

## The Church, God's Plan for This Age: The Model for Racial Reconciliation

Ephesians 2:19-22

July 12, 2020

### Introduction:

- The message of this passage is foundational to the overall theme and message of the book of Ephesians, the unity and peace of the Body of Christ, the church, expressed through a life of love.
- The structure of this passage indicates that it is addressed primarily to Gentile believers in Christ.
- Paul was likely attempting to correct anti-Semitism among these Gentile believers (See Acts 18:18-19:10).
- They were to remember that they should consider themselves to be privileged to be related to believing Jews as equals "in Christ."
- In the conclusion of this passage, Paul uses two beautiful pictures to illustrate the unity that is to be expressed in the body of Christ!

### Review:

1. The Past Condition of the Gentiles – They were far from God (11-12)
  - a. Gentiles in the flesh – They lacked the physical sign of membership in God's covenant nation of Israel (11a).
  - b. Described as Uncircumcision by the Jews – They were despised by the covenant people (11b).
  - c. Without a Messiah – (12a).
  - d. Alienated from Citizenship in Israel – They had no legal claim to God's covenant promises with Israel (Abrahamic, Mosaic, Land, Davidic, and New Covenants) (12b).
  - e. Strangers from the covenants of promise – They had no relationship to any of God's unilateral covenant promises with Israel (12c).
  - f. Having no hope – They had no positive certainty about their future (12d).
  - g. Without God in the world – They had no relationship with the true God in a world dominated by the wicked one (12e).
2. The Present Condition of Believing Jews and Gentiles – Jews and Gentiles are equally made near to God (13-18).
  - a. The Gentiles are made near by the blood of Christ (13).
  - b. Jews and Gentiles now participate jointly in the Body of Christ (14-18).
    - i. Christ proclaimed peace to those both near and far (17).
    - ii. Through the Holy Spirit, Christ provides access to the Father for both Jew and Gentile (18).

### Message:

3. The Conclusion: Gentiles are included with Jews as the people of God (19-22).
  - a. Pictured as Citizenship in a Commonwealth: We are no more strangers and foreigners (19).
    - i. We are now fellow-citizens with the saints (19b).
      1. Believing Jews and Gentiles are on equal standing as saints.
      2. There are no longer to be racial distinctions among believers.
      3. 1 Peter 2:9-10 "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy."
    - ii. We are now part of the household of God (19c).
      1. Believers are equally part of the family of God.
      2. Illustration: Many Nazi soldiers taken captive by the US Army chose to stay in the US and become citizens after the war; many of them even changed their names and married American girls. In a similar way, Christians were once the enemy of God, but now we've been given a place in His very family!

- b. Pictured as the Temple of God (20-22)
  - i. The Foundation Is the Word of God (20a).
    - 1. The Old Testament Temple was physical temple built with stones; the NT “building”, the church, is made of individual members who assemble locally to worship God together through the ministry of the Word.
    - 2. The church is built upon the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets.
      - a. Apostles – these were eyewitness to Christ’s ministry from His baptism to His resurrection and ascension (Acts 1:21-26) and were commissioned with special authority to found the church.
      - b. Prophets – these were men who received direct revelation from God to build up and encourage the New Testament church before the canon of the New Testament was being completed (3:5; 4:11; 1 Corinthians 14:3, 29-32).
      - c. The Word of God must be the sole authority for faith and practice for every church.
      - d. 1 Peter 2:19-21 “We have also a more sure word of prophecy...”
  - ii. The Cornerstone Is Christ (20b).
    - 1. In the first century, the cornerstone was a large stone cut to be perfectly square and plumb. It was carefully set as the first stone so that the entire rest of the building could use it as a frame of reference for what was truly square and plumb for the entire building.
    - 2. The old standard, the Mosaic Law, could not produce harmony between Jew and Gentile and had been removed.
    - 3. The new standard is Christ Who gives the church its direction and purpose:
      - a. He redeemed the church (ch 1).
      - b. He gifts the church so that it can pursue unity (4:1-16).
      - c. He is the basis of forgiving one another in the church (4:17-32).
      - d. He is the pattern for loving one another (5:1-16).
      - e. He is the One to whom we submit which provides the standard of submission in Christian society (5:17-6:9).
      - f. He is the One who provides us with the spiritual armor we need to withstand the devil in the evil day (6:10-24).
      - g. Without Christ, there is no truth to rally behind, no understanding of love and forgiveness, no model of mutual submission, and no protection from the evil one!
  - iii. The Building Stones Are Individual Believers (21-22).
    - 1. An awesome illustration of this truth is one of the walls of Herod’s temple which still stands today. The stones were set so magnificently that a knife blade cannot be inserted between them!
    - 2. Upon the foundation of Christ and His Word, believers are fitted together to form a holy temple in the Lord (21).
      - a. Individual stones are not of much use, but when they fit together they form a beautiful functional place where God is worshipped!
      - b. We must be willing for God to chip away our rough edges as He fits us together!
    - 3. It is as we allow God to fit us together that we enjoy God’s presence and others are drawn to Him!
      - a. People came from all over the world to see Solomon’s temple.
      - b. People from all over the world should be drawn to local assemblies of believers who’ve waling in the unity of the Spirit!
        - i. John 13:35 “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”
        - ii. There is no more powerful witness than the love and forgiveness that believers share and demonstrate to one another.
        - iii. Illustration: Steve Saint was baptized by Mincaye, the man who murdered his father Nate Saint.