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C0437 -- September 22, 2004 -- Ephesians 2:11-13 -- Former Jew-Gentile
Hostility

Let's briefly review Eph. 2:8-10. This is the section Paul devotes to our New Position Individually. In v. 8 we have a famous verse on salvation. ***For by grace you are saved through faith: and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God:***” For by grace you are saved emphasizes the present results of salvation. You are presently ‘safe’ emphasizing eternal security of the individual Christian (contrary to Campbellism). The controversy in this verse centers on the word ***this*** or ***that*** in some translations. What does ***this*** refer back too? Well, ***this*** is neuter so it can't refer to ***faith*** which is feminine, it can't refer to ***grace*** because ***grace*** is feminine, and it can't refer to ***saved*** because ***saved*** is masculine. So, what does it refer too? Well, it turns out that it refers to everything from v. 4 to v. 8 ending with the word ***faith***. This is consistent with other uses of the neuter ***this*** in Ephesians, as in Eph. 1:15 which refers back to 1:3-14, 3:1 referring back to 2:11-22, and 3:14 which refers back to 3:1-13. The neuter ***this*** can refer back to a complex of things in both masculine and feminine genders. Such is the case here as well in 2:8. What is debated is whether ***faith*** itself is a gift of God. Reformed theology says ***faith*** is a gift in the sense that God first regenerates an individual placing the seed of faith within a person so that person can give the faith back to God. This amounts to an unscriptural plan of salvation. Regeneration is never said to precede faith. What they are trying to avoid is humans adding anything to the plan of salvation, such as faith. They say that if we have faith then we would have something to boast about before God, our faith. However, we know from Paul's writings that faith is not a work, it is not added to salvation, it is the means through which God saves. It is receptive. It is the empty hands of faith receiving salvation. The reception of a gift never adds anything to the gift itself. The Bible is clear that a human must believe in order for God to give them the gift of salvation. The gift here is not “faith itself” but the fact that God designed a ***by grace through faith*** salvation. This conclusion does not preclude the fact that for a person to have faith God must initiate the process (John 6:37, 44, 65). Paul then goes on to say that this by grace through faith salvation does not find its source in human beings by saying it is ***not of yourselves***. He also adds that it is ***not of***

works. Salvation is not given on the basis of anything within us or because of our human efforts. God hates human effort. Human effort nullifies grace (Rom. 11:6). If it was by human effort then we could boast, but it's not *so that no one may boast*. We are to boast in God and in the cross of Christ! Since human faith is not a work, since faith doesn't save (God saves), and since faith doesn't change salvation in any way, then just because a human believes does not mean he has anything to boast about (Rom. 4:4-5). In fact, we know from elsewhere that it is God who enables a man to believe in the first place. But God does not first give a person faith just so a person can then give it back to God. That's not biblical Christianity. So, we have three things Paul is affirming and two things he is rejecting: 1) God = source of salvation, 2) grace = basis of salvation (objective), 3) faith = means of salvation (subjective). The two things Paul is rejecting are that 1) man = source of salvation and 2) works = basis of salvation. In v. 10 Paul goes on to tell us the reason why salvation is not by good works. It is because we are His workmanship; literally, we are His "work of art" (NJB). God's goal was that we would be created in Christ Jesus *for* good works, not *by* good works. Salvation is not the end. It's the beginning. God saved us to walk in good works. We are never saved *by* good works but we are saved *for* good works. These works have been *prepared beforehand*, that is, before we were in Christ Jesus. In fact, they were prepared before the foundation of the world along with our election (1:4). The purpose of His preparing them beforehand is so that we might walk in them. They are already prepared. We need not *do* them, just walk *in* them. We do not do a good work for God; God does a good work in and through us. It is grace through and through. It is grace from beginning to end. We are therefore saved by grace through faith and we walk by grace through faith.

E. NEW POSITION ORGANICALLY (2:11-22)

Paul has clearly demonstrated the dead condition of all men, Jew and Gentile without distinction, and the gracious provision of God making us alive, raising us, and seating us with Christ in the heavenlies by saving us according to a by grace through faith salvation. This was wholly of God and not of works lest any man could boast. We are to boast in God and in the cross of Christ. Further, salvation is not the end, we are the artwork of God created in Christ Jesus for good works. We are not saved by good works but for good works. He prepared these works beforehand so that we might walk in them. We are not doing a good work for God but rather He is doing a good work through us, earthen vessels. **But even this is not the end. We are not left alone but are united with other believers into an organic unity. This is Paul's next point in 2:11-22, the second main division of chapter 2. Eph. 2:1-10 was our New Position Individually, but here Paul embarks on**

our New Position Organically. “This forms the basis of the discussion for the rest of the epistle.”ⁱ vv. 11-22 can be divided into three parts:

1. Statement of the Organic Union (2:11-13)
2. Explanation of the Organic Union of Jews and Gentiles into One New Man (2:14-18)
3. Consequences of the Organic Union (2:19-22)

Tonight, we will look at the Statement of the Organic Union (2:11-13).

1. Statement of the Organic Union (2:11-13)

In Eph. 2:11-13 Paul explains that this organic union takes place *in Christ*. Before the cross Jews and Gentiles had nothing to do with one another. These two people groups were strangers. The union is not between Jews and Gentiles per se, but between Jews and Gentiles who believe in Christ.

Greek Text 2:11 Dio. mnhmoneu,ete o[ti pote. u`mei/j ta. e;qnh evn sarki,(oi` lego,menoi avkrobusti,a u`po. th/j legome,nhj peritomh/j evn sarki. ceiropoih,tou(
Translation 2:11 Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, the ones who are called 'uncircumcision' by the so-called 'circumcision' in the flesh performed by hands,

a. Past Disunion (2:11-12)

In Eph. 2:11-12, before stating the organic union in Christ, Paul states the previous disunion. This is similar to Paul’s structure in 2:1-10. Remember how Paul wanted to sketch a portrait of our lost condition before describing our saved condition by the grace of God. So, now Paul wants to state our Past Disunion so that we will appreciate our Present Union in Christ. So, in 2:1-10 Paul described us going from sinner to saint. Here he describes the Jew/Gentile going from hostility to union in Christ.

(1) Uncircumcised (2:11)

Dio. mnhmoneu,ete, “Therefore remember”...Even though all Jews and Gentiles were dead in their transgressions and sins Paul wants the Ephesian Gentiles to remember that they had it worse off than the Jews. The Jews at least had an advantage over the Gentiles. Turn to Romans 3:2. Up to this point in Romans Paul has described three types of people,

all of which are “under sin”. In 1:18-32 Paul said the Pagan Gentiles were under sin. In 2:1-16 Paul said that the Cultured Gentiles were under sin, in 2:17-29 Paul said that the Jews were under sin. However, in 3:1-2 Paul says that the Jews did have an advantage over the Gentiles. “*Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? ² Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God.*” According to Paul the Jew had a great advantage over the Gentile. The Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. This means that God spoke verbally to Israel’s prophets who recorded the very words of God. The words of God are the words of life and God entrusted the Jews with recording and preserving His word. This is why Americans today have a huge advantage over tribes and peoples that do not have the word of God in their language. This is why many Bible translators and missionaries are so zealous to translate the word of God into other languages. Because they know that these people need to hear the word of God if they are going to be saved. So, we don’t often realize the huge advantage that we as Americans have by having the word of God in our language. Such was the advantage of the Jew over the Gentile in the 1st century. So, the advantage was special revelation, and special revelation is required for salvation. Paul wants these Ephesian Gentiles to remember the following...

o[ti pote. u`mei/j ta. e;qnh evn sarki, (“*that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh,*”). This *hoti* clause introduces the content of what Paul wants them to remember. The Gentiles are to remember how they were *formerly* viewed by the Jews before they had received the gracious gift of salvation in Christ. The definite article *ta* before **Gentiles** indicates that the whole class of Gentiles was viewed this way by the Jews. To the Jew the world was divided into two parts: Jews and Gentiles. Every nation on the planet outside of Israel was considered Gentile and the Jews were a totally separate nation, set apart unto God as His possession. By the phrase **Gentiles in the flesh** Paul is not denoting their lost spiritual condition, for both Jews and Gentiles were *in the flesh*, that would not serve to make any distinction. What he means by **Gentiles in the flesh** must refer to their uncircumcised flesh. So, here *flesh* has a physical connotation not a spiritual condition. Physical circumcision is one thing that separated Jews and Gentiles. Jews considered Gentiles to be inferior simply because of an observance of their physical flesh. Then Paul goes on to describe this...

oi` lego,menoi avkrobusti,a, “*the ones who are called 'uncircumcision'*” are the Gentiles. **Uncircumcision** is *anarthrous* and therefore gives it a force of contempt. The word uncircumcision means foreskin. The Jews viewed the Gentiles with great contempt because they had “foreskins”. Sorry for the graphic nature here, but Paul is the one sketching this portrait, not me. And if Paul taught it then I’ll teach it, graphic or not. So,

the Jews hated the Gentiles because they had foreskins. Interestingly, in 1954 Dr. Ernest Wyngren thought he discovered a close connection between cervical cancer in women and male circumcision. What his research showed was that Jewish women had a much lower percentage of cervical cancer than women of other nations. He argued that the reason was because of the ‘circumcision’ of Jewish men. He argued that the substance called ‘smegla’ was linked to cervical cancer.ⁱⁱ However, more recent research has shown this not to be the case. Instead, the reason there was such a low amount of cervical cancer among Jewish women was because of their monogamous relationships. It seems that cervical cancer is the result of a sexually transmitted disease (Human Papilloma Virus). So, the reason Wyngren discovered Jewish women had such low levels of cervical cancer was because they followed the biblical principle of monogamous marriage, not because of circumcised males. Nevertheless, the Jewish people hated the Gentiles because they were uncircumcised.

u`po. th/j legome,nhj peritomh/j evn sarki. ceiropoih,tou(“*by the so-called 'circumcision' in the flesh performed by hands,*”. So, the Gentiles had been labeled “foreskins” and the Jews carried the label *circumcision*. Interestingly, the Greek word for *circumcision* is *peritome*, *peri* meaning “around” (e.g., *perimeter*) and *tome* meaning “to cut”. (e.g., a-tom, an atom was thought to be something that could not be cut; *a-* is always a negation of what follows on a word, therefore “atom” means “not to cut”, another example is the word a-millennialism). So, *peritome* meant “to cut around”, namely the cutting off of the foreskin. The Jews were very proud to be circumcised. It was something they boasted about in the ancient world. This is because *circumcision* was the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 17:9-14). All covenants had signs that accompanied them.

<u>Covenant</u>	<u>Sign</u>
Noahic	Rainbow
Abrahamic	Circumcision
Mosaic	Sabbath
Davidic	Surviving Royal Line
New	Lord’s Supper

Moses was almost struck down by YHWH because Moses didn’t circumcise his son (Exod. 3:24-25). Before his conversion Paul was proud of being circumcised on the 8th day (Phil. 3:5). 8th day circumcision also has interesting medical insights. Apparently, the blood clotting mechanism required during circumcision requires two compounds that are not in the right amounts until the 8th day (prothrombin and vitamin K). In fact, vitamin K is at its highest level in an infant on the 8th day, the day of Jewish circumcision. Now, is it by

Divine Design or impersonal chance that the Jews waited till the 8th day? If they had circumcised on the 2nd or 5th days the baby boys would have bled to death. Today, medical doctors give children a vitamin K shot so that the circumcision can be performed on the day of birth and you don't have to go back to the hospital. Most Americans have their boys circumcised because the father was circumcised or for cleanliness purposes. According to the NT physical circumcision is nothing compared to spiritual circumcision of the heart (Phil. 3:2-6). It is not wrong to have physical circumcision, what is wrong is to place confidence in the flesh (which the Jews did). They thought that physical circumcision signified eternal salvation. Of course, it does not; never did and never will. However, I do think that all Jews should presently be circumcised because it is a sign of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 17:9-14). I challenge anyone to show me just one text where the Abrahamic Covenant is said to be fulfilled and/or any text showing that circumcision as a sign of the Abrahamic Covenant has ceased (cf. Gen. 17:9-14). Circumcision as a sign of the Abrahamic Covenant is never renounced in the NT; this is because the Abrahamic Covenant is an eternal covenant. Now, it is true that circumcision on the basis of the Mosaic Law or as a way of salvation is renounced many times in the NT. No one should ever put confidence in physical circumcision as a means of salvation, but it is a sign of the Abrahamic Covenant, which is eternal.

The phrase *in the flesh* designates where the circumcision was done and the words *performed by hands* signifies how it was done. The adjective *performed* “always depicts what a person does with his or her hands in contrast to the work of God.”ⁱⁱⁱ Physical circumcision done by human hands stands in sharp contrast with spiritual circumcision done by God (Rom. 2:28-29; Phil. 3:2-3; Col. 2:11).”

Jesus Christ came to destroy this hostile situation between the Gentiles and Jews through His cross which formed a basis for uniting believing Jews and believing Gentiles in one body. The Ephesian believers were mostly Gentile believers and they could easily forget this important history which might lead to arrogance toward the Jew. Remembering this history should cause us to never look upon the Jews with arrogance. Paul also warns against this in Rom. 11:17-21. Now the issue is being in Christ, there is no privilege of the Jew over the Gentile or the Gentile over the Jew as was present before the gracious salvation in Christ.

(2) Unprivileged (2:12)

Greek Text 2:12 ο[ti h=te tw/| kairw/| evkei,nw| cwri,j Cristou/(avphllotriwme,noi th/j politei,aj tou/ VIsrah.l kai. xe,noi tw/n diaqhkwn th/j evpaggeli,aj(evlpi,da mh. e;contej kai. a;qeoi evn tw/| ko,smw|

Translation 2:12 that you were at that time without Christ, being alienated from the citizenship of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Next, in v. 12, in addition to the hostility caused by lack of circumcision Paul gives five privileges that Israel had over the Gentiles before their conversion. Paul is continuing to give history to the Ephesians so they will remember their former position.

(a) No Hope of a Messiah

ο[ti h=te tw/| kairw/| evkei,nw| cwri,j Cristou/(“*that you were at that time without Christ,*” indicates the first privilege Gentiles lacked before conversion. They were *at that time*, that is, before conversion, *without Christ*. The distinction here is not between being saved versus being unsaved. All saved Jews and Gentiles were at some time without Christ in the sense of being unsaved. What this refers to is the Gentiles lack of a Messianic expectation or hope. This is something the Jews did have. Israel had this hope because the OT Scriptures, which were entrusted to the Jews, prophesied of the coming Messiah (Gen. 49:10; Deut. 18:15; Ps. 2; 45:3-5, 17; 89:22-25; Zech. 9:9-10; Mic. 5:1-4, et. al).^{iv} Therefore, the privilege Israel had was Messianic expectation. Gentiles did not have this expectation; they were *without Christ*. Paul says the Jews had the privilege of having the Messiah come from the Jewish lineage. In fact, this is the reason for the extensive genealogies in the OT and in Matthew and Luke. People always wonder why are these stupid genealogies all throughout Scripture, there’s no benefit to them so why are they there, can’t we just talk about Jesus! This is a wrong attitude. These genealogies are absolutely critical, as they trace the line of the Messiah Himself! In fact, the Jews kept very detailed genealogies much more detailed than the one’s preserved in Scripture. However, these documents are not available today because they were destroyed in the Roman siege of Jerusalem, under Titus, in AD70. This is one proof that the Messiah had to come before AD70. From 70AD forward there is no way to trace the Messiah’s lineage to see whether a proclaimed Messiah comes from the line of David or not. So, Messiah had to come before AD70 to prove Davidic lineage in accordance with the Davidic Covenant (1 Chron. 17:10b-14; also cf. Isa. 8:10). Paul used the genealogies to prove the Messiahship of Jesus in Acts 13:23.

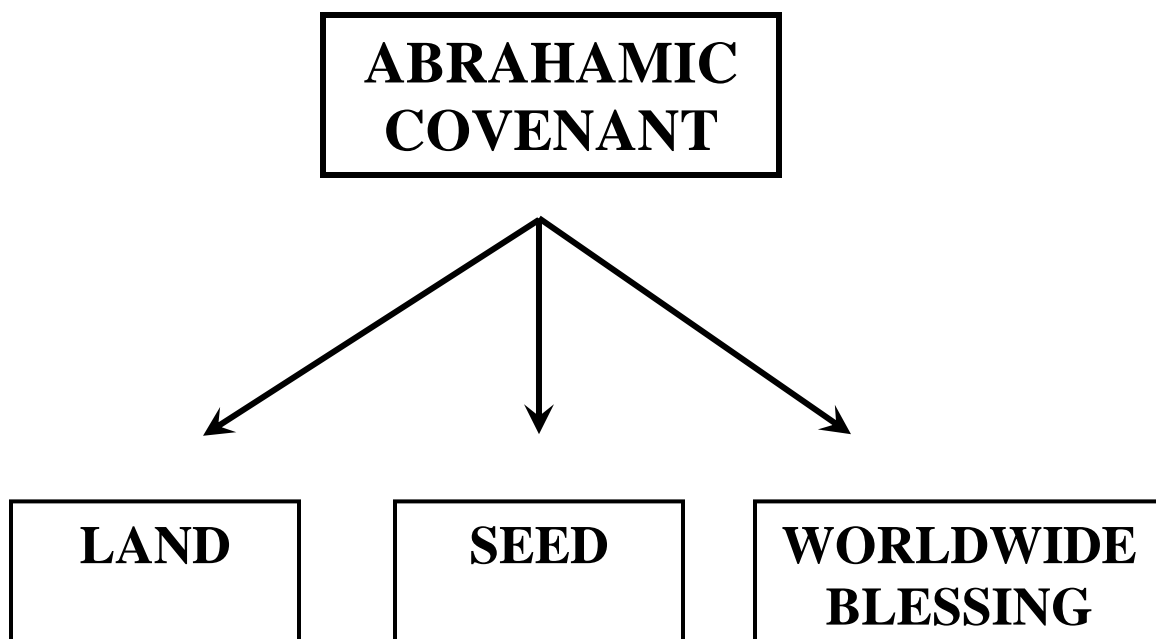
(b) No Citizenship

avphllotriwme,noi th/j politei,aj tou/ VIsrah.l, “*being alienated from the citizenship of Israel*” refers to the second privilege Israel had over the Gentiles. The difficult word in this phrase is the word *politeia* and whether it should be translated “commonwealth/state” or “citizenship”. It seems best to see this as referring to “citizenship,” which carries with it certain privileges of being a part of the community of Israel chosen by God to be recipients of the covenant promises rather than a “commonwealth/state”. Three reasons can be given why this word should be translated *citizenship* rather than *commonwealth*: 1) Verse 19 says believers have become fellow citizens with all the saints, not fellow countrymen (Greek word *sumpoliteia*), If Paul meant Gentiles have become fellow countrymen, then he would be saying we became a part of Israel. That is clearly not what he is saying. 2) Being a citizen of a state has privileges that one who merely resides in a state does not enjoy. 3) There was no state of Israel functioning in Paul’s day. They were under the state of Rome. What these Gentiles needed was the special privileges of God that came through being a citizen of Israel. Up to this point historically, some Gentiles were admitted into Judaism as proselytes but Gentiles as a whole did not have access. They were excluded and therefore *alienated from the citizenship of Israel*. Gentiles needed access to the third privilege...

(c) No Relationship to Covenants

kai. xe,noi tw/n diaqhkw/n th/j evpaggeli,aj(“*and strangers to the covenants of promise,*” refers to the third privilege Israel had over the Gentiles. The Gentiles had no relationship to the covenants of promise which were between God and Israel. First of all, what is a covenant? Now, don’t think about this word as some kind of spiritual ooey goeey mystical thing. It’s a very concrete word. In our day we’d translate this word as ‘contract’. And why do we have contracts? You sign a contract when you rent an apartment or house. You sign a contract when you buy a car or a house. Why do people require contracts? To measure behavior. To see if the signers of the contract fulfill what the contract says they agreed to do. Now, this is what a covenant was. A covenant was a contract made between God and Israel to measure the behavior of the signers. Interestingly, it has been noted that the only nation who made contracts with their God was Israel. Now, the big question here in v. 12 revolves around what contract(s) is Paul talking about that Gentiles were strangers too? The key lies in the fact that the word *covenants* is plural and the genitive *of promise* indicates their unconditional quality. The *covenants of promise* therefore refer to the unconditional covenants. An unconditional covenant is marked by the words “I will” throughout the giving of the covenant. God will accomplish the unconditional covenants. The first, and major unconditional covenant is the Abrahamic Covenant given in Gen. 12:1-

3, 7; 13:14-17; 15:1-21; 17:1-21 and 22:15-18. Interesting thing is that only God signed the Abrahamic Contract. So, whose behavior is being measured in the Abrahamic Covenant? Only God's behavior is being measured because only God passed between the animal pieces in Genesis 15. He's the only signer of the contract. Abraham was in a deep sleep! So, the Abrahamic Contract is a measuring stick to see whether God is faithful to His promises or not? Further, since God is the only signer then this is an unconditional covenant. Man has to do nothing for the terms to be fulfilled. God's behavior is not contingent on human choices. God will fulfill the Abrahamic Contract. By application, the Abrahamic Covenant gives the structure of world history. Any history course in any public or private institution that does not deal with the Abrahamic Covenant cannot understand history at all. In such schemes, history is always reduced to a pile of dates that have no real meaning. The Abrahamic Covenant gives the structure for understanding the dynamics of history and is therefore vital to a proper understanding of history. If you're a believer here today and you don't like history then you don't like salvation because this historical covenant is the basis of all salvation! No one is saved, Jew or Gentile, apart from the Abrahamic Covenant. No one. There is no salvation outside of the Covenants of God. Therefore, Christians ought to love history because their salvation depends on it and only the Bible orients us to understand history. What is the pagan outlook on history? Their old saying says it all, "Life is just a series of one damn thing after another." Later, Henry Ford came along and revised this saying, "No, no, life is a series of the same damn thing over and over." And he was a humanist to the core. So, you have got to grasp onto these Covenants. They are BIG things in the plan of God. They are HUGE. Now, in these covenants there are many physical and spiritual provisions made for Israel but there are three major aspects of the Abrahamic Covenant:



These three aspects are amplified in the three other covenants that Paul has in mind here in Eph. 2:12. These are the Land Covenant (or Palestinian Covenant) outlined in Deut. 30, the Davidic Covenant outlined in 2 Chron. 17:10b-14 and 2 Sam. 7:12-16, and the New Covenant outlined in Jer. 31:31-34. These unconditional covenants are the framework for understanding history. And if you don't understand these covenants, you'll never understand history. It doesn't matter who you are, it doesn't matter where you are, it just doesn't matter. You can't understand the flow and dynamics of history if you don't understand these covenants. And God is the author of this history and God is going to bring these events to pass no matter what men do. God is in control of this thing and to know history you have to know it in relation to God's plan for Israel. So, little bitty Israel, located at the center of the world geographically and controversially, along with her covenants with God, is the key to history. The Gentiles were strangers to these covenants. Your salvation comes from the promised Jewish Messiah and this Messiah was promised to come in the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants. So, your salvation rests on these covenants! If you doubt this look at Paul's argument in Romans 11:15-21 (Olive Tree).

(d) No Hope of Salvation

evlpi,da mh. e;contej, "having no hope" is the fourth privilege Israel had over the Gentiles. They had hope in a coming Redeemer, a coming Messiah. The OT was full of these promises. The fact that Gentiles had no hope logically follows from the previous fact that they were strangers to the covenants of promise! Gentiles had no idea of a coming deliverer. They had no hope of anything whatsoever because God's covenants were made with Israel and God's salvation comes through the covenants. Therefore, for Gentiles to have hope they must have some relationship to these covenants.

(e) No Belief in God

kai. a;qeoi evn tw/| ko,smw| "and without God in the world." Finally, the fifth privilege Israel had that the Gentiles lacked was *atheos*, from which we get the word "atheism". You may not know this but it was the Jews and Christians who used to get accused of being "atheists" because we did not believe in the gods (plural). Paul's intention here is to say that Gentiles in general believed in many gods and did not believe or desire the one true God (Rom. 1:18-23). The Gentiles were "atheists", *without God in the world*. Israel was

to be a priest among the nations to bring the light of God to the world (Exod. 19:5-6). If they had Gentiles would have been able to participate in the worship of the one true God. But Israel became a hotbed of religion because God warned them not to mix with the pagan nations. What ended up happening with Israel? They mixed with the pagan nations so much that they adopted pagan idolatrous practices rather than infecting the nations with truth of the one true God. (Is the modern Church at large doing this same thing by bringing secular music, secular methods, secular marketing, secular psychology, secular education, and secular speakers into the Church?) Yes, they are. We are to be a spiritually distinct people like Israel was to be a physically distinct people. Otherwise, we will be transformed into the world. And, for the most part, most churches are already so worldly they are totally ineffective for Christ and are instruments of the devil. Christ strongly warned against these secularizing trends in churches in Revelation 2-3. We are called to be the Church of Jesus Christ not the Church of the World and its humanism!

b. Present Union (2:13)

Greek Text 2:13 nuni. de. evn Cristw/| VIhsou/ u`mei/j oi[pote o;ntej makra.n evgenh,qhte evggju.j evn tw/| ai[mati tou/ Cristou/Å

Translation 2:13 *But now in Christ Jesus you who were formerly far away have been brought near by the blood of the Christ.*

These verses contrast our previous position apart from all privileges with our present position after conversion.

nuni. de. evn Cristw/| VIhsou/, “*But now in Christ Jesus*”. In contrast to who we were formerly (v. 11) we are *now in Christ Jesus*. Before we were separate from Christ and all Messianic expectation, now we are *in Christ Jesus* (2:4-10). Our true position is no longer in “trespasses and sins” (v. 1, 5) or “in the world” (v. 12), but in Christ Jesus. *Jesus* is added here to Christ to signify the One who was the Messiah who came to earth.

u`mei/j oi[pote o;ntej makra.n evgenh,qhte evggju.j, “*you who were formerly far away have been brought near*”. *you* here refers to the Gentiles. The “we”/“you” distinction between Jew and Gentile has now been clearly introduced in v. 11 (it cannot be read into the prior verses (e.g., 2:1-10). The Gentiles were *formerly far away*. This is exactly how the OT describes the Gentiles nations (Deut. 28:49; 29:22; 1 Kgs. 8:41; Isa. 5:26; Jer. 5:15). Israel was described as “near” (Ps. 148:14). “However, in the present context the reference is to their being brought near to God, “not by being turned into a Jew, but by being included along with the Jew *in Christ Jesus*.” The Jews were near to God because they had the

revelation of God...The Gentiles, lacking this revelation, were far away but by the work of Christ had been brought near to God.”^v Peter recognized this truth in part on the Day of Pentecost and preached the good news to all, even those who were “far off”, clearly referring to the Gentile nations (Acts 2:39). Peter got off to a right start but we know he flinched later in Galatians. It’s ok though, God grows us up.

en tw/| ai[mati tou/ Cristou/ *“by the blood of the Christ.”* The *en* is an instrument of means. Thus, the means by which the Gentiles *have been brought near* is *by the blood of the Christ*. The significance of the *blood of Christ* is that it is a metaphor for the sacrificial death of Christ which was necessary to satisfy God’s holiness and allow Him to offer salvation freely. The fact that the Greek adds the definite article *the* before *Christ* indicates that this is the blood of Israel’s promised Messiah. It was in Him that the hostility between Jews and Gentiles because of circumcision was overcome. It was in Him that the five privileges that Israel had over the Gentiles have been overcome. It was the costly death of Christ on the cross which brought us Gentiles near to God.

In conclusion, Paul is describing our past disunion. He wants to give us a history lesson regarding our past disunion. We were uncircumcised and therefore the Jew had great contempt for us. The Jew relished his relationship with God as demonstrated by his seal of circumcision. Not only was their hostility between Jew and Gentile but there were also five privileges that Jews had over Gentiles. Israel had a Messianic Hope; we had no hope of a coming Messiah. Israel had the privileges of citizenship as the people of God; we had none of these privileges. Israel had the privilege of being under the covenants of promise; we did not have this privilege. Israel had the privilege of having hope in a redeeming Messiah, Gentiles had no such hope. Israel had a belief in the one true God, Gentiles had no such belief, we believed in many gods. But now, through the sacrificial death of Christ Gentiles have been brought near to God. We’ll look more at this union next week. Have Gentiles become Jews? Is the Church a new Israel? Is the Church spiritual Israel? What exactly is the Church? Paul is very interested in defining and making clear the Church and its place in God’s plan.

ⁱ Hoehner, Harold W., *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 351.

ⁱⁱ The connection between uncircumcised males and female cervical cancer has been questioned in recent years. Many say there is no connection and some say there is a connection when one has many partners. The first to make the connection was Ernest Wynder in 1954.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hoehner, Harold W., *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 354.

^{iv} Interestingly, many Jews of the OT expected two Messiahs; Messiah ben Joseph, the suffering Messiah and Messiah ben David, the glorious Messiah. They were properly seeing the suffering and

glorious aspects of the Messiah's reign, but they were unable to see how the two fit together. We know now, because of later revelation, that the way this dilemma is solved is one Messiah and two comings. The first coming of Messiah was as a suffering servant, the second coming will be as a glorious king.

^v Hoehner, Harold W., *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 362.

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