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Ephesians - Part 4

Ephesians Chapter 2:

Verse 11-13: *11. Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; 12. That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens (separated) from the commonwealth (citizenship) of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: 13. But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ (who died for all peoples, Jn 3:16).*

Ezekiel 44:9-13: *9. Thus saith the Lord God; No stranger (son of a foreigner), uncircumcised in heart, nor uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary, of any stranger that is among the children of Israel. 10. And the Levites that are gone away far from me, when Israel went astray, which went astray away from me after their idols; they shall even bear their iniquity. 11. Yet they shall be ministers in my sanctuary, having charge at the gates of the house, and ministering to the house: they shall slay the burnt offering and the sacrifice for the people, and they shall stand before them to minister unto them. 12. Because they ministered unto them before their idols, and caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity; therefore have I lifted up mine hand against them, saith the Lord God, and they shall bear their iniquity. 13. And they shall not come near unto me, to do the office of a priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, in the most holy place: but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed.* Even applying these scriptures literal, as did the Jews, there is no condition in verse 9 - If a stranger (non-Israelite) were circumcised, he could enter the sanctuary, and not as in Jesus' day when they had a special court separating them from born citizens.

Who were the Levites? They were the teachers of Israel (Dt 33:8-10), leaders who became corrupt, and corrupted the people. It is always a leader's responsibility to lead and help the people, especially in the spiritual realm. When the leaders go astray, the majority of the flock will always follow.

Colossians 2:11: *...ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Many assume their sins are automatically absolved by accepting Jesus as Savior. However, our hearts are circumcised with the words we receive via the spirit of Christ.*
Deuteronomy 30:6: *...the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart... to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou may live.* True circumcision produces in the heart, a love for God and others. Non-believing and many believing Jews found common ground on which to come against the teachings of Paul and the disciples. Non-believers use civil laws, believers use the letter of the law (or, Bible). **Acts 15:5:** *But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.* The Romans were not concerned unless they were affected financially, politically or by organized rebellion, where with the Jews, they were concerned with the law.

The heart cannot even begin to be circumcised until figuratively we come into the promised land - i.e. learn to listen to Christ via the conscience as he impresses us. Here is another interesting aspect of circumcision

pertaining to the promised land: **Leviticus 19:23:** *And when ye shall come into the land, and shall have planted all manner of trees for food, then ye shall count the fruit thereof as uncircumcised: three years shall it be as uncircumcised unto you: it shall not be eaten of.* Looking back on my experience when I first received the message to listen to the voice of Christ, I was still under (governed by) the law. The fruit of the land, i.e. my way of thinking, was couched in my own understanding of how to keep the law. It takes time to learn how to listen, even how to study in order to begin to discern the error we have been taught from the Bible. There is an external and internal separation that happens. First, the internal is the separation of the wheat and tares (true bread versus the bad), and then the external is separation from false religions will occur naturally.

Verses 14-16: *14. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition (between us); 15. Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of two one new man, so making peace; 16. And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:* There are two opinions as to what is the wall broken down. 1) The literal wall between the courts, dividing the Gentiles and Jews. 2) The ceremonial law, allegedly nailed to the cross. I think both opinions lack clear scriptural support.

Considering number one, the words “between us” are not in the original. Even taking the wall as figurative does not fit because verse 15 says that it is connected with a law in ordinances. So the literal wall would have been a result of ordinances. There are scriptures that reveal the Lord’s instruction that the strangers (gentile included) among them were to be treated the same as Israelites. **Leviticus 19:34:** *But the stranger that dwells with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.* So, the Jews had perverted the understanding of the law, using it to separate citizens by birth from others. It is the same principle as a denominational mind-set today that separates people according to their beliefs.

What about number two? Abolishing the Ceremonial law divides the law, something the Jews or Jesus never did. Jesus said that the smallest part of the law would not pass away until ALL is fulfilled (Mt 5:17-18). While there may have been literal walls to separate Jew & Gentile, real separation was based on what people believed the law said (Rom 10:1-3). The Jews had become exclusive in their beliefs, an attitude very much with us today. So, what ever “wall” that came down would be a type of removing the spiritual wall that divides people in their opinions about God and man. How did the Jews reach this state of not considering others equally as themselves?

Exodus 25:21-22: *21. And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. 22. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.* The most holy place, where God dwelled above the cherubim, was hidden by a veil. In the tabernacle and temple service, access to God was only by the Levitical high priest. The problem here is that the high priest was an ordinary sinful man. This would make it difficult, even impossible to see the character of God. **Mark 15:37-38:** *37. And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the ghost. 38. And the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.* It was the middle curtain of the enclosure of the holy and most holy places that was taken down, signifying that access to God was no longer via an earthly priest, but via Jesus Christ, a perfect example of the Father’s character. The curtain is a type for the fleshly understanding, and flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1Cor 15:50). **2 Corinthians 3:12-15:** *12. Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech: 13. And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished ^(G2673): 14. But their minds were blinded: for until this day remains the same vail untaken*

away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. 15. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. That which is abolished is not the law, but man's understanding of it. In Jesus Christ, by means of coming to the cross, Jew and Gentile become one - as spiritual Jews (Rom 2:28-29; 9:6). Now, let's go back to Ephesians 2:15 and look at another phrase:

What was abolished, is described as *the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances*: The basic meaning of the Greek word for abolish ^(G2673) means *to render entirely useless*. The "enmity" carries the meaning of *adversity, hatred & hostility*. *Ordinances* is from the Greek word *dogma* ^(G1378), which is never used to describe the law given via Moses. What was nailed to the cross is defined in **Colossians 2:14, 20-22**: *14. Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances (dogma) that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross... 20. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances (dogmatizo ^{G1379}), 21. (Touch not; taste not; handle not; 22. Which all are to perish with the using;) after the commandments and doctrines of men?* Most interpret the *handwriting of ordinances* to be the sacrifices, Levitical priesthood & the feast days. The *touch not; taste not*, etc. were the Jew's doctrines based on their own understanding of the law that was nailed to the cross. The same principle exists today among various religious organizations, which cannot fully agree on interpretations of scripture. It is the correct understanding of the cross that unites true believers. All must go to the cross in humility and a hearing ear to arrive at the correct understanding of why Jesus died. Otherwise, we are worshipping a God of our own choosing - a false God.

Verses 17-19: *17. And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. 8. For through him we both (Jew & Gentile) have access by one Spirit unto the Father. 19. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; The one Spirit (Eph 4:4) by which we have access to the Father is the Spirit of Jesus (Php 1:19), which ultimately comes from the Father and which is the eternal spirit (Heb 9:14). It is the understanding of the cross of Jesus Christ that makes us into spiritual Jews (Rom 2:28-29).*

Verses 20-22: *20. And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; 21. In whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy temple in the Lord: 22. In whom ye also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. A literal temple was built out of stones. Our temple is built out of spiritual stones, and our foundation is built from what the apostles and prophets wrote, not as man explains them, but as the spirit of Jesus explains them. **1 Corinthians 3:16-23**: 16. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17. If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are 18. Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. 19. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. 20. And again, The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain. 21. Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours; 22. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; 23. And ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's. Our temple (mind) is cleansed with the words of Christ (cf Jn 15:3). A man's words from his own understanding is an unclean spirit that only defiles our temple. **John 6:63**: *the spirit it is that is giving life; the flesh doth not profit anything; the sayings that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life* (YLT). Jesus speaks to us directly, through the Bible and through others. And his words are directed to the heart - **Mark 9:7**: *And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. Amen.**

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