

436 More massive mind-changes

Even on my second Acts read-through, I'm still seeing new things, and today it's yet more about 'massive mind-changes'.^{Acts 8-10}

The Guinness Book of Records for mind-changing is held by **Saul→Paul**. He knew his Bible really well and he was totally convinced he was right, so he imprisoned Christians, even approving of their stoning.^{8:1} Suddenly,^{9:1-31} it was like: You know what?! I think Jesus really *is* the Messiah! God is fulfilling Abraham's covenant: 'Through you, *all the nations of the world* will be blessed!'^{Gen 22:18}

But a close second is **Simon→Peter**.^{10:1-48} To be fair, he had the advantage of a close personal knowledge of Jesus, but I'm not sure he was as bright as Saul – he certainly didn't go to uni! But mind-changing isn't about *intelligence*; it's about *humility*. And I think I'd add *faith*: if you're to going to take the risk of a major mind-change, you really have to trust God – especially knowing what your friends will think of you!

While Peter may not have been that bright, he knew that the Bible clearly teaches that Jews (ethnic Jews or slaves) have to be circumcised,^{Ex 12:48-49} and no good Jew would *ever* enter the home of a Gentile.^{10:28} God was asking him to make a major mind-change, so Peter needed to see that vision *three* times.^{10:16} And God kindly gave him that 'coincidence' of the folk arriving from Cornelius at the *exact same time*.^{10:17}

All Jews would need to make this mind-change, so when the first non-Jews came to faith, God gave them the gift of tongues as a clear sign that 'Jesus the Messiah is Lord of *all*'.^{10:36} I can hear it: 'Wow, this is just like at Pentecost! It *must* be God at work!'

But many Jesus-believing Jews refused to make this mind-change, so the problem rumbled on for many decades. You can read about it in Acts and Paul's letters, especially Galatians: *There is **no longer Jew or Greek**; there is no longer slave or free; there is no 'male or female'; you are all one in the Messiah, Jesus.*^{Gal 3:28}

The Bible still clearly says the same today: only (1) ethnic Jews and (2) those willing to undergo circumcision, can claim to be 'God's chosen people'. *Paul knew that; Peter knew that*, so how did they become mind-changers and truly believe that anyone and everyone can be God's chosen people?^{10:35} They followed Jesus' teaching!

Following Jesus isn't about obeying the detailed prescriptions of the Law: Jesus broke some of them and encouraged his disciples to do so. Paul described that as *works*. No, it's about having *faith*, relying on broader principles to help us decide what is right for each circumstance, especially what Jesus called 'the great commandments'.

To *enter* God's kingdom we need the *humility* and *faith* to repent (do a mind-change). So is repentance (mind-changing) just a one-off? No, but it does need real *humility* and *faith* to mind-change from something we once believed strongly.

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