

**UNIT 5 EPHESIANS LESSON 4****"THE RECONCILIATION OF JEW AND GENTILE IN CHRIST"****STUDY PASSAGE: Ephesians 2:11-22**

Paul commences this section with the instruction to "remember". Most of Paul's thought was concerned with the future, with the glory that shall be revealed, and with the goal of the high calling of Christ; but there was for him, a time to remember. He could see that the only way these people could enter fully into an understanding of the extent of their salvation, was by remembering the completely hopeless condition in which they had been. Already he has reminded them that they were dead in trespasses and sins, now he goes on to remind them of their hopeless condition as Gentiles. As we read this passage, we should remember that all this applies to us. If Christ had not "brought us near" by his death, we would yet be as far off as this passage describes.

However, although one purpose of this passage is to remind the Gentiles of their hopeless position before Christ came, the main purpose of the passage is to declare the reconciliation that Christ has brought about between Jews and Gentiles.

THE CONTRAST OF GENTILES AND JEWS BEFORE CHRIST

The outward mark of difference between Jews and Gentiles was that Jews were circumcised (v11). However, although that was only something done in the flesh by human hands, it did illustrate a difference that went deep.

The Gentiles before Christ

Without (the hope of) Christ
or the Messiah
and as such
alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel, "foreigners",
strangers to the Covenants
of Promise
and therefore
with no hope
without God in the world

The Jews before Christ

With (the hope of) Christ
or the Messiah
and
the commonwealth of Israel

Parties to the Covenants
of Promise
and therefore
with hope
with God in the world

NOTES

The Gentiles - all who were not Jews. Despised by the Jews.

Without Christ - not here "Christ" as Jesus Christ, but "Christ" the "Messiah of promise" in the Old Testament.

The Commonwealth of Israel - The true people of God.



The Covenants of Promise - God had made covenants or agreements with Israel which had included the promise of the Messiah; see Genesis 17:1-14; 26:24; 28:13-15; Exodus 24:1-11. Foulkes says (page 80), "The covenants brought Israel into a special relationship of grace with God, and so to the hope of a deliverance and future glory that would be theirs."

No hope - This was a pretty true picture of the society of the day; not only did they not have the hope of Israel, they had no hope at all.

The Outcome of This Deep Difference was Enmity

Paul calls this enmity a dividing wall of hostility (v14). No doubt he was thinking of the wall in the Jerusalem Temple, which barred the way of Gentiles into the inner area on pain of death, when he used this metaphor.

THE RECONCILIATION OF JEW AND GENTILE IN CHRIST

Paul saw that the basic cause of this enmity (v15) or hostility was the "law of commandments and ordinances" by which the Jews gained their access to God, and by which the Gentiles were excluded.

What Christ has Done to Make Peace

In summary - Christ has made peace between Jews and Gentiles because He has established for both a new way of access to God that makes them now in him the true people of God. So He is our Peace.

The thought proceeds as follows:

1. Christ has granted the Gentiles access to God through His blood (v13). "His blood" stands for his sacrificial death on the cross. "The cross" in v16 has the same meaning.
2. He has broken down the middle wall of partition by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, v15. No longer can a Jew hope for access to God because of his keeping of the law, i.e., by making the sacrifices and performing the other rituals. This was only ever done in anticipation of Christ; now this anticipation has been fulfilled by his perfect sacrifice and perfect life and hence the system abolished.
3. He now grants Jews access to God in the same way as the Gentiles:
i.e., through the cross, v16
in the one Spirit, v18
4. He has brought both into one new body, vv. 15 and 16. It is not that the Gentiles have been made into the new Israel, which is the church, the body of Christ. Both Jews and Gentiles make up this new body.
5. The whole point is expressed again in vv. 17 and 18 by saying that Christ has given the same message of peace with God to both Jews and Gentiles, and has granted to both the same access to God in the Spirit.
6. The result is that by both being brought to God in the same way, we are brought close to each other. As our access to God is in him, so our peace with each other is in him. He is our peace.



The Results of His Reconciliation for the Gentiles - v19

The Gentiles are now no longer alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel, or the true people of God, but are fellow citizens with all who have been, and are, saints. Paul then uses the more intimate metaphor of the household. Not only are we citizens of the state, but members of the family.

The Household of God – vv. 20-22

Although the word "household" refers to the people in the house, Paul now goes on to use it of the house or building itself. The phrase "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" continues the theme of our unity with the true people of God, but the main part of the passage is concerned with the way we are related to Christ.

He is the one who gives the structure its unity, v21. He is the one by whom we individually are incorporated into the structure, v22.

The Corporate Nature of Christianity

As evangelicals, we rightly place great stress on the necessity of individual salvation. However, we ought to notice that the Scripture, as illustrated by this passage, lays great stress on the fact that our salvation involves us being together the people of God. In 1:18, we saw that God's inheritance for us is among the saints, or in fellowship, and now we see here that the full habitation of God with men is in the church - now as it is growing, but supremely when it will be complete.

QUESTION 1:

Paul reminds the Gentile Christians that they once were kept away from God by 3 disadvantages. What were they (2:12)?

QUESTION 2:

In 2:13, what function does Christ's blood have in bringing about a change? What is the change? Why was it Christ's death that had to occur, and not the death of some other "good" man?

QUESTION 3:

How did Christ make peace between Jews and Gentiles (2:14, 15)?

QUESTION 4:

How did Christ reconcile both groups to God?



QUESTION 5:

Paul draws to a close his explanation of how Gentiles and Jews can be one in Christ, by drawing a picture of the church (2:19-22). In your own words, what is this illustration? How would it help give the Gentiles a better understanding of their place in the church, along with the Jews? Why is the cornerstone important? Who fills this position?

QUESTION FOR GROUP STUDY:

How does the illustration in 2:19-22, help you understand your place in the household of faith or the church?