

Ephesians 2:19-22

Introduction

In the first half of Ephesians chapter two, we saw that we who were dead in sins and by nature children of wrath have now been made alive together with Christ, and raised up together with Him, and seated together with Him in the heavenly places. We were dead. **But God**, even when we were dead, made us alive.

Then in the second half of chapter two, we see that we who once were far off as Gentiles, without hope, and God-forsaken in this world have now been brought near by the blood of Christ. We were far off. **But now**, we have been brought near.

Last week we saw how Christ accomplished this awesome miracle. “For he himself is our peace, who has made both things one, and has broken down the dividing wall of partition—the hostility—having abolished in His flesh the law of commandments [expressed] in decrees, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.”

Through His death on the cross, Jesus created in Himself a brand new kind of humanity – a humanity never before seen, or even imagined. It couldn’t have been imagined because of how impenetrable was that dividing wall of partition. On the one hand, there was the law that fenced Israel in. On the other hand, there was the mutual hatred and hostility that naturally resulted because of sin. But now Jews and Gentiles have “been made *one* in a unity where both are no longer what they previously were.” (Lincoln) Now we can say that there are Jews and Gentiles, and then there is the Church of God (cf. 1 Cor. 10:32).

✓ Galatians 6:15 — For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation.

A brand new kind of humanity – never before seen or even imagined – where not only are circumcised Jews and uncircumcised Gentiles *one*, but also (as Paul points out) where *all without exception* are the *true* children of God by faith. After all of this mind boggling truth and beauty, Paul needs a fitting conclusion. Paul needs a “grand finale” that will do justice to the *miracle* of this “new creation.” And that’s what we get in verses 19-22. That’s what I have to believe is on Paul’s mind when he writes those first two triumphant words of verse 19 – “**So then...(!)**”

I. “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God”

In verse 12 we were excluded from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise. We were “outsiders.” But now we’re no longer outsiders. Instead, we are fellow citizens with the saints. What does that mean? – We are citizens *of what country*, and fellow

citizens *with what saints*? Well, if we skipped directly from verse 12 to verse 19, it would mean that we are of the *nation of Israel* together with the *Jews*. If we skipped directly from verse 12 to verse 19, we'd have to assume that we all proselytized and converted to Judaism.

- ✓ Ephesians 2:12 — Remember that you were at that time... alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to [Israel's] covenants of promise.
Ephesians 2:19 — So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens [of Israel?] with the saints [the Jews?].

But this is where we see how much has *changed* between verse 12 and verse 19! In verses 13-18 we've learned about a new creation, a brand new kind of humanity. The nature of the covenant people has been radically changed, because there has been a change in covenant. In the Old Testament, we were strangers and aliens because the covenant people were Jews, and we were Gentiles. In the New Testament, we are no longer strangers and aliens because the New Covenant people are a brand new creation where neither being a Jew nor being a Gentile counts for anything (cf. Gal. 6:15). That's why now we are fellow citizens with all the saints not of the ethnic nation of Israel, but of the promised Messiah's *kingdom* which will one day fill all the earth. Everything has changed – EVERYTHING.

So then what about *Israel's* "covenants of promise" to which Paul says we used to be "strangers"? What about especially God's promises to *Abraham* of a land, a seed, and a blessing? The New Covenant created a New "Israel" – a new kind of humanity where there is neither Jew nor Gentile, but a new creation. This is the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham of a "seed." As Paul says in Romans, we are all *children* of Abraham by faith (Rom. 4:9-12, 16-18). "Father Abraham had many sons, and many sons had father Abraham. And I am one of them, and so are you, so let's just praise the Lord!" That's the "seed" fulfilled in the New Covenant, but what about the land?

The New Creation includes not just individuals who've been brought from death to life, and not just a new humanity where Jews and Gentiles are one, but also a new heavens and a new earth where only righteousness dwells (2 Pet. 3:13). And this new heavens and new earth is the ultimate fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham of a land. Paul says that when God promised Abraham the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession, it was really a promise "to Abraham and his [seed] that he would be heir of the [whole] world" (Rom. 4:13). This is why the writer of Hebrews says that Abraham was looking for "a better country, that is, a heavenly one." (Heb. 11:10, 16). And this heavenly country, this new heavens and new earth, is now *our* inheritance (cf. Mat. 5:5). So we see the "seed" and the "land" fulfilled in the New Covenant, but what about the blessing?

The promised blessing was summed up like this:

- ✓ Genesis 17:7-8 — I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, *to be God to you and to your offspring after you*. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, *and I will be their God*.

The *blessing* was everything that flowed out of an intimate, unhindered relationship with God. It was with the goal of fulfilling this very blessing that God made the Old Covenant with the nation of Israel.

- ✓ Leviticus 26:3, 12 — *If you walk in my statutes and observe my commandments and do them... I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people.*
- ✓ Jeremiah 11:3–4 (cf. 7:23) — Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Cursed be the man who does not hear the words of this *covenant* that I commanded your fathers when I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, *Listen to my voice, and do all that I command you. So shall you be my people, and I will be your God.*

But as we saw last week, the law which promised life actually became an instrument of death because of the sinfulness of man. Instead of bringing a blessing, the Law (as a binding covenant agreement), brought only a curse. And so over and over throughout Ezekiel, and Zechariah, and Jeremiah, God promised a new kind of covenant that would finally bring the promised blessing.

Jeremiah 31:31–33 (cf. Jer. 24:6-7; 30:18-22; 32:37-40; Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:24-28; 37:21-23, 26-28; Zech. 8:7-8) — “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. *And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.*”

This intimate, unhindered relationship with God that’s been achieved through Christ’s death on the cross is the ultimate fulfillment of the blessing promised to Abraham (cf. Rev. 21:1-3). And we have all partaken fully of this blessing. To say that we are fellow citizens with the saints is to say that we’ve been *included* as full and equal heirs to every single one of the promises that God made to Abraham and his seed. But I shouldn’t even be saying “equal” because that still implies a distinction between Jews and Gentiles, when in fact we are *one* – a *new creation*.

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, *and members of the household of God.*” See what great lengths God went to, to accept *us Gentiles* and welcome *us Gentiles* into His family, as members of His household – as sons and daughters, and brothers and sisters. The point in all of this is that now we belong. Now we’re a part. We’ve been accepted and welcomed. We’re no longer aliens and strangers – outsiders. We’ve been included. We are fellow citizens with all the saints and members of the household of God. We’ve come *home*. And now this idea of a “household” (*oikeios*) leads Paul on to the idea of a “house” (*oikia*). “So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and members of the household [*oikeios*] of God...”

II. “having been built [epOIKodomeo] on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure [OIKodome], being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together [synOIKodomeo] into a dwelling place [katOIKeterion] of God in the Spirit.”

Suddenly, we’re not members of the household, but stones in the walls of the house! And yet this far from any ordinary house. On the one hand, we can assume that it’s already a complete house fit to be lived in with foundation, walls, and roof. But on the other hand, the house is still growing as more stones are always being added. This house is not an inanimate object, but a living, breathing, growing thing! What an amazing picture!

The *foundation* of this house is the apostles and prophets. In other words, the foundation of this house is the mystery of the Gospel that God has revealed through the apostles and prophets. The foundation of this house is the teaching and doctrine of the inspired Apostles and prophets – the teaching and doctrine that explains the truth about Christ.

But the *cornerstone* of this house is actually Christ Himself. The cornerstone was the very first stone to be laid in the construction of a building. The cornerstone was the stone that determined the placement and line of all the other stones. Paul is thinking of Isaiah 28:

- ✓ Isaiah 28:16 — Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I am the one who has laid as a foundation in Zion, a stone, a stone of testing [Hebrew], a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: ‘Whoever believes will not be in haste.’”

So in other words, Christ is the *measure* of the entire house – the *standard* by which every other stone in the house is tested and aligned. Christ is the cornerstone. The New Testament Apostles and prophets are the foundation stones. And now we can say that we all have been built upon this foundation as the stones in the walls.

Paul says that “*in [Christ]* the whole structure [is] being joined together.” In Christ, the cornerstone. Can you see how this picture becomes more and more amazing and wonderful as it goes along. As the cornerstone, Christ is the measure of the entire house, and so it truly is “*in Him*” that “the whole structure [is] being joined together.” You could also say “fitted together.”

“Today the process of fitting stones together is rather simple because mortar is used. In that day with no use of mortar, there was an elaborate process of cutting and smoothing the stones so that they fit exactly next to each other.” (Hoehner)

And so we have this beautiful picture of those who were previously hostile toward one another now being carefully joined and tightly fitted together as stones in the walls of a single house (cf. Hoehner; Thielman).

“If ancient masons used an elaborate process to fit the stones together, one can be assured that God, even more, by his grace is carefully fitting together the individuals who are a part of his building.” (Hoehner)

But what building is this? What *kind* of a house is this? Paul answers: “In whom the whole structure, *being joined together, grows into a holy TEMPLE* in the Lord; in whom you also are *being built together into a DWELLING PLACE OF GOD* in the Spirit.” What’s Paul thinking of here? He’s thinking of Israel’s temple in Jerusalem. In Isaiah 28 the promised “cornerstone” was laid in Zion. Paul calls this temple “a dwelling place of God” and throughout the Old Testament, it was Israel’s temple that formed this “dwelling place.”

- ✓ Exodus 15:17 — You will bring them in and plant them on your own mountain, the place, O LORD, which you have made for your [*dwelling place*], the sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established.
- ✓ Acts 7:46–47 — [David] found favor in the sight of God and asked to find a *dwelling place* for the God of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built a *house* for him.
- ✓ Psalms 76:2 — His abode has been established in [Jerusalem], his *dwelling place* in Zion.

Remember that *Christ* was *foreshadowed* in the temple worship. It was in the temple worship that *Christ* was *present* with His people ahead of time. And so as Gentiles living outside of Israel and cut off from the temple in Jerusalem, we were separated from *Christ*, having no hope and being forsaken by God in this world. But the Old Testament pictured a future day when Gentiles from all nations would come to worship God at His temple in Jerusalem.

- ✓ Isaiah 56:6–8 — “And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD... everyone who keeps the Sabbath and does not profane it, and holds fast my covenant— these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” The Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, declares, “I will gather yet others to him besides those already gathered.”
- ✓ Isaiah 2:2–3 (Micah 4:1–4) — It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” For out of Zion shall go the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
- ✓ Zechariah 8:20–23 — Thus says the LORD of hosts... Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts: In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”
- ✓ Isaiah 66:18–20 — The time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory, and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations. And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, on horses and in chariots and in litters and on mules and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD.

The Old Testament pictured a future day of blessing for the Gentiles by showing the Gentiles *converting to Judaism* and making regular pilgrimages to worship at the *temple in Jerusalem*. This is how basic and fundamental was the separation between Jews and Gentiles before Christ. It was impossible to think of any kind of a future apart from this distinction. But now, in Christ Jesus, the dividing wall of partition has been broken down. Now, in Christ Jesus, there is a brand new creation – **a brand new TEMPLE**. A temple where Christ Jesus *Himself* is the cornerstone, *in whom we* as “living stones” (cf. 1 Pet. 2:5) are being carefully fitted together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.* **We** who once were known as Gentiles! **We** who once were separated from Christ because we were separated from the temple! We are now stones **in the temple itself** of which **Christ Jesus Himself** is the cornerstone! See how emphatic Paul is because of his joy and amazement: “**In whom** the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple **in the Lord; in whom YOU ALSO(!)** are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

“What a magnificent change has occurred... In contrast to what [we] once were—separated from the Messiah, outside the covenant community, without God and without hope—now [we] are being built into the dwelling place of God himself.” (O’Brien)

And so we see once again that the prophecies of the Old Testament are fulfilled today in a New Creation – in a way that far surpassed the ability of Old Testament language to fathom or express (cf. Jn. 4:21-24).† We are that new creation. We are actually the stones in the new and rebuilt temple of God.

Conclusion

We started out by saying that what Paul needed after verses 11-18 was a fitting conclusion. Paul needed a “grand finale” that would do justice to the *miracle* of how Christ created in Himself one new man in place of the two – so that we who were far off have not been brought near. And that’s exactly what we’ve been given. It’s a grand finale that took all we’ve just learned and helped us to see that it’s even more wonderful and more amazing that we had yet imagined.

As living stones who have been joined together as God’s temple – as a dwelling place of God in the Spirit – what sort of people ought we to be? Paul will come to answer this question in chapters 4-6. But for right now we can say: Hating what is evil and clinging to what is good

* In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul pictures each individual Christian as a temple of the Holy Spirit (6:19). In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul pictures each individual local church as God’s temple, indwelt by God’s Spirit (3:16-17). But here it is *all* the saints throughout *all* the world that *together* form the temple of God in which He dwells by His Spirit (cf. Hoehner; Lincoln; Thielman). So where are we to picture this temple existing? It’s in heaven, *where God is*, and where Christ is seated at God’s right hand (cf. Rev. 3:12; 7:15; 11:19). We have been seated with Christ *in the heavenly places* (Eph. 2:6). Our lives are now hidden with Christ *in heaven* (Col. 3:3-4). And so we are all stones in God’s heavenly temple where God presently dwells in the heavenly places. (Cf. O’Brien)

† “The notion of a pilgrimage by Gentiles to a [physical] temple in Jerusalem has been completely transformed.” (Lincoln)

Revelation 21:1–3 — Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth [land]... And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem [temple], coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband [saints/church]. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man [all the spiritual seed of Abraham]. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God [blessing].”

(Rom. 12:9); cleansing ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God (2 Cor. 7:1); excelling still more and more in our love for the brethren (1 Thess. 4:9-10); and continually offering up our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to God (Heb. 13:15-16; cf. 1 Pet. 2:5).

“**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— 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. 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 things one, and has broken down the dividing wall of partition—the hostility—having abolished in His flesh the law of commandments [expressed] in decrees, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.”

“**So then** you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”