

A New Creation

Long Beach Alliance Church • May 18, 2014 • Pastor Chris Lankford

I have seen his ways, but I will heal him;
I will lead him and restore comfort
to him and his mourners,
creating the fruit of the lips.
Peace, peace, to the far and
to the near," says the LORD,
"and I will heal him."

~Isaiah 57:18-19 (ESV)

1) Cut Off From The Promises Of God's "Cut Off" People

- A) Much like the previous section, with its emphasis on spiritual death ("you were dead...", Ephesians 2:1-3), the Apostle Paul now takes aim at spiritual death from a different perspective, one of national or cultural identity ("you Gentiles...", 2:11-12).
- B) Whereas the previous section was focused on the universal status of mankind and God (2:4-10, a vertical orientation), the primary object of salvation is now focused on hostility between the circumcised (Israel/Jews) and the Gentiles* (nations/uncircumcised), ethnic relationships (2:13-22, horizontal orientation) transformed by Jesus Christ.

* The "Gentiles" (Gk., *ethnos*) are all the nations outside of Israel. "Ethnos" literally means "nations," and even refers to Israel at times in the Bible. However, more often, "Gentiles" is a technical term in the Bible for the nations outside of Israel. Israel is the nation of promise, the Jews/Jewish people, the "covenant people of God," or simply, "God's people." The Gentiles (Heb., *goyim*) are not a single nation, but all those people who belong to nations, cultures, religious beliefs, and/or practices which were outside Israel. The word "heathen" probably comes from ancient word for Gentiles, and thus, the Gentiles are often referred to as the "heathen nations." There are many verses in the New Testament (over 100) in which Gentiles is used as a specific technical reference for the nations which were outside of God's promise (as noted here in Ephesians 2:11), illustrated by the phrase "the uncircumcised." Since circumcision illustrates ("in the flesh by hands," 2:11) the separation (cutting away) of Israel from the other nations and cultures of the world, the "uncircumcised" were those who still were 'attached' to the world "in the flesh," or simply, the Gentiles (collected from numerous works, especially the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, "ἔθνος in the NT," Volume II, Δ-Η, pages 369-372).

- C) In a play on concepts, Paul notes the separation of the Gentiles (2:12) from the circumcised (separated ones), who are the “commonwealth” (citizenry) of Israel. Since Jesus was a Jew, and the blessing of God comes through the Jews (cf. Genesis 12:1-3), this leaves Gentiles as “strangers” (foreigners), hopeless and far away from God (12:2-3).
- D) Not only are all people guilty of being “dead in trespasses and sins” (2:1), but only those who are of Israel even have a chance at salvation, because “salvation is from the Jews” (cf. John 4:22). For those of us who are Gentiles (non-Jews), we are cut-off, alienated, wandering strangers, and completely hopeless without God (Ephesians 2:11-12).

2) Unexpected Sacrifice

- A) Like the sudden adversative phrase “But God...” (2:4), “but now in Christ...” (2:13) suddenly draws those “far off... near” (2:13). The near/far word interplay echoes the language of Gentile converts to Judaism who sought peace and blessing from God (cf. Isaiah 57:18-19).
- B) Similarly, the means of conversion remain a relationship to the Jewish community, and come through obedience to the commandments of God and the sacrificial system. However, the completely unexpected blood of Jesus Christ provides something brand new (2:13).
- C) The peace of God (cf. Isaiah 57:19 again) comes not through relation to an ethnic group, or through following the rules! Why?!
- D) Unexpectedly, Jesus Christ, through the sacrifice of His flesh (2:14), breaks down the “wall of hostility” (“hatred” or “divisiveness,” 2:14) by “abolishing the law of commandments” (“making its effect powerless,” 2:15). Christ’s fulfillment of the Law, kills its “death” effect, bringing life!

3) No Longer Jew Or Gentile -- A Whole New Creation

- A) Through the blood of Jesus Christ, peace with God is accomplished. A new creation has occurred (2:15). The “new creation” (cf. Galatians 6:15-16, 2 Corinthians 5:16-17) is not the old ethnic or religious works of God, but something brand new, a new man, “in place of” the old (2:15).
- B) This is radical news! The old systems had their purposes and had their time, but only to illuminate Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ comes and does what no one else could do, provides redemption through His blood, and makes a way to reconcile ALL of mankind (all peoples, cf. Genesis 12:3) to God, making peace with God, and between men (2:16).

growth group guide

“a new creation”

(ephesians 2:11-15) may 18-23, 2014

warm up

Is equality for all people an important value? Ethnic equality? Marriage equality? Religious equality? Cultural equality? Gender equality?

Any comments, observations, or questions from Sunday's Sermon?

chop it up

Read The Text: Ephesians 2:11-15

The letter to the Ephesian people points to two groups of people, the Gentiles and the Jews. What distinguishes these two groups of people? What brings unity for these two groups? How does this solution actually bring the two groups together?

Why are people only “brought near by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:13)? Why are they not “brought in?”



live it up

If we have been made a “new man in place of the two...” (2:15), what does that accomplish in our lives? If we have been given “peace with God” (2:15 & Isaiah 57:18-19), are we responsible to find others who are “hostile and hopeless” (2:11-14) and make peace with them? How do we modernly apply these Scriptures?



extra

Why was circumcision so important to the Jews, and is it of significance today? If there is not a “mark” of the promise on a person’s body, how will others know of God in our lives? Is there a mark of Jesus modernly?