

Peace and Unity through Christ: An Exegesis of Ephesians 2:11–22 and Implications for the Contemporary Church

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Abstract

Ephesians 2:11–22 is not only the heart of the book of Ephesians but is also central in understanding Pauline Christology and ecclesiology. Through an exegetical analysis of Ephesians 2:11–22, this article explores how the Gentile and Jewish believers in Christ have been reconciled to God and one another, thus creating one new community. The pericope situates Jesus at the center of this newfound unity and peace. Paul argues that the Gentiles were formerly separated from Christ and alienated from Israel (vv.11–12). But now, through the blood of Christ, they have been brought near (v.13) and united with the Jews into a new community. Consequently, the saved Gentiles and saved Jews are now fellow citizens and members of God’s household (vv.19–22). The implication of this act of reconciliation is a peaceful and united church where alienation, cultural prejudices, disunity, and discord do not exist. Through Christ, there is peaceful coexistence and unity in the one new multiethnic community, the church.

Keywords: New community, Church, Gentiles, Jews, Reconciliation, Unity, Peace, Christ

Introduction

The distinction between the Jews and Gentiles in the apostolic church can be traced to the salvation history when God chose Israel as a peculiar and distinct people. At Mt. Sinai, God spoke to Moses and promised the children of Israel that if they obey and keep His covenant, they will be His treasured possession in the whole earth (Exo 19:4–6). However, instead of Israel using its privileged position to become light to other nations, this act of grace became a source of disunity and hostility between them and Gentiles in the Old Testament (OT). The New Testament (NT) also points out that this heightened division and hostility between the Gentiles and the Jews continued in the early church. For instance, Paul was nearly killed for an assumption that he brought Trophimus, the Ephesian(a Gentile), into the temple area (Acts 21: 27–31). This hatred and demeaning attitude against the Gentiles was chiefly based on the

issue of the uncircumcision subject.¹ According to the Abrahamic covenant, the devout Jews considered the Gentiles ritually unclean because they were not circumcised. This article, through exegetical method, seeks to trace the causes and nature of disunity between Jews and Gentiles in the former dispensation (vv.11–12) how in Christ, these two groups have been brought near (v.13) and reconciled to God and to each other, thus creating one new community (vv.14–18). It then explains the consequence of Christ's act of reconciliation to the Gentiles and Jews believers (vv. 19–22).

Background Information of Ephesians

Internal evidence attests to the Pauline authorship of the letter (Eph 1:1, 3:1, 4:1, 6:20). The testimony of early church fathers further qualifies this position.² The opponents of Pauline authorship have cited stylistic differences as the main argument for why Paul could not have written this letter.³

Early historical evidence shows that Ephesus's city was the leading city of the wealthiest region of the Roman Empire. It served as the provincial capital of Asia Minor and was a cosmopolitan, multiethnic, and prosperous commercial centre. In addition to the indigenous Anatolian peoples of Ionia, Lydia, Phrygia, Caria, Ephesus was home to Egyptian, Greek, and Roman settlers. There was also an established Jewish community since the Seleucid times (3rd century BC).⁴ Paul spent three years at Ephesus, and a substantial church developed there (Acts 19–20). Ephesians, alongside Philipians, Colossians, and

¹ Tet-Lim N Yee, *Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation Paul's Jewish Identity and Ephesians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 75.

² Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2002), 2–6. Hoehner extensively looks at affirmation of early Church fathers such as, Clement of Rome, Bishop Ignatius of Antioch, Irenaeus Bishop of Lyon and Polycarp Bishop of Smyrna.

³ Mitton states that there are three main arguments for authorship of the letter, that is: "the letter of Ephesians was written by Apostle Paul; the letter was written by one of the disciples of Apostle Paul after his death; and lastly, Ephesians was written by a late admirer of Paul who had not known him and his theology." C. Leslie Mitton and Matthew Black, *Ephesians*, New century Bible commentary (Grand Rapids, Michigan London: Wm. B. Eerdmans. Marshall, Morgan & Scott Publ. Ltd, 1981), 2–10. Ernest Best chooses pseudonymous author, but agrees that the author was a Jewish man who had highly developed Hebrew and Greek style. Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 7–9. MacDonald states that the epistle is an attempt to explain Pauline doctrine to everyone after his death, and thus chooses a Deutero-Paul for the author. Margaret Y. McDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2008), 16.

⁴ Clinton E. Arnold, ed., *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2002), 301. Josephus points out that Jews had been granted freedom to practice their own religion according to their traditions in Ephesus: Flavius Josephus, "Flavius Josephus The Antiquities of the Jews" (n.d.): 10–12. This mixed population of both Greeks and Jews is also acknowledged by Luke, who highlights that all residents of Asia heard of the word of the Lord (Acts 19:10).

Philemon, is one of the ‘captivity epistles,’ written while Paul was in prison in Rome between AD 62 and 64.⁵

This letter was mainly addressed to Christians living in Ephesus but was circulated widely to many other churches in Asia Minor.⁶ Some scholars agree that the letter is not specifically a response to a particular error or heresy like the other genuine Pauline letters.⁷ Instead, Hawthorne notes that it gives a positive presentation of Pauline ecclesiology and Christian conduct.⁸ This pericope (Eph 2:11–22) mainly expounds on the theme of peace unity in the body of Christ for all saints.⁹

The context depicts a continuation from the previous pericope (Eph 2:1–10) where Paul has addressed the Gentile’s lifeless status in sin and without Christ in the world and that both Jews and Gentiles are saved based on faith alone in Christ. Ephesians 2:11–22 examines the believer’s new position in Christ. This passage has three main conjunctions for transitioning, that is, *διὸ* (11), *δὲ* (13) and *ἄρα οὖν* (19)¹⁰ which help in tracing the flow of thought and in the development of the theme of peace and unity. In verses 11–12, Paul reminds the Gentiles that they were formerly alienated from God and His people Israel. But now, in Christ Jesus, they have been brought near (v.13). Jesus Christ, through his blood, has

⁵ The NT records a brief imprisonment in Philippi (Acts 16:19–23), two years in Caesaria (Acts 23: 23–26) and two years in Rome before the end of Paul’s life (Acts 28:16–31).⁵ This letter was written during the Roman imprisonment since the style and content of this letter is similar to Colossians (to some extent) which was written in the same period.

⁶ Eberhard Nestle et al., eds., *Greek-English New Testament*, 9., rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001), 503. This article holds the view that this was cyclic letter because of the absence of the phrase *ἐν Ἐφέσῳ* in P46, κ , B 6.1739 in some key manuscripts. If the phrase is not present in the original manuscript, then this may mean the letter was to ‘all the saints and faithfuls’ wherever they are found in Asia Minor. Similarly, the absence of personal greetings or specific church situations marks Ephesians as a general (circular) letter. Its close resemblance to the Letter of Paul to Colossians depict that it was probably written in the same season with the letter to Colossians. Furthermore, the churches in Asia Minor probably were going through similar doctrinal issues and challenges. In Colossians 4:16, Paul instructs that the Letter to Colossians is to be read to other churches in Laodicea. This would have been probably the case in Ephesus too where the letter was to be read in other areas. Thus, based on the cited manuscript, there was no need to specifically entitle the Letter to the congregation at Ephesus

⁷ Some scholars agree with Romans, 1st and 2nd Corinthians and Galatians as the genuine Pauline letters because they follow a similar sequence and pattern of thought [Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 27–30].

⁸ Gerald F. 1925- Hawthorne and Ralph P. Martin, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1993), 246.

⁹ Abott, Hoehner, Ferguson and Best, “Ephesians can be divided into four sections, namely: the opening (1:1–2), the body consisting of a first and second main section (1:3—3:21 and 4:1—6:20 respectively), and the ending (6:21–24).” Moulton and Milligan explains that “The second main section primarily consists of paraenetic elements, which are interwoven with theological and Christological motivations, and intrinsically linked to and informed by, the first main section.” The article agrees with these scholars since the first main section is more of a prayer and the introduction to the theme of unity which Paul then addressed in details in the second main section of the book. The pericope under study falls within the first main section of this book.

¹⁰ These are two consecutive conjunctions, not one. They are used together for emphasis, but *ἄρα* can be understood as an inferential particle or conjunction, and *οὖν* be translated as an adverb. Thus, the two together may be translated as, ‘Therefore, then ...’ or ‘Now, therefore, ...’ or ‘Therefore, now ...’ or ‘So, now, ...’ just as some of the renowned English Bible translations for the verse render them.

reconciled the two groups to God and created one new community (vv. 13–18), and consequently, both Jews and Gentiles are now fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household (vv.19–22).

Exegesis of Ephesians 2: 11–22

Gentiles were formerly separated from Christ and alienated from the Jews (vv. 11–22)

Verse 11: Διὸ μνημονεύετε ὅτι ποτὲ ὑμεῖς τὰ ἔθνη ἐν σαρκί, οἱ λεγόμενοι ἀκροβυστία ὑπὸ τῆς λεγομένης περιτομῆς ἐν σαρκὶ χειροποιήτου, 12 ὅτι ἦτε τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ χωρὶς Χριστοῦ, ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ καὶ ξένοι τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, ἐλπίδα μὴ ἔχοντες καὶ ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ.¹¹

Translation: 11 Therefore, remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in [the] flesh, being called the uncircumcision by the ones who are called [the] circumcision which is made in [the] flesh by hands. [12] [Remember]¹² that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, not having hope and without God in the world.¹³

Paul uses the inferential conjunction διὸ¹⁴ as a transition marker to alert the Ephesian church to keep in mind their former dire plight. He urges the Gentiles through a progressive present tense verb, μνημονεύετε (you continue to remember). It does not mean that Paul's recipients had forgotten but emphasized that they need not forget what Christ has done. Paul then introduces the subject, that is, ὅτι ποτὲ ὑμεῖς (that formerly you). The use of 'you' implies to his readers (mainly Gentiles) while formerly depicts that Paul is referring to the season before Christ's death on the cross.

The present imperative may suggest a continuance, and hence the Gentiles were to remember their former plight continually.¹⁵ The adverb ποτὲ (formerly) is a temporal indicator and is used to fix the time-frame of the first division of this paragraph. Though this particle is sometimes used in a generalizing fashion meaning "ever" (Gal 2:6), here it has its

¹¹ This article will rely on Nestle Alland Greek text in reading and exegeting the passage; Eberhard Nestle et al., eds., *Greek-English New Testament*, 9., rev. ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001), 506.

¹² Since this next clause is also in apposition to the earlier one. The verb makes the statement complete and help to show continuity of the previous thought.

¹³ This, and other translations of the pericope, are my own translation of the text. The words in bracket are not in original Greek text thus are additional for smooth translation.

¹⁴ This is a conjunction that gives a deduction, conclusion or summary of preceding discussion. This conjunction connects the passage under study with the previous paragraph (vv. 1–10) see, Daniel B Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1996), 673.

¹⁵ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 353.

usual force of indicating past time, “once,” “formerly,” as is made evident by the contrasting *νῦν δέ* (but now) in verse 13. The time here is further discussed in verse 12.

Gentiles are referred to as *ὐμεῖς τὰ ἔθνη ἐν σαρκί* (you the Gentiles in the flesh). The article *τὰ* together with the noun *ἔθνη* distinguishes the Gentiles as a class of the people different from the ones who are circumcised.¹⁶ The dative *ἐν σαρκί* can be a dative of sphere with the idea of the spiritual realm (spiritual community). Still, a dative of reference makes better sense in this context and depicts a physical difference (ethnic difference).¹⁷

The Gentiles were called the uncircumcision by *οἱ λεγόμενοι ἀκροβυστία ὑπὸ τῆς λεγομένης περιτομῆς ἐν σαρκὶ χειροποιήτου* (by the ones who are called [the] circumcision which is made in [the] flesh by hands). Paul uses these descriptions to make it vivid and remind the Gentiles not to forget their past alienation from God and the great disparity between them and the Jews. The Gentiles, probably the majority, could easily forget history and look arrogant toward the Jews. However, what Paul highlights here is a physical marker, not a spiritual marker. The Jews boasted of this over the Gentiles.¹⁸ The circumcision debate demonstrates that both the Jews and Gentiles had religious and cultural distinctions that had degenerated into prejudices and biases.¹⁹

¹⁶ Paul refers to the Gentiles as the ones who are called *ἀκροβυστία*. This term uncircumcision was a marker of the Gentiles. Schmidt explains that this term means foreskin. It was done by mere human hands and didn't transform the heart. To the circumcision, it was a seal of God's covenant to Abraham as father of many nations. Circumcision was a sign that Israelites were God's children of covenant and thus were rightful partakers of the covenant of promise (Acts 7:8). The author of 'Jubilees' states that "everyone who is born, the flesh of whose foreskin is not circumcised on the eighth day, belongs not to the children of covenant which the Lord made with Abraham, but to the children of destruction" (15.33-4). This therefore marks circumcision as very important in the eyes of the Jews since the Gentiles were considered children of destruction." Best denotes that, "They were referred as such because by their origin or custom they were Gentiles, that is, it seems to refer to this class of people by their birth." This phrase marks Gentiles as outsiders since it presents the Gentiles as a people who lacked the mark of circumcision which was a key covenant marker to Jewish community given to them by God through their father Abraham (Gen.17:10–13).

¹⁷ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical commentary 42 (Dallas, Tex.: Word Books Publisher, 1990), 135.

¹⁸ Talbert notes that Jewish consciousness drew sharp distinction between Jews and Gentiles nations. Gal. 2:15 reflects on the perceived difference: "we are by nature Jews and not sinners from the nations (Gentiles). Ephesians says this difference was based on human act done on the human body. The implication is that the perceived difference is based only on a physical, not a spiritual difference." Cf. Charles H. Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2007), 77).

¹⁹ Paul refers to the Gentiles as the ones who are called *ἀκροβυστία*. This term uncircumcision was a marker of the Gentiles. The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT) explains that this term means foreskin.¹⁹ It was done by mere human hands and didn't transform the heart. To the circumcision, it was a seal of God's covenant to Abraham as father of many nations. Circumcision was a sign that Israelites were God's children of covenant and thus were rightful partakers of the covenant of promise (Acts 7:8). The author of 'Jubilees' states that "everyone who is born, the flesh of whose foreskin is not circumcised on the eighth day, belongs not to the children of covenant which the Lord made with Abraham, but to the children of destruction" (15.33-4). This therefore marks circumcision as very important in the eyes of the Jews since the Gentiles were considered children of destruction." Best denotes that, "They were referred as such because by their origin or custom they were Gentiles, that is, it seems to refer to this class of people by their birth." This phrase marks

In verse 11, Paul explained the leading cause of disunity as both cultural and religious. Paul has used these descriptions to remind the Gentiles not to forget their former alienation from God. In verse 12, he uses the resumptive conjunction ὅτι (that) to highlight what they were to remember. Paul begins the verse ἦτε τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ χωρὶς Χριστοῦ, (that you were at that time without Christ). The phrase ἦτε τῷ καιρῷ refers back to the period corresponding to verse 11, that is, before the crucifixion and the death of Christ.²⁰ The verb to be, ἦτε²¹ (from εἰμί), which means, ‘you were,’ also helps the reader understand that the Gentiles were progressively in the past (alienation continued until Christ’s death) without the benefits that Paul focuses on in verse 12. The imperfect marks the durative aspect of their former state and contrasts with aorist ἐγενήθητε (v.13) ‘you have become.’ The use of the dative of time τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ²² gives us the time frame when the Gentiles were disadvantaged. Gunn suggests that this was in the time before the crucifixion and death of Christ. The time does not refer to the Ephesian believers’ conversion but the change of dispensation.²³ Talbert notes that this was the season before the Ephesians became Christians.²⁴ Hoehner argues that this was the period before their conversion.²⁵ This article agrees with Gunn that this was the period before the death and crucifixion of Christ.

Paul will then mentions the five disadvantages the Gentiles experienced through through these appositional and nominal phrases: χωρὶς Χριστοῦ, ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ, ξένοι τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆς ἀπαγγελίας, ἐλπίδα μὴ ἔχοντες, and ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ. The first appositive χωρὶς Χριστοῦ (separated from Christ) functions as the primary predicate to ἦτε with the other predicates having various relationships to it. The Gentiles were separated from Christ, χωρὶς Χριστοῦ.²⁶ This word χωρὶς Χριστοῦ is translated by the NIV, ESV, and ASV as ‘separated from’ while the KJV translates it as ‘without Christ.’ The word implies that Gentiles formerly lacked knowledge or personal relationship and/or experience of Christ, which the Jews had. Talbert explains that “before the Gentiles

Gentiles as outsiders since it presents the Gentiles as a people who lacked the mark of circumcision which was a key covenant marker to Jewish community given to them by God through their father Abraham (Gen.17:10–13). Gerhard Kittel et al., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1985).

²⁰ This period can also refer to the period before the Gentiles became Christians or period before the birth of Christ. However, in the present case the period before crucifixion is preferred since in the next verse Paul highlights the blood of Christ as the intervention factor.

²¹ This is an imperfect indicative active-progressive imperfect: This was Gentiles’ continued status in the former dispensation (before the coming of Christ).

²² ἐκείνῳ (Dative of time: The period before the coming of Christ)

²³ George Gunn, “An Exegetical Studies of Ephesians 2:11-22” (July 3, 2010): 102, https://www.shasta.edu/uploads/1/6/7/0/16705804/ephesians_2v11-22.pdf.

²⁴ Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 77.

²⁵ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 355.

²⁶ Preposition χωρὶς “without” + Genitive-Masculine-Singular. Χριστός “Christ,” “Messiah.” This prepositional phrase is adjectival and functions as the predicate adjective to ἦτε while χωρὶς Χριστοῦ (*Genitive of separation*)

became Christians, they did not share Israel's national expectation of Messiah."²⁷ The Gentiles did not know Christ as the King, Son of God, and Savior.

The clause Ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραήλ (alienated from the citizenship of Israel) was their second plight. The intensive perfect participle ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι²⁸ is a pluperfect periphrastic construction when taken together with the imperfect verb ἦτε 'to be.' It highlights that the Gentiles' were alienated from God's people, Israel, and also from Christ. The emphasis of the perfect here is on their resultant state, while the participle highlights the continuity of alienation. The periphrastic construction emphasizes the continuing results of alienation up to the time of writing this letter.²⁹ The genitive of separation τῆς πολιτείας' depicts the state of alienation between Jews and Gentiles (vv. 11–12). Hoehner explains that what they sought was the citizenship of Israel because of the special privileges God bestowed on her since up to this time, some Gentiles were admitted into Judaism as proselytes, but as a whole, Gentiles were excluded and thus alienated from the citizenship of Israel.³⁰ Yee notes that Israel's citizenship refers to a kind of a league or alliance based on ethnos. This body politic goes beyond any community in a specific locality.³¹ Stott explains that 'of Israel' points to Israel as a nation under God, a theocracy, and a covenant people to whom he had committed himself by solemn pledge.³² This article notes that the Gentiles were alienated from the commonwealth τοῦ Ἰσραήλ 'of Israel.'³³ The phrase 'of Israel' is a qualitative genitive expressing an idea that the Israelites were privileged to have "Israelite citizenship." Israel gives quality or value to Jewish citizenship.³⁴

The third appositive ξένοι τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆς ἀπαγγελίας (strangers to the covenants of promise) was the third plight. The word ξένοι 'stranger' brings to an end an initial three-fold list of appositives, all dealing with legal status relative to citizenship in national Israel. The conjunction καί brings an end to this initial list. It is related to the preceding prepositional phrase χωρὶς Χριστοῦ (separate from Christ) and also the participial clause ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραήλ (having been alienated from the commonwealth

²⁷ Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 78.

²⁸ Perfect. Passive. Participle: Intensive perfect: indicates the state of alienation. This was a fact. The word study for this word πολιτείας has been attached in the appendix.

²⁹ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 356.

³⁰ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 357.

³¹ Yee, *Jews, Gentiles and Ethnic Reconciliation Paul's Jewish Identity and Ephesians*, 96.

³² John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society: The Message of Ephesians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 95.

³³ Qualitative Genitive: alienated from the citizenship which belonged to Israel.

³⁴ In Deuteronomy 14:2, God describes Israel as His treasured possession.

of Israel). The genitive τῆς ἐπαγγελίας gives the quality to τῶν διαθηκῶν,³⁵ the covenants, ‘these covenants have to do with a promise, thus, ‘of promise.’ Hale and Thorson note that the greatest promise that God made with the Jews was that He would send them a savior.³⁶ Best explains that the covenants refer to Abrahamic covenants (Gen 12, 15), now replaced by the new covenant (Jer 31:31–34).³⁷ This article agrees with Hoehner that the new covenant replaced the Mosaic covenant and not Abrahamic covenants. It is, therefore, best to view these covenants as referring to unconditional covenants, that is, Abrahamic covenant (Rom 4; Gen. 12–15), Davidic covenant (2 Sam 7:12–17, 23:5), and the new covenant (Jer 31:31–34, Eze 36:23–36). The Gentiles were strangers to these covenants because they were given by God to the nation of Israel.³⁸ As NLT notes, the Gentiles were excluded from God’s people, Israel, and did not know the promises God had made to them. The promise gives us the quality of the covenants.³⁹ They were not any ordinary covenants but by God Himself to his chosen people.

The last two appositives are a bit different; they express the resultant state of natural man apart from grace. The fourth is ἐλπίδα μὴ ἔχοντες.⁴⁰ The word ἐλπίδα (hope) here implies a future expectation. Talbert suggests that the Gentiles lived their lives in the world without hope for something more and better after death (1 Thes. 4:13).⁴¹ Stott explains that they were hopeless because although God had planned and promised to include them one

³⁵ Genitive-Feminine-Plural definite article + Genitive-Feminine-Plural διαθήκη “covenant.”

³⁶ Thomas Hale and Stephen Thorson, *The Applied New Testament Commentary*, New ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2007), 733.

³⁷ Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, 242.

³⁸ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 359.

³⁹ The researcher agrees with O’Brien who suggests that, “Here the plural covenants suggest a series of covenants with Abraham (Gen 15:7–21, 17:1–21), Isaac (Gen 26:2–50, Jacob (Gen28:13–15), Israel (Exod. 24:1–8) and David (2 Sam. 7), while the genitive ‘of promise’ probably refers to the foundational promise made by God to Abraham.” Peter Thomas O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Leicester: Apollos, 1999), 189. This view is supported by Bruce who also explains that, “the covenants refer to the covenants which God made with Abraham (Gen15:18), with Israel (Exo24:8) and with David (Ps89:28–7).” F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New international commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 1984), 137. This research observes that Paul is continuing to develop the thought of the Gentiles being ‘without Christ’ by explaining the virtue of being strangers to the very covenants that were related to the promised Messiah in the old dispensation.

⁴⁰ The word ἐλπίδα, ‘hope’ refers to, “much more frequent in the classics, and always in the NT, in a good sense: expectation of good, hope; and in the Christian sense, joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation.”⁴⁰ For example, Paul says, “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:13). In this instance hope has been used to explain “joyful and confident expectation of salvation.”⁴⁰ Secondly, “if hope is fixed on God, it embraces at once the three elements of expectation of the future, trust, and the patience of waiting. Any one of these aspects may be emphasized.” [Kittel et al., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 531–34]. For example, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Heb.11:1).

⁴¹ Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 78.

day, they did not know it and therefore had no hope to sustain them.⁴² The Gentiles did not have Israel's privilege of God's revelation; they had nothing to look forward to.⁴³ Since the Gentiles were without Christ, it meant they were without a future hope in the coming Savior. The word ἐλπίδα here is an accusative of the direct object of the verbal element in the participial phrase μὴ ἔχοντες. As Turaki succinctly puts it, "Paul emphasizes that the Gentiles had nothing to hope for in God as long as they were separated from Christ"⁴⁴ This appositional phrase gives successive details about the status of the Gentiles before the salvation of Christ. The participle ἔχοντες explains the state of hopelessness continued till they found salvation from Christ. As Bruce rightly notes that "Gentiles did not share the hope of Israel, they did not know the God of Israel, nor did it seem possible that the Messiah of Israel should have any significance for them."⁴⁵ This is true since Paul also notes that the Gentiles were polytheists as they did not believe in the one true God (Rom. 1:18–23).

The last appositive is ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ (without God in the world)⁴⁶ The dative ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ is a dative of sphere.⁴⁷ The Gentiles were without hope and God as they lived and conducted their affairs in the evil world. They had no legal standing as to the promises God has made with the Jews and covenants made. The Greek word ἄθεοι has been used only once in the NT, that is, in this particular verse. It means "being without a relationship with God, without God (like in this context). Secondly, one who denies God or the gods and their laws, god-denier or atheist."⁴⁸ The Gentiles were 'without God' because they did not believe in the only true and eternal one God of Israel.

In summary, this first section explains the cultural distinction between the Gentiles and the Jews caused by the circumcision issue. In their status, the Gentiles were alienated from God, his people, and the promised Messiah. Let us examine what Christ has done in the next section.

⁴² Stott, *God's New Society*, 95.

⁴³ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 360.

⁴⁴ Yusuf Turaki et al., *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi, Kenya: Word Alive Publishers, 2006), 1430.

⁴⁵ Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2010), 294.

⁴⁶ Preposition ἐν "in" + Dative- Masculine-Singular. definite article + Dative-Masculine-Singular from κόσμος which means "world." The prepositional phrase is adjectival and modifies ἄθεοι.

⁴⁷ It is not dative of place because dative of place gives the locality as the physical earth, that is, in this physical earth. This same term is used in Eph. 1:4 "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world." Dative of sphere as used here explains the world as a system that is opposed to God and ruled by Satan, for instance, as used by Paul in Eph 2:2 "you once walked according to the course of the world"

⁴⁸ Danker, Arndt, and Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 24.

In Christ the Gentiles have been brought near (v.13)

Greek Text: 13 νυνὶ δὲ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ὑμεῖς οἱ ποτε ὄντες μακρὰν ἐγενήθητε ἐγγύς ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

Translation: [13] But now in Christ Jesus you who once were at that time far off have been brought near in the blood of Christ.

Having highlighted the Gentiles' former status of alienation in the previous section, the author in this section describes that the same Gentiles have been brought near in Christ Jesus (v.13).⁴⁹ The contrastive conjunction *δε* marks the transition from 'formerly' to 'presently/now (expressed through *νυνὶ*)'; and 'separated from Christ' and 'without God in the world' to 'being brought near in Christ,' 'to God by means of the blood.' The conjunction 'but now' speaks of the gracious intervention of God on behalf of lost sinners through Jesus Christ. The dative *ἐν Χριστῷ*, 'in Christ,' is a dative of sphere and denotes Christ as the sphere in which the new union is found. The preposition *ἐν* with the dative denotes location and also relationship. Thus their position is really "in Christ Jesus" rather than "in the world" (v.12) or dead in their trespasses (v.1, 5).⁵⁰ Henry simply writes, "they were brought home to God through Christ."⁵¹ The Gentiles formerly lived apart from Christ in the sphere of the world (v.12c). In the world, they were alienated from the true God.

The subject nominative *ὑμεῖς οἱ* (v.13) denotes that the ones who were once far off are the Gentiles who Paul has addressed in verse 11. Repetition of *ποτε* has the significance of emphasis on the time before the coming of Christ, that is, former dispensation.⁵² The durative participle *ὄντες*⁵³ 'you were' is substantival and in apposition to possessive pronoun *ὑμεῖς*. It depicts that the alienation continues even today for the unsaved Gentiles (depicted through 'you'). Paul uses *ποτε ὄντες μακρὰν* (you who were at one time being far off) to depict that it's the same Gentiles he has addressed in the first section (vv.11–12) who were far off because they were separated from Christ as Lincoln rightly puts it that the term implies in OT describes Gentile nations (Deut 28:49; 29:22; Isa 5:26; Jer 5:15) while describing Israel in

⁴⁹ There is a transition from "at that time" to "now" through the conjunction *δε* which denotes a sharp contrast. Hoehner explains that, "there are three notes of contrasts. First is the adversative conjunction *δε*, 'but.' Second is adverb *νυνὶ*, 'now' which expresses their present condition and this is in contrast to the time indicated by the participle *ποτε*, 'formerly.' Third is "the change in locale to indicate relationships." [Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 361.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 362.

⁵¹ Matthew Henry and Leslie F. Church, *Matthew Henry's Commentary: Genesis to Revelation* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1961), 1850.

⁵² Former dispensation here is used to imply the season before the death and crucifixion of Christ.

⁵³ Present Active Participle: durative present translated as "you were" and highlights continuance of the process of bringing the Gentiles near.

Psa. 148:14 as ἐγγύς (near).⁵⁴ The resultative aorist verb ἐγενήθητε can be translated as [you (pl.) have been brought,] with the focus being on the conclusion of their state of alienation. Those who were ‘far’ are the same people who have been brought ‘near.’ The implication is that the Gentiles have now been brought near to God by the work of Christ. The passive verb ἐγενήθητε denotes that this was an act of God and not the self-effort of the Gentiles to move near.⁵⁵ The aorist strengthens the case by acknowledging that this resulted from Christ’s past action. Through Christ, ‘drawing near’ has been achieved.

The method by which the Gentiles were drawn near is ἐν τῷ αἵματι⁵⁶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ (by the blood of Christ). Talbert understands this instrumentally, that is, the blood of Christ here seals the covenant (Gen 15:7–21, Exo 24:8).⁵⁷ Hoehner understands it as referring to a sacrifice to propitiate God’s demand of holiness.⁵⁸ This article observes that blood is the means of bringing the Gentiles near. The act of “bringing the Gentiles near” is an act of grace as initiated by the blood of Jesus Christ. This was the blood of no one else but τοῦ Χριστοῦ⁵⁹ ‘of Christ.’⁶⁰ In summary, this section highlights the blood of Christ as the means by which the Gentiles and the Jews were brought near to God and to the Jews. Jesus Christ Himself initiated the peaceful coexistence and unity between these two groups.

The Gentiles and Jews Believers Now Belong to God and One New Community (vv. 14–18)

Greek Text: 14 Αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ εἰρήνη ἡμῶν, ὁ ποιήσας τὰ ἀμφοτέρα ἐν καὶ τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ λύσας, τὴν ἔχθραν, ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ, 15 τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν καταργήσας, ἵνα τοὺς δύο κτίσῃ ἐν αὐτῷ εἰς ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον ποιῶν εἰρήνην, 16 καὶ ἀποκαταλλάξῃ τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ, ἀποκτείνας τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν αὐτῷ. 17 καὶ ἔλθὼν εὐηγγελίσαστο εἰρήνην ὑμῖν τοῖς μακρὰν καὶ εἰρήνην τοῖς ἐγγύς· 18 ὅτι δι’ αὐτοῦ ἔχομεν τὴν προσαγωγὴν οἱ ἀμφοτέροι ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα.

⁵⁴ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 138–39.

⁵⁵ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 362–63.

⁵⁶ Dative of means: the means by which they have been brought near is by the blood

⁵⁷ Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 78.

⁵⁸ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 363.

⁵⁹ Qualitative genitive: The blood of Christ was the only way of achieving making them one Heb 9:12, Rom 3:25”

⁶⁰ This is also supported by the writer of Hebrew and Paul in Romans where the blood of Christ is described as the only way of achieving reconciliation between the Jews and Gentiles and between the two groups and God (Heb 9:12, Rom 3:25). The Gentiles who were once separated from Christ “have been brought near in Christ” by the means of the blood of Christ. The alienation of the Gentiles from God could only be remedied by this very same Christ as a result of pure act of grace.

Translation: [14] For he is our peace, who has made both one and has broken down the middle wall of partition, the hostility, by abolishing the enmity in his flesh [15] the law of commandments [contained] in ordinances in order that he might create in Himself one new community [thus] making peace, [16] and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross thereby putting to death hostility. [17] And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace those who were near; [18] for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Paul, in verse 14, through the causal conjunction ‘*γαρ*,’ explains Christ as the cause of peace through which two groups have been brought near. The peace-making work of Jesus Christ had two main results. First, the creation of one new community in place of two’ (v.15), and second, the reconciliation of both the Jews and Gentiles to God (v.16). The pronoun *αὐτός* together with *ἐστιν* is used for emphasis, that is, the same Christ who has brought Gentiles near through his blood is also the peace. Paul denotes that, “Christ Himself is our peace” *ἐστιν ἡ εἰρήνη ἡμῶν*. The present tense in the main verb *ἐστιν* depicts the progress of the action, that is, Christ is continually our peace even today.

The noun *εἰρήνη* (peace)⁶¹ here refers to “reconciliation between God and man which Christ has brought,” that is, it is used in reference to the reconciliation between God and the two groups and between Gentiles and the Jews. Paul also shifts from the second person *ὑμεῖς* to the first person *ἡμῶν* which depicts the Jews are also included as objects of the peace of Jesus Christ along with the Gentiles and all other believers. The article and the participle *ὁ ποιήσας*⁶² is substantival since it is in apposition to *αὐτός*. This researcher translates the aorist tense as constative. He made the two one. Jesus Christ, our peace has made the Jews and Gentiles one, thus bringing them into a relationship with one another and with God in Christ.⁶³

Christ has brought unity by breaking the middle wall of partition and created one new community in place of two, thus making peace (vv.14–15a). Here is a result of the promise

⁶¹ In OT the noun conveys the ideas of wholeness, health and security (Num 6:26, where peace sums up the blessing and Genesis 41:16, where ‘an answer of peace’ (AV, RV) is in RSV a favourable answer). In NT the noun still has these meanings but refer particularly to the reconciliation between God and man which Christ has brought (Rom 5:1). Cf. (Stephen etc. Neill, ed., *Concise Dictionary of the Bible: Part II* (Lutterworth P, 1966), 241).

⁶² Nominative-Masculine-Singular- definite article + Aorist-Active-Participle-Nominative-Masculine-Singular from *ποιέω* which means “to do,” “to make.”

⁶³ Paul in the present context is looking at the action of Christ being our peace as a whole without focusing on the time that it began or ended with an implication of the peace-making process continuing even today rather than having ended, which would have made it resultative. This implies that the unity of the body of Christ today can only be effected with Christ being the centre of ecclesiology. The theological implication is that none of the two can stand alone. Christ is the foundation of ecclesiology.

given through the prophet Isaiah (Isa 57:19). The aorist participle λύσας⁶⁴ is substantival and in apposition to αὐτὸς. This participle is circumstantial and expresses that the flesh of Christ was the instrument for breaking down the law of commandments in ordinances. It is also parallel to ποιήσας and infers that Jesus Christ who is our peace has made the two groups one and has broken the middle wall of partition. The conjunction καί joins ποιήσας discussed above and the participle λύσας is a Granville Sharpe construction⁶⁵ since both the participles act as nouns in the clause. The significance of this construction in this passage shows that the latter participle refers to the same person or the thing expressed by the first. In this context, the same Jesus Christ who has made the Jews and Gentiles one has also destroyed the dividing wall of hostility. The prepositional phrase ἐν τῇ σαρκί⁶⁶ indicates the instrumentality and locale of this accomplishment. This prepositional phrase is adverbial to λύσας and explains that the dividing wall of hostility was broken in His flesh.

Scholars have a varied opinion on what actually is the dividing wall of hostility here; Abott agrees with Mitton that it is a one and a half meter wall in the Jerusalem temple precincts that separated the court of the Gentiles from the court of the Jews with the punishment of death penalty for Gentiles who violates.⁶⁷ Alford views it as the curtain that divided the holy place and the holy of holies in the Jerusalem temple.⁶⁸ Best notes that μεσότοιχον (barrier) is missing in all literature and therefore, this word cannot be translated as a cosmic wall that separates heavenly pleroma from the lower world as translated by Schlier.⁶⁹ Lincoln thinks it refers to Mosaic laws.⁷⁰ One could easily argue that this dividing wall in the literal sense is the law of circumcision (v.11) since it separated the Gentiles and Jews, thus creating hatred between the two groups. As Best succinctly puts it, the partition wall was a metaphorical wall that divided Jews and Gentiles.⁷¹ Hoehner also agrees with Best, that often an attitude of superiority crept that bred hostility.⁷² Consequently, flesh here refers to the physical, human body of Christ and his death on the cross. The αὐτοῦ which follows ‘in his flesh’ is a genitive of possession and describes σαρκί from the standpoint of

⁶⁴ Aorist-Active-Participle-Nominative-Masculine-Singular from λύω which means “to destroy.”

⁶⁵ Samuel Ngewa, “Intermediate Greek (2016-2017)” Africa International University (AIU), July 2016 (unpublished article), 42. According to the grammatical construction, the same Jesus Christ who has made the Jews and Gentiles one has also destroyed the dividing wall of hostility.”

⁶⁶ Dative of sphere: The breaking of the dividing wall was done when Christ died on the cross. The flesh to me represent the death of the lamb.

⁶⁷ T. K. Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians* (Ditzion Press, 2009), 61.

⁶⁸ Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament, Vol. 3 of 4*, vol. 3 (United Kingdom: Forgotten Books, 2017), 97.

⁶⁹ Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, 255.

⁷⁰ Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 141–42.

⁷¹ Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*, 256–57.

⁷² Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 371.

ownership, that is, the flesh of Jesus. As a result, the dividing wall has been broken, thus enabling peace between the two groups and with God.

In verse 15b, Paul argues that the believing Jews and Gentiles are now εἰς ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον⁷³ (one new community).⁷⁴ This is an adverbial accusative of termination focusing on the result of creation. The preposition εἰς gives direction while ἓνα is a contrast that indeed the two have now become one. The same Jesus Christ who is our peace has created in himself (in Christ) one new community in place of two, thus making peace. Talbert observes that the new community introduces a third race different from the Jews and the Gentiles. Jesus' death achieved a new covenant through his blood, in place of the old obligatory covenant.⁷⁵ Best understands this metaphor as referring to individual believers who are now a new community, for neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. If any person is in Christ, he is a new creature (2 Cor 5:17).⁷⁶ Hoehner suggests that in the present context, Paul refers to a whole new race that is formed. A new race that is raceless!⁷⁷ This article agrees with Hoehner since this coincides with Paul's admonition not to offend three groups of people: the Jews, the Gentiles, and the church of God (1 Cor 10:32). The Jews and the Gentiles are presented as unconverted, and the church consists of the Jewish and Gentile believers. They are not Jews or Gentiles but a body of Christians who make up the church. This creates unity among the believers in the church, for they are in Christ. This research takes this prepositional phrase εἰς ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον as adverbial to κτίση. It depicts the goal of making the two groups into one, creating a new community of believers, thus the preference of "one new community" in translation. Paul implies that the two have become a new community, a church not restricted by the former Mosaic covenants or distinctions. One may thus biblically understand the church as a mix of Jesus-believing Jews and Gentiles; they are united in Christ but distinct in their ethnic identities.⁷⁸

⁷³ Preposition εἰς "into", Accusative-Masculine-εἷς "one", Accusative-Masculine-Singular from καινός "new", Accusative-Masculine-Singular from ἄνθρωπος "community". Therefore, the result of abolishing commandments and ordinances was the creation of one new community. This is in contrary to the two (Jews and Gentiles) before his coming.

⁷⁴ The researcher prefers to translate ἄνθρωπον as 'community' rather than humanity or people since non-believers are not included. The use of humanity will imply even non-believers are included which is not the case here. Community is also preferred to 'man' since it include both genders. Stott also explains that, "This does not mean that the whole human race is now united and reconciled. We know from observation and experience that it is not. But then Paul does not claim this either." Reference information for Stott is missing.

⁷⁵ Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 81–82.

⁷⁶ Ernest Best, *One Body in Christ* (SPCK, 1980), 379.

⁷⁷ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 379–80.

⁷⁸ Paul's calling of the church 'one new community' in Eph 2:15 does not by any means prove that its members are no longer Jewish and Gentile. Instead, the text allows, and even requires, retention of the Jew-Gentile classification with the distinguishing factor from their tribal identity being Christlikeness. This can be clearly seen in v.11 where Paul uses the opposite terms 'uncircumcised' and 'circumcised' to explain that this was

In verse 16, Paul focuses on the reconciliation between the one new community to God. The coordinating conjunction καὶ here explains why the law was abolished, so it makes the subjunctives κτίση and ἀποκαταλλάξει parallel. These two subjunctives give the result of what Christ has done, that is, Christ has made peace, has now ἀποκαταλλάξει (reconciled) the two groups. The subjunctive verb ἀποκαταλλάξει is a resultative aorist. The reconciliation of sinful Jews and Gentiles to God results from Christ's action of putting to death the law. The reconciliation took place in one body ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι.⁷⁹ The subjunctive here, used with ἕνα, tells us the purpose of Christ being our peace. The prepositional phrase ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι is a dative of sphere and expresses the sphere, possibly, the body of Jesus Christ through which the reconciliation took place. The verb ἀποκαταλλάξει is first used by Paul in Col 1:20, 22 and is thought to have been coined by him.⁸⁰ In all instances in NT, ἀποκαταλλάξει, and καταλλάξει are used where God is the one who reconciles, and humans are the ones reconciled (Rom 5:10, 2 Cor 5:18, Col 1:20). In this passage, God is the one who reconciles the Jews to the Gentiles. The Jews and Gentiles are, therefore, the objects of reconciliation.

The goal of reconciliation was brought through the cross, διὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ.⁸¹ Hoehner also notes that it is Christ who reconciles Jews and Gentiles through his death on the cross.⁸² The participle ἀποκτείνας is a circumstantial participle and expresses the means of putting to death the enmity, mainly through his flesh (v.14). The last section of this verse (v.16b) ἀποκτείνας τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν αὐτῷ (having put the hostility to death by it) gives the means of reconciliation of the one body of the saved Gentiles and saved Jews to God. This is because ἐν αὐτῷ (by it) refers to the cross as discussed in the paragraph above. It was at the cross that the problem of hostility was resolved.

Having explained how peace and reconciliation were achieved Paul now explains how peace was preached and its results in verse 17. The conjunction καὶ joins this clause to the main clause of verse 14 as a clause coordinate. In other words, “He is our peace and He proclaimed peace.” (vv.13,17). The participle ἐλθὼν is circumstantial to εὐηγγελίσαστο. Since both the participle and the main verb are in the aorist, the participle here expresses time, “after he came, he preached” (AV, ASV, RSV, NASB, NIV) while the middle voice expresses personal interest on the part of the preacher (Jesus Christ) in his message. Mitton

indeed who they are. The one new community, therefore, is the body of Christ, which is the church comprising of different ethnic identities but with the same goal of being like Christ.

⁷⁹ Preposition ἐν “in” + Dative Neuter. Singular. εἰς “one” + Dative. Neuter. Singular. σῶμα “body.”

⁸⁰ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 382.

⁸¹ Genitive of means: The reconciliation was done by means of the cross i.e. through Christ's sacrificial death on the cross. See also 2 Cor 5:18,19.

⁸² Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 383.

thinks the time he came refers to Jesus' ministry here on earth.⁸³ Bengel Bible notes that this was the season "from death, from His descent into hell, and from His resurrection to ascension"⁸⁴ However, from verse 16, this was the period after Christ's crucifixion on the cross. This peace he preached to peace 'to you who were far off and peace those who were near' (v.17b). This implies that both the Jews (near) and the Gentiles (far off) were included in the message of salvation.

In verse 18, Paul affirms that through the same Christ, we have access to the Father. The ὅτι acts as causal conjunction of results and is followed by the δι' αὐτοῦ which indicates that Christ is the means through which we both continuously⁸⁵ have access in one Spirit to the Father (v.18). The accusative προσαγωγήν, access, acts as accusative of direct object with the result of access as the focus. The peace by Christ provided access to the Father. The οἱ ἀμφοτέροι⁸⁶ is the subject of the main verb, the durative present ἔχομεν,⁸⁷ that is, the Jews and Gentiles (all believers) now have continuous access to the Father. The noun προσαγωγήν (access) is used three times in the NT (Rom 5:2; Eph 2:18; 3:12). It means introducing a person such as a king or approaching a harbor or to land.⁸⁸ In the present context, 'to a person' is preferred since peace has been established in verse 17; thus, we have continual access. The agency of this access is ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι.⁸⁹ This is dative of agent⁹⁰ because the Spirit is a person and Christ promised us that "the Spirit will take what is mine and make it known to you" (Jn 16:15).

⁸³ C. Leslie Mitton, *Ephesians*, First Edition edition. (London: Oliphants, 1976), 109.

⁸⁴ "Ephesians 2 Bengel's Gnomon of the New Testament," accessed July 26, 2021, <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/bengel/ephesians/2.htm>.

⁸⁵ ἔχομεν (Present. Indicative. Active: durative/progressive- we have) The present tense is durative and expresses the believers

continuous possession of access to God through Jesus Christ

⁸⁶ Subject Nominative (def. article and nominative): The word has a definite article thus making it a subject.

⁸⁷ ἔχομεν Present active indicative 3rd person plural from ἔχω "to have." The verb serves here as the main verb of the ὅτι clause. The present tense is durative and expresses the believer's continuous possession of access to God through Jesus Christ.

⁸⁸ Blue Letter Bible, "Strong's Greek: 4318. Προσαγωγή (Prosagógé) -- a Bringing To," accessed July 26, 2021, <https://biblehub.com/greek/4318.htm>.

⁸⁹ Preposition ἐν "in" and dative neuter singular εἰς "one" and dative neuter singular from πνεῦμα "Spirit." The prepositional phrase is adverbial, modifying ἔχομεν and expresses agency

⁹⁰ Taking the Spirit as a dative of means will imply the Spirit is non-personal which is not true according to the Scriptures and especially John 16. I disagree with Sinclair and Lincoln who suggest that it is "used as dative of sphere" since this section has already discussed that 'in Christ' is the sphere.[Sinclair B Ferguson, *Let's Study Ephesians* (Edinburgh; Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth Trust, 2005), 68]. According to Gunn, "To be "in the Spirit" in the sense of sphere denotes a concept of mysticism that is absent in this passage. It is used, for example, of the prophetic state of John in Rev 1:10." I agree with Gunn since the goal of accessing in one Spirit is to be πρὸς τὸν πατέρα. The prepositional phrase is adverbial, modifying ἔχομεν, and expresses the goal of the access. This is a contrast to the extremely limited access to God under the OT covenants which the Gentiles were strangers to.

This section notes that the creation of one new community and the reconciliation of the Gentiles and the Jews was initiated by Jesus Christ. Through Christ, the two have been reconciled to God and one another, and the dividing wall of hostility destroyed.

The Gentiles and Jews Believers Are Now Members of God’s Household (vv.19–22)

Greek Text: 19 ἄρα οὖν οὐκέτι ἐστὲ ξένοι καὶ πάροικοι, ἀλλὰ ἐστὲ συμπολίται τῶν ἁγίων καὶ οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ, 20 ἐποικοδομηθέντες ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν, ὄντος ἀκρογωνιαίου αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, 21 ἐν ᾧ πᾶσα οἰκοδομὴ συναρμολογουμένη αὖξει εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον ἐν κυρίῳ, 22 ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς συνοικοδομεῖσθε εἰς κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πνεύματι.

Translation: [19] So then, you are no longer strangers and foreigners but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, [20] having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being [the] chief cornerstone, [21] in whom [the] whole building being fitted together grows into a holy temple in the Lord. [22] In him, you also are being built into a dwelling place of God in [the] Spirit.

Paul, in verses 19–22, discusses the consequence of the new Jew-Gentile union. Paul also switches to metaphors to describe the nature of the one new community. The conjunctions ἄρα οὖν give a firm conclusion for the preceding verses 11–18. The main verb of this v.19 is the present, indicative, active verb ἐστὲ,⁹¹ which implies progress. The Gentiles are progressively not aliens from the time Jesus died on the cross. They are continuously being accepted as fellow citizens with the saints in the household of God. Paul does not repeat this verb in this verse because there exists a development of his thought. The nominatives πάροικοι, ξένοι and συμπολίται (v.19) all act as predicates to the main verb of this clause ἐστὲ and are used to describe the new relationship between the Gentiles and the Jews. Gunn explains, “This is not to say that Gentiles are made citizens of Israel. In this context, Paul is using two figures to express the new relationship of Jews and Gentiles to each other. The first figure is that of fellow citizens who belong to the same household. The second figure is that of stones built into a temple (vv. 20-22).”⁹²

The Gentiles are now fellow citizens τῶν ἁγίων ‘with the saints.’ The researcher prefers this to be a genitive of the whole rather than one of association.⁹³ This is because the

⁹¹ This is an eimi verb which is a Present-Indicative-2nd Person-Plural from εἰμί which means “I am; I exist”

⁹² George Gunn, “An Exegetical Studies of Ephesians 2:11-22” (July 3, 2010): 102, https://www.shasta.edu/uploads/1/6/7/0/16705804/ephesians_2v11-22.pdf.

⁹³ Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 302. Bruce explains that, “Gentiles are not adherents or visitors or second rate citizens in the believing community; they are full members. If the

saints are broader than the Old Testament faithful (Israel). The Gentiles are not saints of any time or class but members of God's family. They are part of all who could be called the people of God. Even angels are included among these saints (Heb 12:22).⁹⁴

Paul, in verses 20-22, now gives the cause of the new building. In verse 20, he gives the foundation through the resultative aorist ἐποικοδομηθέντες.⁹⁵ Believers are now built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. This participle ἐποικοδομηθέντες is a causal circumstantial participle and explains the circumstances of the Gentile's full admission to becoming full members of the kingdom and of the family of God. It is dependent on the main verb ἐστὲ 'you are' (v.19). The building continues 'upon the foundation' ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ⁹⁶ with the apostles and prophets as the foundation and Jesus Christ as the cornerstone.

The whole building, which comprises of all saints, is being built upon this same foundation. The genitives τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν both depict genitive of apposition where the apostles and prophets are the foundation. The article joins ἀποστόλων and προφητῶν very closely together and has the implication that the author wanted to refer to one group rather than making apostles and prophets to be in distinct classes of their own using the Granville Sharp Rule. They are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.⁹⁷ The statement in Ephesians 2:20 ἐποικοδομηθέντες ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets' mean that we are His house, the apostles and prophets are the foundation, and Jesus Christ is the cornerstone.⁹⁸

community is viewed as a city, they are citizens, not resident aliens. The saints with whom they are fellow citizens are the original saints...Gentile believers are now included as among the saints.

⁹⁴ The Gentiles are now in as fellow citizens of that group that is larger than the chosen nation. The Genitive of association would mean the Gentiles are only associated with all the saints which is not true as Christ has already reconciled them to the believing Jews making them part of the new union of saints.

⁹⁵ Gunn, "An Exegetical Studies of Ephesians 2:11-22," 104. "This is an aorist, passive, participle, nominative, masculine, plural from ἐποικοδομέω "build on," "build on to," "build up," "edify." The participle is circumstantial to ἐστε ... οἰκεῖοι, probably expressing the cause or means by which they were added to God's household. The metaphor shifts slightly from the members of a household to the building itself."

⁹⁶ Preposition ἐπὶ "on," "upon" (with a dative object) + Dat. Masc.Sing. definite article + Dat. Masc. Sing. θεμέλιος "foundation." The prepositional phrase is adverbial to ἐποικοδομηθέντες, expressing the location where the building takes place.

⁹⁷ ἐποικοδομηθέντες ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν is translated as "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone" and not "built on the foundation which is the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone."

⁹⁸ It is faith in their teaching about Christ which is in focus. In Matthew 16:18 (NIV) Jesus told Peter, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church," he did not mean that Peter would be the foundation of the church. Instead, it meant that the church would be built on knowing and believing that Jesus is the Messiah, just as Peter had known, believed and confessed (replied) to Jesus. Similarly, Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:11 (NIV) explains that, "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." He also notes in 2 Tim 2:19 (NIV) that, "Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with

Paul, in verse 21, explains the formation of the building through ἐν ᾧ⁹⁹ which refers back to the sphere in which this building activity takes place. Jesus Christ is the sphere in which a Christian relationship exists. The whole building refers to “πᾶσα (whole) οἰκοδομῆ” which is subject nominative as it is a subject to αὔξει. The entire building is being fitted together, and this Paul describes as συναρμολογουμένη.¹⁰⁰ The passive here implies that believers are receiving the action from Christ himself, who is continuously building his church. This implies that Christ is both the agent and the sphere in the church is fitted and joined together. The participle suggests the manner of fitting the building. The present tense that follows is αὔξει¹⁰¹ has a connotation of progress. It indicates that the temple is in progress. Paul then uses an adverbial accusative εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον, which indicates the goal of the process of growth as the focus. That is, “into a holy temple.” The growth is in the Lord ἐν κυρίῳ.¹⁰² Paul concludes this long paragraph by explaining the function of the building (v.22).

The process of being built (v.22) is progressive and continuing even today, therefore the use of συνοικοδομεῖσθε.¹⁰³ The purpose of the building is to εἰς κατοικητήριον.¹⁰⁴ This is God’s dwelling place τοῦ θεοῦ¹⁰⁵ by means of the Spirit ἐν πνεύματι.¹⁰⁶ Abott, suggests that this can refer to, “both the sphere and the means”¹⁰⁷ but I don’t think so since ‘in whom’ was the sphere. Hoehner believes “the phrase is too far removed from the verb to be adverbial, and therefore understands it as being adjectival to κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ.”¹⁰⁸ Since this is an adverbial, Paul uses εἰς to indicate the goal of the verb συνοικοδομεῖσθε, that is, you are being built together that you might be a dwelling place. The purpose of εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον ‘for a holy temple’ is to be a dwelling place of God. This means the building is not inanimate but a living and growing organism. This section showed that the saved Gentiles and the Jews have now been included as members of God’s household. They are now fellow citizens with the rest of the saints.

this inscription: ‘The Lord knows those who are his,’ and, ‘Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.’

⁹⁹ Dative of sphere: In whom - Refers back to Jesus Christ

¹⁰⁰ Present. Passive. Participle: durative/progressive-being fitted together)

¹⁰¹ Present. Active. indicative: durative/progressive-being fitted together)

¹⁰² Dative of sphere: in the Lord – the sphere in which this Holy temple is in Christ)

¹⁰³ Present. Passive. Indicative: Progressive/durative: you also are continually being built together with other believers

¹⁰⁴ Accusative of purpose: Preposition εἰς “into” + Acc. Neut. Sing. Κατοικητήριον “habitation.” The purpose is to grow into a habitation

¹⁰⁵ Genitive of possession: the dwelling place of God: this dwelling place belongs to God

¹⁰⁶ Dative of means: by the Spirit – the Holy temple is God’s dwelling place by the Spirit

¹⁰⁷ Abbott, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*, 42.

¹⁰⁸ Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 414.

Application of The Study

This article has addressed several issues that are critical in understanding and interpreting the text in its context.

According to this passage, Jews and Gentiles had religious and cultural distinctions degenerated into prejudices and biases. Circumcision was a cause of disunity between these two groups. Paul admonishes the Ephesian church that these biases have now been nullified through the blood of Jesus Christ. Today, Christians must view each other as fellow citizens, fellow family members, and fellow parts of God's temple. The gospel erases all racial distinctions and allows believers in Christ from all backgrounds to be reconciled to God and others. Today that same gospel cuts through ethnic, racial, and cultural differentiation.

Disunity in the church has always been a challenge in Christian congregations. Yet, in his intercessory to disciples (Jn 17:11, 21, 22), Jesus prayed for unity. Ndhlovu notes that in the kingdom of Jesus Christ all barriers come down; in Christ, there are no walls, no classes, no races, and no distinction of any sort.¹⁰⁹ The church is both an organism and an organization. It is an organism because it is united around the saving work of Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit no matter where each member is located. It is an organization because it gathers around a common purpose and doctrine and acknowledges particular offices as leaders.¹¹⁰ The church as an organism is united through Christ's saving work on the cross, and as a result, our background, culture, or race should no longer not be a dividing factor. However, despite the saving work of Christ on the cross, there still exists alienation, disunity, and discord in the church. Christians erect new barriers in place of the old, which Christ has demolished, for instance, racism, nationalism, tribalism, nepotism, and class wars. Stott rightly points out personal animosities caused by pride, prejudice, jealousy, and the unforgiving spirit. He also cites the divisive class system, clericalism that separates clergy from laity, and denominationalism that sets churches against each other.¹¹¹ These things are offensive to Jesus Christ since they hinder unbelievers from believing in the gospel.

Conclusion

In Ephesians 2:11–22, we have discussed the themes of peace and unity in the church. In section one (vv.11–12), Jews felt superior to the Gentile because of the covenantal issue of

¹⁰⁹ John Ndhlovu, "Bible Study The Book of Ephesians" (n.d.): 31, accessed July 26, 2021, https://www.academia.edu/1540732/Bible_Study_The_Book_of_Ephesians.

¹¹⁰ Turaki et al., *Africa Bible Commentary*, 1431.

¹¹¹ Stott, *God's New Society*, 110–11.

circumcision. In the second section (v.13), Paul highlights that through the blood of Jesus Christ, the two alienate groups have been brought near. He then uses verses 14–18 to argue that Jesus Christ has reconciled the two groups to God and one other. The two groups are now one new community. Finally, in verses 19–22, Paul highlights the consequences of the new union. The Gentiles are now members of God’s household together with other saints. Paul’s teaching on the church as one new community comprising of saved Gentiles and saved Jews is centered around the work of Christ on the cross. Through the blood of Jesus Christ, the existing hostilities are demolished, and new relationships are founded. The message of this passage is relevant today when preaching peace and unity in contexts with hostilities.

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