

V. Lesson 5 The New Society – Ephesians 2:11-22

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Stuart chapter 5

Aim: To understand how Jesus Christ has broken down the barriers of separation and created one new people for Himself.

In 2:1-10 Paul told his readers that once they were dead, but now they are alive. In verses 11-22 he tells them that once they were separated, but now they are united. The purpose of Christ's work for human salvation is not limited to the giving of new life to individual men and women, previously dead in sin, as the last section described. The present section now shows that it involves bringing of those individuals, whatever their race or background, into unity in the people of God.

Paul has already hinted at the Jew/Gentile problem, and now he turns to it here. If there is still a distinction between Jew and Gentile, it means the work of Christ is not yet completed. Why? The work of Jesus is for all of us to be in union with Jesus at the right hand of God. Now if there is still a distinction between those who are close and those who are not so close, then the work is not finished.

We see elsewhere in Paul's epistles, particularly in the book of Galatians, that one of the biggest issues in the first century Christian church was the question: What is the relationship between Jew and Gentile in the body of Christ? The first great ecclesiastical council of the Christian community was held in Jerusalem (Acts 15). Peter and Paul were involved and James, the brother of Jesus, was the presiding officer. The central issue at the council was the relationship between Jew and Gentile in the new covenant community. The basic spirit of the council of Jerusalem was to be as inclusive of the Gentile community as it could possibly be.

A. The Portrait of Alienated Humanity (Eph. 2:11-13)

- *Why does God constantly ask us to remember our alienation (2:11-12)?*

In the Old Testament the root concept of apostasy was the idea of forgetting. As long as God's redemption was clear and fresh in the experience of the people, they were zealous in their worship and obedience. But as the memory of God's blessing faded, then their zeal began to fade as well. It is this link between memory and the motivating power of gratitude that produces the fruit of righteousness. Paul is reminding these Gentile converts that they are not to take for granted what God has done in them.

1. Circumcision (2:11)

Just as the Greeks despised those who lived outside of their cities, calling them *ethnē* (pagans), so the Jews in their superficial and unspiritual way of thinking ('in the flesh'), instead of regarding the other nations as those with whom they should have shared their knowledge of God (*cp.* Gen. 12:3; Is. 42:1; 6; 49:6), simply spoke disparagingly of them as 'Gentiles' (*ethnē*).

The Jew during this period had immense contempt for Gentiles. He would call them not only 'uncircumcised,' but also dogs. He considered the Gentiles objects of God's wrath. A Jew was not allowed to help any of them, even in times of dire need. If a Jew had the audacity to marry from among the *goyim*, the community ostracized him or her and even held a funeral. Paul grew up with this hatred and contempt. But now he says that God's grace through Christ touches even

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the Gentiles, for in Christ there is no Jew or Gentile (Gal. 3:28). Whether a person is circumcised or not means absolutely nothing (Gal. 5:6).

Paul reminds his Gentile readers that they were excluded from the earlier community of God's people (Israel). The sign of entrance into the covenantal community was circumcision (Gen. 17:10-14). The Jews boasted that they were the circumcised of God, and, therefore, inheritors of the Abrahamic blessings. They even went to the extreme of contemptuously nicknaming the Gentiles (the religiously underprivileged) 'the Uncircumcision' (*akrobustia*) (2:11). Paul, however, does not use the term in a derogatory fashion. In fact, he calls the Jews the "so-called Circumcision" (*legomenēs peritomēs*). As a Jew, Paul attacks those who claim to be spiritually important because of some outward act. Circumcision is a manmade mark that holds no spiritual significance, for the real circumcision is of the heart (Ez. 36:26). Those who despise the Gentiles rather than minister to them have only a fleshly circumcision. It has no spiritual value for them; they are not circumcised in the heart, only outwardly in the flesh.

Paul did not disparage circumcision as an institution. It was to him the God-given sign of the covenant; but if the outward sign was not matched by an inward faith and an obedience of life to the covenant, it became worthless and just a work of the flesh (1 Cor. 7:19; Gal. 5:6; 6:15). The circumcision that mattered, whether or not there was any outward sign, was spiritual circumcision, a putting off of sin and an obedience to Christ (Rom. 2:25-29; Phil. 3:2-3; Col. 2:11).

2. At That Time (2:12)

Paul emphasizes the alienation of the Gentiles from God 'at that time.' Why does Paul want his readers to remember their alienation? A constant reminder of where we were apart from God's grace is necessary if we are to appreciate what He has done for us and to keep us from pridefully thinking we are something special. Remembering our past outside of Christ means remembering how wretched and ungodly we were. Paul describes the disadvantage of the Gentiles in five different ways.

a) *Separate from Christ*

The clue to what Paul is probably thinking of is the word 'Christ' (*Christos*) which means 'the anointed one' or 'Messiah.' The Messiah came to Jews and was perceived by Jews. Since the Gentiles were not Jews, they were cut off from this advantage (*cp.* Rom. 9:5). The Gentiles in their fallen and alienated state were not united to Jesus by saving faith. Of course that was also true of the Jews. But unlike the Jews, the Gentiles had not even had a chance to know Christ. Their religion was totally pagan. They did not even have the expectation of a Savior.

b) *Excluded from Citizenship*

They were 'alienated from the commonwealth of Israel.' They did not belong to, and found themselves cut off from, the fellowship and the privileges (such as Rom. 3:1-2 and 9:4-5 describe) of those who truly called themselves the people of God. God had chosen to be known in Israel as He had chosen to be known nowhere else. So in that day, although not now, an individual had to become a Jew, a member of the commonwealth of Israel, to be saved (*e.g.*, Ruth & Naaman).

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The word for ‘alienated’ (*apallotriōō*) is that used in 4:18 and Col. 1:21 for humanity’s separation from God by sin. The only other NT use of the word translated ‘commonwealth’ (*politeias*) is in Acts 22:28, where it refers to the much-coveted Roman citizenship.

c) Strangers to the Covenants of the Promise

Mention of citizenship in the previous phrase leads Paul to think of the Gentiles as being ‘strangers’ or ‘foreigners’ (*xenoi*). But he moves a step further now, saying, that they were foreigners to God’s covenants (*diathēkōn*). The Old Testament reports how God made repeated covenants with Israel. These covenants were filled with promises. Who were the promises for? They were for those with whom the covenant was made. God’s pledges were for Hebrew ears. Gentiles did not belong to the privileged people. Generally speaking, they did not even know that God had made such promises.

d) Without Hope

This being so, the Gentiles had no ‘hope’ (*elpis*). In fact they were not only without the hope that Israel had, but they were without any real hope at all, especially in this life and in the life to come. This was a very evident characteristic of the Gentile world of the time when Jesus came. People had no prospect for the future, no assurance of life beyond this. The Greeks, for example, looked back on a golden age in the past rather than to a future glory; or more philosophically they took a cyclic view of history. There was in consequence no concept of a goal to which all things were moving, and this lack of hope was seen most notably in their view of death.

On the other hand, the Jews had hope, for they were expecting the Messiah. Their hope was real, for the covenants overflowed with divine promises. But their hope was unshared. ‘No hope!’ What profoundly empty words! Is there any more eloquent way of describing our unconverted years? Without the God of Israel none of us can have any real hope that things will be good or get better. Apart from revelation, apart from the resurrection of Jesus Christ, no one can have any true hope of anything beyond this life.

e) Without God in the World

‘Without God’ (*atheoi*) does not mean that they refused to believe in God, or that they were forsaken by God, or godless in their conduct; but that they had no real knowledge of God. God is the source of every good thing (James 1:17), including hope. So if we are without God, we are without everything, despite appearances to the contrary.

Thus, when Paul refers to those who are ‘without God in the world (*kosmō*),’ he is describing a pagan society. That is what we are when we are outside of a covenant relationship with God. We tend to use the softer term ‘secular’ rather than the term ‘pagan,’ but what we have in America and the Western World is a post-Christian society.

3. But Now (2:13)

These phrases from verse 12 are as grim as those with which the apostle Paul began this great chapter. They so graphically describe our unconverted misery and are a clear account of the awfulness of being non-Christians. Countless numbers of people in today’s world are still like that. But now, just as he had done earlier, Paul indicates a change in the situation as a result of God’s intervention.

‘But now!’ Now, however, for these Gentiles, everything had become different, because from being ‘separated from Christ’ (v. 12), they had come to be ‘in Christ Jesus.’ Paul is talking about

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being brought near to God as a result of Christ's atonement for sin. Every true Christian can remember what he was, and can compare it with what he is now. The apostle is highlighting what he taught us in chapter 1. Every spiritual blessing is ours on the simple condition of being 'in Christ.' But he is also referring to God bringing together Jews and Gentiles to form a new unity: the church of Jesus Christ.

B. The Portrait of the Peace-Making Christ (Eph. 2:14-18)

- *What union is Paul talking about in 2:14?*

1. The Dividing Wall (2:14)

God is building a new humanity that includes reconciliation between the Jew and Gentile. Through Christ He makes both groups into one. The organization of Judaism and that of the Gentile world no longer stand apart as before. Divisions and distinctions no longer exist as far as the standing of any before God is concerned.

He has done this by having broken down the dividing wall, or 'middle wall of partition' (*mesotoichon ton phragmon*). Paul is thinking about the temple at Jerusalem. It was a structure that emphasized the difference between Jews and Gentiles. The wall of partition does not refer to the curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. Paul is referring to another barrier, the one that separated the Jew and the Gentile. The Gentiles were allowed into the outer courtyard of the temple, but no further. They could admire the Jews' privileges from outside, but could not enter into them.

The temple of Paul's day had been built by Herod the Great to replace the older, inadequate temple dating 500 years before. Much of it was overlaid with gold, and quite naturally it was the glory of the city. It sat on a raised platform on what is today still called the temple mount. The temple was surrounded by courts. The innermost court was called the Court of the Priests, because only male members of the priestly tribe of Levi were to enter it. The next court was the Court of Israel; it could be entered by any male Jew. After this was the Court of Women, which any Jew, either male or female, could enter.

These courtyards were all on the same level. So although there were great differences between them, they were not as great as the monumental division that came next. From the Court of the Women one descended five steps to a level area in which there was erected a five-foot stone barricade that went around the temple enclosure; then, after another level space, there were fourteen more steps that descended into the court of the Gentiles. The Gentiles could come into the Outer Court and not further, for there was a wall of partition that separated Gentiles from those who were full members in the covenant. According to Josephus, the Jewish historian, warning notices on it in Greek and Latin said: 'No one of another nation to enter within the fence and enclosure round the temple. And whoever is caught will have himself to blame that his death ensues.' Jews passed freely by, but Gentiles had to stop.

It is strangely significant that Paul was finally arrested and condemned by the Jews in Jerusalem on the basis of a false accusation that he took an Ephesian, Trophimus, beyond this barrier (Acts 21:28-30). Thus, the imprisonment from which Paul is writing this epistle ultimately was based on an accusation of breaching this wall of separation between Jew and Gentile in the temple!

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That wall no longer exists. This is what Paul is teaching. The division of the world into Jews and Gentiles has ended at the cross. All the privileges which were previously reserved for the Jews alone, are now available to the Gentiles, through Christ.

2. The Law of Commandments Contained in Ordinances (2:15a)

- Verse 15 says the union came about by Christ's abolishing the enmity, which is the law. How can this be when Christ Himself said that He did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it?

The 'enmity' (*echthran*) between Jews and Gentiles was architecturally symbolized by the wall in the temple separating the Gentile court from the Jewish court. However, that wall in the temple courtyard was symbolic of the real wall of separation, which was the law. The law with its detailed ordinances of ceremonies and regulations about the clean and the unclean had the effect of imposing a barrier and of causing enmity between Jews and Gentiles

The wall representing the enmity between Jew and Gentile was abolished by Christ's sacrificing His body on the cross. The hatred and separation between the two antagonists was also represented by the "law (*nomos*) of commandments (*entolōn*) contained in ordinances (*dogmasin*)." This Christ abrogated by His atoning act. Paul does not mean that Jesus Christ destroyed the law of God, but rather He performed in Himself all of the requirements that had to be fulfilled for us to be reconciled to God.

In 2:15, Paul is not talking specifically about the moral law. He refers to the ceremonial law which was the source of the hostility between Jew and Gentile. The Jew considered the Gentile to be unclean. The Gentile found the Jew arrogant. He saw him as someone who believed himself to be superior. The ceremonial law was the cause of hostility, tension, and bitterness, the great dividing factor between Jew and Gentile.

Circumcision was the main physical difference between the two groups. Other rules and regulations separating them concerned sacrifices, ritual cleanness, dietary regulations, and celebrations of Sabbaths and festivals. Paul in his companion letter to the Colossians also alludes to the same rules and regulations (Col. 2:11, 16-21).

Why did God give this law to His ancient people? It was a preparation for the coming of Christ. Everything in it was full of significance, speaking in some way or other of the Savior who was to come. But when Christ came, there was no longer any need for the ceremonial law. It was fulfilled and Christ. It no longer serves any purpose and must be discarded. By His death, our Lord Jesus Christ has destroyed the cause of hostility between Jew and Gentile. His sacrifice on the cross fulfilled all the types and shadows in the Old Testament that were represented by the ceremonial law.

3. One New Man (2:15b-16)

The Lord's coming meant making 'peace' (*eirēnē*) between Jew and Gentile by taking away the cause of division. The law could no longer be the way by which Jews, and Jews alone, could try to come to God. The way of approach is now by grace, by a new creative work of God, the same for both Jew and Gentile.

In Christ there is a new humanity; and it is a single entity. God now deals with Jews and Gentiles as such a single entity. Furthermore, Gentiles do not simply rise to the status of Jews, but both become something 'new' and greater. It is significant that the word for 'new' (*kainos*)

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means not simply new in point of time, but new in the sense that it brings into the world a new kind of thing, a new quality of thing, which did not exist before.

No barrier now divides Jews and Gentiles from each other. It is the Lord Jesus Christ who made peace between them. A new nation is to be found on earth, composed of believing Jews and Gentiles. The old way of dividing people into these two categories is now out of date and finished forever. But there is still a division of the human race into two. Some people are members of that new nation, and some are not.

‘Through the cross’ the purpose of Christ was to ‘reconcile’ (*katallassō*) people to God (*cp.* Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; Col. 1:20). When He was slain there ‘the hostility’ between humanity and God through sin was brought to an end, because He bore our sins and made possible our forgiveness. He thus reconciled ‘both’ Jew and Gentile ‘to God,’ but He also reconciled them (and the people of all the different divisions of mankind) to one another and brought them to be ‘in one body.’

Both Jew and Gentile are restored to fellowship with God in the same way – by the same cross, by the same broken body, by the same sacrifice. There are no ‘Hebrew Christians’ and there are no ‘Gentile Christians.’ There are just ‘Christians.’

4. Preached Peace (2:17)

- *When you think of peace (2:17), what do you mean. Compare your definition with the Aaronic benediction in Numbers 6:24-26. How did the Hebrews view peace?*

Christ’s atoning death culminated His ministry on earth, when He preached peace (2:17) to those who were far away (Gentiles) and to those who were near (Jews) (*cp.* Is. 57:19). Paul’s mission is to preach this message of reconciliation, which he does in chapter 3. The goal of salvation is to restore us to the Father, and this idea will become more and more important throughout the rest of Ephesians.

There are not two different ways of salvation, one for the Jews and the other for the Gentiles. The same Preacher came to both, and both have access to God in precisely the same manner. By proclaiming peace, Christ fulfilled Isaiah 52:6-7.

When he wrote the word ‘peace’ (*eirēnē*), Paul, a Hebrew, would have been thinking *shalom*, the Hebrew word for peace and a derivative of *shalam*, which means to be safe in mind, body, and estate. In other words, *shalom* means to be whole or complete and includes health, prosperity, peacefulness, and rightness with God.

Christ is our peace offering (Lev. 3:1-2), our *shalom* (John 16:33), and our wholeness. Without Christ, there is no peace, and therefore, no access in one Spirit to the Father (2:18). Paul is not talking about a marriage between Judaism and Christianity, he is talking about Christians. Some were of Jewish origin and others of Gentile origin. Those who embrace Jesus Christ, whether they be Jew or Greek, slave or free, are now reconciled into one family, into one body, by their common devotion to Christ. He is our peace and Redeemer.

The Lord has not restricted His message to either Jew or Gentile. He has preached, and He preaches, to those who are afar off; and He has preached, and continues to preach to those who are near. Gentiles who believe are not outside Israel and Jews who believe have not left Israel. Together they *are* Israel – the true Israel of God. Today, God’s true Israel is found both in earthly Israel and out of it. In fact, most true Israelites are not physical Jews. There is only one

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Israel. There has only ever been one. But membership of it is no longer restricted to those in the earthly nation. Believing Gentiles are no longer outside Israel; they are not strangers to the covenants; they are actually part and parcel of the people of God.

5. Access to God (2:18)

‘Access’ is probably the best translation of *prosagōgē*, though it could be ‘introduction.’ In oriental courts there was a *prosagōgeus* who brought a person into the presence of the king. He is the door, the way to the Father (Jn, 10:7, 9; 14:6); by Him men and women, though sinners, because they are reconciled can ‘with confidence draw near to the throne of grace’ (Heb. 4:16). But it is added that the ‘access’ is for ‘both’ Jew and Gentile ‘in one Spirit’ (*cp.* 1 Cor. 12:13). There is one way for all.

C. The Portrait of God’s New Society (2:19-22)

- *In 2:20, does ‘foundation’ mean that laid by the prophets and apostles, or does it mean the prophets and apostles themselves? (See 1 Cor. 3:11, Eph. 3:5).*

The unity of all Christians ‘in one Spirit’ will find emphasis and development in chapter 4, but now the apostle turns back specifically to the Gentiles to speak further of the change in their status and position.

1. God’s Kingdom (2:19)

Paul describes this unity using an analogy of citizenship. The result of breaking down this wall of separation and abolishing the enmity of the law is that the Gentiles are no longer aliens, but fellow citizens with the saints, that is the Christian Jews. In the ancient world, two sorts of people lived within a city’s walls. There were those who came from elsewhere but had no right of residence, and no say in the city’s affairs. They were tolerated, because of the businesses they ran. These are the ‘strangers and sojourners’ (*xenoi* and *paroikoi*) of verse 19. Then, of course, there were the ‘citizens’ who belonged there by right. Thus, the Gentiles are now ‘fellow-citizens’ (*sumpolitai*) with the Jews.

2. God’s Family (2:19)

Paul uses another analogy of a family to describe the change in status of the Gentiles. Under the same roof are sometimes found family members, but also others who are outside the family circle. These others live there, but they do not belong by right, nor do they enjoy the closeness of bond which the family members have with each other. Gentile believers are now as much members of the family as anyone else. They are all members of the same household or family (*oikeioi*) – there is only one household. Galatians 6:10 uses this same word, speaking of ‘the household of faith.’

Wonderful as the relationship of a citizen to a strong, beneficent state may be, it is still a distant, or formal relationship. Family ties are more intimate, the bonds tighter. To become a member of a family, you must be born into it or adopted into it. Interestingly, the Bible uses both terms to describe what it means to be a Christian (*cp.* Jn. 3:7; 1 Pe. 1:23; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5).

3. God’s Temple (2:20-22)

Paul adds a third image, that of a building (2:20), and, more particularly, a temple (2:21).

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a) The Foundation (2:20a)

In 1 Corinthians 3:11, Paul says that Jesus Christ himself is the foundation of the building. Here he says that the apostles (*apostolos*) and prophets (*prophētēs*) are the ‘foundation’ (*themelios*). Is there a contradiction? We should regard this simply as a slightly different handling of the same metaphor (*cp.* Rev. 21:14 for a use that is different again but not contradictory). In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul pictured himself and others as builders; here the picture is of believers as stones in the building. There is no inherent contradiction.

Some commentators believe Paul to be saying that the New Testament church is established on the foundation of the New Testament apostles and the New Testament prophets like Agabus and the rest. But Scripture as a whole would not support such a view (*cp.* Rev. 21:12-14). It is clear that what Paul is saying here is that the foundation of this new edifice is the prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New Testament. The apostles of the New Testament correspond in their vocation to the prophets of the Old Testament. The prophets of the Old Testament and the apostles of the New Testament were both divinely chosen, divinely called, divinely commissioned, divinely gifted, and divinely inspired agents of revelation. They were the spokesmen for God.

Other commentators believe that the prophets of the Christian church and not of the Old Testament are intended here. In context ‘prophets’ refers to that special class of individuals who received and proclaimed direct messages from God and worked alongside the apostles in the early days. This meaning is clear from the order of the phrase ‘apostles and prophets,’ and by the way that both words come under the same definite article in the Greek. Later references in Ephesians (3:5, 4:11) also support this view.

The foundation Paul speaks about in verse 20 is not the apostles or prophets themselves. It is not the office of apostle or prophet that constitutes the basis of our faith. Rather, the basis of faith is Christ Jesus. The apostles and prophets were to teach that faith and to propagate the gospel. Their instruction, not their personages, constitutes the foundation of the church.

Thus, it is right to say that the apostles and prophets are the foundation in the sense that for us they are their teaching, which is focused on Christ. The point is that the basis of the church’s unity is truth or sound doctrine. The only unity worth having—the only true unity—is the unity built on the revealed truth of God centering in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

b) The Cornerstone (2:20b)

But why isn’t Jesus called the foundation here? In case we think that the apostles and prophets are given a place of preeminence above Jesus, we need to read this text carefully, especially where it says Jesus is the ‘chief cornerstone’ (*akrogōniaios*). The significance of Christ described as a cornerstone – the position of honor – removes any possible thought of the Lord Himself as the foundation being replaced by the apostles.

What is purpose of the cornerstone? It determines at least three things. First, it sets the direction of the building; it determines the orientation of the rest of the building. Second, it determines the location of the building. Third, it determines the size of the building. The cornerstone is one of the square blocks of the foundation – a big building needs a big cornerstone. Jesus is the cornerstone.

The cornerstone was the brick by which the builder lined up the whole building. Often it was the first brick to be laid. It was the keystone for the whole building – pull this brick out and

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everything falls. So the foundation was laid in and upon the chief cornerstone. The full metaphor is that the foundation of the prophets and the apostles is the base that rests ultimately upon the chief cornerstone, the keystone of the whole structure, who is Christ. Therefore, the authority of both prophet and apostle is derived from the chief keystone of the church, Christ.

Paul shows the importance of a cornerstone. It is part of and essential to the entire foundation. It holds the building together. It supports the weight of the structure and serves as the measure for architectural exactness. The building (church) as a living organism continuing to grow (2:21) will cave in if it does not loyally stand on the foundational truths revealed through the apostles and prophets.

Paul's language of cornerstone shows the fulfillment of prophecy in Christ. Christ was the choice stone laid in Zion (Is. 28:16). Anyone who believes in Him as the precious cornerstone of faith will not be disappointed (1 Pe. 2:6). Christ, however, was the stone the builders (Jews) did reject (Ps. 118:22), but that stone became the very cornerstone of the faith. As the stone rejected, Christ became a stumbling block (Is. 8:14) and a rock of offense for those who are disobedient to the Word (1 Pe. 2:8) and to the instructions of the apostles and prophets.

c) *Living Stones (2:21-22)*

Paul does not mention 'living stones' specifically in our text, but that is what he is thinking about. Believers are mortared together with Christ, as God the architect through His workmen, the preachers of the gospel, build His church (*cp.* 1 Pe. 2:5).

The main point of the metaphor is made explicit when it is said now that in Christ all that is built into the edifice is 'joined together.' All find their true place and function in relation to Christ and as they are built in Him. The 'whole building' (*oikodomē*) has a wide range of meaning. It is used sometimes for individual buildings (*e.g.*, in Mark 13:1-2), but very often in the NT for the whole work of building, and hence, in the spiritual sense of 'building' and 'edification' (as in 4:12, 16, 29). It is the whole operation of building that is in view here.

The work is developing; the church cannot be described as a complete edifice until the final day of the Lord comes. It is growing towards what it is intended to be in the purpose of God – 'into a holy temple.' Paul does not use the general word (*hieron*) that describes the whole of the temple precincts, but that used for the inner shrine (*naos*). The temple in Old Testament days, and especially considered as *naos*, was above all else the special meeting-place between God and His people. It was the place on which the glory of God descended, the place of His presence. That temple is no longer among us, but now God seeks as His 'dwelling place' the lives of men and women.

All believers, whether their origin be Jewish or Gentile, build on the same foundation. Each believer is a brick, and new bricks are being added all the time. No Gentile believer has to stand outside and fondly long to be admitted to the temple. Together with other believers, whether they be Jew or Gentile, he or she *is* the temple! The only temple in which God is interested is that spiritual one which is composed of all believers together. The true Israel and the true temple are one and the same thing.

No longer does God dwell in a building. Rather, He dwells with His people who become the temple of His Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16). This breaks down the final barrier between Jew and Gentile. The Gentile who had no access to the Jewish temple now becomes a temple himself through belief in Jesus Christ. The old temple was God's 'dwelling-place' (*katoikētērion*) on

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earth. The new temple is His dwelling-place on earth. It is not in a physical structure anywhere, but in His spiritual temple, that the glory of God is seen in the world.

Here are several applications to this truth. First, the stones placed into this great structure are chosen and shaped for their position by God. It is His temple; He is the architect; it is not for us to determine where we will fit in or how. Second, the stones are placed into position in relationship to Jesus Christ. They are attached to Him; if they are not, they are not part of this building. Third, the stones are of different shapes and sizes, perhaps even of different material, and they are employed for different functions. Some serve in one way, some in another. Fourth, the stones are linked to one another. From where they are placed they cannot always see this; they cannot always even see the other stones. But they are part of one interlocking whole regardless. Fifth, the stones of the temple are chosen, shaped, and placed, not to draw attention to themselves, but to contribute to a great building in which God alone dwells. Sixth, the placing of each stone is only part of a long work begun thousands of years in the past that will continue until the end of the age when the Lord returns.

D. Application Questions

- *God teaches us to be unified as a body of believers. In what practical ways can I foster this unity this week?*
- *God has formed a new humanity in Christ Jesus. I realize that I am a new creature in Christ, but I still need to improve many areas of my life to become more Christ-like. What areas of my life can I work on this week to show people around me that I am more Christ-like?*

For next time: Read Ephesians 3:1-13 and Stuart chapter 6.