; and people must respond – by turning from their false gods, to the true God.

... but now [God] commands all people everywhere to repent.

Acts 17:30b (NIV)

We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them."

Acts 14:15b (NIV)

- We will be judged for the way we respond. (This isn't an empty claim: God proved it by raising Jesus – the judge – from the dead.)

For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead."

Acts 17:31 (NIV)

- The necessary response includes changing the way we think about God.

"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else. From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live."

Acts 17:24-26 (NIV)

"Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by man's design and skill."

Acts 17:29 (NIV)

"We too are only men, human like you [and should not be worshipped]. / ... the living God ... made heaven and earth and sea and everything in them."

Acts 14:15b (NIV)

The New Covenant is now available to BOTH Jew and Gentile individuals!

And BOTH groups are saved the same way.

BOTH are saved by GRACE – God's undeserved kindness:

"... we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus in the same way they are."

Acts 15:11 (CSB)

BOTH are Accepted and given the Holy Spirit:

God, who knows people's hearts, confirmed that he accepts Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he gave him to us.

Acts 15:8 (NLT)

There is NO favoritism toward the Jews:

... God doesn't show favoritism, but in every nation the person who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

Acts 10:34b-35 (CSB)

One last question: Under the NEW Covenant...

DO WE NEED TO PRACTICE THE CEREMONIAL REGULATIONS OF THE OLD COVENANT?

(NOT referring to the moral requirements (which apply to all people at all times), but to the food laws, celebrations, temple activities, etc.)

DO THE JEWS NEED TO?

- In Christ, these practices are now *optional* for Jews. (And since the temple was destroyed in AD70, some practices are *impossible*.)

EXAMPLE: PETER, DURING A VISION ABOUT CEREMONIALLY UNCLEAN ANIMALS:

Again the voice came to him a second time, "You must stop calling unclean what God has made clean."

Acts 10:15 (ISV)

(See also Galatians 2:11-14.)

- Though they are optional, Jews do not need to abandon their Jewish customs.

When they heard this, they praised God. Then [the apostles] said to Paul: "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews have believed, and all of them are zealous for the law. They have been informed that you teach all the Jews who live among the Gentiles to turn away from Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or live according to our customs. What shall we do? They will certainly hear that you have come, so do what we tell you. There are four men with us who have made a vow. Take these men, join in their purification rites and pay their expenses, so that they can have their heads shaved. Then everybody will know there is no truth in these reports about you, but that you yourself are living in obedience to the law.

Acts 21:20b-24 (NIV)

None of the apostles saw anything wrong with Jews being "zealous for the law." Paul himself lived in obedience to the law (ceremonial rituals, etc.). *These things are not a "salvation issue."*

DO THE GENTILES NEED TO?

- Do the Gentiles need to adopt Jewish customs? NO! (This issue was examined in Acts 15.)

And so my judgment is that we should stop troubling the Gentiles who turn to God, ...

Acts 15:19 (NLT)

Stop troubling them with Jewish customs!

- But they *do* need to avoid participation in practices that were a part of the Gentile idolatry.

... except that we should write to them and tell them to abstain from eating meat sacrificed to idols, from sexual immorality,* and from consuming blood or eating the meat of strangled animals.

Acts 15:20 (NLT)

* (Sexual immorality is a *moral* issue; but it was also a practice that was frequently linked to idolatry. Also, the main issue with the sacrificed meat is the *participation* in the sacrifice – see 1 Corinthians 8, 10.)

YOUR MISSION >>> REJOICE!

THE NEW COVENANT
is a wonderful gift from God!

IF YOU
ARE A
JEW

REJOICE that you can still take hold of the life-changing New Covenant. The Jewish *nation's* response doesn't eliminate *your* opportunity.

IF YOU
ARE A
GENTILE

REJOICE that you have been given a glorious opportunity that originally belonged to others.

THE GENTILE OPPORTUNITY – made possible by Jesus!

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)-- remember that at that time you were **separate** from Christ, **excluded** from citizenship in Israel and **foreigners** to the covenants of the promise, **without hope** and **without God** in the world.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were **far away** have been **brought near through the blood of Christ**.

Ephes. 2:11-13 (NIV)

Credits

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