

We're Reconciled in the Blood to Become a Holy Temple!
Scripture: Ephesians 2:11-22 (vv.19-22)

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I. Historical Background and Biblical Context

In the conclusion of chapter two of Ephesians, the apostle Paul provides us with a summary of what God intends the church – the unified body of all believers – to represent on this earth. Paul reminds his mixed congregations of Jewish and Gentile believers that they were once all separated from God but now through Christ can achieve peace with Him. He calls on them to remember that Jesus has broken down barriers that separated them and for them to model this same behavior in their interactions with one another.

The church is a place where all are accepted and being fitted together for use in God's service to the world. Paul consistently teaching that, in Christ, people from very different backgrounds can all be one in God's family. How many times have you heard people refer to the church as a building? All too often, people live with the misconception that the church is simply bricks and mortar. Some people are in love with the building. The apostle Paul teaches us about the church. He helps us get a clear and concise understanding about the connection between the church and the Lord Jesus Christ. We should never forget that the church is people, people in relationship with Jesus Christ, first, and with each other, second. This is not because of a beautiful building but because of a Person upon Whom the church is built upon.

II. The Lesson: "We're Reconciled in the Blood to become a Holy Temple"

- 1. v. 19. "Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household."**

What a wonderful picture of unity! Paul tells the Gentile believers in Ephesus that they are no longer strangers and aliens, but are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household. They are no longer outsiders but are not insiders. They are no longer lost but are saved. They once were not in God's family but now are in God's family. They now have a place in the kingdom but also have a place at the table. They were no longer to be looked upon as second class citizens but now have first class rights as the Jewish believers. Citizenship in a country comes with full rights and privileges. Paul is reminding the Ephesians that they are citizens of God's kingdom with the benefits that brings guidance of the Holy Spirit, freedom from sin's power, and resurrection life in Jesus Christ. He further reminds them that they are God's family. Different stories, different backgrounds, different struggles but part of one family. We were once strangers from God, but through Christ, we now strangers to this world. We are not primarily citizens of an earthly country but we are citizens of a heavenly country.

In Philippians 3:20, Paul says that our citizenship is in heaven." The Old Testament saints recognized that they were strangers and exiles on this earth. Hebrews 11:13-16, summarizes how they thought about their sojourning, "All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers here on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return, instead, they were longing for a better country- a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them."

As a Christian, we with all other believers, we belong to a different land. That isn't a mandate to withdraw from civic life. It is not a call to be interested in elections or laws or current events, but it is to remind that we belong to the kingdom of God. In John 18:36, Jesus says that his kingdom is not of this world. We should not think of our heavenly citizenship as something that is going to be but recognize that we are

joined together right now. We are joined that heavenly kingdom right now. Our prayer is that His kingdom will come.

2. v. 20. “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.”

Nothing is more important to any building than a solid, stable foundation. It was the apostles and prophets that were the makeup of the foundation. It was their teaching and preaching of Jesus Christ. What they taught the people were expected to believe and to obey. The church foundational doctrine is the Word of God. Just as a foundation cannot be tampered with once it has been laid and the superstructure is being built upon it, so the Word of God cannot be changed by any additions, subtractions or modifications offered by teachers who claim to be apostles or prophets today. The church stands or falls by its loyal dependence on the foundation truths which God revealed to his apostles and prophets, and which are now preserved in the New Testament Scriptures.

Paul describes the church as having being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. The cornerstone was the important piece of the foundation. It was perfectly square so the rest of the foundation, radiating out from it, would be perfectly aligned as well. The cornerstone helps to hold the building steady, and it also sets it and keep it in line. The apostles and prophets built the church off the perfection of Christ, the cornerstone, the foundation they laid was solid. Everything, Paul writes eventually, is built upon Jesus and His finished work at the cross. Apostles are important, and prophets are important, but Jesus, the ultimate foundation is absolutely essential. As a building depends on both its cohesion and its development on being held securely to its cornerstone, so Christ the cornerstone is essential for the church's unity and growth.

3. v. 21-22. “In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.”

Paul is addressing not just the foundation, but also the building's fabrication. Paul tells us that in Jesus the whole building is being fitted together – made to fit together just right. Every stone, every port, every person, has their appropriate place in this building. Paul continues by saying that it is growing and expanding into a holy temple in the Lord. Paul moves on from the whole structure of the temple to its individual stones. In both cases union with Christ is vital: Christ is the chief cornerstone in whole the whole building is joined together... and in him you too are being built together. The apostle Peter, who also develops the picture the church as a building, describes individual church members as “living stones needing to come to Jesus to built into a spiritual house. The Jerusalem temple was an exclusively Jewish structure, which all Gentiles were forbidden to enter. But now Gentiles are not only admitted, they are themselves integral parts of the temple of God. The triune God builds His people as a singular church to be His dwelling place. The purpose of the new temple is the same as were the old, to be a dwelling in which God lives. Spiritually minded Israelites knew that God did not dwell in manufactured temples and the universe could not contain his infinite being. But promised to manifest his glory in the temple's inner sanctuary, in order to symbolize the truth that he dwelt among his people. God is not tied to holy buildings but to holy people. He lives in us individually and as a community. For God dwells in his people as his temple in the Lord through his Son and in his Spirit.

III. Conclusion:

One. Not one in groups of two thousand. But one in One. One church. One faith. One Lord. Not Baptist, not Methodist, not Lutheran. Just Christian. No denominations. No hierarchies. No traditions. Just Christ. We were alienated from God and from his people. But Christ died to reconcile us to both. We are no longer the aliens we were, but the kingdom over which God rules, the family which he loves and the temple which he dwells. Throughout Ephesians, we have seen that Jesus Christ is the center. He will continue to be the Center as we focus on the more practical areas of Christian living. We have been reconciled and Christ has brought us home.