

Title: NO HOPE AND WITHOUT GOD, EPHESIANS 2:11 – 20
(Chatham, NJ; 07/19/15, AM) [D – Two-Point, Cause and Effect]

Theme: Paul's theology about the unity of Jew and Gentile makes the most sense for today's audience when we consider the effects of that doctrine many years following it.

Purpose: To recount the effects and blessings that result from God's plan to unit all people in Christ.

Culture may be compared to those well-watered valleys and fields of human habitation and endeavor that lie downstream from creed. For the habits of culture and the unconscious or subconscious forces that motivate such habits--both moral and immoral--rest upon deep beliefs. Culture is the living expression of the word's etymological root: cult. And the cult grows from the taproot of specific beliefs about the natural and spiritual world that surrounds us.

Christian culture, from its inception to its latest manifestations in the twenty-first century in places as diverse as China, Tennessee, Nigeria, and Russia, has a radical core, that is, a deep root that nourishes this cult, and it is Jesus Christ. As C. S. Lewis suggested, the claims Jesus makes on us are either those of a liar, lunatic, or true Lord. We are devotees of the Lord Jesus Christ, and find all Truth in him.

Unlike any other figure in history, Jesus Christ has inspired a following spanning millennia that closely adheres to two fundamental aspects of the Gospel: the facts of his life and the words of his teaching. Clear departures from either of these bedrock realities of Christian faith are just that: apostasies, fallings away, from Christ.

In our day, those who deny the Gospel facts--the Life, the Passion and Resurrection--have left what C. S. Lewis called the main road and are in the process of loss, of shipwreck. Similarly, those who deny the words and teachings of Jesus--today notably his teaching on the nature of marriage comes to mind--have departed from the company of the saints.

To the saints, the household of faith, the church, the ekklesia, the "cult," has been delivered "the faith once for all," that of "Jesus Christ, the same, yesterday, today and forever." We do not change these things; we seek to have them change us, in the direction of holiness. Those who deny their own tradition were yet nurtured in the fertile soil of Christendom, only to devote themselves to a new cult--relativism or egalitarianism or individualism or whatever.

Such apostasies are not always startlingly apparent in that the sheltering structures of Christian culture--church buildings, art, music, vestments, seminaries--may still be inhabited or used by those who have set in place new doctrines or allowed into the fellowship those who intend to betray it with a gentle kiss. They may look traditional, but they are not. A gothic cathedral may present the stone visages of the Twelve apostolic witnesses of the Resurrection along with the image of their Savior publicly portrayed as crucified. The facts of His life seem to be there, but his teachings, and those of the Twelve, are denied or absent from the pulpit.

If you listen closely to the echoes following the sermons to such comfortable congregations, you will hear whispers of "Ichabod"--the glory has departed from this place. While the worldly pay of hirelings will surpass that of the apostolic shepherds, the Lord alone will judge--and reward--those who speak in his Name.

... for Christ, Creed & Culture,



James M. Kushiner

Introduction:

1. Discussion points from above article.
2. Only by looking at the downstream effects of Paul's doctrine that Jew and Gentile have been united in Christ can we appreciate the importance of that teaching today.
3. We are somewhat detached from the controversy of demanding that the Gentiles must be included in the Kingdom of God.
4. However, the downstream effects of this doctrine are what we see and live by.
5. Let's examine some of the teachings in Ephesians 2:11-22 and explain the effects.

I. Doctrines/Causes of Ephesians 2:11-22

A. Unity in Christ

1. The Gentiles have been brought near, 13
2. At one time separated "having no hope and without God in the world," 12
3. Paul calls us "fellow citizens" and "members of the household of God," 19
4. We, along with Israel, are being built into a "dwelling place for God," 25
5. This inclusion was foreign to the Jews until the Holy Spirit demonstrated otherwise in Acts 10

B. From No Hope to Hope, 12

1. An indictment of pagan religions which offered little hope for a better life
2. The religion of Israel was founded on promises
3. Hope thrives on promises we make; God's character makes hope even more appropriate and believable
4. Now the Gentiles have been given the same hope through the promises of God
5. Can we put a price tag on having hope for a better tomorrow?

C. Participation in the commonwealth of Israel and the covenants of promise, 12

1. We were allowed into this kingdom with all its privileges
2. The promise that God always loved them along with the promise of redemption are inherent in the Kingdom
3. These were no small things
4. God's Kingdom is a kingdom of life and peace
5. We have been legally adopted and grafted (Romans 11:18) into participation

D. Christ is our peace, 14

1. Our faith does not invoke death to its infidel neighbors
2. The angels are Christ's birth proclaimed peace "among those with whom he is pleased" (Luke 2:14)
3. It is an open invitation from heaven to pursue and reunite with God
4. Colossians claims that through Christ we are reconciled to God
5. Philippians offer "peace that passes understanding"
6. Any peace other than from God is an empty shell

E. We are a temple, 21-22

1. God lives with and within us
2. The "heavenly realms" and earth have united in the church
3. God, Immanuel, is truly with us
4. The foundation of prophets and apostles define the nature and teaching inherent in his presence

II. Effects – What Happens Downstream

A. Unity: Now You Belong (1 Peter 2:10)

1. Brings a sense of identity, security, and dignity
 2. It also demands responsibility (1 Peter 2:9)
 3. Privileges always come with demands
 4. All nations and governments have expectations of behavior
 5. The Kingdom of God is no different, and its demands are expected of all members not just a few: God is no respecter of persons
 6. Behavior changes come with the dignity of belonging to God
- B. Hope (not grieve like as others do, 1 Thessalonians 4:13)
1. More than “life is unfair and then you die”
 2. The pagan religions didn’t offer this
 3. We have the hope of life eternal
 4. As if that weren’t enough, we know that what happens in this life has meaning far beyond only today
 5. The future now has possibilities
 6. We are confident because God has a plan (remember last week as well as Wednesday’s discussion about Elijah)
 7. We can go on because God is in control
- C. Commonwealth and Covenants, 12
1. Jews entrusted with the oracles of God, Romans 3:1-2
 2. The Law and Prophets bear witness to the righteousness of God, Romans 3:19
 3. They reveal the nature of our Creator
 4. That he invites us to know him is life-transforming
 5. That he is revealed as a God of wisdom, purpose, and order helped fuel much of the scientific revolution (Islam discourages such inquiry into the nature of things)
 6. Our God says, “Come, let us reason together.”
 7. Think about the numerous blessings we gain by knowing the “oracles of God”
- D. Peace
1. We have access to God, Ephesians 2:18
 2. We have been justified by grace, Eph. 2:10, not by our own will power or monumental act of greatness
 3. Our guilt has been removed
 4. Peace with God is life and justification
- E. God’s Temple
1. We are part of the presence of God on earth
 2. This highlights everything we’ve said about unity, hope, the oracles of God, and peace
 3. 3:10, wisdom of God manifested through the church

Conclusions:

1. The inclusion of the Gentiles through Jesus Christ was always part of God’s plan, and the effects of such a plan are far-reaching.
2. To neglect or deny this is to stray from God.
3. Jesus Christ is the head of the body, 1:22-23, which fills everything.
4. He is Lord and we are united with God because of him.
5. Let us do all in our power to preserve that unity and to demonstrate that God is with those of us who are a part of the building that he is building.