

# Of Every Colour

DIVERSITY is a subject occupying many in business, government and other organisations today. Amongst its different elements, an important question is how well people from different races are represented, and whether any are treated unfairly.

This is the result of a world where travel and migration have become much easier. It is easy to travel to most countries in the world. For many people it is quite straightforward to live and work there, either as a legal right or after an application process. Since the Second World War, the amount of migration has been more than ever before.

The problem lies with the tendency that some people have to distrust those who are different. Within commerce and government there have been cases where people were treated unfairly because of their nationality or their appearance. More severely, within communities and countries there have been tensions, even violence, because of racial differences. And at its extreme, civil wars and genocide have been the result. We have only to look at the events in Kosovo, Myanmar and the Kurdish territories to see examples in recent history.

## The Bible, Ahead of its Time

Back in the Old Testament, we read how God chose the Jewish nation to be His people. He turned them into a nation, gave them a land and a Law, and wanted to use them to show the world what He expects of men and women.

Yet from the start God enshrined the rights of other nations – called Gentiles or ‘strangers’ in the Bible.



The Passover was the first feast established in the Law which God gave through Moses. It was first kept in Egypt, at the end of the plagues, when God was forming His nation and freeing them from slavery. We might not be surprised if this was exclusively for Jews. But we read that the same rule applied for Jew and Gentile.

*When a stranger dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it. One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you (Exodus 12:48–49).*

The same applied to the other principles and practices of the Law, as we read overleaf:

*One ordinance shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger who dwells with you, an ordinance forever throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the LORD (Numbers 15:15).*

Once the people of Israel were established in their land, they built a temple in which to worship God. The materials for this were prepared by King David, and the work was carried out under his son, Solomon. It is interesting to read about how the work was done – involving Gentiles as well as Jews. You can read about this in the early chapters of 2 Chronicles.

When the work was finished, there was a huge feast and great offerings made to dedicate the amazing building. In the prayer he gave at this occasion, look at what Solomon said:

*Moreover, concerning a foreigner, who is not of Your people Israel, but has come from a far country for the sake of Your great name and Your mighty hand and Your outstretched arm, when they come and pray in this temple; then hear from heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, that all peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as do Your people Israel, and that they may know that this temple which I have built is called by Your name (2 Chronicles 6:32–3).*

## God Calls Everybody

God should be placed at the centre of everything, and all peoples of the world can come to Him. This is made even clearer in the work of Jesus. He was a Jew but through his sacrifice everyone can be part of God's plan.

*"I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to myself." This he said, signifying by what death he would die (John 12:32–33).*

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul talks about this subject. He shows how, through Jesus, all people can be included in the promises of the Old Testament.

*The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed" (Galatians 3:8).*

It is very worthwhile to read the whole of this chapter, where he explains how the death and resurrection of Jesus brings everyone together in him, concluding like this:

*As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus (v27–28).*

## A Colourful Future

This is good news. God's invitation is open to everyone. We can all read His Word, obey Him and be baptised. In doing so, we become part of His family and can look forward to His Kingdom here on the earth. In his vision of God's purpose being fulfilled, the Apostle John saw:

*A great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes (Revelation 7:9).*

