

Christian Basis for Race Relations *and Equality under the Law*

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What We Will Learn

- God's purpose for race relations
- And equality under the law
- Equality of all people under God based on
 - Covenant with Abraham
 - Peter-Cornelius Interactions
- Accept and interact with every person, irrespective of race, same as God would
- Equality under the law based on punishment of Saul in interaction with Amalekites

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Equality of All People under God

- Creates people into categories: based on race, nationality, geographic location, physical features, others
- Status of a person before God determined by one criterion
 - Choice to worship and serve God
 - Irrespective of race, nationality, or any other categorization
- He is God to all that worship and serve him

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Universal Choice to Worship and Serve God

- God's covenant with Abraham
- Worship and serve God
- And God will be your God
- Same choice for every person
- Irrespective of race
- Or any other categorization
- Genesis 17:1-7; 15:1

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Genesis 17 (NIV)

1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me faithfully and be blameless.

2 Then I will make my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."

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Genesis 17 (NIV)

3 Abram fell facedown, and God said to him,

4 "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You will be the father of many nations.

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Genesis 17 (NIV)

5 No longer will you be called Abram; your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations.

6 I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you.

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Genesis 17 (NIV)

7 I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

- I will be God to you and your descendants
- Reward for those that worship and serve God [Genesis 15:1]

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Beneficiaries of God's Covenant with Abraham

- Conditional promise
- For Abraham
- Abraham's descendants
- Beneficiaries of Messiah promise
- Genesis 12:3
- John 1:6

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Genesis 12 (NIV)

3 I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

- God's promise to send the Messiah
- Through Abraham's offspring
- For all the earth
- All people are party to God's covenant through Messiah promise

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John 1 (NKJV)

12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

13 who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

- Right to become child of God available to every person irrespective of human heritage

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Conditions for Child of God

- Worship and serve God
 - Accept Christ as Savior that God promised
 - Commit to life based on his teaching:
Living in the Image of God
 - God's representative among others
 - Channel for his compassion (provider assistant)
 - Conveyor of his image (radiate Godliness)
- Accept and interact with every person the same way that God would

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Peter-Cornelius Interactions

- Accepts every person that believes in God
- Irrespective of race, nationality, geography, physical features, or other categorization
- Explained the principle clearly to Peter
- In preparing Peter to interact with Cornelius
- Cornelius: Gentile (i.e., non-Jewish person)
- Peter-Cornelius interactions otherwise would have been forbidden

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Cornelius Sends for Peter

- Cornelius lived in Caesarea
- Commander in the Italian Regiment
- Devout and God-fearing
- Prayed regularly
- Generous to those in need
- Angel of God appeared to Cornelius
- Asked him to invite Peter to his house
- Acts 10:1–8 [Not read in session]

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God Prepares Peter to Interact with Cornelius

- Accept and interact with every person the same way that God would: *“Do not call anything impure that God has made clean”*
- Irrespective of race, nationality, geographic location, physical features, or other categorization
- Acts 10:9–20

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Acts 10 (NIV)

9 About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray.

10 He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance.

11 He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners.

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Acts 10 (NIV)

12 It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds.

13 Then a voice told him, “Get up, Peter. Kill and eat.”

14 “Surely not, Lord!” Peter replied. “I have never eaten anything impure or unclean.”

15 The voice spoke to him a second time, “Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”

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Acts 10 (NIV)

16 This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

17 While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon’s house was and stopped at the gate.

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Acts 10 (NIV)

18 They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.

19 While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three men are looking for you.

20 So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."

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Peter Arrives at House of Cornelius

- Peter came with some believers from Joppa
- Cornelius had his relatives and close friends
- Peter explained God had prepared him to interact with them without human condition
- Cornelius explained God told him
- To invite Peter to bring the word of God
- Acts 10:24–33 [Not read in session]

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Peter Preaches Gospel at House of Cornelius

- "I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right" [Acts 10:34–35]
- All who heard the message
- Received the holy spirit
- And were baptized
- Acts 10:34–48 [Selections read in session]

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Acts 10 (NIV)

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 Gentiles.

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Peter Explains His Actions to Believers in Jerusalem

- Jewish believers in Jerusalem
- Criticized Peter for meeting and sharing food with uncircumcised men
- Peter explained God accepted Gentiles and gave them holy spirit as he gave to Jews
- Acts 11:1–4 and 15–18

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Acts 11 (NIV)

1 The apostles and the believers 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 Starting from the beginning, Peter told them the whole story:

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Acts 11 (NIV)

15 “As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came on them as he had come on us at the beginning.

16 Then I remembered what the Lord had said: ‘John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.’

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Acts 11 (NIV)

17 So if God gave them the same gift he gave us who believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to think that I could stand in God’s way?”

18 When they heard this, they had no further objections and praised God, saying, “So then, even to Gentiles God has granted repentance that leads to life.”

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Equality under the Law

- The Law of a people applies equally to all, irrespective of race or status in society
- God terminated Saul as king of Israel
- For discriminatory application of the law
- Regarding command against Amalekites
- Equality under the law is God’s mandate
- 1 Samuel 15:1–23 [Not read in session]

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Command Against Amalekites

- God judged Amalek for complete destruction
- Commanded Saul to execute the judgment
- No exemption for any Amalekite
- Equal application of the law to all
- Means destruction of every Amalekite
- Irrespective of differences or similarities among them
- 1 Samuel 15:1–3 [Not read in session]

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Discrimination by Saul

- Saul devised discriminatory criteria
- To separate Amalekites into two classes
- For unequal treatment under the law
- Selected the *good* for special treatment
- Destroyed others (the *not good*)
- 1 Samuel 15:7–9 [Not read in session]

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Judgment Against Saul

- God regretted making Saul king
- Did not apply the law equally in executing God’s command against Amalek
 - He turned away from following God
 - Disobeyed God’s commandment
 - Violated principle of equality under the law
- God terminated Saul as king of Israel
- 1 Samuel 15:10–11

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1 Samuel 15 (NIV)

10 Then the word of the Lord came to Samuel:

11 “I regret that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions.” Samuel was angry, and he cried out to the Lord all that night.

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What We Learned

- Covenant with Abraham establishes equality of all people under God, which God explains clearly through Peter-Cornelius interactions
- Accept and interact with every person same as God would, irrespective of race or other categorization
- Punishment of Saul in interaction with Amalekites underscores Equality under the Law as God’s mandate

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