

The Exclusive God And His Exclusive Church

1 Peter 2:9-12

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John L. Kachelman, Jr.

Introduction:

Beginning with Creation and the Garden of Eden, through centuries of time, the story of God's scheme of redemption unfolds through the histories of the Antediluvians, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to Moses and Mt. Sinai, to Joshua and Canaan, to the Kings, to the coming of the Messiah's Herald, to the Messiah, to the establishment of the Church, and ultimately to the restored Eden in Heaven's eternity – one unmistakable emphasis is found, GOD IS AN EXCLUSIVE GOD! The consequence of this emphasis is clear – those who are to receive blessings from the God of the Bible MUST live an exclusive life!

The biblical message is clear (John 3:36; 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 5:11-12). The Bible teaches that there is only ONE way to be saved. There is only ONE belief system that will lead you to heaven and all other belief systems are erroneous! The message of New Testament Christianity is that God's message cannot be adjusted to accommodate personalities and perspectives. There is only ONE way to be saved (1 Corinthians 8:5).

While this message is clear, it is unpopular! Although this has been the historical position of God throughout His dealings with mankind, historically such an exclusive, intolerance of "other ways" has been contested! Every time God's Law has said, "This is THE way..." Satan has countered with the tempting rebuttal, "There has to be allowances and sensitivities for other ways!"

God's exclusiveness is an imperative that cannot be ignored. Thus, it is a critical focus for our study. That exclusiveness which was foreshadowed in the Old Testament by command and practice is found in reality under the New Testament dispensation. Look closely at this point and realize the powerful lesson that has taken centuries of experiences and scores of lessons to communicate!

Body:

I. THE PRINCIPLE – God's exclusiveness is absolute!

Throughout the early portions of Scripture there is the clear statement of this principle. God's relationship with man, beginning in Eden, stressed the fact that God expected man to follow the way of God and to avoid the way of error (Genesis 3:3).

This principle of exclusiveness was given for a simple reason – only as God's will was obeyed could mankind enjoy peace and happiness.

This eternal principle is repeatedly found throughout Scripture as God strives to encourage mankind to practice the divine exclusiveness so s/he will find blessings (cf Exodus 11:7; 12:48; 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 6:4-5; 7:2; 18:9-14; 26:18-19; Leviticus 11:44-47; Numbers 25:17; etc.).

This principle is universally applicable and eternally binding. Every human is accountable for practicing this exclusiveness. No one can evade the duty of obeying God's commands to practice this exclusiveness. This is clearly taught in a number of texts: Leviticus 24:22; Numbers 9:14b; 14:13-16, 29-31; Deuteronomy 10:17-18; 4:2; 6:17-18; 31:12-13. The practical point of this aspect is often ignored in our modern society – the very idea of an "exclusive" standard is condemned as "intolerant." However, the Truth cannot be silenced – God remains an exclusive God! Only those who obey exactly God's commands will enjoy the blessings of Heaven (Matthew 7:21).

II. THE PRINCIPLE COMMANDED – God gives strict commands!

Even a casual reading through the Bible will reveal that the Lord God always commanded a strict separation between those who followed His will and those who refused to obey His will (cf Exodus 8:23; 12:43; Leviticus 17:8b-9; etc.). The meaning was very simple – God does not want His followers to stray from His commands even in the smallest degree! (Joshua 1:6-13).

This command was repeated by Christ (Matthew 7:13ff; 11:28ff; John 12:26, 48; 14:15; 15:2,14). This command was confirmed by the Holy Spirit as Inspiration guided the writers of the New Testament (1 Corinthians 10:10-12, 21; 15:33; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Hebrews 13:9; 2 Peter 3:17; Revelation 22:14-19; etc.).

III. THE PRINCIPLE ILLUSTRATED – God's gives a full explanation!

There are many illustrations of this principle, but examine the command to distinguish between the clean and unclean animals (Leviticus 11:43-47).

This principle commanded Israel to practice a basic understanding in their living – there are two choices in life. One can choose God or one can choose to ignore God. The categories of "clean" and "unclean" impressed upon the

Israeli mind the simple fact that one is either WITH God or AGAINST God – there are no other options; there is no "common ground" between the two. The Jews understood this point. They knew that God wanted His people to avoid the "unclean." This discernment would have a practical impact – God's people would be cut off from any association that would lure them away from fidelity and loyalty.

This "labeling" between the clean and unclean would be practiced every minute of every day. It would be a constant reminder that, even though surrounded and out-numbered by those who are "aliens," they must make choices by spiritual incentives. Since their God was "holy," they were obligated to also be "holy."

This basic principle of the Old Testament typifies the urgency of Christians in the New Testament maintaining "holiness" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 2 Corinthians 13:7; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 5:11ff; etc.). "Let him, therefore, in all things be careful to walk by the counsel and direction of Heaven ... let him also set a watch upon his companionships, as righteousness can have no part with unrighteousness, and the companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Fairbairn 376).

The principle commanded Israel to practice a strict discernment in the most common practice of life – eating a meal. The reason for this discernment was stated simply – "You shall be holy for I am holy." God expected His followers to live so they were DIFFERENT than all others surrounding them (Deuteronomy 7:2-6; 18:9-14; etc.).

This principle commanded Israel to practice an aggressive discernment in the everyday choices (Numbers 25:17-18).

This principle commanded a practice of discernment by all – although it was specifically given to Israel, its application was to all who sought to be identified as a follower of God. God's Law of exclusiveness applied universally (Leviticus 24:22; Numbers 9:14b; 14:13-16, 29-31; Deuteronomy 4:2; 6:17-18; 10:17-18; 31:12-13). NOTE: This point reveals that God's Law was not exclusively for Israel but was for anyone who desired to follow His will!

IV. THE PRINCIPLE ENACTED – God mandated the results!

As the command for exclusive devotion to the holy commands was given,

God offered a further explanation of the results that would be seen when His followers practiced the principle of exclusiveness. Study through the following texts and observe how the principle of exclusiveness will bring certain results in the lives of those who practice it.

- A. Those who practiced the principle of exclusiveness enjoyed blessings from God (cf. Exodus 20:6; Deuteronomy 5:32-33; 6:17-18, 25; 7:7-8; 8:18-20; 26:11, 18-19; 30:15-20; Joshua 1:6-7, 13).
- B. Those who followed the principle of God's exclusiveness offer unique worship to God (Exodus 20:25; Numbers 18:23; 25:2-9; 29:33b; 30:31-33; Deuteronomy 13:6-9).
- C. Those who practiced God's principle of exclusiveness were "consecrated" to God – separated in their practices (Exodus 23:2, 32-33; 32:26; Deuteronomy 8:1-6, 11).
- D. Those who instilled God's principle of exclusiveness were humble in their obedience to God's will (Exodus 23:21; 32:6-9; Leviticus 10:9-11; Numbers 3:16; Deuteronomy 29:9).
- E. Those who followed God's principle of exclusiveness demonstrated "holiness" in their awe toward God (Exodus 29:4-20; Leviticus 7:20-21; Numbers 14:9, 24).
- F. Those who practiced God's principle of exclusiveness maintained an uncorrupted fellowship (Exodus 34:12-15; Leviticus 11:44-47; 18:3-5; 19:2; 20:23-26; 21:6; Numbers 18:4, 7; 22:12; 25:17; Deuteronomy 7:2; 12:30-31; 18:9-14; 23:6,14; 25:17-19).
- G. Those who practiced the principle of God's exclusiveness will recognize that there is only one standard of authority and all are accountable to this standard – the revealed will of God (Numbers 12:2; 14:43; 16:3-11; 20:12, 24; 22:12, 32).
- H. Those who practiced the principle of God's exclusiveness will receive rebukes from those in the world (Numbers 24:11; Deuteronomy 1:17; 13:6-9).
- I. Those who follow God's principle of exclusiveness will not suffer the

Almighty's judgment (Numbers 32:11b, 23; Deuteronomy 1:43; 8:20; 13:6-9; 17:7; 20:18; 28:20, 47).

Conclusion:

I. There are significant lessons to be learned about exclusiveness!

The commanded principle offers some very specific lessons which have a definite bearing upon Christians today.

1. *God is an exclusive God* – He does not practice the "all-inclusive" acceptance that modern society suggests! Just as there is "one God" there is only "one" Spirit, hope, calling, Lord, faith, baptism, God, and church.
2. *God is an intolerant God* – He refuses to tolerate practices, beliefs, and teachings that are contrary to His revealed will! He refuses substitutes. He will not accept anything but the ONE way that He has designed.
3. *God is a loving God* – He has carefully explained His will and illustrated His will so that even the simple-minded are capable of understanding!
4. *God is a consistent God* – All through history God has dealt with mankind in the same manner – the divine commands are given, explained, and illustrated. Mankind is to choose to obey or disobey God's commands. Those who obey find marvelous blessings. Those who disobey find tragic calamity. God seeks to prevent man from suffering tragedy but if man is determined to reject God, there is nothing the divine love can do but watch in sorrow at those who refuse to follow the principle of exclusiveness (Luke 19:41ff).

II. Modern man would do well to recognize the typology of the Old Testament and turn from sin and practice righteous devotion (Deuteronomy 10:20; 11:22).

III. There is an unmistakable Truth in this lesson – Man is not free to choose because God has clearly specified. This Truth causes us to see clearly these points:

1. *God has specified a "oneness" in spiritual matters* (Ephesians 4:4-6).
 - a. This oneness must be guarded (Numbers 25:17-18; Deuteronomy 7:2-6; 2 Chronicles 19:2; 1 Kings 22:44-49; 2 Kings 3:13; Ezekiel 13:22). This oneness cannot be divided, multiplied, or anything else that makes it "different" than what God has commanded.
 - b. "Holiness" must be demonstrated (Leviticus 11:44-46).

2. *God has invited* all mankind to become part of this "oneness" (Revelation 22:17; Exodus 12:13).
 - a. In order to become a part of God's oneness we must be "identified" by blood! (Romans 6:3-4; Acts 22:16; Galatians 3:27).
 - b. God's Exclusiveness does NOT limit God's Love! (Exodus 12:43-49; 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 7:8-11). God desires that ALL become a part of the ONE Church that alone offers salvation.

3. *God has insisted* that His people maintain this exclusiveness so the way of salvation will remain pure.
 - a. We must choose "sides" and demonstrate loyalty (Exodus 32:26).
 - b. We must refuse to become like everyone else (Exodus 8:23; 11:7; 23:2; Leviticus 18:3-4; Deuteronomy 4:9; 8:19-20; 12:8, 32).
 - c. We must not become arrogant (Deuteronomy 7:7-8).
 - d. Our task is to announce that God's Way is the "strait" (restricted) way and ONLY those willing to walk by the restrictions of God can be saved! (Matthew 7:13-14).
 - e. We must emphasize, never downplay, that God expects true Christians to be different and that difference is critical!

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Judsonia Church of Christ, Judsonia, Arkansas