

3. Why is it important for us to look back on our life apart from Christ?

What happened to the ancient Israelites in this regard (Exodus 13:3 and 16:3)?

4. Why is paganism or atheism so hopeless?

5. How has your life in Christ changed the way you think about the world, your own mortality, and your purpose in life?

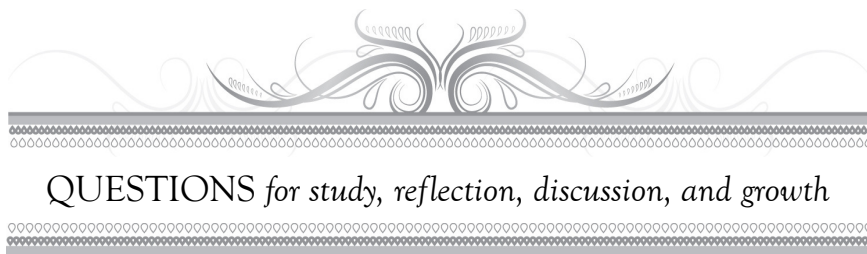


Lesson 8: FAR AND NEAR

Pastor Scott Nelson | Ephesians 2:11-13 | January 17-18, 2009

Our New Community in Christ | In our first seven lessons in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, we learned about the incredible blessings God has poured out on us, and how we as individual sinners have been delivered from death and saved by grace through faith. In the next section of Ephesians (2:11-3:21), we are going to see that our salvation is much more than just a personal experience. God didn't save us to leave us isolated and alone! We—each one of us—are part of a whole superstructure—a building or temple that is being fitted together as a dwelling place of God in the Spirit (Ephesians 2:21-22). Before we can fully appreciate how this building has come together, though, we must first take a look back and see how far removed from God we once were. Some of us have been in a relationship with Jesus for so long that it is hard to imagine how miserable, dark, and hopeless life once was, and just how bleak the pagan outlook on life really is.

- I. Life as a Pagan Outsider (Ephesians 2:11-12)
 - A. Despised by the Jews (Ephesians 2:11)
 1. What Jews thought of the Gentiles
 2. What Gentiles thought of the Jews
 3. The Jewish "advantage" (Romans 9:4-5)



QUESTIONS *for study, reflection, discussion, and growth*

- B. Distant from God (Ephesians 2:12a)
 - 1. Without the Messiah
 - 2. Excluded from the people of God
 - 3. Strangers to the covenants of promise (Abraham, David, New Covenant)

- C. Devoid of all hope and without God (Ephesians 2:12b)
 - 1. The bleak portrait of atheism
 - 2. Life without hope

- II. Life in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:13)
 - A. In Christ we are no longer far away!
 - B. Brought near by the blood of Christ

Notes:

Read Ephesians 2:11-22, Romans 9:4-5, and Colossians 1:21-22.

- 1. Have you ever felt excluded by a particular group of people?

How did you react?

What emotions did you experience (i.e., rejection, deep resentment, etc.)?

To what does Paul attribute the deep hostility between the Jew and Gentile?

- 2. If the cross of Jesus Christ could bring the Gentiles into a relationship with God, do you believe that there is hope for many Jews in our time who are not presently followers of Jesus Christ? Why, or why not?