

Ephesians 2:11-22  
"A Dwelling Place Of God"

Rest assured today that God *loves* you. He desires to live *in* you & wants a personal relationship *w/you*. From the beginning of creation, it's always been God's "goal" to *know* us, walk *with* us, love *on* & bless us. If you want to boil it down, that's the emphasis of the entire bible. It's God's pursuit of man. It's the story of God's love for us & how He has done all that He can that He might know us, walk through life & have a relationship *with* us.

In the beginning God created the heavens & the earth, & upon the earth He created a garden (I don't know if it was 5 sq blocks or 500 sq miles). Upon the creation of man, He placed man *in* the garden in order to tend *to* the garden & God would consistently, *w/what* seems to be some form of regularity (in the cool of the day) walk *w/them*. (The idea is one of intimacy, fellowship, family).

Adam sinned & caused a separation between God & man. So God established a means through sacrifice that would restore fellowship. As time went on God instructed Israel to build a Tabernacle that He might dwell in their midst throughout their wilderness wanderings. *Later still a Temple constructed in Jerusalem... It was His heart to dwell w/man, have a relationship w/man. Flash forward again (God's glory having departed from the Temple) Jesus was born, (Emmanuel, translated... God w/us). God wants to dwell among us, in the midst of us, even - in us.*

& That's the basic thrust of today's text. The *glory* of God may've departed from the Temple, but the *Spirit* of God dwells in *you* who are in Christ. There is no Temple (physically) in Jerusalem today in which God dwells. But God has been building a "temple" on earth for over 2,000 yrs. One which He inhabits through the Person/power of His Spirit in the hearts of His people. Individually & collectively as a body, *we* (Jews & Gentiles alike) are the temple of God (His Holy habitation) on this earth.

Paul's going to talk about this "temple" today. We'll see words like "built", "foundation", "cornerstone", "fitted together" & "dwelling place of God in the Spirit". But before we could be *fitted* together, we had to be *brought* together. Peace; reconciliation between God & man, & Jew & Gentile had to happen & that peace would be found *not* in a philosophy, or in a place, but in a Person. The Person of J.C. Notice.

**Vs 11-12**

Ok. Paul is touching on a couple different topics here. He's speaking to the *strife* that existed between the Jews & the Gentiles, & the *separation* that existed between the Gentiles & God...

“Reconciliation” is kind of the word of the day in this particular text. God reconciles man to Himself & then mankind to one another in Christ. In Christ, the divides are broken down...

But Paul is highlighting here the absolutely desperate place we were in before the cross of J.C. Not only were we dead in trespasses & sins *before* God (being separated *from* God) (Vs 1), but we didn’t even have the access *to* God that was enjoyed by the Jews. We were “aliens”, “strangers” w/out hope being w/out God in the world.

Now what is Paul talking about here when he speaks of being called “uncircumcision” by what is called the “circumcision” made in the flesh by hands? Back in Genesis 12 God called Abraham out of a pagan nation & He entered into a covenant w/him telling him that He would make his name great, that He would make of him a great nation, that he would bless those who blessed him & curse those who cursed him & that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed... He was committing to Abraham that the Christ would come into the world through his lineage.

In Ch 17 God commanded Abraham that he & every male in his family was to be circumcised “in the flesh” as the outward visible sign of the covenant that God had entered into w/the nation that He was forming in the loins of Ab. The idea was that God was “setting them apart”. They were to be distinct from all the people of the earth. No longer would they walk after the flesh, but they would lead lives of holiness, set apart to God. It was an outward ritual that pointed to the inward reality. The cutting away of the foreskin of the heart.

But over time, physical circumcision became a source of pride among the Jews. They saw it as something that spoke to the fact that God had selected *them*, favored *them*, loved *them* above all other nations. They forgot that God chose them to be the source of blessing to the nations & rather than share the knowledge of God w/the Gentiles they were content to isolate themselves *from* the Gentiles. Circumcision became a source of pride & prejudice. They called Gentiles, “Uncircumcision” as a derogatory slur, it was a belittling insult.

But Paul mentions here that they were called “uncircumcision” by what is called the circumcision (notice) “made in the flesh by hands—” What he’s saying is that the physical mark meant nothing to God if it wasn’t truly indicative of being *set apart* to God from the heart. In the book of Romans he said it this way, “*For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly;*”

*and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.*<sup>1</sup> Sort of like baptism today. It's an outward ritual that speaks to an inward reality. It identifies us w/the death & resurrection of J.C. but if you're not *in Christ* then the act itself is irrelevant...

Ok... So the Gentiles were in a bad way (Btw there are only 2 groups of people in the world, you're either a Jew, or a Gentile). The one word that seems to best describe the Gentiles is the word, "w/out". Vs 12 speaks to the desperate position saying that we were "w/out Christ". Now, Paul is pointing to the hopeless plight of the Gentile world. However, just to be clear it's an accurate picture of anyone who is lost... What does it mean to be lost? It means you're, "W/out Christ". You're not *in Christ*, you're *outside* of Christ.

"Aliens from the commonwealth of Israel," in other words there were certain things that God had done for Israel that He didn't do for the Gentile nations. He revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac & Jacob, ministered through Moses, gave them scriptures & made them a theocratic nation. The Gentiles weren't in on that, they weren't citizens, but aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.

"Strangers from the covenants of promise." God had made certain promises to Israel, ways in which He would bless them if they *obeyed Him*. He didn't obligate Himself in any way to the Gentiles. Now the Gentiles were to be blessed through the promises God gave to Israel, but Israel didn't follow through, rather than reach out, they recoiled in. Became prideful, & rather than minister *to* the Gentiles they became bitter *against* the Gentiles. Therefore, the Gentile nations were left (spiritually speaking) in the dark!

So outside of Christ we're aliens, strangers, having no hope. Think about that, "having no hope..." What a horrible/empty place to be in, "having no hope". We've spoken of what "hope" is. It's not an optimistic outlook w/a chance for failure. That's the way *we* like to use the word, it's not the way the *bible* uses the word. Biblical hope is a guaranteed certainty, a concrete unshakable reality. Christ in you is the "hope" (the guaranteed certainty) of glory. *Outside* of Christ there *is* no hope (not ultimately, not eternally). You're *w/out* hope, being *w/out God* in the world.

It's not that God has removed Himself from *man*, but that man has removed himself from *God*. Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil...

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<sup>1</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Ro 2:28-29). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

A man is w/out God because of his own choice, more concerned for his sin than his salvation... So he wanders about, having no hope & w/out God in the world. How sad, how tragic... no guaranteed certainty, no concrete reality, only uncertainty/anxiety & questions...

### Vs 13

The words “But now” of Vs 13 sort of parallel the “But God” of Vs 4. What are the words that define us apart from Christ? “Without” & “far off”. Spiritual death is the picture in Vs 1, spiritual distance is the idea of Vs 13.

“But now” (notice) *in Christ Jesus* you who were once far off have been brought near. Or another way to understand that? From alienation to reconciliation, once distant *from* God, now brought near *to* God (in Christ). If you’re *not* in Christ, the alienation/isolation from God remains as true as it ever was. But in Christ we go from *excluded* to *included*, from *condemnation* to *salvation* (notice) by the *blood* of Christ. It’s the sacrificial death of Christ on our behalf that builds the bridge bringing the otherwise estranged *near* to God.

Now; since we take these passages in bite size pieces over the weeks we can sometimes miss the flow. **But Paul is connecting the great love of God (in Vs 4) w/the sacrificial death of Christ here in Vs 13. & It’s important to see that. Some people have the idea that preaching Christ crucified is all about a bloody, gory Jesus. But the point of Christ crucified isn’t gore, or traumatic emotional shock... it’s love. To preach Christ crucified is to preach Jesus, full of sacrificial, others oriented, saving love...**

I should say this as well. There are many people who suggest different ways to come near to God. Perhaps by being religious, keeping the law, belonging to a certain group of people or partaking in certain rituals... But the bible makes it clear in no uncertain terms that the *only way* to be brought near to God is by the *blood of Christ*. It’s the vicarious, substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus in our place that brings us near to God.

### Vs 14-16

“For He Himself is our peace.” Jesus didn’t just *make* peace, He Himself *is* our peace. To the Corinthians Paul identified Christ as “wisdom from God” & “righteousness” & “sanctification” & “redemption”. To the Colossians he referred to Christ as “the hope of glory”. Here we discover that Jesus isn’t merely a “peace-maker” but He is our very peace itself. He is the one who has broken down the middle wall of separation & has made *both* (Jew & Gentile) one.

In Paul's day there was an actual wall that separated Gentiles from Jews in certain sections of the Temple. As a matter of fact; at the time Paul is writing this he's on house arrest in Rome having been accused of taking a Gentile into the Temple past this literal wall of separation which divided the Jew from the Gentile. & This wall was a physical reminder of the spiritual separation (distinction) between Jews & Gentiles. (That if Gentiles wanted to draw near to God they 1<sup>st</sup> had to convert to Judaism, becoming Jews as it were).

But Paul is making it clear that in Jesus, the wall is gone. Again, to the Romans he wrote, "*For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For 'whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.'*"<sup>2</sup> So as far as God is concerned there's no longer a distinction (spiritually speaking) between Jews & Gentiles. Whatever distinctions there may've been, they were all annulled through the cross of Christ Jesus, therefore, now that we have peace w/God in Christ, we should have peace w/one another as well...

The work of J.C. upon the cross brings harmony & wholeness both to people's relationship w/God & w/one another... Let me make this practical. If the Lordship of J.C. in your life isn't greater than any difference you may have w/others... be it political, racial, social, economic, linguistic, geographic or whatever, then you don't truly understand what it means to be under the Lordship of Jesus.

The application Paul is making *here* revolves around circumcision & the law. The enmity (or source of contention) between the Jew & the Gentile centered on those 2 things. The Jew sought to obey the law, the Gentile had no real regard for the law. But Jesus abolished *in His flesh* the source of enmity, that is, He fulfilled the law perfectly, even paying the penalty of failing to keep it on behalf of you & me. Therefore we've been reconciled to God through faith in Him & the source of contention has been laid to rest (put to death, it's officially a non-issue). Now we have peace, both w/God & w/one another.

God has reconciled *both* (Jew & Gentile) in one body through the cross. The body of Christ, the reference is to the church. That's what Paul is talking about when he points to the agenda of Jesus in fulfilling the law & becoming our peace. It wasn't to bring us together under the banner of part Jew, part Gentile, everyone getting along.

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<sup>2</sup> [The New King James Version](#). (1982). (Ro 10:12-13). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The agenda was to make one new man, a new work altogether. This new “race” (if you will) would be called “Christians”. There’s neither black nor white, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free. There’s neither male nor female, Jew or Greek, Christ *is* all & *in* all (Col 3:11). There were 2 men, Jew & Gentile. Now (in Christ) there’s only 1, Christian.

The issue is no longer concerning those who look to the law & those who don’t. But simply whether or not you’ll trust in the sacrifice of Christ on your behalf.

You might note the emphasis Paul continues to place on the work of the cross of Christ. “Brought near by the blood, having abolished in His flesh, through the cross.” Reconciliation didn’t just happen when everyone learned to get along... It was the hard-fought accomplishment of Jesus.

### Vs 17-18

The same peace (salvation by grace through faith in J.C.) is preached to the Gentile (those far off) & the Jew (those who were near). Jesus levels the playing field. He is the way the truth & the life & no one (Jew or Gentile) comes to the Father except through Him.

“For *through Him* we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” There’s no advantage of one group over the other. There’s no group of people, no particular denomination that has greater access to God than another. It’s the same gospel, the same Jesus who saves us all...

Family, notice the work of the Trinity in your redemption. The goal is “access to the Father”, that access is granted *through* the cross of J.C. & the One who ushers us into His presence (if you will) is the Spirit. If you want access to God the Father, you can have it, through faith in J.C.

### Vs 19-22

Paul is simply continuing to magnify the Person & work of J.C. “Now, therefore” (having been reconciled to God through the cross of J.C.), “you’re no longer strangers & foreigners but fellow citizens w/the saints & *members* of the household of God.” In other words, we’re no longer foreigners *to* God, we’re the family *of* God.

& As such we live together w/God as His “temple”. You & me, we are the dwelling place of God in the Spirit, both individually & collectively as a body. Having been built on the foundation of the apostles & prophets. That is, the apostles & the prophets of the early church laid the foundation, gave us the revelation of the word of God that we refer to as the N.T. The ground work has been laid, the apostles & the prophets laid the foundation.



& It's on this foundation (the revealed word of God) that the "temple", the church of God is built. J.C. Himself being the chief cornerstone. The cornerstone being the stone the binds everything else together, the rest of the structure rests & depends upon it's placement. It also joins 2 walls together (possibly suggesting the union of Jews & Gentiles through Christ).

But here's the take away, Jesus is the One upon whom we were meant to establish our lives. Your life will be out of whack, off kilter, out of balance until Jesus is at the center of it. He's the One in whom you are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. So; we have the foundation in Vs 20, the formation in Vs 21, & the function in Vs 22.

Each of us are like living stones being fit together. Church isn't somewhere you *go*, or something you *do*, it's a living organism of which you are apart *of*. But notice family, we aren't meant to be alone, isolated, out of fellowship. **We're being fitted (or built) notice, "together" ... There's to be a sense of unity & community in our midst. To be a believer w/out a church home is like being an orphan. & There's nothing wrong w/being an orphan, but the longing of the orphan's heart is for family...**

God is arranging us *together*, fitting us *together*, He's preparing us, chiseling us, knocking rough edges off so that we fit perfectly together as His holy habitation. Think about that... God living in you... **& When we gather together collectively as a body, when others come in they should sense & see that God is in His holy temple. Not this building, but you believers... You are the dwelling place of God. He dwells w/you, in Christ He lives in You & the day is coming when Jesus will come for us, & we will see His face & be w/Him, forever... Amen? Amen.**

### Prayer Points:

Jesus You died to make reconciliation possible. May we make the message of reconciliation personal. Surely You have given us the ministry of reconciliation & so may we make known the message of peace w/God through faith in You. Thank You for tearing down the wall of separation & granting us access to the Father, by one Spirit, through Your work upon the cross. Have Your way *in* us, pour Your Spirit out upon us, be glorified in our lives.

God loves you, He desires to live *in* you, to have a personal relationship with you. Whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. God is rich in mercy, turn from your sin, trust in J.C. today.