

## EPHESIANS CHAPTER 2

### Ephesians 2:11-22 – The Church United Under Jesus Christ

What is the basis for this unity between Israel and Gentiles? The answer to this is in Ephesians 1:1-2:10, and this is also fully expounded in Romans 2:1-3:30.

1. All are equally guilty of sin.
2. Every person needs to have forgiveness and justification before God.
3. Everyone is saved by grace through faith.
4. Since we are all guilty and all saved the same way, then there is no division in the church.
5. For the church to be functional, the distinction of nationality needs to be dismissed.

There are five sentences in this paragraph

11-12 – You Gentiles remember that you were separate from Christ.

13 – But now you have been brought near.

14-16 – For He Himself is our peace.

17-18 – We have our access to the Father in one Spirit through Him.

19-22 – You are no longer strangers and aliens but are citizens together with the saints and household of God.

Last week, we addressed the initial observations of this section. I encourage you, if needed, to review the notes or revisit the lesson to see some of the premises that were made as we enter into an analysis of the text. I repeat that this section is not about the reconciliation between God and a person, it is about the separation between Israel and the Gentile nations. It is a physical distinction, not a spiritual one.

### Ephesians 2:11-12 – The previous condition of the Gentiles

This new section begins with a “διό διο.” Normally, this indicates a self-evident inference, even if it needs to be pointed out. Since God has saved everyone by grace, remember something.

*Remember* is “μνημονεύω mnēmoneuō,” an imperative that means to actively call something to mind—think about this and it is something that you should know.

The adverb *formerly* is “πότε pote” and refers to another time. Because we know that this is in the past, it is understood as “once” or “at one time.” The translation *formally* is somewhat interpretive because of the context. Paul is going to refer to something in the past and is no longer the case.

The believing Gentiles in Ephesus are the ones that are supposed to remember. “ἔθνος ethnos,” this is where we get the word ethnic, indicates a nation or the nations. Paul uses this word to identify to whom he is speaking. The people of interest in this particular text are those who are not of Israel.

The next phrase is parenthetical “who are called uncircumcision by the so-called circumcision, which is performed in the flesh by human hands.”

The term *uncircumcision* is not the opposite of circumcised. The Greek words are “ἀκροβυστία akrobustia” vs “περιτομή peritomē.” The word has its root in “the extreme end of something.” They are being called “foreskin.”

The use of this word is non-derogatory despite its crude inference in English. Paul uses this word with no derogatory inference (Galatians 2:7). This does not mean that the Jews did not hold the nations with contempt, but that is not what is being communicated here.

The words *called* and *so-called* are the same Greek word. “λέγω legō” simply means say, tell, or speak. Both words are in the participial form. A literal translation is “the Gentiles in flesh, the ones called uncircumcision by the ones called circumcision in flesh made by hands.”

The point of this phrase is not to draw distinctions or to state that Israelis are not really “of the circumcision.” The repeated word “in flesh” is key. Paul is starting with the reality that, in flesh, there is a distinction; in nationality, there is a distinction. The distinction is on the flesh only. The spiritual distinction is always by grace through faith. Not even circumcision indicates a spiritual reality. Romans 4:5-12 – Abraham was deemed righteous before he was circumcised; circumcision does not indicate the spiritual reality before God.

There is also a distinction in the fact that Israel has an advantage. Romans 3:1-2 – It is a natural thing for a Jew to believe in Jesus; for the Gentile, it is a marvel.

Ephesians 2:12 further explains the disadvantage the nations had prior to Jesus Christ. *Remember* is in italics and is not actually in the text at this location, but the verb from verse 11 actually carries over the parenthetically to these clauses. This is why the main sentence is “You Gentiles, remember that you (were) separate from Christ.” The rest of the verse has four clauses that explain what that means.

*Excluded from the commonwealth of Israel* – This is very straightforward. The nations were separated from and excluded from the Chosen Nation, Israel. This is a natural result of Israel being the Chosen Nation. If those who were outside of Israel wanted to know God, they needed to go to Israel. They could not stay in their nation and come to the truth of the Creator; the nations did not have this revelation.

Genesis 11:1-9 – In Genesis 10, we see how the world expanded after the flood and how they all turned from God; they all went their own way. Genesis 11 is the account of the separation of the nations, being judged for the rebellion at Babel.

Is God obligated to continue His pursuit of mankind? No, but He does through the choosing of a man to be a new nation from out of the nations.

*Strangers to the covenants of promise* – An individual Gentile could know of these covenants if he went to Israel to find the truth, but the nations were not given the information nor were they promised anything.

*Having no hope* – Because of this exclusion, the nations have no future expectations.

*Without God in the world* – The nations have this life only, and the only certainty for them was destruction and judgment.

The terms covenant, promise, and hope all lead to the probability that the Messianic plan is what is understood in this context.

There are two things at play in this previous situation.

1. The Gentile nations are wicked and godless. Although they know about the God of Israel, they work in opposition to YHWH. They do not seek truth nor do the nations consider if YHWH is the true God.
2. Israel has failed and refused to be the light to the nations (Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 42:6, 49:6, 52:10, 60:3). Many of the prophets of the Old Testament have declarations to the surrounding nations. An individual could read the judgment of YHWH and flee to Israel to avoid the death that would come upon the nations.

The fact that Israel, nationally, has rejected her Messiah means that the Gentiles can now participate in the Administration. But when Israel, nationally, accepts her Messiah it will be life (Romans 11:11-16).

### **Conclusion**

Most people take the text in Ephesians 2:11-12 as referring to one's identification prior to believing in Christ. Personal identification before believing in Jesus is described in Ephesians 2:1-3. This section is about the national identity before the coming and proclamation of Christ.

It is true that to be part of this new administration, one must be a believer. But this alienation is not about the individual Gentile but is emphatically stating what the nations were.

Next lesson, we will begin to see how the Gentile and Israelite believers are no longer to have a distinction based upon nationality or based upon circumcision.

*In what way were the nations separated from Christ and Israel and without hope?* They were excluded from the revelation of the promises. Israel was supposed to be the light to the nations but failed and refused. Likewise, the nations did not believe and refused to consider the truth of YHWH.

Questions to be answered in this section

In what way were the nations separated from Christ and Israel and without hope?

What did the sacrifice of Jesus accomplish regarding unity between the nations and Israel?

What is the enmity in verses 15 and 16?

In our time frame, we typically do not have a question concerning Israel and the nations, so what is the theological impact upon the current church and our body in particular?