

Candlelight Christian Fellowship

Ephesians 2:11–22 (NKJV)

Ephesians 2:11–13 (NKJV)

¹¹ *“Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands—¹² that at that time you 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 you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”*

Strangers without Hope

As Gentiles, the Ephesian believers were not the initial recipients of the covenants God made with Israel. In fact, they were *“strangers from the covenants of promise”* and *“aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.”* In this sense the Gentiles were without *“hope,” “in this world,”* because they were *“without God.”*

The Sign of the Covenant – Signifying a People!

In Genesis 17 we read of the sign of the covenant God made with Israel. *“This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.”* Genesis 17:10–13 (NKJV)

It is through this identifier that Paul references the *“Circumcision”* and the *“Uncircumcision.”* The *“Circumcision”* are the people of Israel and *“Uncircumcision”* were all the other nations – the Gentiles.

The Commonwealth

The *“commonwealth”* of Israel refers to the promises and blessings God intended for Israel, the most important of which was the coming of a King-Messiah who would bring deliverance to the nation and people. The *“commonwealth”* of Israel also included the land, a continuing presence in the earth climaxing with Israel as the head of all the nations, the law of commandments (which delineated health and dietary standards, religious ordinances, a priesthood, civil governance, blessings for obedience, the place of worship, etc.)

The things considered the *“commonwealth”* of Israel were not given to the Gentiles. Therefore Paul shows that the *“Uncircumcised”* were *“strangers”* and *“aliens”* to them. This fact is highlighted in Jesus’ statement to the Samaritan woman. He said, *“You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.”* John 4:22 (NKJV)

It should be kept in mind that God chose Israel by sovereign election but did so with the Gentile nations in mind. His choice was to use Israel as a special people and as the nation through whom the Messiah would come. This was all part of God's plan for the nations.

Some see God's purpose of election as unrighteous because they believe He had no desire to give the Gentile nations hope. However, they are wrong! God planned from before the foundation of the world that the whole world would know His covenant with Israel and that the resulting effect would be that all the nations would know the God of Israel and turn to Him for salvation. Therefore, God, in His great foreknowledge, planned ahead for the Gentile peoples to be benefitted by the "Commonwealth" given Israel.

Throughout the duration of the Old Covenant dispensation, God made Himself known to the surrounding nations through the peculiarity of Israel and by the awesome acts of His power. At times those acts appeared gracious and merciful. At other times His awesome power was manifested as judgment and wrath.

We should keep in mind that even within those occasions that appeared harsh and vengeful, the acts were manifestations of grace – just as much as when God demonstrated His power through those things we would call "gracious" and "merciful." God's judgments taught the nations His holy standards and that He is a God to be feared. The end result was that those who saw His awesome works would know of Him, come to fear Him, and turn to Him in repentance. Therefore, God, foreknowing that some men and women would come to Him in faith – even in Old Covenant times – made provision in the law for those Gentiles to come into the camp of the people of Israel and worship the one and only, true and living God.

The Cross

In climaxing the Old Covenant dispensation, the most awful display of God's wrath was the cross. This act of judgment and wrath was the most merciful act God has ever performed. The fact that Jesus bore the sins of the whole world, suffering the wrath of God in the place of sinful man, has given opportunity to every man, woman, and child, to come to Him by faith alone, in Christ alone, apart from the law, and find the only salvation available to man. This is why Paul said, "*But now...*"

"But now in Christ Jesus you [Gentiles] who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ." (vs. 13) It was through Jesus' shed blood on the cross that the law and its sacrificial system was fulfilled, therefore bringing to an end the Old Covenant. As the result, Paul communicates this fact and blessing to the Gentile Ephesians, telling them that "*now*" in the Church Age both Jew and Gentile may come freely to God – apart from the law.

Paul made this clear when communicating to the Colossians as well. He said, "*In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.*" Colossians 2:11–14 (NKJV)

Likewise, the author to the Hebrews makes clear that the Old Covenant has been fulfilled and that the New Covenant finds its fulfillment in Jesus. "*In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.*" Hebrews 8:13 (NKJV)

Because Jesus was crucified, and the law of commandments crucified with Him (making them obsolete), Gentiles are now allowed access into the family of God, by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. This is a fundamental characteristic of the Church Age – wherein God has made one body of all believers. Therefore, the *“circumcision made in the flesh by hands,”* (vs. 11) is non-salvific and therefore non-essential to the believer.

Ephesians 2:14–18 (NKJV)

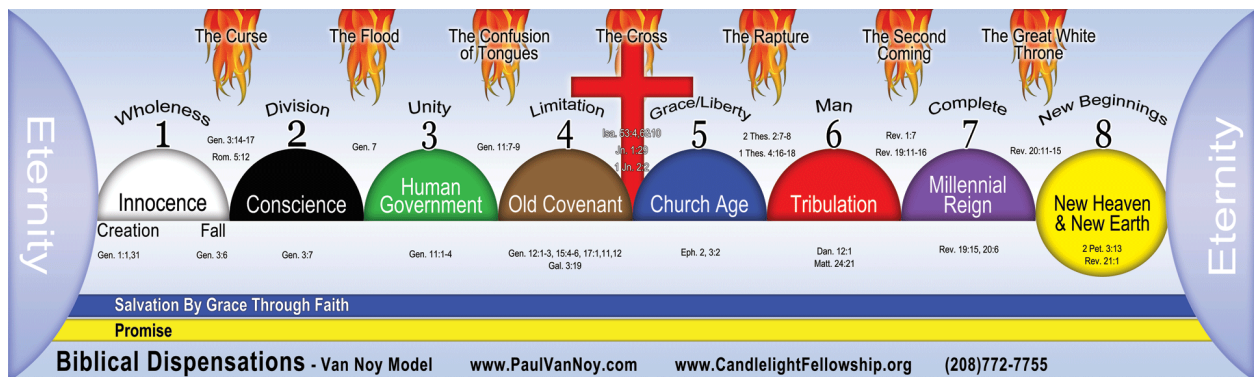
¹⁴ *“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵ having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. ¹⁷ And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”*

One New Man – The Body of Christ – The Church!

The *“one new man”* made from the *“two”* shows that the *“Uncircumcision”* and the *“Circumcision”* are *“now”* made one in Christ. God *“has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments.”* In this way, both Jew and Gentile are formed into one body – the Church. This too is a fundamental distinctive of the Church Age. Jesus has become *“our peace.”*

God’s Continuing Plan for Israel

The fact that God has made all believers in the Church Age a distinctive group (the Church) does not make the Gentiles Jews and does not make the Jews Gentiles. God has committed to Israel, within the *“commonwealth,”* a national existence, and a covenant with the Promised Land. (See Genesis 15) He will fulfill all the promises He has made to the descendents of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – in His own time. This coming of fruition will be realized beginning at the Second Coming and continuing into the Millennial Kingdom. (See Chart Below)



A careful look at the overall blessings provided in the *“commonwealth,”* and in Biblical prophecy, clearly shows that the New Covenant does not nullify the promises God made to His people Israel. On the contrary, it establishes them.

Jesus will come to the earth again, at the time of His Second Coming, making Himself fully known to Israel, will establish the nation and people, secure for them the promised land of Israel, and reign as their Kingly Messiah during the Millennium. Then after the 1000 years, *"...He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power."* 1 Corinthians 15:24 (NKJV)

Ephesians 2:19–22 (NKJV)

¹⁹ *"Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ²² in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."*

As believers in the Church Age, we Gentiles have been adopted into the *"household of God."* We are *"fellow citizens with the saints"* – the people of Israel. Therefore we become recipients of the promised blessings God made to them – apart from the law. Paul wrote, *"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference ... Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law."* Romans 3:21–22, 28 (NKJV)

As stated above, the Jews were provided a place of worship – the temple. However, now in the Church Age, we who believe (both Jew and Gentile) become a living *"holy temple"* unto the Lord. We are those *"in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord."* We are *"being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit."* The whole of us, as distinct and individual members of the Church, are fitted together by the power of God, and formed into a unique dwelling place of God – by the indwelling Holy Spirit. This too is a distinction of the Church in the Church Age.

We are, *"built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone."* The Lord Himself is the *"Chief Cornerstone."* The cornerstone in a building is the first piece of the foundation in a building project. It is from the cornerstone that all measurements of the building are developed. *"For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."* 1 Corinthians 3:11 (NKJV) In completing the foundation for the temple in the Church Age, Paul shows that the *"apostles and prophets"* are placed next in order that the growing Church can and will be properly finished according to the working of God. We are God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus.

Read: Isaiah 53

Verse for Memory

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." Romans 1:16 (NKJV)

Questions:

True or False: If we are not Jews – we are Gentiles!

True or False: Christians must be circumcised in order to be saved.

True or False: As Gentiles God had no initial covenant with us!

True or False: As believers in Jesus we become recipients of many of the blessings of Israel.

Our _____ is found only in the Lord.

Jesus' shed _____ is the only way we could be "*brought near*" unto God.

True or False: The wall of partition that separated Jews and Gentiles was the Law.

The law is _____ in Christ.

True or False: Jews and Gentiles both have access to God the Father through the shed blood of Jesus.

True or False: In verse 19 Paul says that we are no longer strangers and foreigners.

To what were we aliens, strangers, and foreigners? The _____.

Are the Gentiles made partakers of the Old Covenant? _____.

True or False: The New Covenant was initially intended for the Jews. However, Gentiles are *now* made partakers of the blessings of the New Covenant by faith in Christ Jesus.

True or False: The Church is built of both Jews and Gentiles on the foundation of Jesus Christ, the prophets, and the apostles.

True or False: The offer of salvation is provided to all men and women equally.

True or False: The Church is the Temple of God in the Church Age.

True or False: God dwells in us, but He could leave us at any time.

True or False: Circumcision is a sign of the covenant God made with Israel.

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Worksheet Ephesians 2:11-22 (NKJV)

Here are some of the differences between the Jews who were given the commonwealth in the Old Testament and the Church in the Church Age.

Similarities:

- Both are chosen people.
- Both have been given exceedingly great and precious promises.
- Both are called God's "elect".
- Both are called "saints".
- Both are called to be a "peculiar people".
- Both are hated and persecuted – some to the point of death.
- Both are distinguished from the world.

Differences:

- The Law was not given to the Gentiles – only to the Jews. (Ephesians 2:11-12)
- The Jews were promised supernatural blessing – and cursing. (Deut. 28-30)
- The Church does not suffer the Old Covenant curses. (Gal. 3:13)
- Israel is promised a country (the land of Israel) and a city (Jerusalem) on earth. (Genesis 15)
- The Church is promised a home in heaven. (John 14:1-4)
- Israel will be ruled by Christ upon the earth. (Ezekiel 40-48, Revelation 20)
- The Church will rule with Christ on the earth. (2 Tim. 2:12, Revelation 20)
- The Jews will be on the earth during the Tribulation – not the Church. (Daniel 9)
- The Jews will be overcome by the antichrist during the Tribulation. (Daniel 7:21)
- Against the Church Hell will never prevail. (Matt. 16:18)
- The Church recognized Christ at His first coming. (Ephesians 1:13)
- The Church will arrive with Christ (from heaven) at the Second Coming. (Jude 14, Revelation 19:14)
- The living Jews at the time of the Second Coming will believe on Christ for the first time. (Romans 11)

Israel's Future Promised Land

