

I. One New Man – **Ephesians 2:11-22**

A. v.11-12 – Paul begins by reminding the Gentile believers in Ephesus that at one time, they had been excluded from the people of God – on the outside looking in.

1. For a long time, there was only one group of people – one nation – that had been invited into covenant with God (see Deut. 4:7; 2 Sam. 7:23).
2. Even the new covenant, introduced in Jeremiah 31, was made with the house of Judah.

B. v.13 – you were once far off – excluded, alienated – but you have now been brought near by the blood of Jesus Christ.

1. Note the use of “near” and “far”, echoing Is. 57:19.

*“Peace, peace, to the far and to the near,” says the LORD...*” (Is. 57:19, ESV)

- a. Even though Isaiah makes a distinction between people who are near to and far from God, we see God’s intention to bring peace to both groups.

C. v.14-16 – Paul continues to allude to Is. 57:19, noting that Jesus has brought peace to both those who were near and those who were far off. Note three keys in this passage:

1. “Abolishing the dividing wall of hostility” – Paul wrote this letter from prison, which is where he found himself after being accused of bringing a Gentile beyond the dividing wall that separated Jews from Gentiles in the Temple (Acts 21:28).
  - a. The wall of hostility refers to the division that had kept Gentiles far from God. In Jesus, the Gentiles can now draw near alongside the Jewish people as the people of God.
2. “Abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances” – Paul is not saying that the content of the law is a problem. The problem is that we cannot uphold the law in our own strength, and when we fall short of the law, it condemns us; it brings death.
  - a. Paul clearly endorses the law in other places (Rom. 3:31; Eph. 6:1-3, etc.).
  - b. What has been abolished is the debt we had incurred because of the law.

*“<sup>13</sup>And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, <sup>14</sup>by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.”*

*This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. <sup>15</sup>He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.” (Col. 2:13-15, ESV)*

- c. That legal requirement has been moved out of the way, so we can come near.
3. “One New Man” – not a morphing of Jew and Gentile into something completely different, but a reality of two distinct groups who are no longer two, but one.
- a. This is consistent with Paul’s “rule” that he instituted in every church:

*“<sup>17</sup>...This is my rule in all the churches. <sup>18</sup>Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. <sup>19</sup>For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God. <sup>20</sup>Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called.” (1 Cor. 7:17-20, ESV)*

- i. The Jews would have been very familiar with Paul’s words – many Jews had sought to “remove the marks of circumcision” in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes to disavow their Jewish heritage.
  - ii. Paul’s rule was for Jews to not disavow their Jewish identity, and for Gentiles to not seek to become like the Jews according to the flesh.
- b. Paul’s rule was that the Jews and Gentiles should remain distinct, yet they were also to become one.
  - c. This is consistent with the pattern in creation:

*“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” (Gen. 1:27, ESV)*

- i. God created mankind in His image, but did so through two distinct genders. Then in Genesis 2, He tells the two to come together and *become one*, though their male and female distinctions remain in place.
- d. This explains Gal. 3:28 – God is not blurring distinctions, but making us one while maintaining our distinctions. These distinctions bless and benefit one another (like male and female in marriage).
  - e. Reciprocal blessings, as seen in Ps. 67 – God blesses Israel, so that the nations would be blessed; God blesses the nations, so that Israel would be blessed.

- f. In the One New Man, Jew and Gentile are to bless & intercede for one another.
- D. v.17-19 – both Jew and Gentile have access to the Father through the same Holy Spirit.

- 1. The Holy Spirit falling on Cornelius' household (Acts 10) and other Gentiles, is what convinced the Jewish believers that the Gentiles had now been welcomed in.

*“<sup>13</sup>In him you also...were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, <sup>14</sup>who is the guarantee of our inheritance...” (Eph. 1:13-14, ESV)*

- E. v.20-22 – these verses make clear that this formation of One New Man is a *process*.

- 1. Both Jews and Gentiles need to come into our respective fullness (Eph. 4:13), blessing one another, growing into this living temple.

## II. Conclusion

- A. This is one reason we can know that God's call to Israel is not over: it is part of His great plan to bring both Jewish and Gentile believers in Yeshua, to fullness. In His plan, all of Israel will be saved, but that will not happen without the fullness of the Gentiles coming in (Rom. 11:25-26).
- B. We need to understand and grow in our appreciation and worship to God, for the plan and pattern He has established (see Rom. 11:33-36).
- C. We need to build according to the pattern that He has established: One New Man, Jew and Gentile, together in the Messiah.