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# One New Man in Christ

## Ephesians 2:11-22

**Introduction** A collision of cultures...

Cultures have often collided with one another in history. We are witnessing one of the great collisions in history right now: the collision between the West and Islam.

A collision of exclusiveness...

But there was an even greater collision in history, one of exclusiveness. This was most evident in the Temple of Israel in Jerusalem. There, a wall was built around the Temple courts with only Jews allowed on the inside and Gentiles excluded outside.

A collision in the church...

This exclusion led to a collision in the church between converted Jews and converted Gentiles. It was a massive collision that brought great trouble, trial and toil to the Apostle Paul.

A concern for us...

Why is all this a concern for us? Because there is still a tendency to maintain Jewish uniqueness that emerges in things like Messianic congregations and in theories and views about what will happen in the last days.

It is that last issue that brings me to this text and to considering the one new man in Christ.

### **Plight - Separated without God**

**(v.11-12)**

The first half of the chapter speaks of the personal problem of individuals. Now Paul turns to the corporate plight of the Gentiles as a people.

<sup>11</sup> Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands— <sup>12</sup> remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

### **Identification of the Subjects**

**(v.11)**

In two, back to back ironic statements, those in this plight are identified.

God's Evaluation - We were Gentiles in the flesh

Human Expression - We were the "uncircumcised" by the so-called "circumcised"

So we are both, Jew and Gentile, in the realm of the flesh. We were all in the world, in the flesh, under law, separated from each other and from God. Notice then in both, it is a matter of the physical. There are those who are Gentile in the flesh and those who are Jews in the flesh. Neither of them are spiritual. There is

no inherent spirituality to being a Jew. Never was. There was an advantage: but not salvation.

## Description of their Condition

(v.12)

The text describes the sad condition of the Gentiles. It is largely characterized by the word, *SEPARATE*.

We were separated from **the privileges** of the Jews: Christ, citizenship and the covenants. We had no heavenly king, no spiritual citizenship with God's people and were not within the covenant that bound God to His people.

We were separated from **the presence** of God: no hope, without God in the world. We had no hope in this life and in the life to come and we were without the presence and power of God.

For the Gentiles it appeared hopeless. We have no ground to come to God at all. We were separate from the Jews and without God in the world. So we are lost personally (v.1-3) and corporately (v.11-12). Jesus' death and resurrection provides a personal redemption (v.4-10) and it provides a corporate reconciliation (v.11-18).

Now, a word of caution. All of you have a framework. Over the last ten years, we have working to elevate the text of the Scriptures so that it is sovereign over your framework. It is to be, if you will, a big T and a small F. Many of you don't have a label for the things you believe, but do know that you have some kind of systematic theology. Now, some of you come to the Chapel from either a Dispensational or Covenantal framework. So what I am about to show you from the rest of this chapter into chapter 3 is going to sound strange to you. My years of study have led me to reject both systems as comprehensive Theological Systems. Some of what is taught in both systems is taught by the Bible. Some of what is taught by both systems is at best merely logical and at worst, clearly unbiblical. I am going to teach what this text SAYS. I refuse to modify its clear implications simply to make it fit a preexisting theological stance. Now, I am also offering this as a matter to study and weigh carefully. Though it is what I believe this text to be saying, it is still offered as a "work in progress." As elders and teachers, we are all growing together to understand this better, to articulate it more simply and hold it as a common confession.

**A word  
of caution**

Why do I say all this? Because Paul sees Christ as the sum and substance of all of God's purposes. He is the unifying person and principle in God's purposes. So, I do not believe or teach that God has two purposes: one for Israel and one for the church. Nor do I teach that the church replaces or fulfills Israel. What God has promised is fulfilled by and in Christ. Any Jew and any Gentile who participates in God's promises, plans and purposes does so because they are in Christ. This is not a temporary thing during this age or dispensation. God planned the life, death, resurrection, ascension and glorious reign of Jesus Christ as His ONE and ONLY central purpose in redemptive history. He prepared us for it through the Old Testament and explaining it to us in the New Testament.

So, according to Paul we are in dire and desperate straits. We are personally and individually dead in sin and separated from the life of God. His redemptive work in the resurrection brings life to the dead sinner so that he or she is regenerated. But we are also separated from the people of God who are formed by covenant promises. So, the Gentiles and Jews who are in the flesh are separated from one another and from God. Thus the second part of God's salvation provides for us.

### **Provision - Brought Near by Grace (v.13-18)**

The solution to the terrible plight of the Gentiles rests in the person and work of the Messiah. Separation from Him is the essence of their plight and union with Him the hope of their salvation. But the Jew is also lost, dead in sin, and without God in the world because he is merely the "so-called circumcision" in the flesh.

<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup> by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. <sup>17</sup> And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

So God brings them both, Jew and Gentile, together into one body (v.14-15) and then reconciles them as one to Himself (v.16-18) as He is building a single, corporate entity (v.19-22).

### **Its Summation in God's Word (v.13)**

Were far... brought near... by Jesus' sacrifice. The Gentiles were far off from the Jews. This is not talking about physical geography but rather spiritual reality. The Jew and Gentile were separated by the Old Covenant, the Mosaic or Sinaitic Law. It set a wall around about the Jews. A Gentile could only come in through accepting the Abrahamic Covenant by being circumcised and the Mosaic Covenant by keeping the Sabbath.

Yet now, the blood of Jesus brings them (Jew and Gentile) near to one another. How? Because the New Covenant is in His blood, that is to say, the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus the Messiah (1 Corinthians 11:25-26). Paul writes, "You have become near [aorist, passive indicative]." So it is something finished on our behalf in which we are passive recipients of it. Once again, the initiative is placed squarely in God's hands.

Though I am going to break these next 4 verses into two divisions for the sake of discussion, do not separate them in your mind.

**Its Unification of God's People****(v.14-15)**

<sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup> by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.

Notice the emphatic centrality of *THE PERSON OF CHRIST* in grace's work of unification. There is both who He is and what He has done. He is our peace and he makes peace and thus came and preached peace. He is, does and declares that we are one.

What *distinguished* the Jews from the Gentiles was the Law; what *divided* the Jews from the Gentiles was the enmity between them as a result of the Law. What Christ has done on the cross solves both issues.

Peace – Christ is our peace who makes peace

Unity – In Christ, there is one new man made out of the old two

At the cross, Jesus broke down the dividing barrier of the Law and thus the enmity between the two. The objective was to make the two into one new man (entity). The person and work of Christ was designed from the beginning to make this so. The Church as the Body of Christ is the culmination of the work of God.

So the Law has been abolished [loosed, dissolved, released from, done away with] (versus Covenant Theology) and the Jew and Gentile are now one entity in the Body of Christ (versus Dispensationalism). All people, Jew or Gentile, who are placed in Christ are the new people of God together, the new temple, the new man, the new nation, the new humanity, the new assembly, (thus New Covenantalism.)

**Its Reconciliation of God's People****(v.16-18)**

Now Paul argues for the centrality of *THE POWER OF THE CROSS* in grace's work of reconciliation.

The work of the cross (v.16) is to bring about reconciliation by the cross in this one body. All of those together who were to be reconciled to God are brought into the Body of Christ.

The preaching of the cross (v.17) is God's declaration of peace to those far away (Gentiles) and those near (Jews). It is the means by which the work of the cross is brought to Jew and Gentile.

The effect of the cross (v.18) is to provide access to God, our Father through the Spirit. The cross allows us to be in the Spirit and the Spirit in us so that we all individually and corporately are no longer barred from God but have access to Him.

**Summation**

So there you have it:

- God has brought the Jew and Gentile together into one, new entity called His Body.
- God did this by:
  - Abolishing the Law that separated them;
  - Making peace through the death of Christ;
  - Indwelling them individually and corporately together.
- Access to the Father for both Jew and Gentile is only and forever together, in one body, by the Spirit.

What are some ramifications of this?

We must not fabricate theological systems that allow for essential and unending difference between Jew and Gentile. In Christ there is neither forever. Yes, in this world, people are Jews by familial heritage. But it is an “in this world” identity. In Christ, we are simply His children, His citizens, His covenant people.

We must worship God in essential unity. All Christianity is Biblically messianic, not just a small group who confuse and confound Old and New Testaments making their Jewishness essential to their worship. By the way, before we look down our long spiritual noses at such folly, Americans had better pay close attention to how we have made Christianity essentially American by an illicit union of Americanism and cultural Christianity.

Biblical unity is in the union of truth and Spirit. In other words, where the truth is confessed and therefore where the Spirit dwells, there is real unity. The challenge for Christians is to recognize it, foster it, maintain it and watch over anything that functionally denies it.

## **Product - Fitted together by God**

**(v.19-22)**

This paragraph is so important for us to understand. It gives us the grid through which Paul understands the Old Testament. Since Jesus the Messiah has come, has died and has reconciled us to God in one body giving us access to the Father in the Spirit, then there are New Covenant implications for all.

<sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

What in the Old Testament was a physical nation and a physical temple, has now become a spiritual nation (v.19) and a spiritual Temple (v.20-21) and the residence of God (v.22). God taught us what this meant by dwelling in the Temple of a nation. But these were the shadows of heavenly or spiritual realities that, now in this New Covenant Age, are being fully disclosed by the Spirit.

**As a Holy Nation****(v.19)**

There are two important concepts for us here:

We are all fellow citizens of God's Kingdom with the saints.

We are all God's household.

This is how the New Testament church understood itself. Peter, the Apostle to the Jews, in writing to Gentiles in 1 Peter 2:9-10 makes the same point.

**As a Holy Temple****(v.20-21)**

The church is also the Temple of God. God is building up living stones now, fitting them together since Pentecost to a grow an age-long, people wide spiritual Temple for spiritual service and worship

**To Be Indwelled by God****(v.22)**

God not only indwells each living stone individually, but also indwells the church as a corporate entity. That is true of us gathered here in this location on this day; it is true of all living believers all over the world today; it is true of every believer ever.

This then is the language of the New Covenant and the church. We are God's nation, people, bride and temple. Not this building; rather these people.

**Reflect and Respond**

So how do we flesh this out in terms of living?

- We must think carefully about erecting new, unbiblical walls that make the church an "us" and "them". I am not talking about doctrine. Truth will always divide. I am talking all sorts of secondary issues by which we distinguish ourselves and divide from others.
- We need to do some serious work on our theological frameworks. We have to be willing and open to thinking outside of our favorite box. I find even among ourselves that we want to thoroughly Biblical unless it is something we don't like; then we hang on to our cherished ideas. What if we had been unwilling to rethink our arminianism or our therapeutic models?
- We do not worship or serve God as isolated islands. We do so together, as one.
- Let us be motivated to holiness by the understanding that God is raising us up together to be a holy temple in the Lord. We are together in the New Covenant what the Tabernacle and Temple were in the Old.
- As Paul is going to do in chapter 3, let all our thinking about ministry be governed by these principles.

Finally, an invitation: by faith enter in.