

The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON XXX : VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL RECONCILIATION (2:11-22)

Discussion on the Reconciliation of the Gentiles with Jewish Christians (2:14-18)

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. (KJV)

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. (NIV)

for he is our peace, who did make both one, and the middle wall of the enclosure did break down, the enmity in his flesh, the law of the commands in ordinances having done away, that the two he might create in himself into one new man, making peace, and might reconcile both in one body to God through the cross, having slain the enmity in it, and having come, he did proclaim good news — peace to you — the far-off and the nigh, because through him we have the access — we both — in one Spirit unto the Father. (Young's Literal Translation)

I agree with those Bible teachers who consider this section as a quote from possibly an ancient hymn or Jewish midrash (commentary). If Paul had written this today it may have looked something like this:

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 — 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. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 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, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. ‘And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.’ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.”

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

v15c ~ 16b — TWO CLAUSES GIVING THE PURPOSE FOR REMOVAL OF THE WALL AND MAKING THE LAW OF NO EFFECT — that — ἵνα [hina] is a conjunction used to introduce clauses that show a purpose or goal; it is translated *‘that, in order that, so that.’* [Friberg's Lexicon]

in order that (‘hina’)

He may create one man out of two (v. 15c) — *HORIZONTAL PEACE*

He may reconcile both in one body to God (v. 16a) — *VERTICAL PEACE*

that the two he might create in himself into one new man, making peace, (YLT); so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, (NKJV) — ἵνα τοὺς δύο κτίσῃ ἐν ἑαυτῷ εἰς ἕνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον ποιῶν εἰρήνην [hina tous duo ktisē en autō eis hena kainon anthrōpon poiōn eirēnēn] literally, ‘in order that the two create in himself into one fresh man, making peace.’

that the two (YLT) — ἵνα τοὺς δύο [hina tous duo] the two groups, Jews and Gentiles

he might create (YLT) — κτίσῃ [ktisē] *‘to create, to call into being,’ used in the NT only of God's creative activity* [Friberg's Lexicon]

in himself (YLT) — ἐν ἑαυτῷ [en autō] This reunion is only possible through and in Christ. “Thus alone can it be done. *Christ is the peace-maker between men, nations, races, classes.*” [Robertson, Word Pictures]

A RACELESS RACE! — into one new man, (YLT) — εἰς ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον [eis hena kainon anthrōpon] “*What was contemplated, too, was not simply the making of one man where formerly there were two, but the making of one new man. The result was not that, though the separation between them was removed, the Jew still remained Jew and the Gentile still Gentile. It was something new, the old distinctions between Jew and Gentile being lost in a third order of ‘man’ — the Christian man.*” [Salmond, Expositor’s GK Testament, 296] “*Paul refers to a whole new race that is formed. A new race that is raceless! This coincides with Paul’s admonition not to offend three groups of people: the Jews, the Greeks / Gentiles, and the church of God (1 Cor 10:32). The Jews and the Greeks / Gentiles are presented as unconverted and the church is that which is composed of Jewish and Gentile believers. They are not Jews or Gentiles but a body of Christians who make up the church.*” [Hoehner, 379f] “*Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God*” (1 Cor 10:32) “*Christ has done more than simply to bring Gentiles into Israel’s election. The ‘new person’ he has created transcends those categories. In its newness, it is not merely an amalgam of the old in which the best of Judaism and the best of Gentile aspirations have been combined. The two elements which were used in the creation have become totally transformed in the process. This is ‘the third race’ which is different from Jews and Gentiles.*” [Lincoln, 143f]

THIS IS A NEW CREATION — “According to Colossians 3:11 the barriers that divided people from one another — racial, religious, cultural, and social — are abolished in Christ, who is all and in all (cf. Gal 3:28; 6:15). Here in Ephesians 2, Jews and Gentiles who had been deeply divided and at enmity with one another are created in one new person. *Nothing less than a new creation, an entirely new entity, was needed to transcend the deep rift between the two. It was effected through Christ’s death, and the result is not an amalgam of the best elements of the two, but a ‘new person’ who transcends them both. The new humanity is not achieved by transforming Gentiles into Jews, or vice versa. And by this new creation Christ truly ‘makes peace’.* These words explain, in part, the heading to the section: he himself is our peace (v. 14). The peace in view in v. 15 is that between Jews and Gentiles, which is the opposite of hostility. Theologically, its basis is peace with God, and to this the apostle now turns.” [O’Brien, 200] “*Removing the enmity by abolishing the law has cleared the ground for something new. In fact, Christ’s purpose was nothing less than a new creation. We have already encountered this motif in 2:10 where believers were seen as God’s creation. Here Christ, particularly through his death, is seen as the creator of a new humanity.... [I]n this context the one new person stands for the new humanity seen as a corporate entity. Christ has created this corporate new person in himself; the new humanity is embraced in his own person The new community of which the Gentiles have become a part is not simply a development out of Israel, according to [Paul]. Instead, it took a new creation to produce it (v 15). The resulting one new person replaces the two old entities — Israel and the Gentiles (v 15). The privileges the Gentiles now enjoy not only match those which Israel experienced previously, but go beyond them (cf. vv 19-22).*” [Lincoln, 133f, 143f]

THE CHURCH IS NOT THE CONTINUATION OF ISRAEL — “*The church is new for it did not exist prior to Christ, but how new is new? Do we have a third group, consisting of neither Jews nor Gentiles, standing alongside both and yet different from both? Has a new people of God, contrasting with Israel the old people, come into existence? Have Gentile Christians been absorbed into Israel so that they continue it? What, in short, is the relation of the church to Israel? ... Markus Barth has argued in a number of publications as well as in his commentary that the church has been incorporated into historical Israel.... Over against Barth we would argue: (i) His view robs the newness (v. 15) of its newness and gravely diminishes the discontinuity before and after Christ if all that has happened is in effect a widening of the boundaries of Israel by the addition of Gentile believers. (ii) Both Jews and Gentiles are in need of saving grace (2.1-10); Gentiles who do not accept this remain outside the one new being or are not made into new people. What then of Jews who do not accept God’s saving grace? Do they have access to God (2.18) other than through Christ? (iii) Had [Paul] wished to suggest that Gentile believers became a part of historical Israel he would have made ‘nearness’ in 2.13 mean nearness to Israel. (iv) In the terms of 2.1-4 both Jews and Gentiles before they believed stood on the same level as transgressors of God’s will; both must be changed if both are to be redeemed. (v) [Paul] must have known there were unbelieving Jews yet says nothing about them; this then means he saw them as a group distinct from both Christians and Gentiles. (vi) If Gentile Christians were absorbed into Israel they would come under the Torah, yet the Law has been abrogated for the church.*” [Best, 267f] We will discuss this more over the next couple lessons but it is important to note the church was a new creation and not merely a continuation of Israel. *This has direct implications on the amillennialist’s teaching.*

HORIZONTAL PEACE, NOT VERTICAL PEACE — making peace, (YLT; NKJV) — ποιῶν εἰρήνην [poiōn eirēnēn] “*The peace in view at this point is between the two old enemies, not with God, and making peace here, as in Col 1:20, is a synonym for reconciling, the notion which follows immediately.*” [Lincoln, 144; see also Moule, 80; Salmond, Expositor’s GK Testament, 296] “*The creation of the new person takes place simultaneously with the making of peace (present participle, not necessarily signifying a continuous activity as if Christ keeps on making peace, though this indeed may be true). The peace is clearly that between Jew and Gentile.*” [Best, 263] “*ποιῶν εἰρήνην [poiōn eirēnēn], present participle, ‘making peace,’ i.e. so that by this new creation He makes (not ‘made’) peace. The words explain [‘for He himself is our peace’] of ver. 14. The peace is, from the context, that between Jews and Gentiles; but as the basis of that peace with God, the latter thought underlies the former, and to it the apostle now turns.*” [Abbott, 65]

v16 — HORIZONTAL PEACE OF v15 IS BASED UPON VERTICAL PEACE — and might reconcile both in one body to God through the cross, having slain the enmity in it, (YLT); and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. (NKJV) — καὶ ἀποκαταλλάξῃ τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους ἐν ἑνὶ σώματι τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ, ἀποκτείνας τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν αὐτῷ. [kai apokatallaxē tous amphoterous en heni sōmati tō theō dia tou staurou, apokteinas tēn exthran en autō] “This verse is not a consequence of v. 15b but parallel to it; terms are balanced (two

– both, create – reconcile, in him – in one body, making peace – killing); like v. 15b it depends on *ἵνα* [hina, ‘in order to’] and provides a second purpose relating to the whole of vv. 14b-15a. *Unlike v. 15b which spoke of the bringing together of Jews and Gentiles, v. 16 treats the relationship of both to God; thus the ambiguity of horizontal and vertical which commenced in v. 13 is continued and at the same time resolved. Not only do Jew and Gentile move towards one another; both move towards God. Neither movement may be said to be prior to the other or regarded as its basis, unlike Mt 5.23 where the horizontal precedes the vertical. Here the reconciliations are as inseparable as the two great commandments to love.* [Best, 263f] *“Human hostilities to God has to be overcome — ‘while we were yet enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son’ (Rom 5:10) — and hostility within the human family (and within creation as a whole) must similarly be overcome. Both forms of hostility have been ‘put to death’ by Christ through his own death on the cross. This is no doubt an ideal not yet fully realized in experience; but the insistence of this epistle is that the ideal will one day be seen as a worldwide reality, thanks to the completeness of Christ’s reconciling sacrifice.”* [Bruce, 300]

and might reconcile, (YLT); and that He might reconcile (NKJV) — *καὶ ἀποκαταλλάξῃ* [kai apokatallaxē] “The Gr. verb here rendered ‘reconcile’ occurs elsewhere (in exactly the same form) only Col i. 20, 21; but a form nearly identical occurs e.g. Rom v. 10; 1 Cor vii. 11; 2 Cor v. 18, 19, 20. *The idea of the verb is on the whole that of the propitiation of an alienated superior, to whom offending inferiors are, with his consent, led back as accepted suppliants. God (2 Cor v. 19) ‘reconciled the world unto Himself’ by providing, in His Son, the Divine pacification of the Divine displeasure against the world. Christ ‘reconciles us to God’ by being and effecting that pacification.*” [Moule, 80]

NOT ONLY DID THE GENTILES NEED RECONCILED TO GOD BUT SO DID THE JEWS!! — “Up to this point the focus has been on peace on the horizontal level, between Jews and Gentiles, but now this is combined with a vertical perspective as the notion of a reconciliation of both Jews and Gentiles to God is introduced.... *Reconciliation of Gentiles and Jews in one body is a parallel thought to that of the creation of the two groups into one new person, and what one would expect as a resolution to the situation of hostility mentioned in v 15. Reconciliation of both groups to God, however, adds an element which does not fit quite as smoothly into the previous context. It is clear from that context that the Gentiles’ alienation from Israel involved alienation from God (v 12). But what about Israel? Is not the impression given by vv 12, 13 that Israel’s election means that, as distinct from the Gentiles, she is not alienated from God, but rather she is near? But now v 16 speaks of both Jews and Gentiles being reconciled to God.... Though he obviously does not spell it out, if he were pressed to explain why Jews are now said to be reconciled to God, [Paul] would presumably respond that the law which separated Gentiles from Israel, and from Israel’s God, can now be seen to have also separated Israel from God, and would point to [his] teaching to this effect in Gal 3:10-22; 2 Cor 3:7-11; Rom 3:19, 20; 7:7-25; 9:30-10:4. [Paul has] already made clear that not only his Gentile readers, but all humanity, were under God’s wrath (2:3). Both Jews and Gentiles, then, were in a ruptured relationship with God, at enmity not only between themselves but with God. Yet Christ has now reconciled both groups to God through the cross....* The discontinuity between Israel, as the people of God, and the Church is evidenced also by vv 16, 17, where Jews as well as Gentiles are said to be reconciled to God by Christ, and where ‘the near’ need peace with God proclaimed to them as well as ‘the far.’ Despite what he believed to have been their real advantages, [Paul] holds also that Israel too was alienated from her God.” [Lincoln, 144ff; 163] “Whatever advantages Jews may once have had (v. 12) no distinction is now made between the ways in which they and Gentiles are reconciled to God.” [Best, 265]

RESTORING A ONCE-LOST UNITY? — *ἀποκαταλλάξῃ* [apokatallaxē, ‘reconcile’] is a double-compound verb; the only other place it is found in the NT is Col 1:20,22, the Colossian hymn. Some consider this as more than a reconciliation but as a reconciliation of a once-lost unity (Chrysostom, Calvin). Best rather just considers this another example of the intensification of a Pauline word which is common in Ephesians. *“The reconciliation of human beings to God is not expressed elsewhere in the NT so clearly as by Paul and his school (the LXX uses the verb for it in 2 Macc 1.5; 5.20; 7.33 where God, not humanity, is the object of reconciliation; in 2 Macc 8.29; Isa 9.4; Jer 31.39 the reconciliation is entirely on the human level); the idea may indeed have been introduced into Christian thought by Paul. The metaphor is derived from the social and political sphere where it is used of the bringing together of those who for some reason are apart and is used in this way in Mt 5.23f; Acts 7.26; 1 Cor 7.10f. [Paul] was the first to use it to describe the new relationship of Jews and Gentiles, and it is not inappropriate metaphor in the context of peace, but he does not use it directly of their being brought together.”* [Best, 265]

THE UNUSUAL WORD USED HERE POINTS TO PAULINE AUTHORSHIP — “In applying canonical criticism, Porter and Clarke make an interesting observation. The newly coined term for reconciliation is used only here and in Col 1:20, 22, as mentioned above. It is a word that fits within Pauline thought. However, it would seem that no pseudonymous author (of Colossians and Ephesians) would have coined a new word nor would he have used it in Ephesians since it is used differently than in Colossians (if he used Colossians as a basis for Ephesians). The use of this word in these books points to Pauline authorship for both books.” [Hoehner, 383]

both in one body to God (YLT); them both to God in one body (NKJV) — *τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι τῷ θεῷ* [tous amphoterous en heni sōmati tō theō] *“Both’ – here in the masculine plural; both great groups, Jewish and Gentile believers. ‘In one body’ – A phrase in contrast to ‘both;’ the two groups become the One Body, the One Man, of ver. 15.”* [Moule, 81] “What Christ creates is ‘the one new (human) being’ and he creates this person out of the two, i.e. Jews and Gentiles; we note the change from the neuter (v. 14) to the masculine; *whatever the significance of the earlier neuter, people are now in mind.*” [Best, 261] “The reference is to the Jews and Gentiles now making one body.... His object was to bring the two long-sundered and antagonistic parties as one whole, one great body, into right relation to God by His cross.” [Salmond, Expositor’s GK Testament, 297] “Christ reconciles the two groups ‘in one body’. If we associate the reference to the body closely with that to the cross, the

body in v. 16 might be the physical body of Christ which hung to the cross (so Chrysostom; Theodoret; Bengel; etc.). If this were so, we should expect 'in his body' of possibly 'in a (the) body'.... Since [Paul] uses 'body' in the singular elsewhere of the church he would probably have used 'flesh' here if he had meant Christ's physical body. **The vast majority of commentators accept the reference here as to the church**, and this is true even if the 'one new man' in v. 15b is understood individualistically. Accepting that the reference is to the church, we see that both vertical and horizontal relationships are fully present, Jews and Greeks being simultaneously reconciled to God and to one another. The former is the primary reference." [Best, 265f] **"The qualifying adjective 'one' makes clear that he had the Church in mind and not the physical crucified body of Christ or both."** [Lincoln, 144f]

through the cross, (YLT; NKJV) — διὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ, [dia tou staurou,] once more a reminder that this only took place because of the work of our Lord on the cross! **"The separation of the Gentiles from Israel and her election was a cleft so deep that it took the creative act of Christ's death to fill it."** [Lincoln, 143]

THE CROSS 'KILLED' THE ENMITY BETWEEN JEW AND GENTILE — having slain the enmity in it, (YLT); thereby putting to death the enmity. (NKJV) — ἀποκτείνας τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν αὐτῷ. [apokteinas tēn exthran en autō] There are several possible manners in which 'in it' may be understood. The reference most likely is to the cross. **"The enmity which is killed is that between Jew and Gentile as in v. 14 and not that between humanity and God or both. It received its death blow in the cross;** [the participle could be understood as] indicating one particular event, Christ's death. **Christ is killed and he kills!"** [Best, 266] **"'Slain' – a word chosen, instead of e.g. 'cancelled,' 'abolished,' because the work was done through death. What was really, in final effect, executed at Calvary was the obstacle to peace; whether peace in the sense of the harmony of redeemed souls, or peace in the sense of reconciliation to God, the basis for the other."** [Moule, 81]

EACH CHURCH IS A MICROCOSM OF GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE — **"The Church is not only the place of reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles, it is also the place where reconciliation between humanity and God is experienced, where harmony between heaven and earth has been restored, and where access to the Father is enjoyed. The high God of heaven has chosen to make it his dwelling place on earth, and the Christ who has been exalted to heaven forms the crowning stone in its structure. The Church is where men and women experience a sense of being at home, of belonging, not only to one another in a unified humanity as fellow citizens, but also to God himself as part of his household or family. This new society is also a building, a temple, where humans are the building material which God the builder has already made into his dwelling place. No longer the literal temple in Jerusalem but the community of the Church is the focus for God's presence in the world. The Church is already the temple in which God dwells. Yet, it is at the same time a building under construction, where, through their relationship to Christ and to one another, believers are still being shaped into a fit sanctuary for God. It is to be characterized by growth and holiness as it become what it already is."** [Lincoln, 162] **"Christ's bringing together Jew and Gentile in himself as the 'one new person' is a highly significant step towards the fulfilment of God's eternal plan, that is, the consummation of the mystery (1:9-10). God's ultimate purpose is to bring together everything in Christ as the focal point. The object of this summing up is 'all things' (1:10), an expression which is amplified and explained by means of the parallel phrases 'things in heaven' and 'things on earth'. Christ's creating of one new person in himself has particular reference to the latter domain, namely, 'things on earth'. His bringing together Jew and Gentile is the achieving of a reconciliation between two hostile elements here 'on earth'. This work has, in principle, already been effected. Christ has achieved it by his death on the cross. It may thus be spoken of as 'realized eschatology'. But there is still a future dimension, for the new relationship between Jew and Gentile has yet to be consummated. Later Paul will contend that the very presence of Jews and Gentiles in the church, here and now, is magnificent evidence to the 'rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms' of the manifold wisdom of God (3:10)."** [O'Brien, 200f]