

Ephesians 2:11-22 Answers
One New Man in Place of Two (Jew & Gentile)
The New Math: 1 + 1 = 1

Overview:

The letter to the saints in Ephesus can be divided into two parts:

Chapters 1-3 are theological (doctrine/belief); chapters 4-6 are practical (duty/behavior)

Chapters 1-3 concern the Wealth of the Believer; chapters 4-6 concern the Walk of the Believer.

Introduction:

Ephesians 1 contained a blessing and prayer. Ephesians 2 started off with the truth that we were once formerly all dead in our trespasses and sins, "but God" had mercy on us and made us alive in Christ. Today we'll study the rest of chapter 2, which is about Gentile believers and Jewish believers being joined together into one new man: 1 + 1 = 1.

This second paragraph is written specifically to Gentile believers. It is not addressed to the Jewish believers in the church at Ephesus.

******What did Paul want Gentile believers to remember (2:11-22)?** Paul twice urged the Gentile believers to remember that at one time they were far off from God and His covenant people (the Israelis), but now through Christ they were brought near and reconciled to both God and the believing Israelis.

1. Brainstorm: Why did Paul write this? What situation in Ephesus might have caused Paul to feel the need to remind the Gentile believers that they are now brought near and are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God (2:11-22)?

- 1) Ephesus was a center for Artemis worship. It is possible that these believing Gentiles had been ostracized by the local pagans for converting to Christianity and were feeling rejected and forlorn. This pagan opposition may be there reason why Paul, back in 1:20-21, pointed out Christ's authority over all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name named (thus giving his readers perspective).
- 2) The early church was largely comprised of Jewish Christians and there was a history of animosity between Jew and Gentile. The Jews would not even eat with Gentiles, calling them unclean dogs. On the other hand, the Romans were extremely proud of their culture. Anyone who could not speak Greek was considered a barbarian. They were also harshly anti-Semitic, climaxing in the A.D. 70 destruction of Jerusalem. Knowing of the potential for racial tension, Paul may have written this to head off any potential conflict.

The first word in this new paragraph (2:11-22) is “therefore.” What is the therefore there for?

The presence of the word “therefore” (*dio*, a particle drawing a conclusion) shows a link between the two paragraphs. It is like a verbal hinge that links the material in this new paragraph back to the information in the previous paragraph.

2. Synthesis: Ephesians 2:1-10 (paragraph 1) concerned the truth that we are saved totally by God’s grace and that we are now God’s workmanship (poem). Paul then wrote this second paragraph about the Jew and Gentile being made into one. **What is the link? Why do you suppose Paul wrote first about God’s grace in salvation and it being totally of God (2:1-10) and then wrote this about the Gentile and Jew being made into one (2:11-22)?** Paul knew from painful experience how difficult it would be to meld Jew and Gentile together into one church. By starting with how salvation is totally of grace, by God’s doing, and totally undeserved, any ground for boasting or superiority would be removed. Gentile and Jew were on a level field. It is possible that Paul wrote this to head off any potential Jewish/Gentile attitude problems within the church.

3. Why did Paul refer to his readers as Gentiles “in the flesh” (2:11)? Paul was writing this to Christians whose physical ancestors were not descended from Abraham. Physically, they were Gentiles. However, they were not Gentiles in spirit. They are now Jews in the spirit.

Word Study: “Gentiles” (2:11) is from *ethné* (basis for ethnic). To the Jews, the Gentiles historically were the enemy; they were irreligious, ignorant, foreigners (Eadie, p. 161, 173)..

In 2:11, what derogatory name did Jewish people have for Gentiles? The circumcised Jews categorized the Gentiles as “the uncircumcision”.

To be uncircumcised was synonymous with not worshipping the true God.

Example: David referred to Goliath as an “uncircumcised Philistine” (1 Samuel 17:26).

4. Why was circumcision the demarcation between Jew and Gentile (2:11)? *See back to Genesis 17:1-14.* Circumcision was the sign of the covenant between Abraham and his descendants wherein they were promised real estate and divine protection.

5. Paul described his readers as Gentiles “in the flesh” and also made reference to Jewish circumcision made “in the flesh by hands” (2:11). What other type of circumcision is there? *See Romans 2:29, Colossians 2:11.* Far more important than circumcision in the flesh is the circumcision of the Spirit.

ESV Colossians 2:11 . . . you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ . . .

ESV Romans 2:29 . . . circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit . . .

**** **According 2:12, historically, what were the spiritual implications of being a Gentile?** (*List on board*). Historically (“at that time”), Gentiles were **1)** separated from Christ, **2)** alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, **3)** strangers to the covenants of promise, **4)** having no hope and **5)** without God in the world.

6. What is the problem with being separated from Christ (2:12)? *See 2:1-5, John 14:6.* Apart from Christ we are dead in our trespasses and sins.

ESV **John 14:6** . . . I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

7. What is wrong with being alienated from the commonwealth of Israel (2:12)? *See John 4:22, Romans 3:1-2.* Since the Israel was the nation through which the Messiah came, to be separated from Israel was to miss God’s spiritual blessing of salvation. The unbelieving Gentiles were separated from the sphere of God’s revelation of Himself through the Jewish nation.

Note: “commonwealth” (2:12) is from *politeia* (basis for politics) and means citizenship, state or body politic (BAGD, p. 686).

ESV **Romans 3:1-2** Then what advantage has the Jew? . . . Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

Insight: Unbelieving Gentiles are separated from Christ, but by grace through faith they can be united with Christ. Similarly, whereas unbelieving Gentiles were formerly alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, in Christ believing Gentiles are now genuine members of the commonwealth of Israel. In Christ believing Gentiles are spiritual Israelites. The church (made up of both Jews and Gentile) in a sense is now the true Israel.

8. Unbelieving Gentiles are strangers to the covenants of promise (2:12); what are the covenants of promise (2:12)? God made several covenants with the nation of Israel. The first was God’s covenant with Abraham wherein God unconditionally promised land, seed and blessing, which typified heaven, the coming of the Messiah and justification by faith. Another is the Sinai covenant, which immediately served to give them possession of the land, protection in the land, prosperity and a populous posterity and which ultimately served to show them their sin and prepare them for the need to be justified by faith in the Messiah rather than by works.

Truth: In Christ, believing Gentiles are no longer strangers to the covenants of promise. Rather, believing Gentiles are the fulfillment of the covenants of promise!

9. “At that time” (2:12) unbelieving Gentiles had “no hope” (2:12); no hope with respect to what? Before coming to faith in Christ, unbelieving Gentiles had no hope of a relationship with God, no hope of eternal life, no hope of escaping their enslavement to sin.

10. Paul wrote that unbelieving Gentiles are “without God in the world” (2:12). The Greeks and Romans were polytheists and were known for a whole pantheon of gods. In what sense were they without God (2:12)? There is no salvation apart from Christ. A person may be religious or Buddhist or Islamic or Hindu, but apart from Christ he is in reality without God in the world; his theology is the doctrine of demons.

According to 2:13, what brought near the once far off Gentiles? See 1 Peter 1:18-19. The blood of Christ brought them near.

ESV 1 Peter 1:18-19 . . . you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.

******In Christ, what has happened to the Jew and Gentile divide (2:14-16)?** In Christ:

- 1) There is peace between the two (2:14a, 15b)
- 2) Both are made one (2:14)
- 3) The dividing wall of hostility has been broken down (2:14)
- 4) There is one new man in place of two (2:15)
- 5) Both are reconciled to God in one body (2:16).

Pronouns: Notice the “you” (Gentiles, 2:11, 12, 13) versus “our” and “us” (2:14, 16, believing Gentiles along with Jewish believers).

11. Peace is mentioned twice in 2:14-15. The word peace sort of serves as book ends and the material in between explains what the peace looks like. What does it mean for there to be peace between Jew and Gentile in the church (2:14-15)? First, the peace only exists in Christ. Practically, in the church, this means believing Jew and believing Gentile are now “one” body, one new man in place of two. There is harmony and acceptance and unity.

Word Study: “peace” is from *eiréné* which etymologically may come from *reo* (“to bind”). In Christ we have the binding of uncircumcised together with the circumcised (class notes on Ephesians, Dr. Richard Henderson, MABTS, 1983).

12. What was the dividing wall of hostility (2:14) between Jew and Gentile? There was, both physically and socially, a wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles. For example, there was a sign posted on a wall in the Jerusalem temple warning Gentiles they would be killed if they entered (Hendriksen, p. 133).* The Law of Moses served to separate Israel from the surrounding nations; the Jews were a peculiar and separate people. They could not intermarry with those outside the Hebrew tribe. Things like dietary restrictions, Sabbath observances and circumcision helped to keep them apart.

It was God Himself who first made this distinction in order to keep the Jews from intermarrying with the surrounding pagan nations. Though distinct, they were to be a witness to them, a nation of priests. However, once the Messiah was born, the need for this racial purity was fulfilled. The Gospel is for all people groups, regardless of race. The church is still to be a distinct nation, but

made distinct by its holiness, not outward ritual. Like ancient Israel, the church is to be a kingdom of priests in the world, ambassadors of Christ, beseeching men to be reconciled to God.

13. In order to make Jew and Gentile one, Christ abolished the law of commandments expressed in ordinances (2:15). What was the law of commandments expressed in ordinances that Christ abolished (2:15)? See *Acts 15:5, Romans 6:14, 16, 7:4, 6*. This does not merely refer any man-made traditions added by the Pharisees. This is a reference to the Law of Moses given at Mount Sinai. The new covenant in Christ made the old one obsolete. The rules and rituals that once made the Jews distinct are no longer in force. The whole notion of Torah compliant Christianity is false and divisive. Some within the early church erroneously said of Gentile Christians:

ESV **Acts 15:5** . . . believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to order them to keep the law of Moses."

Truth: The wall of hostility was broken down by abolishing the Law of Moses.

ESV **Romans 6:14** . . . you are not under law . . .

ESV **Romans 6:15** . . . we are not under law.

ESV **Romans 7:4** . . . you . . . have died to the law through the body of Christ . . .

ESV **Romans 7:6** . . . we are released from the law . . .

Caution: There are today Messianic Jewish Congregations (which oddly enough are often made up mostly of Gentiles) who purpose to keep the Law of Moses. This is fine as long as they do not teach that it is necessary to do so nor look down on those who do not. To do so would be to re-erect the dividing wall that Christ tore down and to make a distinction in Christ between Jew and Gentile.

14. Paul wrote that Christ created one new man instead of two (Jew and Gentile). What is the name of this new man (2:15)? See *Galatians 3:28*. No name was given, but this is a clear reference to the church, the body of Christ. Both Jew and Gentile were made into something new and different. In Christ both Gentiles and Jews become a new creation, a new man, a new body. It is starting all over: the church. You are not a Jewish believer, you are a Christian. You are not a Gentile believer, you are a Christian.

ESV **Galatians 3:28** There is neither Jew nor Greek . . . for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

According to 1:17, Christ preached peace to those far off (Gentiles) and those near (Jew). Based on 1:18, how is peace between these two groups possible? It is possible because both Jew and Gentile have access through Christ to the Father in one Spirit. (Notice all three members of the Trinity here).

“So Then” (2:19)

****15. The “so what” (or more precisely, the “so then”) is found in 2:19. **What is the application of all this (2:11-18) for believing Gentiles (2:19-22)?** (*Reread*). The result is that believing Gentiles are no longer strangers and aliens, but are fellow citizens along with believing Jews in the household of God.

What was the difference between a stranger, an alien and a citizen (2:19)? In the Greek city states, a **stranger** was a total foreigner with no rights or privileges, an **alien** was a non-citizen who lived in the city and was treated as a neighbor and a **citizen** had full protection and rights in the city (*ESV Study Bible*, p. 2266). Paul’s point is that believing Gentiles are now full citizens in God’s household.

Spiritual Israel? In 2:19 Paul said that believing Gentiles are no longer strangers (to the covenants of promise, 2:12) and no longer aliens (to the commonwealth of Israel, 2:12). This suggests that the church is the true, spiritual Israel (composed of believing Jews and Gentiles).

16. What can we learn about God’s household (2:19) from 2:20-21? *See 1 Peter 2:4-5.* The household of God (the church) is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus as the cornerstone. In Christ, the whole structure, made up of Jew and Gentile, is joined together into a holy temple in the Lord.

ESV 1 Peter 2:4-5 As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house . . .

What purpose does the foundation of a building serve (2:20)? The foundation is the basis upon which the superstructure is built. The foundation is made first; not until it is complete is the rest constructed.

17. In what sense were the apostles foundational to the church (2:20)? *See Acts 2:42.* Their teachings became the norm for doctrine. The early church was noted for studying not the teaching of Jesus but of the apostles (which was the same thing). It was also primarily from the apostles that we have the New Testament writings. And like a foundation, once their foundational work was done, it was done. That is why there are no more apostles today (in the sense that Paul was, a person who has handpicked and trained by Jesus).

18. We are familiar with the twelve apostles and we know about Christ Jesus, but who are these prophets that the church is built upon (2:20)? *See ahead to 3:5 & 4:11-12.* Twice more here in Ephesians, apostles and prophets are mentioned together in a way that clearly refers to new covenant prophets. This thus probably is not a reference to the many prophets of the Old Testament era (such as Moses or Isaiah) who made predictions concerning the coming of the Messiah (also, Paul listed apostles before prophets; had he meant Old Testament prophets he more likely would have listed prophets first since they came before the New Testament apostles).

Is the gift of prophecy still valid today (2:20)? This gift that may have been more prevalent in the days before the writings of the New Testament were completed. Since it was a foundational ministry, it could be argued that the need for the prophets was met when the foundation was laid. There are no longer any apostles in the sense that Paul was an apostle, Jesus the cornerstone is no longer with us, and arguably there are no longer any New Testament prophets.

19. Christ Jesus is the cornerstone of the church (2:20). What purpose did a cornerstone serve (2:20)? Cornerstones are not used as much today as in the past. In the old days a cornerstone was part of the foundation and was laid first, in one corner, to make a stone building square. Jesus, of course, ascended into heaven and is now longer on earth. As with the other foundational ministries (apostle and prophet), once His foundational work was done, Jesus departed.

20. During the Old Testament era the temple in Jerusalem was the center for orthodox worship. Now, in the New Testament era, God has a different temple; what is it (2:21)? See *1 Peter 2:5*. The holy temple now consists of believing Jews and Gentiles joined together into a spiritual house.

ESV **1 Peter 2:5** you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house . . .

ESV **2 Corinthians 6:16** . . . we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Paul's teaching on this spiritual new covenant temple would be in direct contrast to what literal temple there in Ephesus (2:21)? See *Acts 19:27*. Ephesus was famous in the ancient world for its temple to Artemis.

From a strictly New Testament perspective, it is wrong to refer to a church building as a church, temple or sanctuary. It is a church *house*, or a *building* in which the church *meets*. The actual church consists of the people.

During the Old Testament era, God's presence was sometimes manifested in the Jerusalem temple. It was called by rabbis the "Shekinah glory". According to 2:22 where is God's spirit now manifested? See *2 Corinthians 6:16*. The Holy Spirit now dwells in the church.

ESV **2 Corinthians 6:16** . . . we are the temple of the living God; as God said, "I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

21. Why is it significant that the Holy Spirit now indwells God's living temple (2:22)? See *1 Samuel 4:21-22*. This is a tremendous theological truth: The Spirit, formerly manifested in the Jerusalem Temple, and now moved into a new temple: the church. The old temple became *icabod* (the glory has departed).

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. This is put people's minds in gear and them something to look for as the text is read. It causes focus.

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