

Chapter 6

Preliminary Steps in Identifying the Qāhāl

(Step 5: Ephesians 2)

Step 5 in Identifying the Qāhāl

Step 5: Paul and Israel

Ephesians 2: The Gentiles and the Covenants

The general theme of Romans 11 is Israel. More specifically, Paul deals with Israel's current unbelief and how this is to be explained in view of the covenants and promises God made to Israel in the Old Testament. The general theme of Ephesians 2 is the Gentiles. Again more specifically, Paul deals with the salvation sent to the Gentiles and how this is to be explained in view of the covenants and promises God made to Israel and that belong to Israel, not to the Gentiles. Just as in Romans 11, however, Ephesians 2 makes it clear that Gentile salvation is through Israel and only through Israel.

It should also be noted that nowhere in Romans does Paul use the word ἐκκλησία except in chapter 16, where he uses it for local churches. By contrast, in Ephesians the "New Testament church" is a major theme. Thus, this study in Ephesians gives insight into how Paul understood the ἐκκλησία that Jesus would build.

*The Gentiles: First "Far Away" and
Then "Brought Near"*

Verses 11-22 represent the section of Ephesians 2 of primary interest here. The first paragraph in this section brings out a number of characteristics of the former state of Gentiles and how that has now changed.

11 Therefore remember that formerly you, the

Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands— 12 remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

Note how Paul characterizes the former state of the Gentiles:

- They were separate from Christ.
- They were excluded from the commonwealth of Israel.
- They were foreigners to the covenants of the promise.
- They were without hope and without God in the world.

Why was it significant that the Gentiles were foreigners to Israel's covenants? Because apart from those covenants there is no salvation. As seen also in Romans 11, Gentile salvation can come and does come only through Israel and her covenants. Being foreigners to the covenants meant Gentiles were "without hope and without God."

However, "by the blood of Christ" the Gentiles who were "far off" were "brought near." Far off from what and brought near to what? The likely background to Paul's use of "near" and "far" here and in verse 17 is Isaiah 57:19:

Peace, peace to him who is far
and to him who is near,"
Says the LORD, "and I will heal him."

The words "far" (רָחֹק, *rāchôq*)¹ and "near" (קָרוֹב, *qārôb*)²

1 An adjective meaning *distant, far*, from the verb רָחַק, *to be or become far, distant* (BDB, p. 934-35). Both the verbal and adjectival forms are general and have a wide range of uses. The LXX translation of this word in Isa. 57:19 is μακρὰν (*makran*), the same word used by Paul in vv. 13 and 17.

2 An adjective meaning *near, from the verb קָרַב, to come near, to approach* (BDB, p. 897-98). Again, both the verbal and adjectival forms are general and have a wide range of uses. The LXX translation of this word in Isa. 57:19 is ἐγγύς (*eggus*), the same word used by

in this verse have been given a variety of interpretations by both Jewish and Christian scholars. Perhaps the most likely is that those who are "far" are Gentiles, and those who are "near" are Jews.³ What is more certain is this:

The *bringing to participation in the blessings of the theocracy* is...expressed often also among the Rabbins by the figurative *propinquum facere*, "to make near" (which with them is, with special frequency, equivalent to *proselytum facere*, "to make a proselyte")...⁴

Therefore, it is likely that "have been brought near" means "become citizens of Israel" with the consequence of sharing in the blessings of her covenants.

The Gentiles: Citizens of National Israel

Direct textual evidence for this conclusion is found by comparing "excluded from citizenship in Israel" in verse 12 with "fellow-citizens with the saints" in verse 19.

The phrase "excluded from the commonwealth of Israel" in verse 12 is ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι της πολιτειας του Ισραηλ. The

Paul in vv. 13 and 17.

3 This is the view taken by Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), III:413. He further suggests that "the language anticipates the New Testament promises of Acts 10:36 and Ephesians 2:17..." For a summary of alternative views, Jewish and Christian, see Joseph Addison Alexander, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner & Co., 1870), II:352. However, Paul in v. 17 seems clearly to mean "Gentiles" and "Jews," so that is most likely his intent in v. 13 as well.

4 Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *The Epistle to the Galatians and the Ephesians* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1884), p. 381. Note that the Greek word for "proselyte," προσηλυτος (*prosēlytos*), is a coined construction to mean "one who has come over" and is the designation for a Gentile who converts to Judaism by missionary efforts (AG, p. 722). It occurs only in Jewish and Christian writings (Karl Georg Kuhn, "προσηλυτος," *TDNT*, VI:728). S. D. F. Salmond, *The Epistle to the Ephesians in The Expositor's Greek Testament*, 4 vols., gen. ed. W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970; original publication date, before 1923), p. 293, agrees that this is the Jewish background of "to be far" and "to make near": "For the designation of the Gentiles as 'far off' and the use of the phrase 'bring nigh' in the sense of making them members of the theocracy, cf. Isa. lvii. 19; Dan. ix. 7; and for examples in Jewish literature, see Wetst., *in loc.*; Schöttg., *Horæ Hebr.*, i., 76." It should be noted, however, that neither Meyer nor Salmond draw from their observations the conclusion proposed in the analysis here.

key word in this phrase is πολιτεια (*politeia*) translated "commonwealth." This word connects verse 12 with verse 19 and the phrase "fellow-citizens with the saints." The Greek here is συμπολιται των αγιων. The key word in this phrase is συμπολιτης, a combination of the preposition συν (*sun*) plus πολιτης (*politēs*). πολιτης means *citizen*, and thus συμπολιτης means *fellow-citizen*.

The connection between verses 12 and 19 is based on the fact that πολιτεια (*politeia*) and πολιτης (*politēs*) are cognate words, the former meaning "commonwealth" or "state" and the latter meaning "citizen." Both involve the concept of nation or state. Therefore, the Gentiles who were originally "excluded from the commonwealth of Israel" are now "fellow-citizens." This connection can imply only one thing. That from which the Gentiles were excluded was citizenship in the nation of Israel. Therefore, that of which they are now citizens must also be the nation of Israel. This conclusion is argued at greater length in the section, "The Commonwealth of Israel in Ephesians 2" in Appendix 2.

But the text has "συμπολιται [fellow-citizens] των αγιων." αγιος (*hagios*) is an adjective meaning *holy* or *consecrated*, but it is here used substantively as "saints."⁵ των αγιων is genitive and should probably be taken to mean "with the saints." Therefore, the meaning is "fellow-citizens [of Israel] together with the saints." Many commentators take "the saints" to be a reference to all Christians, both Jewish and Gentile.⁶ However, this seems most unlikely due to the sustained emphasis in the context on Gentiles "formerly" being separate from Israel and its covenants.⁷ So if it is the Gentiles who are now fellow-citizens of Israel with the saints, then "the saints" must be a reference to Israelites who themselves believe--in other words, Jewish believers, the remnant of

5 To use an adjective substantively means to use it as a noun. According to AG, p. 10, Eph. 2:19, together with a number of other NT texts, illustrates this substantive use of αγιος to mean "saints", e.g., 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Col. 1:4; et al.

6 Ellicott, Meyer, Salmond, Alford, Hendriksen, Hodge, et al.

7 In arguing that "the saints" consist of both Jewish and Gentile Christians, Meyer, *The Epistle to the Galatians and the Ephesians*, p. 392, refers to those who have now become fellow citizens as "the Ephesians" to whom Paul is writing. However, in this context Paul is addressing the Ephesians as *Gentiles*: υμεις τα εθνη εν σαρκι, "you [plural] the Gentiles in [the] flesh" (v. 11). The clear and sustained contrast in verses 11-22 is between Gentiles and Jews, not Ephesian Gentiles and those Gentiles and Jews saved prior to them.

Romans 11:5.⁸

Paul's teaching in Ephesians 2, therefore, seems quite parallel to what he wrote in Romans 11:

Ephesians 2	Romans 11
The Gentiles have now become fellow citizens of Israel.	The Gentiles have now been grafted into the olive tree (Israel).
The Gentiles are now fellow citizens "with the saints" (Jewish believers).	The Gentiles are grafted in among the natural branches that remain (Jewish believers = "the remnant").
The Gentiles are now no longer foreigners to Israel's covenants but receive the blessings of salvation from them.	The Gentiles now receive the blessings of salvation from the root (the patriarchs, based on the covenant made with them).

Note the last point in the table: in both Ephesians 2 and Romans 11 all salvation comes through Israel and the covenants made with her. Thus again the point is driven home: salvation comes to the Gentiles through Israel and only through Israel. *Gentiles are not independently saved.*

This is not to diminish the role played by Jesus. Indeed, the Gentiles have been brought near by the blood of the Messiah (verse 13). However, the blood shed by the Messiah of Israel was the blood of "the new covenant,"⁹ which is clearly stated to have been made "with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,"¹⁰ not with the Gentiles.

8 Horner, *Future Israel*, p. 274: "While some interpret 'the saints' as believers in general, for converted Rabbi Paul this term, in context here, would indicate Jewish Christians, or the remnant of Rom 11:5, in parallel with Gal. 6:16."

9 Luke 22:20; cf. Matt. 26:27, 28; Mark 14:24; 1 Cor. 11:25.

10 Jer. 31:31.

The Sense In Which Gentiles Become Part of Israel

In chapter 5 it is argued, based on the olive-tree metaphor, that Gentiles are in some sense "grafted" into Israel. Here it was argued that Gentiles in some sense become "citizens" of Israel. Both this grafting and citizenship picture the sense in which believing Gentiles are related to national Israel during this interadvent period. As also pointed out in chapter 5, this sense does not imply that believing Gentiles become Israelites or that ethnic Israel somehow loses its national identity as the people of God. Rather, Gentiles become related to Israel in the very limited sense of sharing Israel's covenantal spiritual blessings of salvation during the interadvent period.¹¹ This sense is stated briefly in chapter 7 and is fully developed, defined, and delimited in Appendix 3.

The Four Metaphors

The previous table shows the parallels between Ephesians 2 and Romans 11 with regard to the Gentiles. The remainder of Ephesians 2 focuses attention on four metaphors.

- What is the relationship between these four metaphors and the olive-tree metaphor in Romans 11?
- In turn, what is the relationship between all five metaphors and the ἐκκλησία, or "church," to which Paul refers nine times in Ephesians?¹²

It is in the answers to these questions that great insight is gained into the first New Testament use of ἐκκλησία in Matthew 16:18.

In the next section of Ephesians 2, Pauls writes the following:

14 For He Himself is our peace, who made both *groups into* one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, 15 by abolishing in His flesh the enmity,

11 This sharing in the spiritual blessings of Israel's covenants is implied in the Ephesians 2 passage in vv. 12-13 and explicitly stated in Rom. 15:27.

12 Eph. 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 32.

which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, 16 and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. 17 AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; 18 for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. 19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, 21 in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.¹³

Here are the four metaphors:

- Two men¹⁴ made into *one new man* (verse 15).¹⁵
- *One body* (verse 16).

13 Eph. 2:14-22.

14 τους δυο, "the two," is masculine: "the two [men]."

15 εις ενα καινον ανθρωπον, "into one new man." Johannes Behm, "καινος," TDNT, III:449, writes, "In Christ Jews and Gentiles have been made εις ενα καινον ανθρωπον...The Church is the new humanity." The committee that maintains the NIV evidently liked this interpretation, because the 1984 version of the NIV originally had "man" whereas the 2011 version has "humanity." Thus the committee has come down on the wrong side of the issue discussed by Wayne Grudem in *Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006). δυο is masculine and the masculine noun ανθρωπος is Greek for *man*. The figure is that out of "the two [men]," Jew and Gentile, God would, in the Messiah, turn them "into one new man." This "one new man" is clearly equivalent, with only a slight change of metaphor, to the ενι σωματι, "one body," of v. 16, which in turn is almost certainly a reference to τη εκκλησια ητις εστιν το σωμα αυτου, "the church which is his body" (1:22-23; et al.). Yes, both "one new man" and "one body" are metaphors, but by design quite clearly intended by Paul to picture a single man and a single body. Of course the two metaphors represent groups: Gentile believers, Jewish believers, and the two united into one group. However, it is far easier to grasp this intended concept when the metaphor is translated accurately as "one new man." What would two "humanities" being turned into "one new humanity" possibly mean? Contrary to Behm, Paul thought of the εκκλησια as a "new man" and as a "body," the "body of Christ," not a "new humanity." For a detailed discussion of the attempt of the NIV to make the Bible gender-neutral, see the article, "An Evaluation of Gender Language in the 2011 Edition of the NIV Bible" by Wayne Grudem found on his Web site, waynegrudem.com.

- The *household of God* (verse 19).
- The *holy temple* (verses 20-22).

These metaphors continue the sustained theme in this passage of the joining of Gentiles to Israel and Jewish believers. Note the ways this theme is expressed:

- Gentile believers are now fellow citizens of Israel together with Jewish believers.
- The believing Gentile and the believing Jew now make one new man.
- Gentile believers are joined with Jewish believers to form one body.
- Gentile believers together with Jewish believers are members of the household of God.
- Both sets of believers form a holy temple in which God lives by his Spirit.

Regarding these metaphors, one important point must be emphasized. They do not imply that believing Jews and believing Gentiles lose their identity as such or the covenantal distinctions that differentiate them.

A number of commentators take the "one new man" to mean the obliteration of all distinctions between Jews and Gentiles.¹⁶ On the contrary, Jews have not lost their

16 Dispensationalists maintain that there are two separate programs and two separate peoples of God, Israel and the church (Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today*, pp. 44-45). According to this view, within the church of this dispensation there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, pp. 326-327, writes, "This [1 Cor. 12:12, 13 and Eph. 2:20-22] points definitely to the Day of Pentecost as the historical beginning of the Church, for upon that day the Spirit of God came upon the waiting disciples to build them into one body of Christ whereupon all distinctions of race and nation would be cancelled (Gal. 3:28)." For entirely different reasons, amillenarians and covenant theologians have the same interpretation of Eph. 2:11-22. According to Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., n.d.; original publication date, 1856), p. 137, "The distinction between Jew and Gentile is abolished. All the exclusive privileges of the former are abrogated."

distinction as members of the nation of Israel, God's covenant people, and Gentiles remain Gentiles. Horner is correct in his conclusion on this issue:

Hence, with Romans 11 also in view, I reject the rather common Gentile understanding that this oneness [in Ephesians 2:15-16] results in a homogeneous union which completely eliminates former Jew/Gentile distinctions...¹⁷

The Four Metaphors and National Israel

It was stated in the section, "The Sense In Which Gentiles Become Part of Israel" in this chapter, and argued at length in Appendix 3 that believing Gentiles become part of national Israel only in the very limited sense of sharing Israel's covenantal spiritual blessings of salvation during the interadvent period. But now another difficult question arises: are the metaphors "one new man," "one body," "household of God," and "holy temple" metaphors for national Israel?

It would seem not. The train of thought in this part of the passage focuses on some kind of combination between believing Jews and believing Gentiles rather than a limited association between national Israel and believing Gentiles sharing the spiritual blessings of Israel's covenants, as in the previous part of the passage.

The Four Metaphors and the ἐκκλησία

If the four metaphors do not represent national Israel, do they represent the ἐκκλησία of which Paul writes in this letter to the Ephesians?

Here it would seem the answer is decidedly yes. The "one body" of verse 16 is very likely equivalent to τῆ ἐκκλησίᾳ ἧτις ἐστὶν τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ, "the church which is his body," in 1:22-23; 3:6. In his commentary on Ephesians, A. Skevington Wood concludes,

"This one body" therefore refers to the church (as elsewhere in Ephesians 1:23; 3:6), which in

17 Horner, *Future Israel*, p. 273.

Colossians 3:15 is depicted as the place of peace.¹⁸

This is the conclusion of a wide range of scholars within both dispensationalism¹⁹ and covenant theology.²⁰

It would also seem likely that if one of these metaphors represents the ἐκκλησία, the "one body" of verse 16, all four do. Each is presented within a general context dealing with the joining of believing Jews and believing Gentiles.

National Israel and the ἐκκλησία

The two questions at the beginning of the earlier section, "The Four Metaphors," can now be addressed:

- What is the relationship between these four metaphors and the olive-tree metaphor in Romans 11?
- In turn, what is the relationship between all five metaphors and the ἐκκλησία, or "church," to which Paul refers nine times in Ephesians?

The ἐκκλησία is one of the themes of Ephesians. The word occurs nine times in the letter²¹ and very probably has the same meaning in each of those nine uses. In 1:22-23, 3:20-21, and 5:22-23 Paul refers to the ἐκκλησία in this way:

22 And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

20 Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations

18 A Skevington Wood, *Ephesians*, in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, 12 vols., gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), XI:40-41.

19 E.g., Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, p. 683;

20 E.g., Charles Hodge, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, pp. 137-139, and William Hendriksen, *Exposition of Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967), p. 135.

21 Eph. 1:22; 3:10, 21; 5:23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 32.

forever and ever. Amen.

22 Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body.

The first and third of these references use a metaphor for the ἐκκλησία, namely, the "body" of Christ with he himself as the head.²² But every reference to ἐκκλησία in Ephesians, with or without a metaphor, likely refers to the same group of people.

It is also quite clear that the ἐκκλησία in Ephesians consists exclusively of believers. In the marriage analogy, Paul continues with the following directive:

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.²³

This points to a most important observation when comparing the ἐκκλησία to Paul's metaphor of the olive tree.

Chapter 5 stressed that the branches on the olive tree, whether natural or wild, do not represent individuals. The image does not portray the branches connected to the tree growing in number as more and more people are saved, nor does it portray more and more branches broken off. Rather, it displays a few natural branches (the remnant, the Jewish believers within national Israel) that remain on the olive tree and the wild branches (the Gentile believers) that have been grafted into the olive tree among them, all vitally connected to the root. It also depicts natural branches that have been cut off (the unbelieving bulk of national Israel), nevertheless remaining part of the nation of Israel, and then grafted back in at the second advent. Thus the olive tree, as concluded in chapter 5, is simply a metaphor or image *used*

22 See also Col. 1:18. The metaphor pictures Christ as both the ruling and organic head of the "body," which represents the ἐκκλησία in the metaphor. See Hendriksen, *Exposition of Ephesians*, p. 103.

23 Eph. 5:25-27.

to depict the condition of the nation of Israel at two distinct times.

On the other hand, the ἐκκλησία is an *assembly of specific people* and therefore grows as more and more people are saved. An assembly of individuals is not a metaphor or image constructed to depict various relationships between groups of people. Thus the assembly or ἐκκλησία is the sum or numerical total at any given time of the two groups statically represented in the olive-tree metaphor by the two types of branches connected to it, the natural and wild branches, which are receiving the covenantal blessings of salvation from the root.

How, then, is Ephesians 2:11-22 to be understood in relation to the ἐκκλησία and the olive tree?

Verses 11-13:

Verses 11-13	The Olive-Tree Metaphor
The "Israel" here seems quite clearly to be national Israel as a whole, the Old Testament nation with which the "covenants of the promise" were made.	In the olive-tree metaphor the total of the natural branches also represents national Israel as a whole and thus so does the olive tree itself.
The believing Gentiles have been made fellow citizens with the Jewish believers in the nation of Israel.	In the olive-tree metaphor these two groups of believers are the natural branches that remain vitally connected to the root plus the wild branches grafted in.

The fact that many natural branches have been cut off from the root but remain part of the nation of Israel does not affect the parallels in the above table. Paul's whole point in verses 11-13 is to explain how the Gentiles could receive the spiritual blessings of Israel's covenants. His answer is that believing Gentiles have become part of national Israel, albeit in the very limited sense

explained earlier in this chapter and in detail in Appendix 3.

Verses 14-18:

In this paragraph Paul is zeroing in on those who are experiencing the spiritual blessings of Israel's covenants. Some are Gentiles and some are Jews, but there is no longer any enmity between them. In view of verse 18, the "one new man" of verse 19 and the "one body" of verse 16 consist exclusively of believers. Thus these two metaphors represent the ἐκκλησία, as argued above. Each is therefore equivalent to those branches, both natural and wild, vitally connected to the root in the olive-tree metaphor. Also as argued above, neither of these two metaphors represent national Israel as a whole.

Verses 19-22:

In this paragraph Paul brings together the themes of his two preceding paragraphs. Believing Gentiles are now in some sense fellow citizens of the nation of Israel together with "the saints" (the believing remnant within national Israel). These two groups together constitute the "household of God" (verse 19), which can also be viewed as a holy temple, a "house" of God (verses 20-21). Thus these two metaphors also represent the ἐκκλησία, as argued above. Again, each is therefore equivalent to those branches, both natural and wild, vitally connected to the root in the olive-tree metaphor. Finally, as argued above, neither of these two metaphors represent national Israel as a whole.

The conclusions reached in this chapter and chapter 5 can be put in tabular form as follows.

The Interadvent Period

	National Israel	The ἐκκλησία
Metaphors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The total of the natural branches of the olive tree and, in turn, the olive tree itself (Romans 11) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The One New Man • The One Body • The Household of God • The Holy Temple (Ephesians 2)
Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unbelieving Bulk • Believing Remnant • Believing Gentiles ("members" only in the limited sense defined in Appendix 3) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believing Jews (the remnant of Rom. 11:5) • Believing Gentiles

This analysis of Ephesians 2 might seem complicated. However, the essence of it all is simply this:

- Paul needed to explain how believing Gentiles can receive spiritual blessings from the covenants God made with national Israel during the interadvent period. His answer is that they have become "citizens" of national Israel. They become part of Israel only in the limited sense explained in Appendix 3.
- He also wanted to discuss the relationship between believing Gentiles and believing Jews (the "saints" or "remnant" within national Israel) to each other and to God. His answer is that they are members together of the ἐκκλησία, for which he gives four metaphors.