

Words of Grace Seasoned With Salt

Bible Studies And Personal Opinions About Current And Future Events

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Gentiles Past And Present

How The Gentiles Went From Spiritual Poverty To Spiritual Wealth A True Rags To Riches Story

Ephesians 2

11 Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

12 That at that time ye 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:

13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Verse 11-12 describes the spiritual and dispensational condition of us gentiles in time past. Verse 13 describes our spiritual and dispensational condition now. In time past, prior to the cross, gentiles like us were without Christ, strangers from the covenants of promise and we were without hope and without God in the world. But, why was this true of us gentiles in time past? It's because we were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. We were without Christ being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. We were strangers from the covenants of promise being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. We were without hope and without God being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. Why was this true? Because all the blessings and promises in verse 12 belonged to them by promise.

In Romans 9:4-5 Paul wrote: ***Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.***

Every one of these spiritual blessings was given to the commonwealth of Israel by promise in time past. These promises were made to them exclusively.

Every blessing in Ephesians 2:12 was also theirs by promise. The Christ of verse 12 was Israel's Christ or Messiah. The covenants of promise were Israel's. The hope was Israel's hope. The God of verse 12 was Israel's God. And because we were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, gentiles like us had no claim to their Christ or Messiah, or covenants of promise, or their hope or their God.

We were in a state of spiritual poverty in time past. But, according to verse 12, verse 13 is no longer true of us. Verse 12 describes our condition in time past, but verse 13 describes us now. A change took place. Verse 12 is no longer true of us. According to verse 13, what we were far off from in time past in verse 12, we are now made nigh to. What does this mean? It means that Israel's Christ is now our Christ. Israel's covenants of promise are now our covenants of promise. Israel's hope is now our hope and Israel's God is now our God.

Israel's Christ is Now Our Christ

The word Christ means Messiah. See John 1:41. The name Messiah means; Savior, deliverer, provider, and defender. In time past the only people who had a Messiah to save them, deliver them, provide for them and defend them was Israel. Being without Christ means we had no Messiah. But now, he is our Messiah, savior, provider, deliverer and defender.

In Colossians 1:24-27 Paul wrote: ***Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:***

God dispensed or revealed to Paul a mystery that was hid from ages and generations and it concerns us gentiles. And the glory and riches of this mystery is that Christ the Messiah now dwells in us, now lives in and among gentiles like us. Gentiles now have a Messiah, savior, provider and deliverer and defender.

The Christ and Messiah of Israel is now the Christ and Messiah of us gentiles. This was a great mystery in time past, but now it is a reality. Christ is the Messiah of both Jews and gentiles. We are no longer without Christ or without a Messiah or without a savior or deliverer. He is as much our Messiah today as he is the Jews.

There is something that gentiles like us should keep in mind today when we say we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. To believe on the Lord Jesus Christ means we believe that Jesus is our Lord and our Messiah. It also means that the body of Christ is the body or church of Messiah. The gospel of Christ is the gospel of Messiah. The second coming of Christ is the second coming of Messiah. The words of Christ are the words of Messiah. The Spirit of Christ is the Spirit of Messiah.

Israel's Covenants Are Now Our Covenants

Notice the covenants we are made nigh to in Ephesians 2:12 are called the covenants of promise. It's the covenants God made with Israel wherein he promised or coveted to bless them in some way.

There were two major covenants he made with them wherein he promised or covenanted to bless them that we partake of today.

The covenant and promise he made with Abraham

In Genesis 22:18 God made a covenant of promise with Abraham. It says:

And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

The writer who interprets this covenant and promise is Paul in Galatians 3. He wrote:

8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

Verse 16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.

In Galatians chapter 3 we find out who:

The seed of Genesis 22:18 is: Christ- vs.16

Who the nations of Genesis 22:18 are: Heathen nations – Vs. 8

What the blessing of Genesis 22:18 is: Justification – vs. 8

How the heathen nations are justified: Through faith - 8

Notice this covenant of promise God made to Abraham is called the *gospel*. When we preach that God will justify heathen gentiles by faith alone in Christ, we are preaching the gospel God preached to Abraham in Genesis 22:18 and today we call this gospel, the gospel of Christ. The gospel of Christ is based upon the covenant of promise God made to Abraham; that he would justify heathen gentiles by faith in Christ, the seed of Abraham. And notice it says heathen gentiles and not proselytes.

The New Covenant of Promise

In Hebrews 8:6-13 Paul describes the New Covenant of promise God made with Israel in Jeremiah 31:

But now hath he (Christ) obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he (Christ) is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. (Notice the connection between covenant and promises) For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

There are two things to notice in these verses;
Jesus is a minister and mediator of the New Covenant in verse 6.
The New Covenant had better promises than the Old Covenant in verse 6.

There are two other things we should notice about the New Covenant:

(1) Paul was also a minister of the New Covenant.

In 2 Corinthians 3:6 he wrote: **Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter (old), but of the spirit (new): for the letter (old) killeth, but the spirit (new) giveth life.**

(2) Gentiles are now partakers of the promises of the New Covenant.

Ephesians 2:13: **But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.** (Made nigh to the covenants of promise in verse 12.)

Romans 15:27: **For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.**

Gentile believers are now partakers of Israel's spiritual things. Israel's spiritual things were the spiritual blessings and promises God made to Israel and the greatest was the blessings and promises of the New Covenant. It contained more blessings and promises than all the other covenants he made with them and gentile believers are now partakes of them all.

The promises of the New Covenant

*A new and better Spirit - 2 Cor.3:6-8, 17, Ezek. 36:26

(The indwelling Holy Spirit)

*A new and better heart - Ezk.36:26, 2 Peter 1:4

(The new nature)

*A new and better birth- 1 Peter 1:23, John 3:1-8

(A second spiritual birth)

*A new and better sacrifice – Hebrews 9-10

(Christ's all sufficient sacrifice)

*A new and better hope – Heb.11:16, Heb.12:22

(A heavenly hope)

*New and better laws - Heb.8:10 (The laws of Christ)

*A new and better priesthood - 1 Peter 2:5

(The spiritual priesthood of all believers)

*A new and better High Priest - Heb.3:1 (Christ)

*A new and better city - Heb.11:16

(The Heavenly City New Jerusalem)

*A new and better mediator –Heb.8:6, 1 Tim.2:5 (Christ)

- *A new and better intercessor – Heb.7:25, Rom.8:34 (Christ)
- *A new and better temple – Heb.8:2, 9:24 (Heavenly)
- *A new and better mercy seat and propitiation who is Christ.– 1 John 2:2, Rom.3:25
- *A new and better altar – Heb.13:10 (Christ)
- *New and better promises – Heb.8:6 (Spiritual)
- *A new and better understanding–Heb.8:11, 1 Cor.2:9-13 (Spiritual understanding)
- *A new and better salvation – Heb.5:9 (Eternal salvation)
- *A new and better redemption – Heb.9:12 (Eternal redemption)
- A new and better calling – Heb.3:1 (Heavenly)

The New Covenant is truly a covenant of many promises. No other covenant has as many promises as the New Covenant. In time past, gentiles like us were strangers from the blessings and promises of the New Covenant, but now we are made nigh to them and partake of them by grace through faith without becoming proselytes to Judaism.

Israel's Hope Is Now Our Hope

The hope in Ephesians 2:12 is the hope of resurrection, but not just any resurrection. In the Bible there are two resurrections. In John 5:28-29 The Lord shows us what they are: ***Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.***

In Acts 24:15 Paul called them the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust.

In Rev. 20 John called them the first resurrection and the second resurrection.

In time past, under the Law, the only people who had the hope of being raised in the resurrection of life and of the just, was Israel and Jewish proselytes. That hope was theirs by promise and covenant. At that time Gentiles like us were without hope. We had no hope of being in the resurrection of life and of the just. But now, their hope is our hope, which means we are no longer without hope. Israel's hope is now our hope.

Paul preached the hope of Israel throughout his ministry. In Acts 28:20 he said: ***For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.***

The hope of Israel Paul was bound for, was their hope of resurrection.

See the following verses:

Acts 23:6: ***But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question.***

Acts 24:14-15: ***But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.***

Act 24:21: ***Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.***

Acts 26:6-8: ***And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?***

The hope of Israel that Paul preached was their hope of resurrection. But, why did they persecute Paul for preaching it? For the same reason they persecuted the other apostles for preaching it.

Acts 4:1-2 says: ***And as they spake unto the people, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees, came upon them, Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead.***

What Paul and the apostles preached about the resurrection disagreed with both the Sadducees and Pharisees. The Sadducees were mad because they did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. The Pharisees were mad because they preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead and they believed he was an imposter.

Paul preached a future resurrection of saints and he said their resurrection was made possible by the past resurrection of Christ. If Christ was raised from the dead as Paul said, then he was the Son of God as he claimed to be and that means the Pharisees murdered their own Messiah. This is why the hope of Israel was opposed by both Sadducees and Pharisees.

The hope of Israel is the resurrection of life God promised them in the prophets. If that is so, then the resurrection Paul was persecuted for preaching and the one he wrote about in such places as 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15, is the hope of Israel. If that is so, that means it's found in the prophets, because that is where God made the promise of resurrection.

Therefore, when Paul wrote about resurrection, he based it upon what the prophets wrote in the Old Testament. For example he said in 1 Thessalonians 4:15: ***For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.*** What Paul wrote in this chapter about Christ's coming and the resurrection in this chapter, is based upon *the word of the Lord*. That makes spiritual sense, because this hope is the hope God promised Israel in the Old Testament prophets.

But where is this resurrection found in the Prophets? Paul shows us where in 1 Corinthians 15:54-55: ***So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and***

this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

These verses plainly say that when the Lord comes at the last trump and the dead are raised and those alive are caught up without dying, **THEN** two prophecies in the word of the Lord will be brought to pass and he quotes Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14.

In time past, the only people who had this hope was Israel. But now, it's ours. So we are no longer without hope. We have the absolute hope of being in the first resurrection of life. This is why it's called the blessed hope. It's blessed because the second resurrection is a resurrection of damnation.

Israel's God Is Now Our God

The true and living God has not always been the God of the gentiles. Consider these verses from the Old Testament.

Exodus 3:5-6: ***And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. Moreover he said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.***

Exodus 3:15-16: ***And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations. Go, and gather the elders of Israel together, and say unto them, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared unto me, saying, I have surely visited you, and seen that which is done to you in Egypt:***

In the Old Testament, the true and living God was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their children only. He was never called the God of heathen gentiles like us. At that time, we were without God according to Ephesians 2:12.

But now, he is the God of gentile believers. In Romans 3:29-30 Paul wrote: ***Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith.***

In time past, the God of the Bible was the God of the Jews only, but not anymore. He is the God of all believers, Jew or gentile. The Jews in Paul's day thought he was their God only and they still do. As far as they were concerned, gentiles like us were still without God. But, we are made nigh to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is as much our God as theirs.

Ephesians 2:12-13 are very important verses in Paul's epistles, for they show us a major change has taken place as far as gentiles like us are concerned. What was once true of us is no longer true. By the death and shed blood of Christ, Israel's Christ is now

our Christ. Israel's covenants of promise are now our covenants of promise. Israel's hope is now our hope and Israel's God is now our God.

We have gone from spiritual poverty to spiritual riches. We have gone from rags to riches and it's because of Christ's sacrificial death and resurrection. Ephesians 2:13-14 says: ***But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us.***

God has reconciled Jews and gentiles together today in one body, the church, and made us gentiles partakers of the promises he made to the Jews in time past. The Christ of the Jews is now the Christ of the gentiles. The covenants of promise that once belonged to the Jews now belong to the gentiles. The hope of the resurrection of life is now the hope of Jew and gentile believers. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, is now the God of us gentiles.

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