

Ephesians Week 4
2:11-22
Summary

Summary of Text

Paul zooms in even further, contrasting the previous state of his readers to their current status. His main thrust is that not only were these Gentiles formerly dead and judged, but they were also separated from all hope, being apart from the people of Israel and all that that entailed. But, now, they have hope because God, in Christ, has destroyed the division between Jew and Gentile. This is rich theology that Paul is weaving here. Literally, in the body and death of Jesus:

- i. he made the two, that is Jew and Gentile, into one
- ii. he broke down the barrier between the two
- iii. by abolishing the enmity of the law
- iv. thus making peace
- v. the reconciliation has been done in one body, that is Jesus', and it has made one body, that is the church
- vi. the enmity which put Jesus to death on the cross, has been put to death through Jesus' death on the cross

The key verb which Paul uses in this section is an imperative, which is command language, 'remember!' and it comes home to roost here. We must remember who we are now, in light of what Jesus did in the cross. We all equally come to the Father, in Jesus and by the Spirit. So where once the Jews had the advantage and we had no hope, now our hope and advantage are equal - all coming through Jesus.

This is all related to Paul's earlier word that God is summing up all things, things in heaven and on earth, in Jesus. Thus, Jew and Gentile are reconciled and human and God are reconciled. Further, in light of this new creation language, we are described in temple language but, strangely, also with organic language, i.e. growing.

This takes us back to Genesis where God creates the heavens and the earth, and after creating he makes a garden and places the Adam (not gender specific at this point) in it; the garden is temple language. In the midst of God's creation is his temple where his presence is to be found (he met with them in the garden) and where his image bearer was (priest). Paul, in Ephesians, is describing new creation in Christ, who is the new creation, and in him we, the church, are the new temple of God. Like in the first creation, God's image/garden/temple was to move out to all the creation, so our witness/temple/church/image is to move out to convert/reconcile/sum up all things/creation.

Application

First, for me, I hope you can see that the gospel itself is larger and richer than is typically described in churches (at least in my own experience). Not only does the death of Jesus mean that my sins are forgiven and I'll go to heaven when I die, but it is literally the redemption and renewal of all creation. Second, we need to remember our current status in light of our former status. Too often, we take our, Gentile, status as God's people for granted - like it's no big deal. For Paul it is a huge deal and is a mystery of God which has now been revealed. The focus is not that God brought Israel down, he didn't, but that he brought us Gentiles up.

Discussion

One important direction of our discussion time was that and how we evangelize the Jewish people. We realize that we live in a post-holocaust time, which has come to mean that we do not evangelize our Jewish brothers and sisters because it seems anti-Semitic. However, for Paul to not evangelize the Jews was considered anti-Semitic, largely because, at that time, Gentiles believed that God had abandoned the Jews - he hasn't. In our day we tend more toward believing that the Jews have their own route to salvation separate from the message of Jesus. Ephesians, in addition to other Pauline letters, clearly shows that this is not true and in fact impossible. Salvation, meaning how we become God's people, comes to both Jews and Gentiles in the same way - through Christ.