

EPHESIANS

Bible Study 2:11-22

Questions will be posed and space will be allowed for a written response. Make every effort to answer the questions before looking below for the answer. **The answers will be in bold print at the end of the “questions” section.**

Thanksgiving and Prayer – 2:11-22

From the salvation of individuals, Paul moves to another aspect of salvation in which God reconciles Jews and Gentiles, previously hostile peoples, not only to Himself but also to each other through Christ (vv. 11–16). Even more than that, God unites these now reconciled people in one body, a truth introduced in vv. 19–22 and explained in chapter. 3. (CSB)

Notice the progression from verse 11 through verse 18 on God brings the Gentile Christians into harmony with the Jewish Christians.

1. What does verse 11 tell us about the standing of the Gentiles and their relationship with circumcised Jews?
2. What negative aspects regarding Gentiles are mentioned in verse 12?
3. What is the good news in verse 13?
4. What does verse 14 say about Christ's doing to bring Jew and Gentile together?
5. What did Jesus do personally to break down the barriers as explained in verses 15-17?
6. How does verse 18 describe the result of Christ's work?
7. How do verses 19-22 describe what the Ephesians' have become?
8. What is your favorite verse/phrase in this section?

Some Answers to the above Questions:

1. A great ethnic, moral, and religious barrier had divided Jew and Gentile for centuries. Jews hated Gentiles. The physical covenant of circumcision marked a Jew as other than a Gentile and Gentiles as other than a Jew. Jews spoke a daily prayer of thanks that they had not been created Gentiles. Intermarriage was forbidden, with funerals being held for Jew who did marry Gentiles. A Jew rubbing elbows with Gentiles in public was considered unclean. (LL)

2. The negatives are...

Separate from Christ.

Before Christ Gentiles had no promise of a Messiah, no legacy of prophets foretelling the Promised One. For Gentiles, schooled in Greek thought, history was a matter of cycles going nowhere. The Hebrew notion of a linear history with a plan and terminus was foreign to Greeks. For them history would cycle and recycle, destined to repetition and redundancy. (LL)

Excluded from citizenship and foreigners to the covenants of promise.

Before Christ's coming, God's promises were given only to the Jewish people. Recall that at Jacob's well Jesus told the Samaritan woman, "Salvation is from the Jews (John 4:22).

Without hope and without God.

It is not that they were atheists who denied the existence of a god.

They had many gods, but they were false gods. They did not have the triune God, so they had no god at all to help them. (PBC)

3. The good news is...

They were once far away now brought near.

The verb "brought" here is passive. The Gentiles did not do anything on their own to approach God. (PBC)

Through the blood of Christ

This expresses the violent death of Christ as he poured out His lifeblood as a sacrifice for us (cf. 1:7). (CSB)

4. Christ...

Is our peace

Not just absence of war, but well-being, unity, and salvation. Christ makes peace and is also the place where it is found. (TLSB)

In the rest of Ephesians, "peace" is particularly connected to "reconciliation"—unity between men and God, and with one another (2:17; 4:3; 6:23), the first one leading to the second. (CC)

Destroyed barrier, the dividing wall of hostility

Words like barrier and dividing wall are a vivid description of the total religious isolation Jews and Gentiles experienced from each other.

To destroy means to totally break loose from something that has a hold on you. Dissolve is another synonym. The Jews hated Gentiles and called them dogs. They were not referring to pet house dogs but the wild dogs that roamed the streets and were a danger to humans. The Gentiles also had names for the Jews. That wall of hostility between Jews and Gentiles was completely destroyed.

5. Christ did...

V. 15 – Abolishing in His flesh...law with all its commandments and regulations.

The OT Law (God's commands) is not changed by the coming of Christ. Christ kept this Law perfectly and now can forgive our breaking of the Law.

What is abolished here is the effect of the specific regulations that separated Jews from Gentiles. The purpose of these civil and ceremonial laws, unique to Israel, was to keep Israel a separate nation. The many carefully spelled out regulations were to hedge and protect Israel from heathen influence until the promised Messiah was born.

V. 15 – New one out of two...making peace

Paul is not merely saying that Jew and Gentile are united in one church. They are united in Christ himself. "If anyone is in Christ, [there is a] new creation!" (2 Cor. 5:17). (CC)

V. 16 – Reconcile both to God...through the cross

Reconciliation is the removal of the barrier, caused by sin, between God and humanity. Christ's death on the cross for the sin of the world is the way this barrier was removed. (The Lutheran Bible Companion – Volume 2)

V. 17 – Came to preach peace

The Word that he has preached is the gospel of our salvation. The content of these tidings is peace, peace with God. The peace of salvation which Christ has merited by his blood and cross.

6. The result is...

Jews and Gentiles both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Access in Greek literally means "a coming near." Access to the Father is only through Jesus Christ (John 14:6), under the influence of, the Holy Spirit. Access means that Jew and Gentile now may approach the heavenly Father with the confidence that He accepts all who are in Christ.

Christ brings us into the throne room of the king of kings and yet we know him tenderly as “Father.”

7. The Ephesians have now...

V. 19 – Fellow citizens with God’s people...Members of God’s household

The household in ancient times was what we today might call an “extended family.” (CSB) Fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household.

The Greek for household means a place to live safe from outside dangers. The main part of the church is called a “Nave” which means boat. To be in the boat is to be rescued from drowning in the sea. Through our Baptism we are members of God’s family.

V. 20 – Built on the foundation of apostles and prophets

The firm foundation of the Ephesians congregation, Paul states, is the doctrine Christ gave them through the OT prophets and NT apostles. Throughout the ages there has been only one plan of salvation. OT believers looked forward to the Messiah or Savior who was to come. NT believers look back to the Savior who has come. (PBC)

V. 20 – Jesus chief cornerstone.

The cornerstone referred to a foundation with a “tested” stone at the corner. (CSB) It establishes the direction of two walls and anchors them together (1 Peter 2:6-7). (TLSB)

V. 21 – Whole building joined together...holy temple in the Lord

The Greek verb for “joined together” occurs only here and in 4:16, where it describes how the members of a body are joined. It reinforces the “cornerstone” idea – that all the parts must be in harmony with Christ. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 4, Part 3)

V. 22 – Built together...dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit

Carpenters and craftsmen add more and more component parts to a building as it proceeds toward completion. In that way, too, Christ is building his church – one believer at a time. Each believer is carefully fitted into his or her niche. All are known by name. All are important to the Builder (God living by the Holy Spirit). All fulfill a purpose. (PBC)