

Strefa Zero June 10 – 11, 2017

Connected Talk 2

The Reconciliation between Jew and Gentile

This difference between Jew and Gentile is made very clear in Ephesians 2 from verse 11: “Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called uncircumcised by those who call themselves the circumcision”. The condition of the Gentiles before conversion is then described, and it isn’t encouraging! “remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.” (Eph. 2: 12). Then Paul declares how the separation between Jews and Gentiles has come to an end through the blood of Jesus. “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.” (Eph. 2: 13).

From Romans and Ephesians we can see that this reconciliation between Jews and Gentiles is for Paul the foundational reconciliation. It is not just one example among many between peoples with a history of conflict. Why? Because in some way God commanded this separation. It is part of the election of Israel, that since Vatican Two the Catholic Church teaches has never been annulled or revoked. Israel was called to be a holy people, set apart (see Ex. 19: 6), and this call required them to be separate from the surrounding peoples given to idolatry and what the Torah calls “abominations”, like child sacrifice and ritual prostitution.

This helps us to understand the next three verses in Ephesians 2. “For he is our peace, he has made both one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us in his flesh, by nullifying the law of commandments in ordinances, so that he might create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, that he might reconcile the two in one body through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.” (Eph. 2: 14 – 16). There isn’t time to go into discussion of the reasons, but I want to suggest an interpretation:

- Jew and Gentile are reconciled and made one through the cross

- what is removed and destroyed is their hostility, their enmity (this word comes twice)
- it does not mean that the Torah of Moses is abolished
- what are annulled are the requirements for Israel to be separate.

The reconciliation that makes the two one does not weaken or remove their distinct identity, as in marriage man and woman are made one without ceasing to be man and woman. Jew remains Jew and Gentile remains Gentile (the nations remain nations), but Jesus makes them one and has removed the barriers. **Becoming connected never destroys our specific identity.**