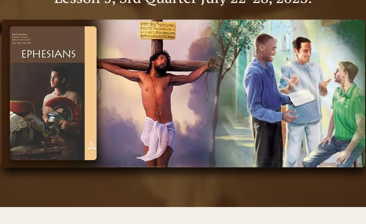
Horizontal Atonement: The Cross and the Church

Lesson 5, 3rd Quarter July 22-28, 2023.



Sabbath Afternoon July 22

Memory Text:

"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;" KJV — Ephesians 2:13, 14

Question: Is spiritual Israel made up of Gentiles? Am I right in saying that the relationship of the Gentiles to Israel is that of adoption?

Answer: There is to be but one family tree in the Kingdom, the tree of Jacob, into which the Gentiles are grafted, as is seen from Romans 11.

This is further shown by the holy city wherein is no Gentile gate, but each of whose twelve gates bears one of the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Hence, the Gentiles are saved through adoption--grafted into the original olive tree, and thus as naturalized citizens of Israel they inherit the Kingdom.

"Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD." KJV — Jeremiah 31:35-37

As the promises are made only to Israel (the seed of Abraham), the original vine, which has been trodden down, this vine must therefore be raised up; then the penitent Gentiles by virtue of adoption in Christ, shall be grafted into it, and only thus become of the planting of the Lord.

Sunday, July 23

Brought near to Christ

Compare Ephesians 2:1-3, Paul's earlier description of the Gentile past of the addressees, with Ephesians 2:11, 12. What does he accent in his fresh description of their past?

Isa. 65:1 – "I am sought of them that asked not for Me; I am found of them that sought Me not: I said, Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation that was not called by My name."

Paul, writing to the Romans, applies this verse to the Gentiles coming into the Gospel (Rom. 10:20). They are, therefore, those who sought the Lord without asking for Him, and those who found Him without seeking after Him. This condition laden with results, points out that the Lord is easily found.

Verse 2 – "I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts."

Here is a great contrast between the well-informed in the things of God, and the ignorant Gentiles. While the former are pulling away, although the Lord is tearfully pleading with them, the latter are drawing nigh to Him. Here we see how patient God is. He continues to plead on and on. It is hard for Him to give up a sinner before all possible means to save are exhausted. Here is clearly seen that it is easier to save a heathen than it is to save a well satisfied deluded Christian.

"The apostle desired those to whom he was writing to remember that they must reveal in their lives the glorious change wrought in them by Christ's transforming grace. They were to be lights in the world, by their purified, sanctified characters exerting an influence counter to the influence of satanic agencies. They were ever to remember the words, "Not of yourselves." They could not change their own hearts. And when by their efforts souls were led from the ranks of Satan to take their stand for Christ, they were not to claim any credit for the transformation wrought. RH May 10, 1906, par. 6

"God's workers today are to remember this. The great change that is seen in the life of a sinner after conversion is not brought about by any human goodness. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." Let those who are brought to repentance declare that it is only because of the goodness of God that they have been led to Christ." RH May 10, 1906, par. 7

Monday, July 24

Reconciliation: God's Gift from the Cross

How does Paul describe the cross and the impact of Christ's work there in each of these passages in Ephesians? How would you summarize what Paul says about the cross and how it transforms our relationships? (See Eph. 1:7, 8: Eph. 4:32; Eph. 2:13, 14; Eph. 2:16; Eph. 5:2, 25.)

The first step in reconciliation to God is the conviction of sin. "Sin is the transgression of the law." "By the law is the knowledge of sin." 1 John 3:4; Romans 3:20. In order to see his guilt, the sinner must test his character by God's great standard of righteousness. It is a mirror which shows the perfection of a righteous character and enables him to discern the defects in his own. GC 467.3

The law reveals to man his sins, but it provides no remedy. While it promises life to the obedient, it declares that death is the portion of the transgressor. The gospel of Christ alone can free him from the condemnation or the defilement of sin. He must exercise repentance toward God, whose law has been transgressed; and faith in Christ, his atoning sacrifice. Thus he obtains "remission of sins that are past" and becomes a partaker of the divine nature. He is a child of God, having received the spirit of adoption, whereby he cries: "Abba, Father!" GC 467.4

These natural brothers must be fully reconciled to each other before they can lift the reproach from the cause of God that their disunion has caused. "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now." Those who labor for God should be clean vessels, sanctified to the Master's use. "Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord." "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." 3T 59.4

Tuesday, July 25

Breaking Down the Dividing Wall

What action does Paul say Christ took toward "the law of commandments expressed in ordinances" (ESV)? Why did He take this action? (See Eph. 2:14, 15.)

"The Christian church was at this time entering upon an important era. The work of proclaiming the gospel message among the Gentiles was now to be prosecuted with vigor; and as a result, the church was to be strengthened by a great ingathering of souls. The apostles who had been appointed to lead out in this work, would be exposed to suspicion, prejudice, and jealousy. Their teachings concerning the breaking down of "the middle wall of partition" [Ephesians 2:14.] that had so long separated the Jewish and the Gentile world, would naturally subject them to the charge of heresy; and their authority as ministers of the gospel would be questioned by many zealous, believing Jews." GW 441.2

Though we are plainly told that the 144,000 guileless servants of God, the first fruits are made up of the twelve tribes of Israel -- first Jacobites after the flesh and second born of the Spirit (Rev. 7:4-8), and that the innumerable great multitude, the second fruits, are made up of all nations (Rev. 7:9) first of both Gentiles and Jews born after the flesh, and second birth after the Spirit, yet God can and will identify them all: "I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know Me:" says the Lord, "behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there. And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the highest himself shall establish her." Ps. 87:4, 5.

Thus it is that all through the prophecies which point to this day and age God addresses the church not as Christian or as Gentile, but as Judah, Israel, Zion, Jerusalem and so on. Furthermore, all the covenants and all the promises are made to the descendants of Jacob. Aside from a privilege to join the Jews -- the church -- there is not one promise made to the Gentiles. When a Gentile, therefore, accepts Christ and joins His church, he then becomes a Jew and thus subject to share in the promises to the Jews and to keep the Jewish Sabbath if we must call It such.

You who want to be in Christ's Kingdom whether you be Jew or Gentile in the flesh had better now become full fledged Jews in the Spirit by accepting not only Christ, but also His Holy Sabbath, otherwise you shall certainly find yourselves outside of the City. God forbid "For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" (Rev. 22:15) -- all the unrepentant law-breakers since the days of Cain. It will be heart breaking and soul terrifying to find yourselves in a crowd that is doomed to suffer the second death -- eternal death. "There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matt. 24:51.

Wednesday, July 26

Jesus, Preacher of Peace

How does Paul imagine believers participating in sharing Jesus' message of peace? Eph. 4:3; Eph. 6:14, 15; compare Rom. 10:14, 15 with Eph. 2:17-19, Isa. 52;7, Isa. 57:19.

"During His earthly ministry Christ began to break down the partition wall between Jew and Gentile, and to preach salvation to all mankind. Though He was a Jew, He mingled freely with the Samaritans, setting at nought the Pharisaic customs of the Jews with regard to this despised people. He slept under their roofs, ate at their tables, and taught in their streets. AA 19.2

"The Saviour longed to unfold to His disciples the truth regarding the breaking down of the "middle wall of partition" between Israel and the other nations—the truth that "the Gentiles should be fellow heirs" with the Jews and "partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel." Ephesians 2:14; 3:6. This truth was revealed in part at the time when He rewarded the faith of the centurion at Capernaum, and also when He preached the gospel to the inhabitants of Sychar. Still more plainly was it revealed on the occasion of His visit to Phoenicia, when He healed the daughter of the Canaanite woman. These experiences helped the disciples to understand that among those whom many regarded as unworthy of salvation, there were souls hungering for the light of truth. AA 19.3

"Thus Christ sought to teach the disciples the truth that in God's kingdom there are no territorial lines, no caste, no aristocracy; that they must go to all nations, bearing to them the message of a Saviour's love. But not until later did they realize in all its fullness that God 'hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us.'" Acts 17:26, 27. AA 20.1

Plainly, those whom God is to use in His final work, in the time of the end, are not to be anything like the Egyptian crown prince, not anything like the learned Moses. Those who can learn to keep and feed sheep well and to readily take orders, are the ones who can be taught how to keep and feed God's people.

Moses' wife was the only Ethiopian in the entire company. For this reason some thought they were superior to her. They thought that Moses had committed the unpardonable sin by marrying out of his nation, as though race had anything to do with making people superior or inferior. Moses' own sister, Miriam, was caught in that sin. There she was, trying to break up his family, yet Moses prayed for her recovery when she was stricken with leprosy.

Thursday, July 27

The Church a Holy Temple

What culminating set of images does Paul use in Eph 2:11-22 to signal unity between Jews and Gentiles in the church?

"In the Scriptures the figure of the erection of a temple is frequently used to illustrate the building of the church.... Writing of the building of this temple, Peter says, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood" ... (1 Peter 2:4, 5)...." AG 123.2

"In the quarry of the Jewish and the Gentile world the apostles labored, bringing out stones to lay upon the foundation. In his letter to the believers at Ephesus, Paul said, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Ephesians 2:19-22. AA 596.1

"And to the Corinthians he wrote: "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." 1 Corinthians 3:10-13." AA 596.2

Friday, July 28

Further Thought

"And today God is still using His church to make known His purpose in the earth. Today the heralds of the cross are going from city to city, and from land to land, preparing the way for the second advent of Christ. The standard of God's law is being exalted. The Spirit of the Almighty is moving upon men's hearts, and those who respond to its influence become witnesses for God and His truth. In many places consecrated men and women may be seen communicating to others the light that has made plain to them the way of salvation through Christ. And as they continue to let their light shine, as did those who were baptized with the Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, they receive more and still more of the Spirit's power. Thus the earth is to be lightened with the glory of God. AA 53.2

For further studies, feel free to contact:

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