

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA.55:10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGES
FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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THE NATIONS - NOW JOINT BODIES

The Greek word **ethnos** means *nation*. It is found 164 times in the New Testament where it is translated "Gentiles" 93 times; "nation" 64 times; "heathen" 5 times; and "people" 2 times. It can easily be, and is in some versions, translated consistently "nation" each time it occurs. This is the way it should be. To translate it "Gentile" in any occurrence is always someone's interpretation but not an honest translation. It is somewhat obvious that the many occurrences of "Gentile" was related to the predilections of the King James translators. It was always their purpose to get the Gentiles into every possible passage.

The Hebrew word for "nation" is **goy** (plural, *goyim*). This word means a corporate body, a nation; that is, an aggregate of persons who are thought of, or think of themselves, as comprising a distinct unit, usually political or governmental. This word is used of the nation of Israel many times. See Deut. 4:6, 7, 8, 34.

It changes quite often, but at present there are 151 nations (bodies) which are members of that body called the United Nations. If the charter of this organization is examined, it will reveal that these nations are not joint-bodies; that is, they are not members on the basis of absolute equality. Nations such as the United States and Russia are able to annul by their single negative vote an action that is desired or has been taken by all the other nations.

The word joint when used of the members (individual or corporate) that make up a larger unit signifies complete equality, so that whatever is the right and privilege of one is the equal right and privilege of all members. In other words, all members are deemed to be the same as to rights, privileges, and obligations.

The Greek word which represents this idea is the word **sun**. Literally this means "together," and while it is often translated "with," it denotes a far more intimate association than is expressed by "with." When used in compounds or as a prefix this word often seems a bit confusing since it is spelled *sun*, *sum*, *sui*, *sug*, *su*, and *sus*.

These diverse spellings need not bother us. They are based on the letters that follow them. It is always the word *sun*, an element that brings the idea of equality into the word with which it is combined.

We find this word used as a prefix three times in Ephesians 3:6: *sunkleronoma*, *sunsoma*, and *sunmetocha*. These words are plurals, and they mean "joint-enjoyers of a portion, joint-bodies, and joint-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel." The word we are particularly interested in at present is *sunsoma*, joint-bodies. This is the declaration that tells us that at the present time, under God's present administration of grace, all nations are joint-bodies in His sight and are being dealt with on the basis of absolute equality.

The diligent Bible student will often come upon Biblical passages which theologians have long mistranslated, misinterpreted, and reworked in order that they might be used in support of some doctrine which they have long held. One such doctrine has to do with "the mystical body of Christ" which is supposedly composed of Gentiles, no Jews allowed unless they repudiate their very nationality along with all other things related to Judaism. Popular interpretations of Eph. 3:6 are an example of this. The word **ethnos** is translated "Gentiles," and **sunsoma** is translated as a singular when it is positively plural. In doing so they cover up a declaration of divine truth which has for a time changed the status of Israel in the sight of God and raised all other nations to equality in the sight of God.

In order to fully understand this we will need to go back in Biblical history and consider the favored place given to Israel. The small number that went into Egypt with Jacob (Ex. 1 :5) "**became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous**" (Deu. 26:5). When Jehovah brought them out of Egypt and gave them a land of their own, it was not His purpose to place this nation on a place of equality with other nations, for it was His declared intention to exalt Israel (Deut. 26: 18, 19; 27:9; 28:1). The special privileges of this nation are revealed in Deu. 4:7, 8, 33, 34 and 7:6. From this time forth it could not again be said that the nations of the earth were joint bodies in the sight of God.

As we move forward in history and come to the days of the Lord Jesus upon the earth we find Him saying to His disciples: "**Go not into the way of the nations, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel**" (Matt. 10:5, 6); and to the Syrophonecian woman: "**I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel**" (Matt. 15:24), there is only one conclusion possible - Israel was being favored in a special way; there was no equality of opportunity among the nations, they were not being dealt with as joint-bodies.

Again as we move forward beyond the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ into the Acts period we find Paul declaring that the gospel was to the Jew first (Rom. 1:16); that the Jews had the advantage (Rom. 3: 1, 2), and that to Israel belonged the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the legislation, the divine service, the promises, the fathers, and the honor of being the nation out of whom is the Christ (Rom. 9:4, 5). The favored place of Israel is manifest all the way through the Acts period. In Galatians 6:3 Paul speaks of "the Israel of God," a designation that cannot be honestly applied to any company of people today.

The reader, I am sure, has already noticed that the declaration in the title of this study is that the nations are *now* joint-bodies.

The present equality of nations in relationship to God's present dealings began with Paul's momentous declaration in Acts 28:28. It is plain from Acts 3:26; 10:36; 11:19; 13:26; and 13:46 that God's salvation-bringing message was authorized to and made freely available to all in Israel. The words of Acts 28:28 declare that it is now made freely available to the nations. A simple, honest, and grammatical translation of Acts 28:28 reads: "**Let it then be known unto you, that the salvation-bringing message of God has been authorized to the nations, and they will hear it.**" (See Issues No. **SB008** and **SB011**). These words do not put Israel down, they simply lift all other nations up to the level of equality so far as partaking of the gospel is concerned. Paul reiterates this in Eph. 3:6. With these facts before us, we can better examine the portion that forms the context of the truth we are considering.

Ephesians 3: 1 begins with the words **Toutou charin**, which mean "of this grace" and do not mean "for this cause." If Paul had intended to say "this cause" he would have used the words *tauten aitian*, which means "this cause" and not *toutou charin* which mean "of this grace." Thus "this grace" becomes the specific subject of this portion and refers back to Eph. 1:6,7; 2:5, 7, 8. And he at once enlarges upon this to show that grace is God's present method of dealing with men and with the nations they have formed. He declares that he is "the bound-one of Jesus Christ," which must mean that he was under exceedingly heavy obligations to his Lord, and he further states that this obligation was toward (in relationship to) you of the nations. He has been given certain important revelations that he must set forth. He then digresses somewhat to say that he is assuming that they have heard of the administration of the grace of God which had been given to him to give to them, that is, on behalf of you of the nations.

Since these truths will hardly be welcomed and will be received with difficulty by the people of Israel, there is a slight apologetic note in Eph. 3: 1, 2. Paul then declares that it was by revelation that this secret truth was made known to God's apostles and prophets, but he had been made the dispenser of it. As he writes the contents of this secret, he declares that the nations are raised to a place of equality with Israel in

regard to three great things - full participation in whatever God pours out upon the nations today, that all nations are bodies on the basis of absolute equality in God's sight, and equal opportunity for all nations so far as the salvation-bringing message (gospel) of God is concerned.

It was the proclamation of these truths that was one factor that led Paul to say in his final epistle: "**All they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes**" (2 Tim. 1: 15).

It should be noted that the statements in Eph 3:1-7 are made concerning nations - not some of the nations, or a number of individuals out of the nations. It is "the nations" on this earth during God's administration of grace that are said to be "joint bodies" in God's sight. It is as if God had erected a sign saying: "No favors or privileges will be extended to any nation that are not extended to all such."

This present principle of God's dealings will become more clear if we consider some of the relationships of our own nation with the nations of the world.

The United States is one of the largest, strongest, and wealthiest nations upon the earth. As such it is necessary for us to have dealings with other nations. In these transactions it is not the policy of the United States to consider these nations as joint-bodies. This is clearly seen in words that constantly appear in these arrangements such as "favored nations" and "most favored nations."

We can truly say that at one time Israel was a most favored nation in the sight of God (2 Sam. 7:23, 24). Some other nations were also favored in certain things mostly due to their beneficence toward Israel. However, this is not truth for today. Israel, neither the people nor the nation that calls itself Israel, is the subject of any special favors from God at this time. Whatever God may be doing for Israel today is the same that He is doing for all nations.

Even though it is the positive declaration of God that the nations are joint-bodies in His sight, such an idea is abhorrent to the minds of many people who make up the nations. Yet it is the truth and we must walk in the light of it. I can sing as fervently as anyone: "America, America, God shed His grace on Thee!" but I know from His Word that He will not shed upon this nation any grace or favor that He does not show to other nations as well.

It is wrong to think that today when nations go to war that He will fight on one side and insure the defeat of the other. He will not bless the guns of one nation, even if they are sprinkled with holy water. If nations go to war today, they will have to fight until one side exhausts the other, or else both give up in a stalemate. God cannot be recruited or drafted to fight on the side of any nation.

When God governs the earth, the nations will no longer be joint-bodies. The new nation of Israel that is produced by God will be exalted in that day. Nevertheless, truth for today is that the nations are joint-bodies.

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