

# The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON XLV : DIGRESSION #2 - PAUL AS MINISTER OF THE MYSTERY TO THE GENTILES (3:1-13)

*For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. (Eph 3:1-13 KJV)*

*For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles — Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence. I ask you, therefore, not to be discouraged because of my sufferings for you, which are your glory. (Eph 3:1-13 NIV)*

*For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you the nations, if, indeed, ye did hear of the dispensation of the grace of God that was given to me in regard to you, that by revelation He made known to me the secret, according as I wrote before in few [words] — in regard to which ye are able, reading [it], to understand my knowledge in the secret of the Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it was now revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit — that the nations be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in the Christ, through the good news, of which I became a ministrant, according to the gift of the grace of God that was given to me, according to the working of His power; to me — the less than the least of all the saints — was given this grace, among the nations to proclaim good news — the untraceable riches of the Christ, and to cause all to see what [is] the fellowship of the secret that hath been hid from the ages in God, who the all things did create by Jesus Christ, that there might be made known now to the principalities and the authorities in the heavenly [places], through the assembly, the manifold wisdom of God, according to a purpose of the ages, which He made in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have the freedom and the access in confidence through the faith of him, wherefore, I ask [you] not to faint in my tribulations for you, which is your glory. (Eph 3:1-13 Young's Literal Translation)*

## ***Paul as Minister of the Mystery to the Gentiles (3:1-13)***

The essence of what Paul is saying is as follows:

*For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you, the Gentiles —*

*if, indeed, ye did hear of **the responsibility of managing the GRACE of God which was given to me, namely, that He made known the mystery that the Gentiles should be***

***joint – heirs***

***and joint – body***

***and joint – partakers***

***of His promise in Jesus the Messiah through the gospel;***

this **GRACE** was given to me

- **to preach** the unsearchable riches of the Christ among the Gentiles
- **and to enlighten** all as to what is the plan of the mystery

**in order that** [hina] the untraceable wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and to the authorities in the heavenlies through the ecclesia.

Therefore I ask you not to lose heart in my tribulations on behalf of you which is your glory.

## The Mystery Explained

**V 6 — STATEMENT OF FACT, NOT PURPOSE — That ... should be (KJV, NKJV) — εἶναι [einai]** “The words ‘should be’ are *einai*, the infinitive of the verb of being. The translation should read: ‘that the Gentiles are.’ The contents of the mystery are a fact, not a purpose.” [Wuest, Word Studies in the Greek NT, 82] “The present infinitive εἶναι [einai] is wrongly translated ‘should be’ in the AV. It is not expressing purpose but is epexegetical or appositional, denoting the content of the mystery, and could be translated ‘that is’ or ‘namely.’” [Hoehner, 445]

**epexegetical** – the addition of a word or words to explain a preceding word or statement

**THREE ‘TOGETHER WITH’-PREFIXED WORDS — the Gentiles are fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers** — τὰ ἔθνη συγκληρονόμα καὶ σύσσωμα καὶ συμμετοχα [ta ethnē sygklēronoma kai syssōma kai symmetocha] *What is concealed in our English translations is that the content of the mystery, the full inclusion of the Gentiles in the local assembly, is described by means of three adjectives, each which begins with συν- [syn, meaning ‘together with’].* “Paul uses three adjectives as predicate accusatives to express that Gentiles now are fellow members with the Jews. All three adjectives have a **SUN-** [syn, ‘together with’] prefix to emphasize the union between Jews and Gentiles in the body of Christ. This is a common stylistic feature of Paul.” [Hoehner, 445] *We have many examples of this prefix used in our English language today:*

- **SYN-OPTIC** — Dictionary definition: ‘affording or taking a general view of the principal parts of a subject, taking a common view; used chiefly in reference to the first three Gospels (synoptic Gospels) Matthew, Mark, and Luke, from their similarity in content, order, and statement. From Greek *synoptikos*.’ Therefore taking a ‘together-with’ view of something.
- **SYN-ERGY** — Dictionary definition: ‘the interaction of elements that when combined produce a total effect that is greater than the sum of the individual elements; synergism. From Greek *sunergos*’ The Greek word is ‘together with’ + ‘work, labor, action, deed;’ therefore having a ‘together-with’ work or action, a combining of smaller actions to produce a greater effect. ‘Sunergos’ is used twice in the NT and translated ‘fellow worker, fellow helper’ (Rom 16:21; 2 Cor 8:23).

As literally as I am able, here is verse 6:

**“... that the nations / Gentiles are  
‘together-with’ heirs,  
and ‘together-with’ body,  
and ‘together-with’ sharers of His promise  
in the Christ [in Christ Jesus], through the gospel / good news”**

**STRAIGHT-FORWARD MEANING BUT DIFFICULT APPLICATION — I must admit I am having difficulty with the application of Paul’s words here. Some commentators give this a general reference to our salvation and continue without further explanation. Many of those who go into more detail limit Paul’s words to salvation only or is all-inclusive, meaning they erase all differences between the Jew and the Gentile in the New Testament era. I believe that misses the main emphasis of this passage.** Let us to take a quick glance at each of these words and then try to understand their collective meaning and application.

συγκληρονόμα  
[sygklēronoma]

**HEIRS ‘TOGETHER WITH’, FELLOW HEIRS, JOINT HEIRS** — Not found in classical literature or LXX but is found in a couple of inscriptions, in Philo, and four times in the NT (Rom 8:17; Eph 3:6; Heb 11:9; 1 Pet 3:7). It means ‘he who receives, or will receive, something along with another,’ or more simply a ‘joint heir’ (NEB) or ‘fellow heir’ (AV, RV, ASV, RSV, NASB, NRSV). We will look at each of the four times this word is used in the NT below.

σύσσωμα  
[syssōma]

**BODY ‘TOGETHER WITH’, OF THE SAME BODY** — This word is found nowhere else in the literature of the time and may have been a word coined by Paul for this very usage, although Aristotle used a similar form as an adjective. Lincoln says the best literal translation is ‘concorporate’ = ‘sharers in the one body.’ Ernest Best warns against calling this a ‘neologism’ since we do not know all Greek literature (a ‘neologism’ is the introduction of a new word or usage).

συμμέτοχα  
[symmetocha]

**PARTAKERS ‘TOGETHER WITH’** — This was a rare word that was used of plant life that needs heat and cold as well as dry and wet, and none of these are ever separated from its ‘partner.’ “It is used also of an ‘accomplice’ in a plot. In the NT it occurs only in Ephesians (3:6; 5:7) and means ‘sharing with them, casting one’s lot with them’ or ... ‘fellow participant.’” [Hoehner, 446] “Therefore do not be partakers συμμέτοχοι [symmetochoi] with them.” (Eph 5:7 NKJV)

Prior to our looking at the details, here are some things we know overall:

**THE FIRST AND THIRD WORDS HAVE JEWISH OVERTONES, THE SECOND WORD IS PURELY CHRISTIAN** — *The content of the mystery is now disclosed – Jews and Gentiles meet in the church on equal terms. This is expressed through three terms which echo ideas found elsewhere in the letter; of them the first and third also echo Jewish ideas:*

*fellow heirs* —

*sharers, partakers of his promise* —

*members of the same body* — *in contrast to the other two terms, this is a definitive Christian theme*

*In each case, the ‘together with’ is a reference to the Jewish and Gentile believers. These three terms do not progress in importance, rather they are simply different ways of expressing the same thought.* [Best, 312]

**THIS REFLECTS BACK TO PAUL’S COMMENTS IN 2:11-22** — “[T]his concept has already been seen in the earlier section (2:14-22) because believing Jews and Gentiles are both created into one new humanity (2:15), both fellow citizens and members of God’s household (2:19), both being fitted together (2:21), and both being built together into a dwelling place of God (2:22).” [Hoehner, 446f] “Those who once were ‘excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise’ (2:12) now have exactly the same legal status before God as His chosen people, the Jews. They have the same marvelous, boundless inheritance in Christ that Paul has already mentioned (1:11, 14, 18). Every believer is blessed ‘with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ’ (1:3). As the apostle told the Galatians, regardless of your racial or other heritage, ‘If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise’ (Gal 3:29). The Gentiles are not boarders or strangers but sons (cf. 1:11, 14, 19; 2:19), having the same legal status as all other believers.” [MacArthur, 92]

**WHILE SALVATION IS FOUNDATIONAL IN THIS UNION BETWEEN THE JEW AND GENTILE, THE CONTEXT IS ECCLESIASTICAL** — *This point is incredibly important and will keep us from error if we interpret Paul’s words in that light.*

- *“In each case σύν [syn–, ‘together with’] refers to the unification of Jews and Gentiles rather than to the relation of either to Christ.... These Gentile believers are fellow heirs with Jewish believers, not with all Jews, of the promised inheritance (see 1.14, 18 for its nature), fellow members of the body of Christ and fellow recipients of the promise of God. Together they form the new people of God, the ‘third race.’ ‘Promise’ in the singular may refer either to the total of what is promised in the OT in relation to salvation or to the particular promise made to Abraham on which the whole position of Jews rested and which is seen in some parts of the NT to apply to Gentile Christians (Gal 3.29).” [Best, 312]*
- *“Fellow-heirs with the Jews; the only occurrence of the word in the NT in this application.” [Salmond, Expositor’s Greek NT, 305] So while this word is used four times in the NT, its use here is unique.*
- *“It is not the same as Rom 8:17 where believers are joint heirs with Christ, speaking in Christological and soteriological terms. Rather, here it is expressing in an ecclesiological manner the fact that Gentiles are joint heirs with Jews.” [Hoehner, 445; see also Lincoln, 181]*
- *“συγκληρονόμα [sygklēronoma], fellow-heirs, not with Christ, as in Rom. viii. 17, for it is ‘in Christ,’ but with the believing Jews.” [Abbott, 83]*

## **BODY ‘TOGETHER WITH’ (OF THE SAME BODY)**

σύσσωμα [syssōma]

While not in the order given by Paul, we will look at this word first for two reasons: (1) of the three words, this has a uniquely Christian tenor to it compared to the others; and (2) I believe it important for this entire discussion to define Paul’s use of the word ‘body’ here. *While most will immediately confine this word to ‘all believers everywhere (the universal-invisible church), I*

believe Paul is speaking of the local assembly of believers and that this word particularly emphasizes the union of the Jews and Gentiles within that local assembly.

**“It might be regarded as appropriate that a new word should be coined to express so revolutionary a concept as the inclusion of Gentiles in the people of God on the same footing as Jews. Even proselytes from paganism to the Jewish faith were debarred from a few minor privileges which were reserved for Israelites by birth. It the new community there were no such restrictions.”** [Bruce, 316] “It means that they are of the same body and it is designed to express a close relationship to the body of Christ. Thus the translation literally would be ‘concorporate,’ but a smoother rendering is ‘members of the same body’ or ‘fellow members of the body.’ Both believing Jews and Gentiles are in the body of Christ, so Gentiles are fellow members of the body with Jews. The growth of this body depends on the head who is Christ, and each of the members functions dependently on the other members of the body in order to contribute to the growth of the body (4:15-16). Again, this concept has been mentioned already in 2:14-22 for they are both created into one new humanity (2:15), both in one body (2:16), both growing into a holy temple (2:21), and both being built together as the place where God dwells in the Spirit (2:22).” [Hoehner, 446] “They are *σύσσωμα* [syssōma], i.e. they are constituent portions of the body of Christ; — as nearly related to him, and as much partakers of his life as their Jewish brethren. **The hand is not in the body by permission of the eye, nor the eye by permission of the hand. Neither is the Gentile in the church by courtesy of the Jews, nor the Jew by courtesy of the Gentiles. They are one body.**” [Hodge, 114] I agree and fully appreciate these observations but it should be noted that most of their thoughts and meanings are references to the universal-invisible church. I however make the application to the local church and their comments still apply.

## **HEIRS ‘TOGETHER WITH’ (FELLOW HEIRS, JOINT HEIRS)** **συγκληρονόμα [sygklēronoma]**

Of the four times this word is used in the NT, only Romans 8:17 is followed by a Person:

*“and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and **joint heirs** [συγκληρονόμοι, sygklēronomoi] with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.”* (Rom 8:17 NKJV) This is of course a reference to all believers’ identity in Christ at salvation.

The other three passages all are followed by a ‘thing’:

*“by faith he did sojourn in the land of the promise as a strange country, in tabernacles having dwelt with Isaac and Jacob, **fellow-heirs** [συγκληρονόμων, sygklēronomōn] of the same promise”* (Heb 11:9 YLT) This has a strict Old Testament application.

*“Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being **heirs together** [συγκληρονόμοι, sygklēronomoi] of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.”* (1Pet 3:7 NKJV) Peter is not referring to a church situation but the shared salvation experience between a husband and a wife.

*“that the Gentiles should be **fellow heirs** [συγκληρονόμα, sygklēronoma], of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel”* (Eph 3:6 NKJV)

**This is where some focused interpretation is required, for if NT believers are ‘joint-heirs’ with our Jewish brethren without reservation then is that not the Amillennial position? Yet as we have pointed out in our previous studies, Paul’s teaching here lays to rest the Amillennial position in my opinion.** William Hendriksen is an example of the Amillennial position:

*“But what these prophets did not make clear was that in connection with the coming of the Messiah and the outpouring of the Spirit the old theocracy would be completely abolished and in its place would arise a new organism in which the Gentiles and the Jews would be placed on a footing of perfect equality.... Paul makes it clear that God’s unveiled secret (‘mystery’) has to do not merely with an alliance of Jew and Gentile, or perhaps a friendly agreement to live together in peace, or even an outward combination or partnership, but, on the contrary, with a complete and permanent fusion, a perfect spiritual union of formerly clashing elements into one new organism, even a ‘new humanity’ (2:15).”* [Hendriksen, 154f]

I disagree with the extent to which William Hendriksen takes this passage and will provide my arguments below. Here are similar quotes from other Amillennialists:

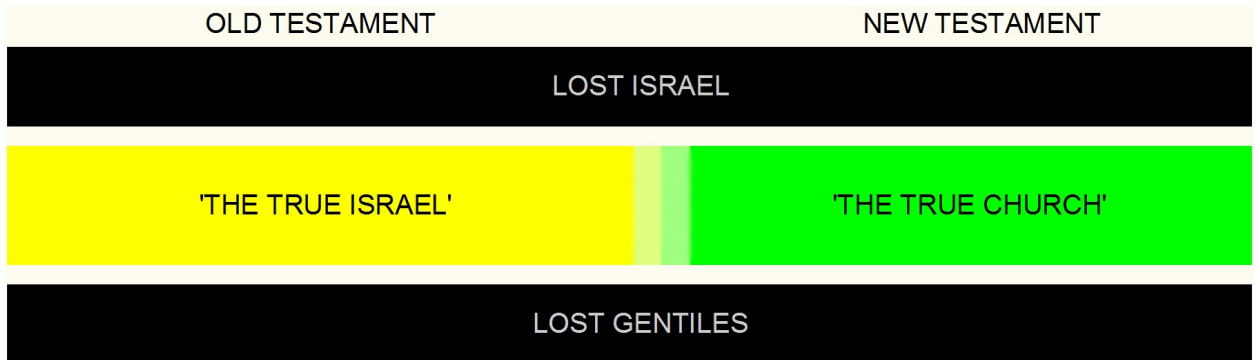
***“Amillennialists do not believe that the kingdom of God is primarily a Jewish kingdom which involves the literal restoration of the throne of David.... Amillennialists believe that the kingdom of God was founded by Christ at the time of his sojourn on earth, is operative in history now and is destined to be revealed in its fullness in the life to come. They understand the kingdom of God to be the reign of God dynamically active in human history through Jesus Christ. Its purpose is to redeem God’s people from sin and from demonic powers, and finally to establish the new heavens and the new earth. The kingdom of God means nothing less than the reign of God in Christ over his entire created universe.”*** [Anthony Hoekema, ‘Amillennialism: A Brief Sketch of Amillennial Eschatology’; from [http://www.the-highway.com/amilc\\_Hoekema.html](http://www.the-highway.com/amilc_Hoekema.html) 2/5/2015]

***“The most obvious fact of amillennial ecclesiology is that it denies any millennial period following the church age in which righteousness and peace will flourish on earth. All the prophetic anticipations of such a period are either considered conditional and therefore uncertain, or are to be fulfilled in the church in the present age.*** The denial of a

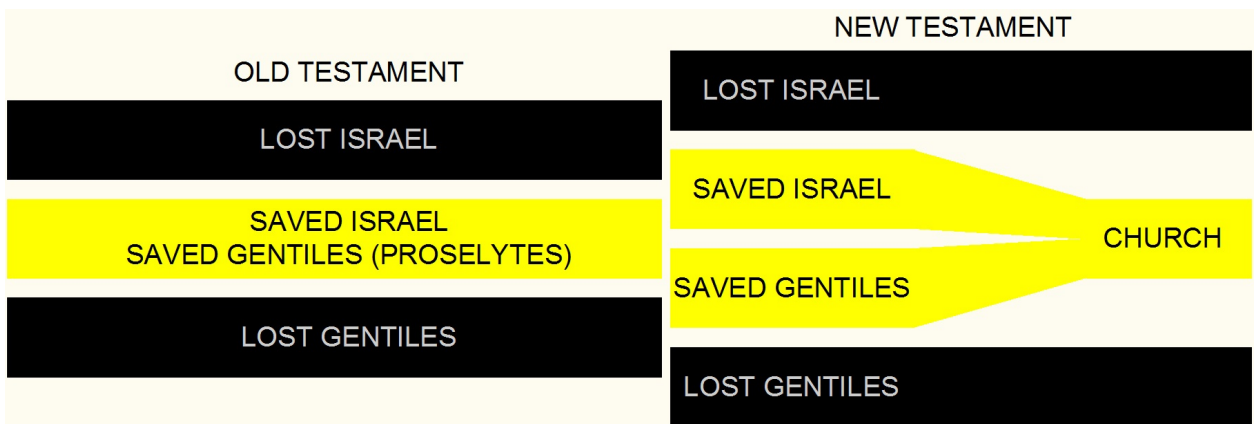
future millennium is based on the method of giving a spiritualized interpretation to Old Testament kingdom prophecies.... While considerable difference of opinion exists among amillenarians regarding the best method of disposing of the mass of Old Testament prophecies which seem to indicate a future earthly kingdom for Israel, they agree in the main principle, that is, that these promises will not be fulfilled to Israel in a kingdom age to follow the present dispensation. Whether cancelled because of rejection of Christ as Messiah or spiritualized according to Calvin's formula, amillennialism with one voice condemns any literal fulfillment of these promises." [from the Theological Journal Library CD and posted with permission of Galaxie Software; <https://bible.org/book/export/html/5455> 2/5/2015]

Let us clarify our position prior to attending to their comments:

- **THIS IS NOT A MATTER OF 'US' AGAINST 'THEM'** — Do I agree with the Amillennial position on eschatology? No, but I also do not believe any eschatological position is cause for division between the brethren. I have personal friends who hold to the Amillennial position and I have great respect for them; they are good, Godly men (and women). Some of our greatest theologians are (were) Amillennialists: John Calvin, William Hendriksen, A. T. Robertson, Louis Berkhof, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, et. al. Great men who God has greatly used. *If someone is a true believer and accepts the literal, bodily future return of our Lord and Savior to judge the earth, then the details as to His coming are secondary. Study? – yes. Try to understand to the best of our abilities what the Scripture teaches on this topic? – yes. But divide and argue amongst the brethren? – no, I will not. Not over eschatology.*
- **WE SHOULD LET THE WORD OF GOD SPEAK RATHER THAN TRYING TO CONFORM ANY PASSAGE INTO OUR PRE-DETERMINED SYSTEM OF BELIEFS** — *If we approach any passage of Scripture with blinders, we will miss what the Lord is teaching. Can we honestly ask as we study, 'What is the Lord saying in this passage and how does it conform with the rest of Scripture?' We must let the Word of God speak for itself and then conform our beliefs to God's Word.* I believe William Hendriksen 'read into' this passage his amillennial beliefs ... *but how often do we do the same?*



Referring to our quotes above: the Amillennialists believe all of the promises given to Israel in the Old Testament are fulfilled or have now been given to the New Testament believers (which they understands as the 'church'). That would include most (all?) Reformed churches, many Presbyterians and others within various denominations. *Therefore to them the Gentiles are 'joint-heirs' with the Jews in all areas without exception. I do not believe that is Paul's teaching in this passage.*



As we have taught in previous lessons, I believe the chart above gives a more accurate portrayal of what Paul is teaching in the book of Ephesians. *Rather than Israel being assimilated within the New Testament church, Paul is teaching that the Jew remains a Jew and the Gentile remains a Gentile, but the wonder of it all is that they unite in love within the local assembly to honor Christ in their teachings, attitudes and actions. "The Gentiles have not been added to an already existing entity; they are fully equal joint members, totally necessary for the life of the body, which without them would not exist....* As is likely to

have been the case in 2:19 and was certainly the case in 2:21,22, the συν-, ‘together with’] prefix has in view a relationship with other believers, but since the subject of the clause is τὰ ἔθνη [ta ethnē, ‘the nations, the Gentiles’], ‘the Gentiles,’ those other believers must primarily be those of Jewish birth. ***It is important to grasp rightly [Paul’s] emphasis. He is not celebrating the relationship of Gentiles with Israel or the Jewish people as such. With the terms he uses he directs attention to unity within the Church rather than unity with Israel and her past. For, as has already been observed from 2:11-22, [Paul] views the Church as a new entity which transcends old divisions and categories, and what for him is at the heart of God’s disclosure is that the Gentiles are an essential constituent of this new entity.... The Gentiles have not been added to an already existing entity; they are fully equal joint members, totally necessary for the life of the body, which without them would not exist.***” [Lincoln, 180f]

Here are some comments we have seen in previous lessons. As previously discussed, the main emphasis of these quotes is that the ecclesia is a new entity, the Jews still being Jews and the Gentiles still being Gentiles within that one local church body:

Comments on the Eph 2:11-22 passage, from lesson 13a : ***“Ephesians is probably a circular letter written to several congregations in Paul’s Gentile mission where his predominantly Gentile readers are helped to appreciate the greatness of their salvation. It has a history, and they have entered into the heritage of Israel. The use of the Old Testament Scriptures in this key paragraph, both explicitly (cf. vv. 13, 17) and by way of allusion or echo (cf. vv. 19-22), underscores the note of continuity between Gentile Christians and the promises of God to Israel (cf. Gen 12:1-3; Isa 49:5, 6). But, if anything, there is a greater emphasis in this paragraph on the element of discontinuity: the new community of which these Gentiles have become a part is not simply a development out of Israel. It is a new creation (v. 15), not some kind of amalgam made out of the best elements of Israel and the Gentiles. The resulting new humanity transcends the two old entities, even though unbelieving Israel and disobedient Gentiles continue to exist. The privileges Gentiles enjoy are based upon but transcend the blessings promised to Israel (vv. 19-22).”*** [O’Brien, 183f]

Commenting on Eph 2:14, from lesson 13d: ***“In this context, however, the reference is clearly to the two groups of people previously discussed, the Gentiles and the Jews. They have not just been brought into a mutual relationship, but have been made one in a unity where both are no longer what they previously were. In accomplishing this, Christ has transcended one of the fundamental divisions of the first-century world.”*** [Lincoln, 140f] ***“The two groups are not strictly Jews and Gentiles; it is Christians from both these groups who are made into the new group. Jews and Gentiles as such still exist as independent groups.”*** [Best, 253]

Commenting on Eph 2:15, from lesson 13f: ***“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]

Commenting on Eph 2:15, from lesson 13f – Relating to Paul’s teaching that this ecclesia Christ formed, built with Jews and Gentiles, is a new entity are the following comments:

***“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.’”*** [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 new for it did not exist prior to Christ, but how new is new? Do we have a third group, consisting of***

**a-mal-gam** [uh-mal-guhm] – noun – an alloy of mercury with another metal or metals; a mixture or combination: *His character is a strange amalgam of contradictory traits.*

*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 historic 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]*

Commenting on Eph 2:17, from lesson 13g: ***"This verse reinforces the idea of the formation of an entirely new entity. Both the 'far' and 'near' hear the message of peace. If the Gentiles actually became Jews, then the near would not need the message of peace; rather those who were far away would enter into the fold of the near. On the contrary, the picture is that the 'near' also need a message of peace, and on acceptance they, with the Gentiles, enter the new fold, the church. It is the new humanity that is created."*** [Hoehner, 387]

***But if Paul is not making an Ammillennial statement, how then are we to understand his meaning?***

**THE JEWS AND GENTILES ARE EQUAL WITHIN THE ECCLESIAS** — I find these comments appropriate even though the majority of these commentators hold the doctrine of a universal-invisible church; I would apply their comments to the local assembly. "[The Gentiles] are fellow-heirs with the Jews and share in the spiritual riches God gave them because of His covenant with Abraham (Gal 3:29). ***In Christ, being a Jew or a Gentile is neither an asset nor a liability, for together we share the riches of Christ.***" [Wiersbe, 28] "Fellow heirs — Cp. Rom. viii. 17; Gal. iii. 29; iv. 7. They are the children of God and brethren of Christ, equally with Jewish believers, and so equally heirs of their Father's kingdom; 'joint-heirs with Christ' of 'the better country, that is the heavenly' (Heb. xi. 16)." [Moule, 89] ***Although the word is not used in Gal 3:26-29, the same concept is presented. At this point in the discussion the concept of believing Jews and Gentiles as 'fellow heirs' was understandable to the Ephesians because of Paul's previous disclosures in Eph 2:14 (made both one), 2:19 (fellow citizens), 2:20 (same foundation), and 2:21 (fitted together). Logically then, believing Gentiles also would be fellow heirs.***" [Hoehner, 445f] Here is the Galatians passage Hoehner was referencing:

*"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal 3:26-29 NKJV)*

**JEWISH AND GENTILE BELIEVERS ALIKE ANTICIPATE A SPIRITUAL INHERITANCE IN OUR FUTURES** — Andrew Lincoln limits the 'inheritance' to the blessings of salvation, of which I agree: ***"The inheritance in which they share is for Ephesians an image for the full salvation God has prepared for his people, which they have already begun to enjoy through the Spirit, who is the guarantee of complete future possession (cf. 1:14; 5:5, note that in 1:18 ['inheritance'] is used of God's inheritance rather than that of believers). So, central to the mystery is the Gentiles' full and equal share in the inheritance of the blessings of salvation."*** [Lincoln, 181; see also Snodgrass, 161f] ***"God promised Abraham that he would bless his descendants and that through him all the families of the earth would find blessing (Gen 12:2-3). Now the divine plan has been revealed that through the gospel all the families on the earth should not only be blessed in Abraham's offspring, but also be counted among his children. They, too, share 'the faith of Abraham', who is 'the father of us all' (Rom 4:16). They are fellow-heirs because they are heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ (Rom 8:17). Earlier in Ephesians the notion of 'inheritance' pointed to the certain hope of participating in the future glory, the enjoyment of which has already begun through the Spirit who is the guarantee of that future possession (cf. 1:14; 5:5)."*** [O'Brien, 234f] ***"The Gentiles are fellow heirs. They have the same right to the inheritance as the Jews. The inheritance is all the benefits of the covenant of grace; the knowledge of the truth, all church privileges, justification, adoption, and sanctification; the indwelling of the Spirit, and life everlasting; an inheritance so great that simply to comprehend it requires divine assistance, and elevates the soul to the confines of heaven. Hence Paul prays (1:17, 18), that God would give the Ephesians the Spirit of revelation that they might know what is the riches of the glory of the inheritance to which they had been called."*** [Hodge, 114] ***Charles Hodge's comments are excellent and appropriate if we keep them in the context of this lesson. Hodge and some others however would take this one step too far and completely remove any distinction between the Jew and the Gentile within this church age.***

**SUMMATION: SAVED JEWS AND GENTILES ARE TOGETHER WITHIN THE ECCLESIA, BUT SAVED GENTILES ARE NOT PART OF ISRAEL** — Harold Hoehner here makes a great summation of all we have been attempting to say in this lesson: ***"Care must be taken not to make Gentile believers a part of Israel. There is a delicate balance between what applies specifically to the nation Israel and what applies to the church.*** Three different views are offered regarding this.

First, some believe that all the promises of the OT covenants are applied to the church in the present day. However, there

is no indication in the NT that the church should claim the Promised Land for its possession. This was promised specifically to the nation Israel.

Second, others take the spiritual promises in the covenants literally but allegorize the land promises. Again, nowhere in the NT is there any indication of this. On what basis can one allegorize parts of the covenant and interpret other parts literally? There is no basis on which one can allegorize the promise of the land which God made to Israel. If this unconditional covenant were not fulfilled, then God's integrity is at stake. Acts 3:19-21 clearly indicates that there will be a time future to our day when the covenants will be fulfilled literally. **Furthermore, this view would make the church the 'new Israel,' and this is contrary to the whole point of Eph 2:11-22 where the 'new person' is distinct from the nation Israel. Gentiles do not become Jews but rather Jews and Gentiles become 'one new person.' The church is not the new Israel but a distinct body of believers made up of believing Jews and Gentiles.**

Third, some take the covenants of promise literally. In this case, however, only those promises restated in the NT apply to the church and those that are not mentioned apply to the nation Israel and are yet to be fulfilled. There is no indication in the NT that the land promises made to Israel are for the church's possession.

In conclusion, the third interpretation seems to fit best with the facts presented in the NT." [Hoehner, 447f] Andrew Lincoln made similar comments; see above.

### Here are the major points we have gleaned from our study above:

- **While the word 'fellow-heir' or 'joint-heir' is used elsewhere in the NT, its usage here is unique in its application.**
- **Believing Gentiles are fellow-heirs with Jewish believers, not with Christ in this passage; cf. Rom 8:17 – 'and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.'**
- **Paul is not celebrating the relationship of Gentiles with Israel or the Jewish people as such. With the terms he uses he directs attention to unity within the ecclesia rather than unity with Israel and her past.**
- **The Gentiles have not been added to an already existing entity; they are fully equal joint members in a new entity, totally necessary for the life of the body, which without them would not exist.**
- **The ecclesia is not the new Israel but a distinct body of believers made up of believing Jews and Gentiles.**
- **To misunderstand these verses to teach the Gentiles have inherited all the promises that were given to the Jews without exception would require one to spiritualize much of the Old Testament.**

## PARTAKERS 'TOGETHER WITH' OF HIS PROMISE

συμμέτοχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας αὐτοῦ [symmetocha tēs epangelias autou]

**'THE PROMISE' PROBABLY RELATES TO THE LAST 'SUN-' WORD ONLY** — The consensus of the commentators I have read believe 'His promise' relates to the last 'sun- word' only. "The genitive of ἐπαγγελίας [epangelias], 'promise,' is objective and depends only on συμμέτοχα [symmetocha, 'partakers together with'] and not all three adjectives." [Hoehner, 447]

**WHAT PROMISE?** — "Note 'promise' is singular, possibly referring to either the totality of what was promised in the OT in relation to salvation or the particular promise to Abraham on which the whole position of the Jews rested and upon which is seen in some parts of the NT to apply to Gentile Christians, cf. Gal 3.29." [Best, 312] "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal 3:29) All of the commentators I read understands this in a similar fashion:

"Certainly for [Paul] there was a time when Israel possessed the promise through the covenant relationship with Yahweh (cf. 2:12). But as 2:11-22 makes clear, the way in which the promise was fulfilled and hope realized in Christ brought about an element of discontinuity with the past so that the fulfillment in Christ means that for the new community the promise now has its own distinctive Christian content, and, in this, Gentile Christians are participants together with Jewish Christians, with no difference between them." [Lincoln, 181]

"What is this promise? Paul is probably thinking especially of the promise to Abraham that through him all the Gentiles would be blessed (Gal. 3:8; Rom. 4:13), a promise that in Gal. 3:14 seems to merge with the biblical promise of the eschatological outpouring of God's Spirit." [Thielman, 205]

"The promise is the promise of salvation, of a part in the kingdom of the Messiah; and to be partakers of the promise is to be joined with those to whom the promise is given." [Abbott, 83]

"The promise is the promise of redemption; the promise made to our first parents, repeated to Abraham, and which forms the burden of all the Old Testament predictions." [Hodge, 114]

"['Promise'], not specifically the promise of the Spirit, but, as undefined, the promise of *Salvation*, the *Messianic* promise in its length and breadth." [Salmond, Expositor's GK Testament, 305]



**in the Christ** — ἐν τῷ Χριστῷ [en tōi Christōi — Tyndale NT, Geneva Bible, KJV, NKJV, YLT]; **in Christ Jesus** — ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ [en Christōi Iēsou — RSV, NIV, NASV, ESV] As noted, there is a very minor textual discrepancy between the versions. *“Behind the togetherness of Gentile and Jewish believers in the one people of God lies God’s activity in Christ; this is brought out in the final two phrases of the verse which relate to all that preceded in the verse.”* [Best, 312] *“[In Christ Jesus] is not to be related simply to the notion of promise but qualifies all three of the previous descriptions, characterizing the sphere in which Gentile incorporation takes place, and thus in which God’s purpose is realized and salvation accomplished.”* [Lincoln, 181] *“In Christ, not διὰ [dia, ‘through’], for He was not simply the means; it was in His person that this effect was produced.”* [Abbott, 83f]

**by the gospel** — διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου [dia tou euangeliou] *“Gentiles did not gain equal status by circumcision or any other religious ceremony, but by the gospel.”* [Hoehner, 448] *“by the Gospel. It is not by birth nor by any outward rite, nor by union with any external body, but by the Gospel, received and appropriated by faith, that we are united to Christ, and thus made heirs of God.... Hence the apostle enlarges on the dignity and importance of preaching the Gospel.”* [Hodge, 114f]

**EACH CHURCH IS A MICROCOSM OF THE ETERNAL STATE** — “The content of the mystery which is revealed through the proclamation of the gospel, and which has been stated in 3:6, is not unrelated to the content of the mystery as expressed in 1:10 in terms of summing up all things in heaven and on earth in Christ. The former provides the model for the latter. *In other words, the bringing together of the cosmos in Christ finds its present anticipation in the bringing together of humanity in Christ in the one Church out of Jews and Gentiles.*” [Lincoln, 181]

**NOTE ONCE AGAIN THE REFERENCE TO THE TRINITY** — “It is ‘in Christ Jesus’ that they are made ‘fellow heirs’ in the inheritance of God: ‘of the same body’ under the Head, Christ Jesus; and ‘fellow partakers of the promise’ in the communion of the Holy Spirit (Eph 1:13; Heb 6:4). *The Trinity is thus alluded to, as often elsewhere in this Epistle* (Eph 2:19, 20, 22).” [JFB, Commentary on Whole Bible]

**THIS MUST BE A REFERENCE TO A LOCAL CHURCH APPLICATION** — *Paul spoke of wonder of ‘Gentiles and Jews together in one church.’ Most of the commentators understand this to be the universal invisible church but as we have observed before, what is so special about that? Anyone can get along with another person as long as it is theoretical and abstract! Our universal-invisible friends also recognize that it was readily understood the Gentiles would one day be blessed but what was unknown was the uniting of the Gentiles and Jews together in one body. But if the reference is to the universal invisible church then saying ‘the Gentiles will be partakers of same body as Jews’ is no different than merely saying ‘the Gentiles will one day be saved.’ In other words, there is no mystery that Paul is here expounding! The only application that makes sense of Paul’s words is a local, visible assembly of believers; i.e., the ecclesia as we have been using it throughout these lessons.*