

JEWS AND GENTILES BROUGHT TOGETHER

TEXT: EPH. 2:11-18

Introduction:

1. In Ephesians 2:11, the apostle Paul refers to “Uncircumcision” and “Circumcision.”
2. Ever since the days of Abraham, the rite of circumcision served as a “token (sign) of the covenant” between Abraham (and his descendants) and God (Genesis 17:9-14).
3. The Jews looked down upon the Gentiles as uncircumcised heathen. You may recall when Goliath taunted and defied the Israelites, David said, “For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” (I Samuel 17:26).
4. In the early days of Christianity, many Jews insisted that Gentiles needed to be circumcised in order to be saved (cf. Acts 11:1-3; 15:1-5; Gal. 5:1-12).
5. During this dispensation of grace (“the church age”), there is no need to be circumcised. It is not wrong to be circumcised, but it is wrong to insist that one has to be circumcised.
6. “Is any man called being circumcised? let him not become uncircumcised. Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God. Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called” (I Cor. 7:18-20).
7. In his epistles, Paul draws a contrast between “spiritual” circumcision and physical (literal) circumcision (cf. Romans 2:25-29; Col. 2:11).
8. This emphasis on “spiritual” circumcision goes back to the OT.
9. Deuteronomy 10:16 says, “Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.”

10. Deuteronomy 30:6 says, “And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.”
11. Jeremiah 4:4 says, “Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart.”
12. This terminology was carried over into the NT. Stephen said to the unregenerate Jewish leaders, “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye” (Acts 7:51).
13. By referring to literal circumcision as “that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands” (Eph. 2:11), Paul was pointing out that there is no spiritual significance or value in physical circumcision.
14. In OT times, Gentiles who wanted to worship the true God in the appointed way had to convert to Judaism (e.g. Rahab and Ruth).
15. That is why our Lord told the Samaritan woman at the well, “Salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22).
16. Now, in this present dispensation, Gentiles are brought into a covenant relationship with the God of Israel – not by submitting to circumcision, and not by keeping the law of Moses, and not by converting to Judaism – but by putting their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:11-13).
17. The same is true of Jews today. Jews do not become Gentiles when they receive Jesus as their Lord and their Messiah (cf. Rom. 3:28-31).

I. CHRIST HAS BROKEN DOWN THE WALL OF PARTITION

1. In the OT, there was a big distinction between Jews and Gentiles. The Gentiles “were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12).

2. Gentiles were idolaters. They were polytheistic. They were hopeless and Godless (2:12).
3. The Jews considered Gentiles “dogs.” Even our Lord used this term when He said to the Syrophenician woman, “It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs” (Matt. 15:26).
4. She wisely replied, “Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters’ table” (Matt. 15:27).
5. There was very little social interaction between Jews and Gentiles. Paul refers to this as “the middle wall of partition between us” (Eph. 2:14).
6. Paul was referring to the literal wall of partition in the temple, which separated the court of the Gentiles from that into which only the Jews were allowed to enter.
7. In Acts 21, a riot nearly broke out when some Jews accused Paul of bringing Gentiles beyond the wall of partition (Acts 21:28-31).
8. Paul referred to this wall of partition as a symbolic picture of the barrier separating Jews and Gentiles. Paul said Christ brought peace, when He went to the cross and died for the sins of the world.
9. Notice Paul uses the word “peace” three times (Eph. 2:14, 15, 17).
10. Christ is called “The Prince of Peace” in Isaiah 9:6.
11. Micah 5:5 says, “And this man shall be the peace.”
12. Christ died on the cross to “reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby” (Eph. 2:16).
13. Christ died to pay the penalty of the law that had been broken. Therefore, He completely satisfied the righteous claims of God.
14. The law pronounced a curse and a condemnation on all who violated it. It was the Jews’ proud boast that they were custodians of the law, and they were. But they failed to realize that their failure to keep the law put them under the curse of God.

15. “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal. 3:10).

II. THE CHURCH IS A “NEW MAN” (2:15).

1. The Scofield Study Bible says, “Here the ‘new man’ is not the individual believer but the church, considered as the body of Christ in the sense of [Ephesians 1:22, 23](#); I [Corinthians 12:12, 13](#); [Colossians 3:10, 11](#).”
2. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Head of the church (Eph. 1:22). He is up in heaven at the Father’s right hand (Eph. 1:20). Therefore, the Head is up in heaven directing the body, which is down here on earth (2:16).
3. The NT church is a “new man” entirely distinct from Israel (2:15b).
4. The NT church is not a continuation of the nation Israel. It is entirely distinct from Israel.
5. First Corinthians 10:32 says, “Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.” The church is a “new man.”
6. Some refer to the so-called “OT church,” but the Bible never uses that term. Some teach that the church goes back to Adam and Eve, or Abraham, etc. but this is unscriptural. Jesus said: “I will build my church...” (Matt. 16:18).
7. There was no church before Christ.

III. ALL BELIEVERS ARE INDWELT BY THE SAME HOLY SPIRIT

1. Ephesians 2:18 says, “For through him (Christ) we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”
2. Ephesians 1:13 says, “Ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.”
3. God has organized His church through the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:22).

4. Ephesians 4:3, 4 says, “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit...”
5. “The unity of the Spirit” (4:3) is what keeps the church going forward. Once that unity is damaged (through carnality and strife, etc.), the church cannot go forward, but will be hindered.

CONCLUSION:

1. In the OT, only the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies, the place of God’s presence.
2. And the high priest could only enter there on one day of the year – the Day of Atonement.
3. But now in this dispensation of grace, we all have “access by one Spirit unto the Father” (2:18).
4. Here is our proper order for prayer: “through Christ,” by the Spirit, to the Father (2:18).

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