



WORD FOR LIFE CHURCH MINISTRIES

IN CHRIST: BELIEVING AND LIVING BECAUSE OF JESUS
a study of Ephesians

Spring 2024

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Ephesians 2:11-22

In Christ: Believing and Living Because of Jesus

The first ten verses advance an understanding of regeneration and explain its implications for believers. Based on the regeneration afforded to believers, the last half of Ephesians 2 gives attention to the unity that exists in Christ for Gentiles and Jews. Such unity is the anticipated outcome for people who believe in Jesus (spiritual) and implies new social and political realities.

Chapter/Section Theme: New Life in Christ.

Evidence of believers' regeneration is _____ within the family of God.

Reflection Questions: What actions, beliefs, and/or traditions made you feel unwanted or unwelcome in a faith community? How does the Gospel compel believers toward unity? How are you the voice of unity who helps people to be received in a family, job, church, or social circle?

Key Terms

- *Uncircumcision v. Circumcision* (v. 11): literally, the presence of foreskin vs. “cut around” or the absence of foreskin. As a Jewish rite/ritual, circumcision was the visible sign of acceptance of God’s covenant promise to Abraham (*Gen 17:9-14*). Uncircumcised refers to men whose foreskin had not been cut; a sign that one was not Jewish but a Gentile. Circumcision implied that one was Jewish and therefore included in God’s covenant. Conversely, uncircumcision implied that one was a Gentile and, therefore, outside of God’s covenant with Israel.
- *Aliens* (v. 12, 19): estranged from, to be shut out from fellowship and intimacy, a non-participant; refers to one’s separation from God (*Is 1:4; Ez 14:4-5, 7; Eph 4:18-19*). The idea is that one has acted in some way that creates separation. The term can be used interchangeably with *stranger*, but context is needed to understand accurate meaning. An example is in the hymn *Come Thou Fount*: “Jesus sought me when a stranger wand’ring from the fold of God. He, to rescue me from danger, interposed His precious blood.”
- *Strangers* (v. 12, 19): foreign(-er), a guest. The term refers to nationality, which makes its use different than that of *aliens* and the reference to their relationship with God. [NOTE: This is the same word (*xenoi*) from which the English word *xenophobia* is derived when referring to the fear of people whose nationality differs from one’s own.]
- *Hope* (v. 12): expectation, trust, confidence. Paul says that those who were alienated and were strangers had no hope. Thus, hope is viewed as an outcome of one’s standing with God as it pertains to the covenants God initiated (*Gen 15:12-21; 17:1-8; 26:1-5; 35:11-12*).
- *Peace* (v. 14, 17): a state of wellness. In the Jewish context, peace equated to welfare/health. To say, “He is our peace,” means Jesus makes us well by joining together



those who were disturbed or disjointed. Thus, Jesus holds us together with God.

- *Commandments* and *ordinances* (v. 15): an injunction or law/ordinance. Commandments include prescriptions (dogma) concerning the nature of the command and how it is to be carried out. From the word ordinance we get the word *dogma*, meaning a decree or edict.
- *Reconcile* (v. 16): Change from one state of feeling to another. Jesus initiates the action of reconciliation which the definition implies is a complete/full action. The work of reconciliation is necessary because of the existence of *hostility*.
- *Fellow Citizens* (v. 19): literally means, a native of the same town. Verse 19 positions fellow citizens as the opposite of strangers and aliens, a status that comes about because of what makes the designation possible (see 2:14-18).
- *Cornerstone* (v. 20): stone that forms the base of a corner of a building joining two walls together. A structure depends on the cornerstone for its ability to be sustained. (Isaiah 28:16; 1 Peter 2:6-10). Christ, the cornerstone of covenantal faith, joins together disparate groups of people into the family of God—i.e., both Jewish and Gentile believers. The cornerstone benefits the building it supports but causes people outside to stumble.

Chapter Outline

Bible study note: As we saw with Ephesians 2:1-10, verses 11-22 should also be read and understood as a singular (though long) paragraph that addresses one central point, which is the expectation of unity among believers as a reflection of their belonging in God's family.

I. Ephesians 2:11-12 – At one time...

The core of Paul's argument is that God, through Jesus, has brought together two disparate groups into one. Where once barriers existed to separate Jews and Gentiles, Jesus embodies a change from what once was.

A. Gentiles by birth (11): _____

B. Strangers without Christ (12): _____

NOTES: _____

II. Ephesians 2:13-18 – But now...



Because of the revelation of Jesus Christ, regeneration is possible, and regeneration brings with it certain new realities for believers: peace, union, and access.

- A. Those who were far off are brought _____. Peace between Gentiles and Jews is possible through Jesus' shed blood and broken body.
- B. Those who were “_____” are “_____” (see, *peace* defined above). Peace between both groups and God is possible because of Calvary (*Col 1:21-23*).
- C. Those who were _____ are brought in.
 - 1. Read Matthew 26:59-62. What is the accusation against Jesus?
_____.
 - 2. The metaphor of temple worship is used to mark the limits for Gentiles who might enter the temple in Jerusalem. To advance beyond a certain outer part of the temple meant death for the offender. Verse 14 details how this separation was eliminated.
- D. Those who were apart are brought together.
 - 1. The same _____ brings peace to all.
 - 2. The same _____ is available to all.

Bible study note. Aliens and strangers (v. 12) □ Strangers and aliens (v. 19). This a rhetorical device that signals the completion of a thought, or unit of text. This is one way to understand the various arguments or points an author makes. To locate them, locate the beginning (v. 12) and the end (v. 19), and understand what is said in between.

NOTES: _____

III. Ephesians 2:19-22 – So what...

The radical and revolutionary nature of regeneration for Gentiles has been discussed, but this final section further highlights the glory and challenge of this wonderful change.

- A. New life in Christ provides a new place of _____. Believers obtain a “new home” wherein spiritual identification surpasses natural identification.
- B. New life in Christ provides a solid, stable _____. Believers obtain a new sense of belonging and are maintained within a finished system of faith.
- C. New life in Christ provides a new Divine _____. The community of believers forms a point of identification where God can be seen – *1 Cor 3:16-17; 6:19-20; 1 Peter 2:4-5*.



NOTES: _____
