

Ephesians 2:11-22 - June 26th, 2022

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[0:00] We welcome you to the media ministry of Bethel Community Church, knowing Jesus, making Jesus known. Well, good morning, everyone, and so good to hear so much good news, even our reign that we're having today, but especially the decision this week of the Supreme Court and how that will all shake down, especially we are thankful to live in Missouri, which wants to outline abortion totally, and so praise the Lord for that, and for the gospel that went out in the area of Ironton and Farmington this past week.

All wonderful news, and for those of you who had a vital part in that, praise the Lord. But this morning, our passage is continuing in the book of Ephesians, chapter 2, and we'll be looking in that passage.

But as I was studying that passage, I ran into a problem by which I said, well, I'm having a little trouble with an introduction of that passage.

And the passage is going to speak of an enmity between two groups of people, and we might just ask ourselves, okay, well, what does that have to do with myself and our congregation and so forth? And so I needed help from the Apostle Paul to make me think through why we are going to study the passage that we are going to study.

[1:41] When I think of Ephesians, of course, it always came to mind that the most beautiful thing about it was the fact that all the spiritual blessings that are ours, that just radiates out of chapter 1.

When we think of our election, we think of our adoption, we think of our inheritance, we think of our being sealed by the Holy Spirit, and that's a wonderful thing about that particular aspect of Ephesians.

But now we're into chapter 2, but I want to look at the introduction that I think helps me to understand why we are going to cover the passage that we are today.

And that is in chapter 1, verse 7, we're going to read from 7 through verse 10. And hopefully, if I explain it right, we can get a feel for the rest of our message today.

In verse 7, it says, In all wisdom and insight, He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His kind intention, which He purposed in Himself, in Him.

[3:23] And then verse 10, which makes things a little bit more difficult, but it says this, with a view of all that has been just said, to an administration suitable to the fullness of time, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on the earth.

And so one of the key words here is the word administration. And we, about a year ago, went through a study of dispensations so that we could fully, in a broader way, understand that when we are learning something from the Word of God, that when we come to a passage, we can understand who the passage is speaking to, under what circumstances, so that we fit it properly in its place.

And so we studied seven dispensations. And the ones, of course, most important to us, because it's in our time frame, is the dispensation of grace, the church age, and a coming dispensation.

And that would be the millennial period. And so these things all become important to us. But let's take a look at what we had just read.

First of all, we see that in this, the Apostle Paul is clearly bringing out the gospel. Now, we do remember from last week's sermon that our brother Paul, our brother David, went through detail about what the gospel is.

[5:15] And so we won't touch on that from that passage today. But from verse seven, it clearly shows us that in Christ, we have redemption through his blood.

So we have a redeemer, and we are the redeemed. And it tells us that that was by blood. And what that means is that there was the shedding of blood.

And that brought about death. And that is the death of our Savior on Calvary's cross. And that resulted in one of the fruits. And that is the forgiveness of our trespasses or our sins.

And so, and why did that happen? Because it was according to the riches of his grace, which he just lavishly bestowed upon us.

And then it says, also, in all wisdom and insight, he, the Lord Jesus Christ, was making known in us the mystery of his will.

[6:18] And he wanted to do that because of his kind intention to do it. A purpose in him. And he said, for what reason?

Verse 10. It was with a view or with a broad scope of seeing things to an administration that fits or that is suitable to the fullness of times.

And what is the definition of that fullness of time? Is it history? Well, he gives the definition in the rest of the verse. The summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens, and things on the earth.

And so, we want, every time we go to the Word, whether it's here from the pulpit or from our home reading or a Bible study or a Sunday school hour, it's the idea that we want to know the wisdom of God, we want to know the mystery of his will in every aspect of our lives.

And so, with today's passage, we'll see how what looks like fit a situation of many years ago that it applies to us even as we speak.

[7:38] And so, we will see today, too, by invoking the thoughts of administration or dispensation that this is playing a very important role because we will see that not only are we learning things during the church age, but it won't be very long when we're going to find ourselves in the millennial age.

Isn't that true? If we could look at it this way, the Lord could come any day, right? This week or whenever. And seven years from now, we're back.

We're back on the earth, but in a glorious way because we'd come back with our Savior and all that that encompasses. And so, what we learn from our Lord for both in the church age carries itself over, likely, or very much so, in the millennial period as well.

Dr. Harry Ironside likes to call that, instead of dispensation or administration, he used to like to use the word economy. And, of course, I think of economy as kind of a business thing, but he talks about the economy of politics, the economy of government, economy of family, and so forth.

And so, he uses that word rather than the word dispensation. But dispensation helps us because when we were addressing things about Israel's future, it became so much clearer when a prophet spoke, whether it be Isaiah or whether it be Joel or Amos, that he was making reference to a fulfillment of during the past history, let's say the time of the law, or whether it's during the age of grace or the millennial age.

[9:35] And so, this becomes, that type of thinking becomes pretty important to us because there's a lot of churches have no future for Israel. They do not, you know, we've been through this replacement theology and they don't quite see it.

They say the church is really the answer to all the promises that were given to Israel. But we don't see it that way. We see that from when we study Romans 11, that when the fullness of the Gentiles is finished and has come in, then God takes up where he, with the promises that he promised to Israel and he fulfills those promises.

So, but anyway, I hope that gives us a little bit of an idea of why we are studying the passage today that we are. Because the passage today is going to do, deal with an enmity, a kind of a, not a happy period between two groups.

And so if we look at chapter two and verse 11, we start to get the picture of this. And verse 11 kind of stands out by itself. So I want to address that where I think the other verses after 12 through 22 have a much more connectivity to it.

So verse 11 says in chapter two, it says, therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by the so-called circumcision, which is performed in the flesh by human hand.

[11:13] So the Apostle Paul is saying to the Gentile that you would probably like to forget, but remember that there were some just terrible things said about you.

and you had an identity that wasn't very pleasant. And that is that the Jew would like to think of you as nothing, as having nothing in their life.

And so and he and so then we get into the enmity that is involved in their attitude of the Jew toward the Gentiles.

And so in verse 12 it says this, remember, so he asked him a second time to remember something, that you were at times separate from Christ, you were excluded from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

And these were true facts from the time about 2,000 years before the cross when God came with a beautiful plan of redemption by beginning with building that redemption plan through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that it would ultimately come down to through a genealogy to the person of Jesus Christ who would come to earth to be our redeemer and our savior.

[12:45] And so we have a time frame when it basically is saying of the Gentiles, you didn't have a book, like you didn't have a doctrine, you didn't have anything that would even hint that there's a Messiah in your plans.

And so the apostle Paul is saying that there was a time that you were separated from Christ. And then he said also, number two here, that you were excluded from the commonwealth of Israel. So when you think of Israel, they had from the time they left Egypt, they had one who was their cloud during the day to keep them cool and their pillar of fire by night to keep them warm and to guide them on and to provide them manna and provide them quail and to provide them water from the rock and to give them some new laws and new guidance and just have a complete intricacy with this group of people called the Israelites.

And so the Gentiles, you didn't have anything like that. You might have observed from a distance to see that these people have something and they have a God and so forth.

And the Gentiles would just feel like we have no share in that commonwealth. And then it also says, and you were strangers to the covenants of promise.

[14:17] And so the Gentiles didn't even have the oracles of the Jewish people to trace through there to say that with Abraham, that not only are you going to wind up being a great nation with a great name and with great protection and but ultimately all the families of the earth are going to be blessed.

And so the Gentiles are not even aware of that. And it could be that from the Israel point of view it says, oh what that means is that over a period of time if there are some Gentiles that want to become an Israelite then there's a mechanism by which they could do that.

But that was not really what the Lord had in mind. And so because of all that, because of these problems we also have the statement that the Gentiles were hopeless.

And what a terrible thing to be, is to be hopeless. And stating without a God, without God in this world, they might have had pagan idolatry and other forms of worshipping creatures, but basically the the apostle Paul is saying here, Gentiles, you are without God in the world.

But then verse 13 is just a beautiful transition, and we just love the first two words, but now. It reminds us when we were studying Hebrews chapter three, and it said, but now the righteousness, after explaining to us the ungodliness of the world, the unrighteousness of the world, we reach the final phrase that says, but now the righteousness of God has been revealed, being brought to us through faith in the blood of the work that our Christ did on the cross.

[16:20] So here we have, but now, here's the change, but now, Gentiles, in Christ Jesus, you who formerly were far off, have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

And so, with all of this problems and disappointments that existed as an alienation, we have a beautiful picture that through the work that was done on the cross, through the blood of our Lord

Jesus Christ, by that blood being shed that brought about death, that it has brought the Gentiles near, who were once far off.

And as a result of that, it says in verse 14 that, for he himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall.

And so, when we think of this alienation, we think of it as two societies that are hostile to each other. And even to the extent, I want to read a quote from John Stott, who wrote a book on Ephesians, but he quotes a Scottish preacher, William Barclay, who says this about the relationship of Jews to Gentiles.

[17:50] He says this, the Jew had an immense contempt for the Gentile. The Gentiles, said the Jews, were created by God to be fuel for the fires of hell.

God, they said, loves only Israel of all the nations that he has made. It was not even lawful to render help to a Gentile mother in her hour of sorest need, for that would simply be to bring another Gentile into the world.

Until Christ came, the Gentiles were an object of contempt for the Jews. The barrier between them was absolute.

If a Jewish boy married a Gentile girl, or if a Jewish girl married a Gentile boy, the funeral of that Jewish boy or girl was carried out.

Such context with a Gentile was the equivalent to death. And so you and I probably experienced by just history alone through the years that animosity that exists, that alienation that a Gentile would feel.

[19:20] And yet the apostle Paul tells us that the cross has made a difference to that. And what has happened? It has brought the Gentiles near.

Verse 14, they have now have a reason for peace, for he himself is our peace, who has made both groups into one and broken down the barrier of the dividing wall.

We are speaking of groups, but it's in the context that it has to happen to each individual, even though we are looking at it from a group perspective, is that in order for that to happen, that Gentile had to come to a saving faith in our Lord Jesus Christ by the blood of our Savior.

And so the barrier is broken down. Josephus wrote in his writings about the war and antiquities, he said, you know, the way things were set up around the temple in Herod's time, there was an inner court for the priests, the Jewish priests, of course, and so they were the closest to the sacrifices and so forth.

And then there was the next court would be for the Jewish male, and then there would be another court a little further, and that would be for the Jewish female, and then after you went down five steps to one barrier, and then 14 steps even lower, you came to the Gentile courts.

[20:54] So the Gentiles were very much removed from any presence of the nearness that the Jews were feeling or experiencing in their lifestyle.

And so that's an interesting point, and it says that in the museum in Turkey, in the capital, there is a copy of a sign that was recovered from the destruction of Jerusalem, whereby it states that any person going past, speaking of a Gentile, past this point is not subject to prosecution, but is just subject to immediate death.

God's death. And so apparently there were guards at that point that if a Gentile made its way up, that their immediate experience would be that that would be the end of their life.

And so when we see here that theologically or spiritually, it's talking about the fact that the cross has broken down the barrier of a dividing wall, we could also see that in AD 70, it became a reality that all of Jerusalem, the temple was destroyed, and that dividing wall was broken down.

And how did this take place? By verse 15, by abolishing in his flesh, speaking of the death of Christ, the enmity, which is the law of commandments, contained in ordinances, so that in himself he might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace.

[22:39] So we see, too, that also the lifestyle of the Jews with their rituals, with their different things in life, were part of the animosity that existed.

And so let's see if I can remember what some of these things were. the but anyway, I'll come to that point.

So it was the fact that the Jews had sacrifices, it was that they had the rituals, they had the oracles of God, they had a clear picture of a Messiah that was to come, and so forth.

And that was a hindrance for the Gentiles. They had no part in that. And so through the cross, verse 15, through the abolishing of in his flesh, that enmity was broken.

And that now the Lord himself has made out of two, two different groups, one new man, thus establishing peace.

[23:59] And then verse 16, it says, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

So one other problem was also addressed by the cross, and that is there was the there was the reconciliation that was necessary for the Gentile to God, and for the Jew to God.

And so that was vertical, but then it had to be that reconciliation of the Gentile to the Jew. And so all of this is accomplished by the work of the cross.

And then it says here in verse 17, and he, that's the Lord, came and he preached peace to you who are far away, to the Gentiles, and peace to those who are near.

And so if we were to follow through with the life of Christ on earth, that his ministry took him on occasions to speak to the Gentiles as well as the Jews, but his work on the cross was also a testimony of the gospel, of his saving grace, and his resurrection as well, and then his time here on earth before he was ascended was also, would speak well of his preaching peace to those who were far away and to those who were close.

[25:39] And verse 18 says, for through him we both have our access in one spirit to the father. And so we knew of the past history of Israel's access to God, and that was through the priest and through the holy place and through the holiest of holies, but that is all done away with at the cross whereby now there is the access as Romans 5 would tell us that the work of, let me turn to that, the work of the justification of our faith brought about the following conditions.

And that would be, it says this, Romans 5 1, therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith, and that is our access into his grace by faith, in which we stand and which we exult in hope of the glory of God.

And so now, through the work of the cross, both the Gentile and both the Jew have access into, by one spirit, to the Father, and so that is accomplished at that time.

And verse 19, so then you are no longer strangers and aliens. So it started out that that's how we were viewing the Gentiles, alienated from all things spiritual.

But now you are fellow citizens with the saints, and you are God's household. So you are adopted into the family of God as well.

[27:50] And so, and then it continues on to say, in whom the whole building being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into the dwelling of God in the spirit.

And so when we think of what Peter had to tell us in 1 Peter about the fact that we are living stones, and we have as our cornerstone our Lord Jesus Christ, who was rejected by the builders, but the same is being made the chief cornerstone.

And so now, how does the Gentile see himself? He sees himself as one who is part of the church, as part of that spiritual building stone of the universal church and the local expression of it.

And so that's another wonderful, glorious thing in that regard. And so how does that fit with what I was saying in the very beginning? And that is, Paul sees as his ministry, and he called it his stewardship, and there's two things we remember about Paul.

He was assigned to the witness, to the Gentile. And so we clearly know that that is one of his stewardship. The other stewardship was that it was Paul who would bring the, the, not a mystery, but, I mean, not a, something mysterious, but a mystery of God's will in the various things that he brought forth in scripture through the power of the Holy Spirit.

[29:35] And so that becomes just a major point that every time we are thinking about God's plan that he has in mind, and as it applies to us, we see that it has its purpose, is so that we would wind up understanding his full picture.

So even beyond the church age, the time when these things of even the latter days of the millennial period, and so forth, beyond that, that we see that the Lord wants, even at this point, to give us the wisdom and the insight to understand these things.

And so I'm going to ask the musicians to come up at this point. And then we would ask ourselves, well, for what purpose? For what end result?

And then Paul says this in verse 12 of chapter 1. he says, to the end, that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of his glory.

So he said, okay, the Jewish people were some of the first to hope in Christ. And it wound up for the praise of his glory. And then in verse 13, he gets back to the Gentiles and he says, and in him, in Christ, you also, speaking of the Gentiles, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having also believed, you were sealed in him with the Holy Spirit of promise, which was given as a pledge of our inheritance with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, for what purpose?

[31:42] To the praise of his glory. So everything that we study, everything that we talk about, everything, whether it be for the church age or for the future, for the millennial period, is with the ultimate goal that we would receive from the Lord the wisdom and the knowledge of these things, the insight, so it would resound with the praise and glory.

So let's think about it. There'll be many during the tribulation that are Jewish that are going to be saved, and after that we are going to interact with these people, but not as Jews, because the scripture just told us that we are going to be one in Christ, that we are going to be the one new man. And so the distinction of Jews in the millennial is not going to exist versus Gentile in the millennial. What is the scripture that tells us there is neither Jew nor Gentile, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male or female, we are all one in Christ.

And so that's the way the picture will be in the future. We see there will be no, I mean, I'm sure we'll be brought back to the great promises and the things that happen in the life of Israel, but the new way is the things that are important.

Not the old way of being concerned about the outward flesh like circumcision, but of the new way as we find ourselves in the life that the Lord directs us through.

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