

LIVING IN ANTICIPATION OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Class 4: Evangelism Among Jews and Gentiles

John Harrigan

I. THE INCLUSION OF JEW AND GENTILE IN SALVATION

Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and *all the nations* of the earth shall be blessed *in him*. (ESV Genesis 18:18)

You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be *the sign of the covenant* between me and you. ¹² For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—*those who are not your offspring*. ¹³ Whether born in your household or bought with your money, *they must be circumcised*. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. ¹⁴ Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant. (NIV Genesis 17:11-14)

A. Gentile Inclusion Before Acts 10

This is the statute of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, ⁴⁴ but every slave that is bought for money may eat of it *after you have circumcised him*... ⁴⁷ All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. ⁴⁸ If a stranger (Gk. *prosēlutos*, LXX) shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the LORD, *let all his males be circumcised*. Then he may come near and keep it; *he shall be as a native of the land*. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. ⁴⁹ There shall be one law for the native and for the stranger (Gk. *prosēlutos*, LXX) who sojourns among you. (ESV Exodus 12:47-49)

In every province and in every city, wherever the edict of the king went, there was joy and gladness among the Jews, with feasting and celebrating. And many people of other nationalities [“were circumcised and” LXX] *became Jews* because fear of the Jews had seized them. (NIV Esther 8:17)¹

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves. (ESV Matthew 23:15)

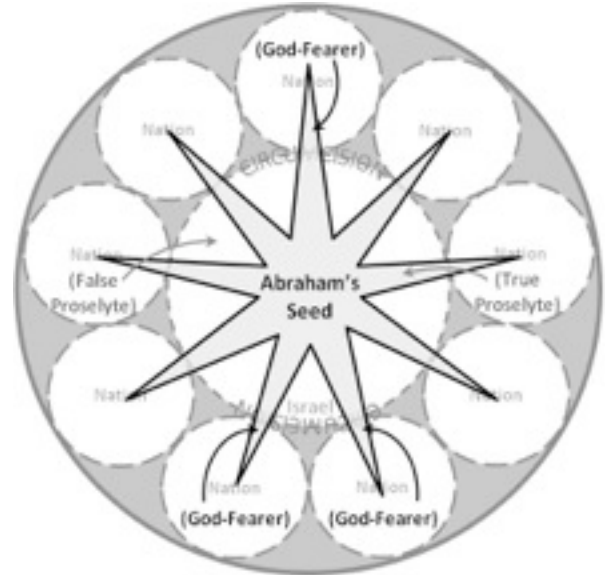


B. Gentile Inclusion After Acts 10

¹ “The rite [for the reception of proselytes] consists of three parts: circumcision, baptism, and the offering of a sacrifice in the temple... The non-Jew received thus into Judaism was regarded after conversion ‘in every respect as a Jew,’ b. Jeb., 47b. This means in the first instance that like every Jew he is under obligation to keep the whole Jewish Law. In keeping is the saying of Paul in Gl. 5:3: μαρτύρομαι δὲ πάλιν παντὶ ἀνθρώπῳ περιτεμνομένῳ ὅτι ὀφειλέτης ἐστὶν ὅλον τὸν νόμον ποιῆσαι [“I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law”].” (K. G. Kuhn, “προσῆλυτος,” TDNT, 6:738-39)

"We have come from Cornelius the centurion. He is a righteous and *God-fearing man*, who is respected by all the Jewish people." ... ⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit came on all who heard the message. ⁴⁵ *The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles.* (NIV Acts 10:22-45)²

The apostles and the brothers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him ³ and said, "You went into the house of uncircumcised men and ate with them." ⁴ Peter began and explained everything to them precisely as it had happened... ¹⁷ "So if God gave them the same gift as he gave us, who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could oppose God?" ¹⁸ When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, "So then, God has granted even the Gentiles repentance unto life." (NIV Acts 11:1-18)



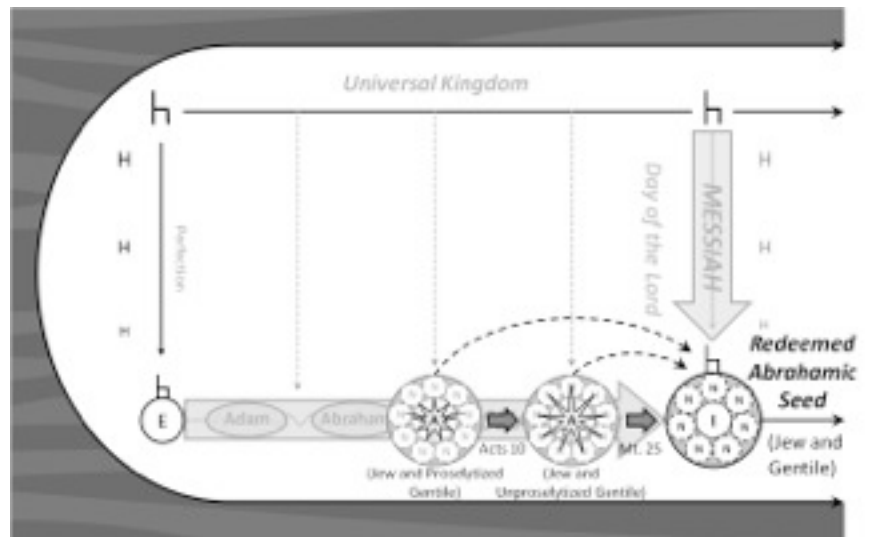
Some men came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the brothers: "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, *you cannot be saved.*" ² This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them... ⁵ Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, "The Gentiles *must be circumcised* and required *to obey the law of Moses.*" ⁶ The apostles and elders met to consider this question. ⁷ After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: "Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips *the message of the gospel* and believe. ⁸ God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹ He made *no distinction between us and them*, for he purified their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of the disciples a yoke that neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear? ¹¹ No! We believe *it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved*, just as they are." ... ¹³ When they finished, James spoke up: "Brothers, listen to me. ¹⁴ Simon has described to us how God at first showed his concern by taking from the Gentiles a people for himself. ¹⁵ The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written: ¹⁶ "After this I will return and rebuild David's fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, ¹⁷ that the remnant of men may seek the Lord, *and all the Gentiles who bear my name*, says the Lord, who does these things' ¹⁸ that have been known for ages. ¹⁹ "It is my judgment, therefore, that *we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles* who are turning to God. ²⁰ Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.

² "The attitude of the primitive Palestinian community to σεβόμενοι τὸν θεόν ["God-fearer"] was based on that of Palestinian Judaism. The only non-Jew to have a part in the salvation effected in Jesus was the one who had first become a member of the Jewish people by the acceptance of circumcision and of the obligation to keep the whole Jewish Torah. Otherwise the non-Jew remained a Gentile and as such he would fall victim to God's wrath in the Last Judgment." (K. G. Kuhn, "προσήλυτος," TDNT, 6:743)

²¹ For Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath." (NIV Acts 15:1-21)³

Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, *the son of a Jewish woman* who was a believer, but his father was a Greek. ² He was well spoken of by the brothers at Lystra and Iconium. ³ Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him, and *he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews* who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. (ESV Acts 16:1-3)

When we had come to Jerusalem, the brothers received us gladly. ¹⁸ On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹ After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done *among the Gentiles* through his ministry. ²⁰ And when they heard it, they glorified God. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are *among the Jews* of those who have believed. They are all *zealous for the law*, ²¹ and they have been told about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or walk according to our customs. ²² What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. ²³ Do therefore what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow; ²⁴ take these men and purify yourself along with them and pay their expenses, so that they may shave their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself also live in observance of the law. ²⁵ But as for the Gentiles who have believed, we have sent a letter with our judgment that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality." (ESV Acts 21:17-25)



C. Different Stewardships, Same Basis of Faith

For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. ²⁹ Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, ³⁰ since God is one. He will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. ³¹ Do we then

³ "But some men, with open mouths, carry even the excessive luxury and boundless intemperance of Sardanapalus to such an indefinite and unlimited extent, being wholly absorbed in the invention of senseless pleasures, that they prepare sacrifices which ought never be offered, strangling their victims, and stifling the essence of life, which they ought to let depart free and unrestrained, burying the blood, as it were, in the body. For it ought to have been sufficient for them to enjoy the flesh by itself, without touching any of those parts which have an connection with the soul or life. On which account Moses, in another passage, establishes a law concerning blood, that one may not eat the blood nor the fat. The blood, for the reason which I have already mentioned, that it is the essence of the life; not of the mental and rational life, but of that which exists in accordance with the outward senses, to which it is owing that both we and irrational animals also have a common existence." (Philo of Alexandria, *The Special Laws*, 4.122-123; *The Works of Philo* [Hendrickson, 1995], 628)

overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law. (ESV Romans 3:28-31)

Look: I, Paul, say to you that if you accept circumcision, Christ will be of no advantage to you. ³ I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision that he is obligated to keep the whole law. ⁴ You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵ For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness. ⁶ For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love. (ESV Galatians 5:2-6)

I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. ² God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew... ⁵ So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. ⁶ But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace. (ESV Romans 11:1-6)

Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches. ¹⁸ Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. ¹⁹ Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts. ²⁰ Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him. (NIV 1 Corinthians 7:17-20)

D. Consideration for Different Callings

As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. ² One person believes he may eat anything, while the weak person eats only vegetables. ³ Let not the one who eats *despise* the one who abstains, and let not the one who abstains *pass judgment* on the one who eats, for God has welcomed him. ⁴ Who are you to pass judgment on the servant of another? It is before his own master that he stands or falls. And he will be upheld, for the Lord is able to make him stand. ⁵ One person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. *Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.* ⁶ The one who observes the day, *observes it in honor of the Lord.* The one who eats, *eats in honor of the Lord,* since he gives thanks to God, while the one who abstains, *abstains in honor of the Lord* and gives thanks to God. ⁷ For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself... ¹³ Therefore let us not pass judgment on one another any longer, but rather decide never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of a brother. ¹⁴ I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus that nothing is unclean in itself, but it is unclean for anyone who thinks it unclean. ¹⁵ For if your brother is grieved by what you eat, you are no longer walking in love. By what you eat, do not destroy the one for whom Christ died... ¹⁹ So then *let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding.* ²⁰ Do not, for the sake of food, destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to make another stumble by what he eats. ²¹ *It is good not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything that causes your brother to stumble.* ²² The faith that you have, keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the one who has no reason to pass judgment on himself for what he approves. ²³ But whoever has doubts is condemned if he eats, because the eating is not from faith. For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. (ESV Romans 14:1-23)

II. EVANGELISTIC DELINEATION BETWEEN JEW AND GENTILE

A. Evangelistic Calling

On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel *to the uncircumcised*, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel *to the circumcised* ⁸ (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry *to the circumcised* worked also through me for mine *to the Gentiles*), ⁹ and when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that *we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised*. ^(ESV Galatians 2:7-9)

To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; ²¹ to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. ²² To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; *I have become all things to all men*, so that I may by all means save some. ^(NASB 1 Corinthians 9:20-22)

B. Evangelistic Order

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, *to the Jew first* and also to the Greek. ¹⁷ For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." ^(ESV Romans 1:16-17)

And after the meeting of the synagogue broke up, *many Jews and devout converts to Judaism* followed Paul and Barnabas, who, as they spoke with them, urged them to continue in the grace of God. ⁴⁴ The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵ But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. ⁴⁶ And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, *we are turning to the Gentiles*. ⁴⁷ For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, "' I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'" ⁴⁸ And when the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and *as many as were appointed to eternal life believed*. ^(ESV Acts 13:43-48)

Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue... *testifying to the Jews* that Jesus was the Christ. ⁶ But when the Jews opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! *I am clear of my responsibility*. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." ^(NIV Acts 18:4-6)

C. No Distinction in Basis or Quality of Salvation

For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. ¹¹ For the Scripture says, "Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame." ¹² For *there is no distinction between Jew and Greek*; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. ^(ESV Romans 10:10-12)

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, ²⁷ for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. ²⁸ *There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.* ²⁹ If you belong to Christ, *then you are Abraham's seed*, and heirs according to the promise. (NIV Galatians 3:26-29)

Therefore remember that at one time *you Gentiles in the flesh...* were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off *have been brought near by the blood of Christ.* ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one... that he might create in himself *one new man in place of the two...* ¹⁸ For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are *fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.* (ESV Ephesians 2:11-19)

D. Distinction in Role of Inheritance

This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw *concerning Judah and Jerusalem:* ² In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and *all nations* will stream to it. ³ *Many peoples* will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out *from Zion*, the word of the LORD *from Jerusalem.* ⁴ He will judge between *the nations* and will settle disputes for *many peoples.* They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. (NIV Isaiah 2:1-4)

I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, *my kinsmen according to the flesh.* ⁴ They are Israelites, and *to them belong* the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. ⁵ To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen. (ESV Romans 9:2-5)

So I ask, did they stumble in order *that they might fall?* By no means! Rather through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, *so as to make Israel jealous.* ¹² Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean! ¹³ Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle *to the Gentiles*, I magnify my ministry ¹⁴ in order somehow *to make my fellow Jews jealous*, and thus save some of them... ²⁸ As regards the gospel, they are enemies of God for your sake. But as regards election, they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. ²⁹ *For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.* (ESV Romans 11:11-29)

III. OBSTACLES TO JEWISH EVANGELISM

A. The Offense of the Cross and Divine Atonement

But if I, brothers, still preach circumcision, why am I still being persecuted? In that case *the offense of the cross* has been removed. ¹² I wish those who unsettle you would emasculate themselves! (ESV Galatians 5:11-12)

For there is no distinction: ²³ for *all have sinned and fall short* of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are *justified by his grace as a gift*, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵ whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. (ESV Romans 3:22-25)

Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. ² I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. ³ For, *being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God*, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. (ESV Romans 10:1-3)

B. The Offense of Realized Eschatology

What is it, after all, that marks the difference between Christians and Jews? ... Jews believe in the eventual fulfillment of an elusive dream of a perfect world. Christians believe that the world has already been saved by the crucifixion and resurrection of the Messiah Jesus. The difference between the belief in future redemption and realized redemption is the chasm that separates Jewish from Christian thinking.⁴

The Jew is profoundly aware of the unredeemed character of the world, and he perceives and recognizes no enclave of redemption in the midst of its unredeemedness. The concept of the redeemed soul in the midst of an unredeemed world is alien to the Jew, profoundly alien, inaccessible from the primal ground of his existence. This is the innermost reason for Israel's rejection of Jesus, not a merely external, merely national conception of messianism. In Jewish eyes, redemption means redemption from all evil. Evil of body and soul, evil in creation and civilization. So when we say redemption, we mean the whole of redemption. Between creation and redemption we know only one caesura: the revelation of God's will.⁵

The church rests on its faith that the Christ has come, and that this is the redemption which God has bestowed on mankind. We, Israel, *are not able* to believe this... We know more deeply, more truly, that world history has not been turned upside down to its very foundations—that the world is not yet redeemed. We *sense* its unredeemedness. The church can, or indeed must, understand this sense of ours as the awareness that *we are not redeemed*. But we know that that is not it. The redemption of the world is for us indivisibly one with the perfecting of creation, with the establishment of the unity which nothing more prevents, the unity which is no longer controverted, and which is realized in all the protean variety of the world. Redemption is one with the kingdom of God in its fulfillment. An anticipation of any single part of the *completed* redemption of the world—for example the redemption beforehand of the soul—is something we cannot grasp, although even for us in our mortal hours redeeming and redemption are heralded. But we can perceive no caesura in history. We are aware of no centre in history—only its goal, the goal of the way taken by the God who does not linger on his way.⁶

⁴ David S. Ariel, *What Do Jews Believe? The Spiritual Foundations of Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 232.

⁵ Schalom Ben-Chorin, *Die Antwort des Jona* (Hamburg, 1956), 99; quoted in Jürgen Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ: Christology in Messianic Dimensions*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 29.

⁶ Martin Buber, *Der Jude und sein Judentum* (Cologne, 1963), 562; quoted in Moltmann, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 28-29.