

EPHESIANS
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SESSION 2

GOD'S NEW TEMPLE (2:11-22)

1. WHAT WE ONCE WERE (11-12)

Called 'uncircumcision' (a derogatory description) by the so-called circumcision. Paul is dismissive of their elitism and notes that it is merely 'performed by hands' - i.e. of no spiritual significance. (cf Ro 2:28-29, Phil 3:2-3, Col 2:11).

They were apart from Christ - i.e. with no expectation of a promised Messiah (cf Ro 9:4-5).

Excluded (or alienated) from the commonwealth of Is. It was a 'commonwealth', or nation under God, a theocracy and covenant people.

Strangers to the covenants - God had made with Abraham, David etc.

- William Hendriksen "Christless, stateless, friendless, hopeless and Godless."

Remember what you once were! (v11, 12)

2. WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE (13-18)

The concepts of being 'far off' or 'near' were familiar to Jewish thought (see Isa 57:19). Proselytes were permitted to draw near to Israel

But two new factors here. Not made part of commonwealth of Israel, but of newly created community.

'In Christ', 'by the blood of Christ.'

V 14 - He is our peace who made us both one - a reference to the reconciliation between Jew and Gentile.

(a) The abolition of the law of commandments.

Broke down the dividing wall. - Symbolic of this division was the separation in the Temple courts of Jews and Gentiles.

In 1871 an inscription was found. 'No man of another race is to enter within the fence and enclosure around the Temple. Whoever is caught will have only himself to thank for the death which follows.'

The wall actually referred to is the 'law of commandments' which he has abolished.

- Lincoln "The divisiveness was produced by the law as such, by the very fact that Israel possessed the Torah, and so in order to remove the divisiveness Christ has to deal with the cause - the law itself. He does this 'in His flesh'.

(b) The creation of a single new humanity (v15)

Removing the enmity has cleared the ground for something new. Christ's purpose was nothing less than a new creation.

- Lincoln "The separation of the Gentiles from Israel was so deep that it took the creative act to fill it. Yet Christ has done more than simply to bring Gentiles in to Israel. The 'new person' he has created transcends those categories."
- Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones

"The Church is something absolutely new that has been brought into being, something that was not there before. It is comparable to what happened at the very beginning when God created the heavens and the earth. There was nothing there before God created. Creation means bringing into being something that was previously not there, non-existent; it is making something out of nothing.

"How does God make peace between Jew and Gentile? It is not by modification of what was there before; it is not even by an improvement of what was there before. God does not just take a Jew and do something to him, and take a Gentile and do something to him, and thereby bring them together. Not at all! It is something entirely

new. Creation! Now this is vital to the whole position. As we enter the Christian Church we do so as new creations, we enter into something that is entirely new. The Church must not be conceived of as a coalition of a number of parties. No, it is the abolition of the old and the creation of something entirely new."

- Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones

"The old is entirely done away with. The Jew has been done away with as such, even as the Gentile has been done away with, in Christ. 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, for you are all one in Christ Jesus' (Gal 3:28)

"In Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything nor uncircumcision but a new creature (Gal 6:15). Jew has gone, Gentile has gone; all that belonged to Jew, all that belonged to Gentile, is irrelevant henceforward. It is the new creature that mattersthe unity of this new body is an absolute unity. There is no such thing as a Jewish section of the Christian Church. There is no such thing as a Gentile section of the Christian Church. And there never will be. The old has been done away with."

(c) The reconciliation of Jew and Gentile to God (v16)

Here the hostility is clearly between God and men. Jesus 'killed' the enmity.

- Robinson "The slain was slayer too."

With the new status of the 'one new man' it is clear that not only Gentiles were not only 'added to Israel's privileges', but 'both' were being reconciled. - i.e. Israel needed to be reconciled to God too.

New Testament gospel applied to Jew and Gentile; many responded in Acts (Isa 52:7 & 57:19)

- Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones

"Here is one of the great trinitarian verses of scripture."

Both now have access - cf Rom 5:1-2 - 'an introduction'.

(i) Through Christ

The old categories are transcended. Access is through Christ without reference to the Temple.

(ii) In One Spirit

- Fee "...in the one Spirit' replaces the temple as the place of 'access' into the presence of God."

(iii) God is now "Father"

Also new relationship - access to God as Father, through one Spirit.

- Fee "For Paul it is the common experience of the one Spirit, by Jew and Gentile alike, that attests that God has created something new in the body of Christ. Thus the one Spirit who has formed them into the one body, also brings them together as that one body into the presence of the Father."

The 'one Spirit' parallels the 'one body' of v16 (cf Eph 4:4).

- Fee "What has made one body possible is the death of Christ; what makes the one body a reality is their common lavish experience of the Spirit of God. As they live together in the Spirit they now have access to the Father."

3. WHAT WE HAVE NOW BECOME - GOD'S NEW SOCIETY (19-22)

(a) God's citizens

Formerly strangers (foreigners) and aliens. No homeland. Now fellow citizens.

(b) God's family

Now have not only a homeland but a household! Members of God's own family - with the Holy Spirit witnessing Abba Father in our hearts!

(c) God's Temple (20-22)

(i) The foundation.

The apostles and prophets gave identity to the new society (temple). They were foundational. Not only in their teaching but their personal apostleship.

Beware the danger of over-simplification in John Stott's comment - "In practical terms, this means that the church is built on the New Testament scriptures. They are the church's foundation documents."

(ii) Jesus being cornerstone.

Some see as crucial part of foundation.
Some see as 'head of the corner' - exalted positional head.
Either way, all is lined up with his unique centrality.

(iii) Built together as the Holy Spirit's dwelling place.

From deprived gentiles to being part of God's very temple.

The new Temple is neither a material building, or a national 'shrine', nor a localised site to be visited.

It is an international building spread worldwide made up of people.

- Lincoln "The emphasis on God's presence in the Spirit can provide a reminder that when we talk of the 'spiritualisation' of the concept of the Temple, we are not talking of invisibility or immateriality but of the reality of men and women forming the eschatological people of God, dominated by his living power and presence in the Spirit."
- Fee "...this imagery especially emphasises the church as the 'new temple', the present place of God's habitation on our planet. Here is the place of God's presence - in the midst of his people, especially as they are gathered to worship him and to instruct one another (as 5:18-20 indicates).....Here, then, is how one is to understand all the 'indwelling' terminology in Paul: by the indwelling of the Spirit, both in the individual and in the community, God (or Christ) indwells his people. Here is the ultimate fulfilment of the imagery of God's

presence, begun but lost in the Garden, restored in the tabernacle in Exodus 40 and in the temple in 1 Kings 8. It is God's own presence among us that marks us off as the people of God, in the language of Moses, is 'what distinguishes (us) from all the other people on the face of the earth' (Ex 33:15). So not only do we have access to the presence of God (v18), but God himself by the Spirit has chosen to be present in our world in the gathered church."

Now 'growth' and 'holiness' are to characterise the Temple.