

The Church, God's Plan for This Age: The Only Hope for Racial Reconciliation

Ephesians 2:11-23

July 5, 2020

Introduction:

- The message of this passage is foundational to the overall theme and message of the book of Ephesians, the unity and peace of the Body of Christ, the church, expressed through a life of love.
- The structure of this passage indicates that it is addressed primarily to Gentile believers in Christ.
- Paul was likely attempting to correct anti-Semitism among these Gentile believers (See Acts 18:18-19:10).
- They were to remember that unbelieving Jews were still the covenant people of God, and closer to God than the unbelieving Gentile.
- They were to remember that they should consider themselves to be privileged to be related to believing Jews as equals "in Christ."

Message:

1. The Past Condition of the Gentiles – They were far from God (11-12)
 - a. Gentiles in the flesh – They lacked the physical sign of membership in God's covenant nation of Israel (11a).
 - i. Circumcision was the outward sign of participation in God's covenant with the nation of Israel.
 - ii. Gentiles lacked this symbol and were outside the covenant.
 - b. Described as Uncircumcision by the Jews – They were despised by the covenant people (11b).
 - i. The Jews were commanded to be a light to the Gentiles, but instead despised them.
 - ii. Jesus made a great stir when He chose to travel through Samaria rather than go around it (John 4).
 - c. Without a Messiah – (12a).
 - i. There was no Messianic promise given outside of Israel.
 - ii. The Messiah of Daniel 9 is the one who will usher in God's kingdom and though the OT includes Gentiles in the kingdom, it is only as nations who are subject to Israel.
 - d. Alienated from Citizenship in Israel – They had no legal claim to God's covenant promises with Israel (Abrahamic, Mosaic, Land, Davidic, and New Covenants) (12b).
 - i. Since OT Gentiles were outside the covenants, they had no relationship to God.
 - e. Strangers from the covenants of promise – They had no relationship to any of God's unilateral covenant promises with Israel (12c).
 - f. Having no hope – They had no positive certainty about their future (12d).
 - i. The gods of the Gentiles were fickle and unreliable.
 - ii. The Gentiles offered sacrifices to these gods for health and prosperity, but they had no assurance that they were being heard.
 - g. Without God in the world – They had no relationship with the true God in a world dominated by the wicked one (12e).
 - i. The Gentiles had no relationship to the true God and were under His judgment (Romans 1:18-32).
2. The Present Condition of Believing Jews and Gentiles – Jews and Gentiles are equally made near to God (13-18).
 - a. The Gentiles are made near by the blood of Christ (13).
 - b. Jews and Gentiles now participate jointly in the Body of Christ (14-18).
 - i. Christ is our peace (14)
 1. Christ made both one
 2. Christ destroyed the dividing wall
 - ii. The twofold purpose of Christ's being our peace (15)
 1. To create in Himself one new man
 2. To reconcile both Jew and Gentile (16)
 - iii. The reconciliation of Jew and Gentile (16)
 1. In one body – the sphere in which reconciliation takes place is the body of Christ.
 2. To God – the goal of reconciliation; Both Jew and Gentile are reconciled to each other, only because they are separately reconciled to God.
 3. Through the cross – the means by which reconciliation takes place.

- iv. Christ proclaimed peace to those both near and far (17).
 - 1. This is likely referring to the preaching of the gospel on the day of Pentecost.
 - 2. The message that was preached was the gospel which produced peace with God for Jew and Gentile.
 - v. Through the Holy Spirit, Christ provides access to the Father for both Jew and Gentile (18).
 - 1. Under the Mosaic Law, only the high priest had direct access to God once a year; the Gentiles had no access at all.
 - 2. Through the Holy Spirit, both Jew and Gentile can approach God as Father!
3. The Conclusion: Gentiles are included with Jews as the people of God (19-22).
- a. Pictured as Citizenship in a Commonwealth (19)
 - b. Pictured as a Building and Temple (20-22)
 - i. The Foundation (20a)
 - ii. The Cornerstone (20b)
 - iii. The Building Stones (21-22)