

The New Covenant is available to Gentiles! (Eph 2:11-18)

The Hebrew word for "foreigner" means "outsider." Similar to "foreigner," the Bible uses "alien" within the context of an immigrant, "resident alien" for a long term resident immigrant, and "temporary alien" or "stranger" for a temporary settler. After God changed Jacob's name to Israel, "Gentile" was another term for "foreigner" that referred to anyone who was not a Jew.

1. What do you observe about Gentiles who live amidst the nation of Israel under the Mosaic Covenant?

He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant. He who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money must be circumcised, and My covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. (Gen 17:12-13, NKJV)

And when a stranger dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it. One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you." (Ex 12:48-49, NKJV)

And if a stranger dwells with you, or whoever is among you throughout your generations, and would present an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord, just as you do, so shall he do. One ordinance shall be for you of the assembly and for the stranger who dwells with you, an ordinance forever throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord. One law and one custom shall be for you and for the stranger who dwells with you. (Num 15:14-16, NKJV)

But Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you. For wherever you go, I will go and wherever you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God." (Ruth 1:16, NKJV)

2. Who did God make the Mosaic Covenant with? Carefully observe this within the context of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 17:7) and the apostle Paul's statement to Gentiles (Eph 2:11-12). What do you see?

And Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel." (Ex 19:3-6, NKJV)

And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. (Gen 17:7, NKJV)

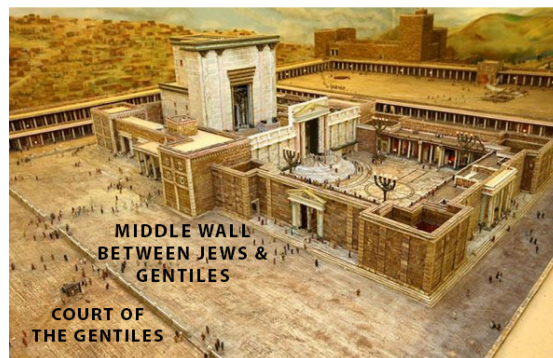
Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands - that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. (Eph 2:11-12, NKJV)

3. Bible study is not easy. There are many passages that are challenging to understand and take a lot of research to discover what the Author meant. Sometimes no amount of research will resolve a difficult passage. An example of a challenging passage is this one where the apostle Paul speaks to Gentiles and explains how the New Covenant makes salvation easily available to Gentiles. Examine the accompanying data and discuss what Paul was saying.

But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. (Eph 2:13-18, NKJV)

Circle “middle wall.” When a word is hard to understand, a good method is to see how the underlying Hebrew word is used elsewhere in the Bible; but, if it is relatively rare in the Bible, scholars will search how that word was used by other extrabiblical authors around that time.

The Jewish historian Josephus used that term to describe the balustrade that separated the court of the Gentiles from the Temple itself, which had the inscription: “No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surround the sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death.”



Circle “one new man from the two.” The context of the passage indicates that “two” is in reference to the two groups of people: Jews and Gentiles.

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Teacher Notes

The Hebrew word for "foreigner" means "outsider." Similar to "foreigner," the Bible uses "alien" within the context of an immigrant, "resident alien" for a long term resident immigrant, and "temporary alien" or "stranger" for a temporary settler. After God changed Jacob's name to Israel, "Gentile" was another term for "foreigner" that referred to anyone who was not a Jew.

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Encourage the student to take their time discovering what the Bible is saying about foreigners. Help their observation with questions and marking up the text. Foreigners who lived amidst the Hebrews during the Mosaic Covenant could either live by the Mosaic Law set for foreigners (Gen 17:10-13, Ex 12:43-49, Num 15:13-16, and Lev 24:21-22) or become a Jew and live fully by the Law as Ruth did (Ruth 1:15-17).

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Help the student observe that the covenant was made with the "children of Israel" who were the Jews.

Teacher tip: It may be helpful to review how the name Israel was given:

Then Jacob was left alone; and a Man wrestled with him until the breaking of day. Now when He saw that He did not prevail against him, He touched the socket of his hip; and the socket of Jacob's hip was out of joint as He wrestled with him. And He said, "Let Me go, for the day breaks."

But he said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me!"

So He said to him, "What is your name?"

He said, "Jacob."

And He said, "Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed." (Gen 32:24-28, NKJV)

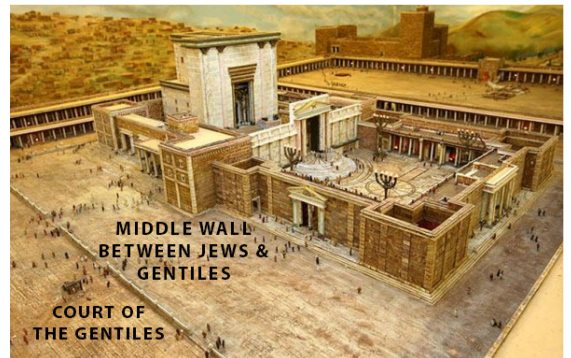
Encourage discussion among the class. God promised to Abraham to be God to him and his descendants (Gen 17:7) and to acknowledge that covenant, circumcision was required for Abraham and his descendants at eight days after birth (Gen 17:12-13). The apostle Paul refers to this sign of the covenant in speaking to the Gentiles about their uncircumcised state and "having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph 2:11-12).

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Review the picture of the middle wall separating the Court of the Gentiles with the Temple itself. Help the student see the figure of speech.

By breaking down the middle wall and the hostility between Jews and Gentiles, the apostle Paul is saying that Gentiles can figuratively enter the Temple and come to God to be forgiven and blessed with the Holy Spirit. Whether Jew or Gentile, the descendant of Abraham is the one who has faith in Jesus Christ.