

AN EXEGETICAL STUDY OF EPHESIANS 2:11-22

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*Outline of the book of Ephesians*

Introduction, 1:1-2

I. Doctrinal, 1:3-3:21

- a. The work of the Triune God in Redemption, 1:4-14
- b. Paul's Prayer, 1:15-23
- c. Jew and Gentile joined together in Christ, 2:1-22
  - i. Both Jew and Gentile spiritually dead by nature, 2:1-10
  - ii. Distant Gentiles brought near to the covenant Jews through the death of Christ, 2:11-22
- d. Paul's Prayer 3:1-21 (Introduced by *Τούτου χάριν*)
  - i. Digression, 3:2-13
    - “The administration of the grace of God”
  - ii. Resumption of Prayer, 3:14-21 (Note the repetition of *Τούτου χάριν*)

II. Hortatory, 4:1-6:20 (Note the transitional marker *οὖν*)

- a. Unity and Growth of the Body, 4:1-16
- b. Put off the old man & put on the new man, 4:17-6:9 (Note the introduction of a new topic by *Τοῦτο οὖν λέγω καὶ μαρτύρομαι ἐν κυρίῳ*)
- c. The Struggle Against Spiritual Wickedness, 6:10-20 (Note the transitional *Τοῦ λοιποῦ*)

Conclusion, 6:21-24

*Structural Diagram of Ephesians 2:11-22*

1	<sup>11</sup> Διὸ μνημονεύετε	
2	ὅτι ποτὲ ὑμεῖς ... <sup>12</sup> ὅτι ἦτε τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ χωρὶς Χριστοῦ,	[ID → 1]
3	τὰ ἔθνη ἐν σαρκί,	<app → 2>
4	οἱ λεγόμενοι ἀκροβυστία ὑπὸ τῆς λεγομένης περιτομῆς	<app → 2>
5	ἐν σαρκί	<spra → 4, περιτομ.>
6	χειροποιήτου,	<dsc → 4, περιτομ.>
7	ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ	<app → 2>
8	καὶ ξένοι τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας,	<app → 2>
9	ἐλπίδα μὴ ἔχοντες	<app → 2>
10	καὶ ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ.	<app → 2>
11	<sup>13</sup> νυνὶ δὲ <sup>α</sup> ... ὑμεῖς <sup>β</sup> ... ἐγενήθητε ἐγγυὸς <sup>γ</sup> ...	<adv → 1>
12	<sup>α</sup> ... ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ	<sph → 11>
13	<sup>γ</sup> ... ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ.	<mns → 11>
14	<sup>β</sup> ... οἱ ποτε ὄντες μακρὰν	<app → 11>
15	<sup>14</sup> Αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ εἰρήνη ἡμῶν,	[cau → 11]
16	ὃ ποιήσας τὰ ἀμφότερα ἐν	<app → 15>
17	καὶ τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ λύσας, ... ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ,	<app → 15>
18	... τὴν ἔχθραν	<app → 17>
19	<sup>15</sup> τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν καταργήσας,	[mns → 17]
20	ἵνα τοὺς δύο κτίσῃ ἐν αὐτῷ εἰς ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον	[pur <sub>1</sub> → 15]
21	ποιῶν εἰρήνην	[res → 20]
22	<sup>16</sup> καὶ ἀποκαταλλάξῃ τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους	[pur <sub>2</sub> → 15]
23	ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι	[sph <sup>1</sup> → 22]
24	τῷ θεῷ	[goal → 22]
25	διὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ,	[mns → 22]
26	ἀποκτείνας τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν αὐτῷ.	[cau → 15]
27	<sup>17</sup> καὶ ... εὐηγγελίσαστο εἰρήνην ὑμῖν τοῖς μακρὰν	[con → 15]
28	... ἐλθῶν	[TC <sup>2</sup> → 27]

<sup>1</sup> This phrase expresses sphere only if σῶμα is referring to the church, the “body” of Christ; however, if σῶμα refers to Christ’s physical body, then it would express means, and this would be a reference to His crucifixion.

29	καὶ [sc. εὐηγγελίσατο] εἰρήνην τοῖς ἐγγύς·	[con → 27]
30	<sup>18</sup> ὅτι ... ἔχομεν τὴν προσαγωγὴν οἱ ἀμφοτέροι	[cau → 29]
31	... δι' αὐτοῦ	<agn → 30>
32	ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι	<agn → 30>
33	πρὸς τὸν πατέρα.	<goal → 30>
34	<sup>19</sup> ἄρα οὖν οὐκέτι ἐστὲ ξένοι καὶ πάροικοι	[inf → 1-33]
35	ἀλλὰ ἐστὲ συμπολίται τῶν ἁγίων καὶ οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ,	[adv → 34]
36	<sup>20</sup> ἐποικοδομηθέντες ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ	[cau/mns? → 35]
37	τῶν ἀποστόλων	[SubG → 36]
38	καὶ προφητῶν,	[SubG → 36]
39	ὄντος ἀκρογωνιαίου αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ,	[AC → 36]
40	<sup>21</sup> ἐν ᾧ πᾶσα οἰκοδομὴ ... αὕξει	[RC → 39, I.Xp.]
41	εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον	<goal → 40>
42	... συναρμολογουμένη	[man/mns → 40]
43	ἐν κυρίῳ,	<sph → 40>
44	<sup>22</sup> ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς συνοικοδομεῖσθε	[RC → 39, I.Xp.]
45	εἰς κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ	<goal → 44>
46	ἐν πνεύματι.	<mns → 44>

Explanation of tags from preceding diagram:

AC	Attendant Circumstance
adv	Adversative
agn	Agency
app	Apposition
cau	Causal
con	Connective
dsc	Description
goal	Goal
ID	Indirect Discourse

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<sup>2</sup> Since both the participle and the main verb are in the aorist, the participle can express contemporaneous time. The “coming” here is probably a reference to the coming of Christ in the Holy Spirit on Pentecost to preach the gospel through the apostles.

inf	Inferential
man	Manner
mns	Means
pur	Purpose
RC	Relative Clause
res	Result
spa	Spatial
sph	Sphere
SubG	Subjective Genitive
TC	Time Contemporaneous

*Outline of Ephesians 2:11-22*

The passage divides into 3 sections, the main divisions occurring at verses 13 and 19. The first main division, at verse 13, separates the passage into past and present. Verse 11 opens with διὸ μνημονεύετε (“therefore remember”), which looks to the past. The shift to the present occurs in verse 13 with the words νυνὶ δέ (“but now”) which brings us into the present. The final section is a conclusion based on the preceding two sections and is introduced by the inferential phrase ἄρα οὖν “therefore.” Thus a first level outline of the passage would be as follows:

- I. Past, 11-12
- II. Present, 13-18
- III. Conclusion, 19-22

The first section (Past) asserts via an indirect discourse clause, “you were without Christ.” The subject, “you” refers to the recipients of the letter, and has in view the majority Gentile makeup of the church(es). The identity of these Gentiles is further delineated by a series of appositional phrases; they were: “Gentiles in flesh,” “called ‘uncircumcision,’” “alienated from citizenship in Israel,” “strangers from the covenants of promise,” “those who have no hope,” and “godless ones in the world.” Thus, the first main division may be expanded as follows:

- I. Past condition of the Gentiles, 11-12
  - a. Lacking the physical sign of membership in God’s covenant nation
  - b. Despised by the covenant people
  - c. Lacking legal status in God’s covenant nation
  - d. Having no relationship to God’s covenant promises
  - e. Hopeless
  - f. Godless

The second section (present) includes both second person plural references and first person plural references (v. 14 “our peace,” v.18 “we have”). The second person references continue viewing the majority Gentile makeup of the church(es); whereas, the first person references bring in the minority Jewish makeup, and includes even the author of the letter. What begins as a first person plural reference then continues as third person plural using ἀμφότεροι “both,” or οἱ δύο “the two.” Thus we see verse 13 describing the “bringing near” of the Gentiles, and verses 14-18 describing the joint participation of both Gentile and Jew in the Body of Christ:

- II. Present: Both Jew and Gentile Participate Equally in the Body of Christ, 13-18
  - a. Bringing the Gentiles Near, 13
  - b. Joint Participation of Both Jews and Gentiles, 14-18

The conclusion returns to the second person plural and drops the references to ἀμφότεροι and δύο; thus, the application is primarily to the majority Gentile population of the church(es). However, the interesting compounds, συναρμολογέω (v. 21) and συνοικοδομέω (v. 22) bring in references to the Jews as participating with the Gentiles in this application. This concluding section brings in the two metaphors of citizenship in a commonwealth, and of a building and a temple. This last metaphor sees both Jewish and Gentile believers as the building blocks, the apostles and prophets as the foundation, and Christ as the Cornerstone of the building.

- III. Conclusion: Gentiles are included with Jews as the people of God, 19-22
  - a. Pictured as Citizenship in a Commonwealth, 19

- b. Pictured as a Building and Temple, 20-22
  - i. The Foundation, 20a
  - ii. The Cornerstone, 20b
  - iii. The Building Stones, 21-22

*How the grammatical structure affects the interpretation of the passage*

The structure of the passage indicates that it is addressed primarily to Gentile believers in Christ. This suggests the likelihood of a latent anti-Semitism among these Gentile believers that Paul was attempting to correct. These Gentile believers were to understand that, the Jews, though they had not received Jesus as their Messiah, were still accounted as the covenant people of God, and thus closer to God than the unbelieving Gentile. As for those Jews who *have* believed in Jesus, believing Gentiles should consider themselves to be privileged to be related to them on an equal status, now that they are all “in Christ.”

1. The opening clause of verse 11 is inferential in force, as indicated by the conjunction *διό*. The following content of this inferential clause makes a logical conclusion to verses 1-10. Their status of being spiritually dead has certain conclusions regarding their relationship to God. This relationship is spelled out in verses 11-12, especially as it pertains to God’s covenant promises made to Israel.
2. The *ὅτι* of verse 11 introduces the indirect discourse clause, spelling out the content of the preceding verb *μνημονεύετε*. This content, then, is spelled out in the predicate adjective phrase *χωρὶς Χριστοῦ* and its 6 appositional phrases. This results in a 7-fold description of the Gentile Ephesians’ pre-conversion condition:
  - a. Without a Messiah
  - b. Gentiles in flesh, i.e., having no outward sign of a relationship to God according to the Mosaic covenant
  - c. Described as “uncircumcision” by the Jews; i.e., given a derogatory title by God’s covenant people
  - d. Alienated from citizenship in Israel; i.e., having no legal claim to God’s covenant promises with national Israel, viz., the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Land, David and New covenants
  - e. Being strangers from the covenants *of promise*; i.e., having no relationship to either the Abrahamic, Land, Davidic, or New covenants. These covenants are based on God’s promise alone, with no conditions laid on Israel; thus probably the Mosaic Covenant is not referred to in this statement.
  - f. Having no hope; i.e., no positive certainty about their future.
  - g. Godless in the world. This last phrase would have been something of a surprise to almost any Gentile in the first century Mediterranean world, for almost all were very religious, and most had many “gods” that they worshipped.
3. The first clause of verse 13 is an adversative clause, indicated by the conjunction *δέ*, and making a contrast with the indirect discourse clause of verse 11. In contrast to the seven-fold description in verses 11-12, they were now described as, “become near.”
4. Two prepositional phrases explain in what sense the believing Gentile Ephesians were now to be considered “become near”:

- a. ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ expresses the *sphere* in which this is true.  
 b. ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ expresses the means/instrument by which this is true.
5. The participial phrase οἱ ποτε ὄντες μακράν is both appositional to the subject of ἐγενήθητε and also concessive to the verb itself. In other words, *in spite of the fact* that they had been μακράν, they were now ἐγγύς.
  6. The γάρ clause of verse 14 is causal to verse 13. The reason these believing Gentiles have now become near to the covenant people of God is through the peacemaking work of Christ. The fact that this explains verse 13 makes it clear, that the “peace” referred to here, is not so much peace between God and man, but peace between Jew and Gentile. This also explains why Paul here switches from the 2 pers. pl. to the 1 pers. pl.; whereas before, he was describing the condition of unsaved Gentiles, he now is discussing the close relationship of Gentiles and Jews, Paul himself being a Jew.
  7. “our peace” in verse 14 is described through two appositional phrases
    - a. “who made both one”
    - b. “who destroyed the middle dividing wall”
  8. The ἵνα clause of verse 15 is compound. Its two subjunctive verbs provide a twofold purpose of Christ’s being our peace.
    - a. Purpose #1: To create in Himself one new man
    - b. Purpose #2: To reconcile both [Jew and Gentile]
  9. The reconciling of both Jew and Gentile in verse 16 is modified by a succession of 3 prepositional phrases:
    - a. “in one body” probably expresses the sphere in which the reconciliation takes place, with “body” likely referring to the body of Christ, the church.
    - b. “to God” expresses the goal of the reconciliation. Both Jew and Gentile are reconciled to each other, only because they are separately reconciled to God.
    - c. “through the cross” expresses the means by which the reconciliation takes place.
  10. The final section of this paragraph is introduced in verse 19 by the inferential expression ἄρα οὖν, a slightly different inferential expression than the one introducing the entire paragraph in verse 11 (διό). Perhaps the difference can be explained in that ἄρα οὖν is used internally to the pericope; whereas, διό introduces the entire pericope.
  11. The second clause of verse 19 is adversative, expressing a strong contrast (ἀλλά) to the first clause of the verse.
  12. The statement of verse 19b that the believing Gentile Ephesians were now “fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God” is explained by means of two parallel participial phrases expressing either the cause or means of 19b. The two participial phrases describe: (1) the foundation (= the apostles and prophets), and (2) the cornerstone (= Christ). What is left to be implied is the metaphorical position of the believing Jews and Gentiles (other than the apostles and prophets, that is). To fill out what is left of the building metaphor, the figure implies that the believing Jews and Gentiles constitute the building stones of this structure, since they are “fitted together” (συναρμολογουμένη, v.21). One is reminded of 1 Peter 2:5.

### *Biblical Context Summary*

#### 1. Theme of the book

Leading concepts occurring repeatedly throughout the Book of Ephesians include: peace 7x; love 19x; unity (of Jew and Gentile in Christ, ch. 2-3; of the body of Christ, ch. 4). These suggest that the theme is: The unity and peace of the Body of Christ expressed through a life of love.

#### 2. Immediate context surrounding the passage

The immediately preceding context (2:1-10) describes the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. This salvation brings the believing sinner out of death and into life as he is raised with Christ and seated with Christ in the heavenlies.

The paragraph following our passage begins with a prayer (3:1); however, this prayer is suspended while Paul digresses to discuss the administration of the grace of God among the Gentiles that God has entrusted to Paul (3:2-13). This administration of grace among the Gentiles was not a subject of Old Testament revelation (3:5,9), which may explain why some Jews had such a difficult time understanding how so many Gentiles could now be coming to faith in the Jewish Messiah, while relatively few Jews were doing so. Paul's ministry made Gentiles "fellow-heirs and of the same body and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus." Thus, this digression is a sort of addendum to, or continuation of, Eph 2:11-22.

With 3:14, Paul resumes the prayer begun in verse 1. This prayer asks that God might grant the Ephesian believers (1) that they be strengthened in their inner man; (2) that Christ might dwell in their hearts; (3) that they might be able to comprehend the immense love of Christ; and (4) that they might be filled with all the fullness of God. The realization of this prayer in both the Jewish and Gentile members of the church would go a long way toward promoting love and unity between these two groups.

#### 3. Contribution of the passage to the overall theme of the book

Though the church in Ephesus began with Jewish believers (former disciples of John, Acts 19:1-7; later, those converted from the synagogue, Acts 19:8-10), the lengthiest recorded ministry of Paul took place as he taught for two years from the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9) in a very Gentile setting. This mixed Jewish/Gentile makeup of the church likely set the stage for divisions within the church, as old prejudices between Jew and Gentile carried over into the social life of the congregation. Thus, as Paul exhorts these two groups to strive to maintain the unity that God had already established positionally, he, in 2:11-22, lays out the doctrinal foundation for this unity.

*Theological Context Summary*

1. Under the Law Dispensation, Gentiles were without a covenant relationship with God, 2:11-12.
2. Contextual Connection: The favored status that the Mosaic Law gave to the Jews under the previous dispensation resulted in their forming an unfavorable opinion of Gentiles. This is likely part of the reason for a rift between Jewish believers and Gentile believers in the church at Ephesus. Such prejudice on the part of the Jews is unwarranted, and Paul alludes to this in 2:3 when he points out that the Jews were just as guilty before God as were the Gentiles.
3. In Christ, Gentiles who were previously without a covenant relationship, have now come “near” (ἐγγύς). The text does not say they have been brought into Israel’s covenants, nor that they even *have* a covenant with God, only that they have now come near.
4. Contextual Connection: Now that the Gentiles have come near, Jews can claim no superiority over them in their relationship to God. In the present dispensation, relationship to God is not based on covenant, but on faith in Jesus, equally for both Jew and Gentile. The principle that now binds the people of God together is the union “in Christ.” Joined to one another in Christ, both Jew and Gentile reflect this unity through Christ’s great law of love, 4:2-6.
5. In Christ, Jews and Gentiles are made one. This is not Israel becoming the church, nor is it the church becoming Israel; this oneness is described as a “new man” (καὶνὸς ἄνθρωπος, v.15); it is also the “one body [sc. of Christ]” (εἷς σῶμα, v.16).
6. Contextual Connection: Here the contextual connection is practically identical with the previous one. The “new man” and the “one body” are ways of expressing the principle of union between believing Jew and believing Gentile, and provides the doctrinal basis for their giving diligence to preserve this unity (4:2-6).
7. The church comes into existence through the redemptive work of the cross (διὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ, v.16).
8. Contextual Connection: This goes back to the redemptive plan as expressed in chapter one. It also marks the event which brought an end to the Mosaic Law. It was the Mosaic Law, principally, that prompted within the Jews the kind of prejudice that resulted in the very enmity that this epistle is attempting to correct.
9. The Mosaic Law has served its purpose; it came to an end at the cross (vv. 14-16).
10. Contextual Connection: As with the previous points, the Mosaic Law not only could not save, it promoted within the Jews an unspiritual attitude of superiority. By stating that the Law has come to an end
11. In the present dispensation, there is no need for human priests, since we have access to the Father through the Spirit (v.18).
12. Contextual Connection: The temple, as a part of the Mosaic institution, likewise was used to promote Jewish superiority over the Gentiles. This is seen quite clearly in the wall that separated the Court of the Gentiles from the inner courts of the temple complex. The Gentiles simply did not have access to God’s presence. Of course, the common Jew, who

might draw nearer than the Gentiles, still did not have direct access to God. Only the High Priest on *Yom Kippur* was permitted into God's direct presence, but still he *could* go into the Holy of Holies once a year and represent the covenant people. So this matter of access to God likely represented a focal point of Jewish prejudice against Gentiles. Now, in the current dispensation, not only has the Mosaic Law been done away, it has been replaced with a new way of access to God, whereby both Jews and Gentiles have direct access, any time, anywhere, through Christ. This, likewise, provides a significant part of the theological foundation for the message of unity in the Book of Ephesians.

13. The Church is based on Christ as the cornerstone, and the apostles and [NT] prophets as the foundation (v. 20).
14. Contextual Connection: In first century building technology, the cornerstone was no mere piece of decoration. It was a large stone skillfully cut to be perfectly square and plumb. It was carefully set as the first stone on the foundation, so that the entire rest of the building could use it as its frame of reference for what was truly square and plumb. As such, the cornerstone provided the direction and purpose for the entire building. In the Book of Ephesians, a significant part of the argument for unity lies in the fact that the old standard, the Mosaic Law, could not produce harmony between Jew and Gentile, and had thus been removed. There is a new standard in the present dispensation. That new standard is Christ. From Christ, the entire church receives its direction and purpose. He achieved redemption for the church (ch. 1); He is the mystery of the present dispensation, unknown in the past dispensation (ch. 3); He is the one who gifts the church so that it can pursue unity (ch. 4a); He, as the forgiver of men, is the basis of our forgiving one another in the church (ch. 4b); He is the measure of the love in which we are to walk (ch. 5a); He is the one to whom we submit, and this provides the standard of submission in Christian society (ch. 5b-6a); and He is the one who provides us with the spiritual armor we need to withstand the devil in the evil day.

The theological themes of Ephesians 2:11-22 have to do chiefly with the new dispensation (administration) that has been instituted since Christ's redemptive work on the cross. The previous dispensation had served its purposes for nearly 1,500 years, but under that dispensation, the covenant people of God (Israel) had developed an unhealthy and unspiritual prejudice against the Gentiles. The new dispensation involves a doing away with the institutions that were abused by the Jews in supporting this prejudice, viz., the Law, the Priesthood and the Temple. In the present dispensation, believers in Jesus are united through faith in Christ's redemptive work on the cross. They are brought together in the body of Christ on an equal basis with one another. Christ himself has created this unity, something that the Mosaic Law could never accomplish.

## Exposition

### **Introduction:**

Ephesians 2:11-22 carries a message that is foundational to overall theme and message of the Book of Ephesians. The first converts to Christ in Ephesus were from among the Jews (converts from the synagogue, and converts from among some disciples of John the Baptist, Acts 18:19-21; 24-28; 19:1-8). Later, after being forced out of the synagogue, large numbers of Gentile converts came to faith while Paul taught from the facilities of the local philosopher Tyrranus (Acts 19:9-10). This resultant ethnic mixture in the church apparently led to strained relations as ancient Jewish prejudice toward the Gentiles (and *vice versa*) found its way into the fellowship of believers. Paul writes to the Ephesians in large part to counter this problem. He reminds the members of the congregation that they have been united in Christ and are now on an equal basis before God. Paul argues that the rationale the Jews had used to justify their anti-Gentile prejudice was based on their reliance upon the Law of Moses which has now been done away in Christ. In its place, during the present dispensation, both Jew and Gentile are related to God on exactly the same basis, no longer by means of the covenant promises of the Old Testament, but solely by faith in the redemptive work of Christ.

As he develops his argument, Paul begins by granting that the past condition of the Gentiles was precisely as the Jews had presumed; they were in fact separated from God's covenant blessing (2:11-12). However, he then proceeds to move into the present and describe a new kind of administrative arrangement (i.e. "dispensation") that has been established since Christ's redemptive work on the cross (2:13-18). This new administrative arrangement treats both Jew and Gentile as equals before God, neither one having a preferential position because of the covenants. Finally, Paul concludes that, in Christ, both Jew and Gentile form a unified entity, pictured under two metaphors: (1) citizenship in a commonwealth (2:19), and (2) building stones in a temple structure (2:20-22).

### **Outline:**

- I. Past condition of the Gentiles, 11-12
  - A. Lacking the physical sign of membership in God's covenant nation, 11a
  - B. Despised by the covenant people, 11b
  - C. Lacking legal status in God's covenant nation, 12a
  - D. Having no relationship to God's covenant promises, 12a
  - E. Hopeless, 12b
  - F. Godless, 12b
- II. Present: Both Jew and Gentile Participate Equally in the Body of Christ, 13-18
  - A. Bringing the Gentiles Near, 13
  - B. Joint Participation of Both Jews and Gentiles, 14-18
- III. Conclusion: Gentiles are included with Jews as the people of God, 19-22

- A. Pictured as Citizenship in a Commonwealth, 19
- B. Pictured as a Building and Temple, 20-22
  - 1. The Foundation, 20a
  - 2. The Cornerstone, 20b
  - 3. The Building Stones, 21-22

### Commentary:

#### *I. Past condition of the Gentiles, 11-12*

- A. Lacking the physical sign of membership in God's covenant nation, 11a

Διό] This inferential conjunction connects the current paragraph to the preceding. In 2:1-10 Paul had argued that both Jew and Gentile are equally guilty before God (Gentiles, 2:1-2; Jews, 2:3), and that both Jew and Gentile are saved on the basis of faith alone in Christ alone (2:4-10). 2:11-22 draws a logical conclusion from this; if both are equally guilty, and both are saved on the same basis, then there should be no racial division within the congregation.

μνημονεύετε] Pres. Act. Impv. 2pers. Pl. μνημονεύω, “to remember,” “to keep in mind.” This verb, occurring frequently in the NT (21x; 7x in Paul; only here in Eph), has its content expressed either by περί τινος (Heb 11:22), ὅτι (Ac 20:31; here, Eph 2:11; 2Thess 2:5), or an indirect question (Rev 2:5; 3:3).<sup>3</sup> Paul commands the recipients to hold continually before their minds the following doctrinal truths. In this first doctrinal half of the Book, imperatives are quite rare,<sup>4</sup> making this command stand out as all the more significant.

ὅτι] The conjunction introduces the indirect discourse (i.e. content) clause after μνημονεύετε. The clause becomes interrupted by a lengthy appositional phrase, then resumes with a repeated ὅτι at the beginning of verse 12. See comments *infra* at verse 12.

ποτέ] This temporal indicator 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 usual force of indicating past time, “once,” “formerly,” as is made obvious by the contrasting νυνὶ δέ (*but now*) in verse 13. The time reference is not to the Ephesian believers' individual conversion, but to the change of administration/dispensation that occurred following Christ's redemptive work on the cross. In the mid-first century, when Paul wrote this epistle, some of the Ephesian converts may in fact have been alive on earth before the crucifixion, but Paul is speaking generically of the condition of Gentiles before the cross in these first two verses.

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<sup>3</sup> BDAG, s.v. μνημονεύω.

<sup>4</sup> An analysis of the verb moods in the two halves of Ephesians (chh. 1-3 doctrinal; chh. 4-6 hortatory) bears this out: in chapters 1-3, only 0.8% of all verbs are in the imperative (ch. 1, 0%; ch. 2 2%; ch. 3, 0%), while 38.2% are indicative; whereas in chapters 4-6, 19.8% of all verbs are in the imperative (ch. 4, 15.3%; ch. 5, 23.9%; ch. 6, 20.4%)

ὕμεῖς] Nom. Pl. 2<sup>nd</sup> Personal Pronoun. The antecedent is specifically the Gentile majority of the Ephesian congregation. This differentiation between Gentile (referred to in the 2 pers. pl.) and either Jew or both Jew and Gentile (referred to in the 1 pers. pl.) was established in the preceding context; see 2:1-2 (2 pers. pl.) and 2:3 (1 pers. pl.).

τὰ ἔθνη] Nom. Neut. Pl. definite article + Nom. Neut. Pl. ἔθνος “*nation*,” “*Gentile*,” “*custom*.” The article is used here to refer to the class, i.e., Gentiles as a class of people. Ἔθνη, though occasionally used to refer to the nation of Israel (Jn 11:48, 50ff; 18:35), usually refers to the Gentile nations, and was used normally in the LXX to translate גּוֹיִם (*Goyim*). The nom. pl. is used to place this noun in apposition with ὕμεῖς. It is the first in a series of six appositional nouns or nominal phrases used to describe the Gentile majority in the Ephesian congregation.<sup>5</sup> Paul uses apposition frequently throughout this paragraph as a means of describing and clarifying some significant noun.<sup>6</sup>

ἐν σαρκί] Preposition ἐν “*in*” + Dat. Fem. Sing. σὰρξ “*flesh*.” The prepositional phrase is adjectival, modifying ἔθνη and makes reference to the physical sign of the Jewish covenant relation to God, viz., circumcision. As will be seen in the following phrase, these Gentiles were “marked” as ἀκροβυστία, *uncircumcision*. ἐν here has a locative significance. Beginning with Abraham, all Jewish males were to indicate their inclusion in the covenants of God by receiving the sign of circumcision normally on the eighth day following birth.

#### B. Despised by the covenant people, 11b

οἱ λεγόμενοι] Nom. Masc. Pl. article + Pres. Pass. Ptcpl. Nom. Masc. Pl. of λέγω frequently “*to say*,” “*to tell*,” “*to speak*,” but here, as in many other places, “*to call*,” “*to name*.” The article has a substantivizing force and makes the participle substantival, placing it in apposition with τὰ ἔθνη. For the passive of this participle, as here, see also Mt 13:55; Heb 11:24; 1Co 8:5. The masculine appears to be ungrammatical, since it ought to agree either with the preceding neuter ἔθνη or, possibly, with the following feminine ἀκροβυστία. However here the masculine is a *construction ad sensum*, describing a people group which would be considered masculine. On the other hand, see the following λεγομένης!

ἀκροβυστία] Nom. Fem. Sing. “*uncircumcision*.” This serves as the predicate nominative to λεγόμενοι and functions essentially as a proper name.<sup>7</sup> In this case, it was a derogatory term thrust at the Gentiles by the Jews. Found only in Biblical and ecclesiastical Greek, the term is probably a corruption of

<sup>5</sup> The others are: οἱ λεγόμενοι ἀκροβυστία κ.τ.λ., ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραήλ, ξένοι τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆς ἀπαγγελίας, ἐλπίδα μὴ ἔχοντες, and ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ.

<sup>6</sup> Other uses of apposition can be seen in v.13 οἱ ποτε ὄντες μακράν; v.14 ὁ ποιήσας τὰ ἀμφοτέρα ἔν, [ὁ] τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ λύσας, and τὴν ἔχθραν.

<sup>7</sup> BDF §412(2).

ἀκροποσθία.<sup>8</sup> Calvin spiritualizes this to mean “their want of the sacraments” as evidence that “neither were they partakers of his grace.”<sup>9</sup> Such a sacramental view cannot possibly be read into this context. Circumcision (and, therefore, uncircumcision) has reference to the covenant relation of Jews under previous dispensations and has nothing to do with the church.

ὑπό] This preposition when followed by a genitive object expresses the agent of a preceding passive verb. In this instance “that which is called the circumcision” is the agent of “those who are called ‘uncircumcision.’”

τῆς λεγομένης] Gen. Fem. Sing. article + Pres. Pass. Ptcpl. Gen. Fem. Sing. of λέγω “to say,” “to call.” The article has substantivizing force making the participle substantival. See comments *supra* on οἱ λεγόμενοι. Here, however, the expression is genitive so as to function as the object of the preceding ὑπό, and its gender is grammatically correct, being in agreement with the following περιτομῆς.<sup>10</sup>

περιτομῆς] Gen. Fem. Sing. περιτομή “circumcision” (lit. “a cutting around” in both the Greek and Latin etymologies). Like ἀκροβυστία *supra*, this noun is a predicate genitive of λεγομένης and functions as a proper name. The title was borne as a badge of honor by the Jews.

ἐν σαρκί] See comments *supra* where it modified ἀκροβυστία. Here, it modifies περιτομῆς.

χειροποιήτου] Gen. Fem. Sing. χειροποίητος “made by human hands.” This two-termination adjective is found as early as Herodotus in the fifth century BC referring to such things as buildings and temples that were *made by human hands*. Here, however, it refers to circumcision as that which is man-made. Paul may have added this qualifier to infer that their circumcision had more to do with man than with God. As early as Deuteronomy 10:16 Israel was urged to circumcise their heart, not merely their flesh. The heart cannot be circumcised by the hand of man. If Paul had a verse like Deut. 10:16 in mind, then he was likely inferring by use of this adjective, that the Jews’ hearts in fact had *not* been circumcised.

### C. Lacking legal status in God’s covenant nation, 12a

ὅτι] The ὅτι resumes the ὅτι of verse 11; i.e., it continues the indirect discourse after a somewhat lengthy and complex description of the uncircumcised condition of the Gentiles. Now, as the indirect discourse clause continues, Paul moves on to the next appositional noun phrase.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> BDAG, s.v. ἀκροβυστία. ἀκροποσθία from ἀκρο, “tip” or “top” + πόσθη, the *membrum virile*.

<sup>9</sup> John Calvin, “Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians” in William Pringle, transl. *Calvin’s Commentaries*, Vol. XXI (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979) 232.

<sup>10</sup> A noun which one might think should be masculine!

<sup>11</sup> See comment *supra* on τὰ ἔθνη.

ἦτε] Imperf. Ind. 2 Pers. Pl. εἰμί “to be.” This forms the main verb of the indirect discourse ὅτι clause, and may therefore be supplied as the verb of the ὅτι clause in verse 11 as well. The imperfect describes their continued existence throughout the previous administration/dispensation.

τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ] Dat. Masc. Sing. article + Dat. Masc. Sing. forms of καιρός “time,” “period,” and ἐκεῖνος, Demonstr. Pronoun “that.” The article is in the normal position for a demonstrative pronoun in the attributive position. This Dative of Time marks the time-frame when the descriptions being employed by Paul here in verses 11-12 were true. The previous administration/dispensation is marked temporally by the adverb ποτέ in verse 11, the Imperfect Indicative of ἦτε in this verse, and by the Dative of Time in τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ.

χωρὶς Χριστοῦ] Preposition χωρὶς “without” + Gen. Masc. Sing. Χριστός “Christ,” “Messiah.” This prepositional phrase is adjectival and functions as the predicate adjective to ἦτε. χωρὶς, when used as a preposition<sup>12</sup> takes a genitive object. Χριστός here probably means “Messiah,”<sup>13</sup> rather than “Christ.” Although by the time Paul writes his prison epistles the term Χριστός has largely taken on the attribute of a proper name, in this particular context (Jew vs. Gentile) it most likely has reference to the fact that there was no Messianic promise given outside of Israel (Ro 9:4,5). In Daniel 9:25 Χριστός (cognate to χρίω “to anoint”) appears in the LXX as the translation of מָשִׁיחַ (from מָשַׁח “to anoint”). Interestingly, in Daniel 9:26 the MT has the same מָשִׁיחַ, but the LXX translates it as χρίσμα “an anointing.” This Messiah of Daniel 9 is the one who will usher in God’s kingdom, and, though the OT includes Gentiles in the kingdom, it is only as nations who are subject to Israel. The Messiah is primarily Israel’s Messiah, and the Gentiles only receive blessing secondarily.<sup>14</sup> Thus, as Paul describes the former condition of the Gentiles, he describes them as being “without a Messiah.”

ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι] Perf. Pass. Ptcpl. Nom. Masc. Pl. from ἀπαλλοτριόω “to estrange,” “to alienate.” The parallel passage in Col 1:21 combines this same word with ἐχθρός, “alienated and hostile in mind.” The participle, though anarthrous, is nevertheless probably substantival, inasmuch as this continues the list of appositives begun in verse 11 (see comment on τὰ ἔθνη). Not only were they “Gentiles in the flesh,” and “those called ‘uncircumcision,’” they

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<sup>12</sup> It is found as an adverb as early as Homer in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, but occurs only once in this usage in the NT in John 20:7. Its most frequent use in the NT is as a preposition with the genitive, following its object in the phrase οὗ χωρὶς (see BDF §216,2).

<sup>13</sup> Holman Christian Standard Bible.

<sup>14</sup> Westcott views this as a reference to “...the personal relationship now recognised and not of the national hope”, Westcott, Brooke Foss, and John Maurice Schulhof, ed., *Saint Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians: The Greek Text With Notes and Addenda* (London; New York: Macmillan and co., limited, 1909) 35. However, the promises to national Israel are most likely in view here. God had promised a Messiah to national Israel, but the Gentiles were excluded from this due to their exclusion from citizenship in Israel. This accords better with the context.

were also, “those who had been alienated.” The perfect tense signifies a settled condition (intensive perfect) that had existed unchanged for generations and eons.

τῆς πολιτείας] Gen. Fem. Sing. definite article + Gen. Fem. Sing. πολιτεία “*citizenship*.” The article singles out this citizenship as unique. Citizenship in Israel had unique rights and privileges not found in any other nation. Coming after a word like ἀπαλλοτριώω, the genitive case expresses separation (“*from*”). This noun occurs in Greek as early as Herodotus in the fifth century BC and was used first and foremost to refer to “the rights and privileges of citizenship.” Other acquired meanings include such notions as “the life and business of a statesman,” “government,” “administration,” “civil polity,” and “the constitution of a state”; then, by extension, “the life of a citizen,” “civic life.” In the LXX, since the code of citizenship was embodied in the Mosaic Law, πολιτεία came to signify “a moral life,” “a godly life.” The only other occurrence of this term in the NT is Acts 22:28. In the context of Eph 2, though πολιτεία might possibly refer to the “people” of Israel, it most likely refers to the “rights of citizenship” in Israel.

τοῦ Ἰσραήλ] Gen. Masc. Sing. definite article + Gen. Masc. Sing. Ἰσραήλ, “*Israel*.” When Ἰσραήλ refers to the nation, it is almost always articular (Mt 2:6; 8:10; 10:23; Ro 11:2; Ac 5:31; etc.). Both in Greek and in Hebrew, the names of countries are normally feminine, but here the name Ἰσραήλ (Heb. יִשְׂרָאֵל) was first the name of the Patriarch; thus, it is masculine. The genitive is a genitive of description – “*Israelite citizenship*.” Again, Paul’s argument is that under the previous administration/dispensation, covenant blessings and privileges were directly connected to national Israel. Lacking this connection, the Gentiles were without any relationship to God.

#### D. Having no relationship to God’s covenant promises, 12a

καί] See discussion under καί *infra*, just preceding the word ἄθελτοι.

ξένοι] Nom. Masc. Pl. ξένος, a three-termination adjective meaning “*strange*” or “*foreign*,” but here used substantively as the next in this extraordinary sequence of appositives (see note on τὰ ἔθνη, *supra*). It is used substantively again in 2:19 where it is combined with πάροικοι.

τῶν διαθηκῶν] Gen. Fem. Pl. definite article + Gen. Fem. Pl. διαθήκη “*covenant*.” The genitive case, coming after a word like ξένος expresses separation – *strangers separated from the covenants*. The article makes these specific covenants. The Gentiles would have been under the universal Noahic Covenant, but the reference here is to those specific covenants made between God and Israel. The plural number refers to the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen 12; 13; 15; 17; etc.) and its subsidiaries: the Land Covenant (Deut 29-30), Davidic Covenant (2Sa 7:12-16), and New Covenant (Jer 31:31-33). The Mosaic Covenant (Ex 19ff.), is probably not in view here, as it was conditional and

temporary, and is presented in the NT in contrast with the Abrahamic Covenant (Ro 4:13-17; Gal 3:6 – 4:31).<sup>15</sup>

τῆς ἐπαγγελίας] Gen. Fem. Sing. definite article + Gen. Fem. Sing. ἐπαγγελία “promise.” The genitive is descriptive; i.e., these covenants have to do with a promise. The article makes this promise specific. Taken together, the Abrahamic, Mosaic, Land and New Covenants hold forth the promise that God would dwell in the midst of His people in the land, His people dwelling in peace, fruitfulness, and righteousness. This promise is not quite the same thing as the New Testament concept of “salvation.” Though salvation is included in the OT covenant promise to Israel, the covenant promise involves much more (definite, recognizable borders to the land of Israel; a restoration of all twelve tribes to the land; God’s dwelling in His temple in the midst of His people; an eternal King from the Davidic line who also serves as a priest like Melchizedek).

#### E. Hopeless, 12b

ἐλπίδα] Acc. Fem. Sing. ἐλπίς “hope.” The noun is anarthrous because it expresses the general condition of hopelessness found among the Gentiles. The word ἐλπίς denotes a certainty about some future event. In the NT epistles it frequently refers to the blessed hope of the believer in Christ, the rapture of the Church (e.g., Tit 2:13; 1Jn 3:3). Here, however, it is much more general. The gods of the Gentiles were fickle and unreliable. The Gentiles would offer worship to these gods in anticipation of health, good crops, or a time of peace, but they had no assurance that their gods would really supply these things. And, of course, what lay beyond the grave was a subject of darkness and mystery. The hollow attempts at comfort recorded on many of the monuments found in ancient grave yards gives abundant testimony to this.

μῆ] The normal negative used outside of the indicative mood. Here it negates the following participle.

ἔχοντες] Pres. Act. Ptcpl. Nom. Masc. Pl. ἔχω “to have.” Here, as with ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι (see comments *supra*), the participle ought to be considered substantival, though it is anarthrous. It continues the string of appositives begun with τὰ ἔθνη (see comments *supra*). As a substantival participle, it could be translated, “those who do not have hope.”

#### F. Godless, 12b

καί] With one other exception (καὶ ξένοι), these appositive nouns and noun phrases are strung together in asyndeton. The conjunction is used here to introduce the last item in this list. But, then, why is there another instance of

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<sup>15</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002) 358-359. Abbott includes the Mosaic covenant, but obviously sees the tension in this view when he equivocates, saying, “The plural is used with reference to the covenants with the patriarchs, but the Mosaic covenant is not excluded, although it was primarily νομοθεσία.” (Abbott, T.K., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and to the Colossians*. [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1897] 58).

καί just preceding ξένοι? Ξένοι brings to an end an initial four-fold list of appositives, all dealing with legal status relative to citizenship in national Israel. So, the conjunction καί brings an end to this initial list. The last two appositives are a bit different; they express the resultant state of natural man apart from grace.

ἄθροισ] Nom. Masc. Pl. of ἄθεος “godless,” “without god.” This is a fairly ancient word in the Greek language, occurring as early as Lysias and Sophocles in the fifth cent. BC. It meant “godless” or “ungodly” with reference to morality and lifestyle. It could also mean “abandoned of the gods.” Nowhere does it appear to be used of philosophical “atheism” in the modern sense of that word.<sup>16</sup> Ephesians 2:12 is its only occurrence in the NT. It is highly improbable that this could mean anything like theoretical atheism (i.e., denial of the existence of a divine being), since such a philosophical view was virtually unknown in the ancient world. In the context of Eph 2, it is probably not describing immoral conduct either (though it may in fact have been true about the Gentile Ephesians). Everything else in the context has to do with being cut off from the true God who was worshipped by Israel. Most likely, therefore, ἄθεος here means something like, “having no relationship with the one true God,” and possibly “abandoned by the one true God” (compare Rom 1:18-32).

ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ] Preposition ἐν “in” + Dat. Masc. Sing. definite article + Dat. Masc. Sing. κόσμος “world.” The prepositional phrase is adjectival, modifying ἄθεοι. Does κόσμος mean the world as a physical place, or does it refer to the world system, as it frequently does in Scripture? Either one of these might make decent sense in this verse. Paul uses κόσμος two other times in Ephesians – first, in 1:4 (ἐξελέξατο ἡμᾶς ἐν αὐτῷ πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου, *He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world*) where it clearly refers to the physical location; and second, in 2:2 (ποτε περιεπατήσατε κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου, *you once walked according to the course [or “aeon” of the world]*) where it appears to be referring to the world system that is opposed to God. The usage in 2:2 is both the nearer context and the context which bears a more similar topic. In this light, it seems much more likely that κόσμος 2:12 refers also to the evil world system that dominates this age, of which Satan is the ruler. This being the case, ἐν should be understood as expressing the sphere in which their “godlessness” (ἄθεος) is experienced and lived out.

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<sup>16</sup> Sometimes Plato’s *Apology* is cited as using ἄθεος to mean “atheist”; however, Plato uses it of the charge brought against Socrates that he taught belief in his own concept of δαιμόνια, rather than in the traditional Greek gods, i.e., substituting one set of gods for another set of gods. This is hardly what is meant by the modern use of the word “atheist.”

## II. Present: Both Jew and Gentile Participate Equally in the Body of Christ, 13-18

### A. Bringing the Gentiles Near, 13

ὡνὶ δέ] “*But now*,” a common transitional formula in Paul’s epistles, occurring some 16 times (Ro 3:21; 6:22; 7:6, 17; 15:23, 25; 1Co 12:18; 13:13; 15:20; 2Co 8:11, 22; Eph 2:13; Col 1:22; 3:8; Philem 9, 11). Outside of Paul, this phrase is only found once in the NT (Heb 9:26). Here it marks the transition from a consideration of the Gentiles’ past experience to a consideration of their current experience.

ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ] Preposition ἐν “*in*” + Dat. Masc. Sing., Χριστός “*Christ*,” “*Messiah*” object of the preposition + Dat. Masc. Sing.<sup>17</sup> Ἰησοῦς “*Jesus*.” This prepositional phrase is adverbial, modifying the main verb of the sentence, ἐγενήθητε. The prepositional phrase ἐν Χριστῷ is almost uniquely Pauline, occurring some 73 times in Paul’s epistles (9x in Eph, and another 7x for ἐν αὐτῷ). Of these, 46 add Ἰησοῦ, as here. Outside of Paul, only Peter uses this phrase, and he only 3 times (ἐν Χριστῷ 1Pe 3:16; 5:14. ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ 1Pe 5:10, although there is textual uncertainty about the added Ἰησοῦ).

The phrase ἐν Χριστῷ expresses the sphere in which the believer’s relationship with God is sustained in the present dispensation. In previous dispensations this relationship had been defined in terms of the covenants. But in the dispensation of the church age, one’s relationship to God is not expressed in terms of covenant,<sup>18</sup> but rather by means of one’s being “in Christ.” Commenting on Ephesians 1:1, Hoehner has said:

These saints were in Christ Jesus, not in Adam or the goddess Artemis of Ephesus. While believers have geographical locations (e.g., “Ephesus”), spiritually they are positioned “in Christ” (cf. “in Christ at Colosse” in Col. 1:2). Paul used “in Christ Jesus,” “in Christ,” or “in Him” quite frequently. In Ephesians 1:1-14 the phrase occurs nine times! Christians have their very life in Christ.<sup>19</sup>

ὕμεῖς] Nom. Masc. Pl. of the second personal pronoun. The antecedent refers to the Gentiles who are “in Christ.” The expressed pronominal subject of

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<sup>17</sup> Ἰησοῦς is only partially declined, like many non-Greek proper names. Ἰησοῦς is a transliteration of יֵשׁוּעַ *Yeshu’ a*, a shortened form of יְהוֹשׁוּעַ *Yehoshu’ a* (Joshua). Its declension is as follows: Ἰησοῦς – nom.; Ἰησοῦ – gen., dat., and voc.; Ἰησοῦν – acc.

<sup>18</sup> Many NT scholars are of the opinion that the church’s relationship with God is to be understood within the terms of the New Covenant. However, Jer 31:31 explicitly states that the parties to the New Covenant are God and Israel/Judah, not the church. For an excellent discussion of the NT passages that relate to the New Covenant, see John Master in chapter 5 (“The New Covenant”) of *Issues in Dispensationalism*, edited by Wesley R. Willis and John R. Master (Moody Press, 1994), 93-110; also, see George Gunn, “2 Corinthians 3:6 - The Church’s Relationship to the New Covenant,” accessible at <http://www.shasta.edu/subpage.php?spid=48>.

<sup>19</sup> Harold H. Hoehner, “Ephesians” in John F. Walvoord, Roy B. Zuck and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983), 615.

ἐγενήθητε is emphatic – *you*, as opposed to those Gentiles who are not “in Christ.”

οἱ] Nom. Masc. Pl. definite article. The article goes with ὄντες, substantivizing the participle so it can be placed in apposition with ὑμεῖς.

ποτε] Adverb, “*once*,” “*formerly*” modifying the phrase ὄντες μακράν.

ὄντες] Pres. Ptcpl. Nom. Masc. Pl. of εἶμι “*to be*.” The participle is substantival, in apposition to ὑμεῖς. As earlier in this passage (see comments *supra* on τὰ ἔθνη), Paul uses the device of apposition to define and clarify his terms. Those who are now ἐγγύς (“*near*”) are the same as those who were previously μακράν (“*far*” or “*distant*”). Though the participle is substantival, the verbal force of the participle gives it a concessive idea here, as well – “*though you were far*.”

μακράν] Adverb, “*far*.” Here it functions as predicate adjective to ὄντες.<sup>20</sup> In this context, the frame of reference is Jew and Gentile. The Gentiles had previously been far from the Jews. While it is also true (and may be implied) that the Gentiles were far from God, that is not the meaning in this verse. This verse is making the point that they were far from the covenant people of God – the Jews.

ἐγενήθητε] Aor. Dep. Ind. 2 Pers. Pl. γίνομαι, “*to become*.” Main verb of the sentence. The aorist tense is ingressive – “*in Christ, you began your existence of being near*.”

ἐγγύς] Adverb, “*near*.” Similar to μακράν *supra*, ἐγγύς serves as the predicate adjective to ἐγενήθητε. And, as with μακράν, the frame of reference here is Jew and Gentile. The point being made in this verse is that the Gentiles had been brought near to the Jews. As verse 16 will show, the way Jew and Gentile were brought close to each other was by reconciling both to God; so the “*far*” and “*near*” (μακράν and ἐγγύς) of this verse have to do with the relationship of Jew and Gentile. Replacement theology takes another view, “*Accordingly in the following verses we have two points of view combined, viz. the reconciliation of the Gentiles to God, and their admission to the πολιτεία of Israel, namely, the true Israel – the Christian Church.*”<sup>21</sup> However; Paul has carefully laid out a different explanation. The Church has not become a “*new Israel*,” but a “*new man*” that is neither Jew nor Gentile.

ἐν τῷ αἵματι] Prep. ἐν “*in*” + Dat. Neut. Sing. definite article + Dat. Neut. Sing. of αἷμα, “*blood*.” The prepositional phrase is adverbial to ἐγενήθητε and expresses the means/instrument by which the believing Gentiles became near. From the very first mention of blood in the Bible (Gen 4:10), there has been a sacredness attached to it. The Noahic Covenant forbade its being consumed by man, because it was the life of man and was related somehow to the image of

<sup>20</sup> For adverbs functioning as predicate adjectives to forms of εἶμι, cf. BDF §434.

<sup>21</sup> Abbott, 59-60.

God in man (Gen 9:4-6; forbidden also in the Mosaic Covenant, Lev 3:17; 7:26-27; 17:10-12). Blood was to be applied to the doorposts and lintel of the homes of the Israelites to protect them from the destroying angel (Ex 12:7, 13, 22, 23). Under the Mosaic Covenant, a blood sacrifice was never to be mixed with leavened bread (Ex 23:18; 34:25). The basis for understanding the sanctity of blood for sacrifice is expressed perhaps most clearly in Leviticus 17:11, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.”

τοῦ Χριστοῦ] Gen. Masc. Sing. definite article, + Gen. Masc. Sing. of Χριστός “*Messiah*,” “*Christ*.” Genitive of possession to αἵματι. Animal sacrifices had been a part of sinful man’s approach to God ever since the beginning (Gen 4:4<sup>22</sup>). The Mosaic Covenant had so many blood sacrifices for so many different occasions that one can only guess at how many millions of gallons of animal blood must have been shed over the millennium and a half of that covenant’s administration. Yet, the author of Hebrews reminds us that none of that blood could ever truly take away sins (Heb 10:4). Animals, which lack the image of God, do not possess a life that is of sufficient value to substitute for the life of a man (cf. Gen 9:6). It took the hypostatic union, the uniting of Perfect Deity with complete humanity, to provide a blood sacrifice that could truly take away man’s sin.

Not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Heb 9:12-14 NASB95)

You were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood* of Christ. (1Pet 1:18-19 NASB95)

This is all laying the groundwork for the next subsection (see the γάρ in the next verse). The blood of Christ brings Jew and Gentile near to one another, because it accomplished the reconciliation (ἀποκαταλλαγή!) referred to in verse 16.

## B. Joint Participation of Both Jews and Gentiles, 14-18

### Verse 14

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<sup>22</sup> That blood was shed in the preparing of animal skins to cover Adam and Eve (Gen 3:21) is implicit; however, there is no explicit mention of “blood” in the text.

αὐτός] Nom. Masc. Sing. 3<sup>rd</sup> Pers. Pronoun. The antecedent is Χριστοῦ in the preceding verse. The expressed pronominal subject is emphatic. It is Christ *himself* Who is our peace; none other could be.

γάρ] The conjunction is causal. The thing that caused the Gentiles to become near to the Jews was the peacemaking work of Christ. His peacemaking work had a two-fold result: (1) The creation of the new man – the church, the body of Christ, verse 15; and (2) The reconciling of both Jew and Gentile to God, verse 16.

ἐστίν] Pres. Ind. 3<sup>rd</sup> Pers. Sing. of εἶμι “to be.” Main verb of the γάρ clause.

ἡ εἰρήνη] Nom. Fem. Sing. definite article + Nom. Fem. Sing. εἰρήνη “peace.” The noun is predicate nominative to ἐστίν.<sup>23</sup> Here is an instance of metonymy in which the effect is put for the cause. In this case, the noun “peace” is the result of His action of bringing about peace. Expressed literally, we would understand “He *effected* our peace.”<sup>24</sup> Εἰρήνη is a very old word, being found as early as Homer in the eighth century BC. This noun may have been originally derived from the verb εἶρω “to fasten together in rows,” “to string together.” As used by the ancient Greeks, the term simply meant “peace” or “a time of peace.” Its use by the LXX translators, however, seems to have broadened the conceptual possibilities for this term. The LXX generally uses εἰρήνη to translate εἰρή, and this adds to the semantic range of εἰρήνη such ideas as “prosperity,” “welfare” (Jdg 6:23; Lv 26:6); “eternal rest” (Wis 3:3); and “health” (Jdg 18:15). Εἰρήνη occurs 92x in the NT; 43x in the Pauline Epistles (at least once in each of the Pauline Epistles; 7x in Ephesians). The context of Ephesians argues strongly for the εἰρήνη in chapter 2 as being a reference, not to peace between God and man,<sup>25</sup> but to peace between Jew and Gentile in Christ. Though the LXX introduced to the idea of εἰρήνη concepts such as “health,” “wholeness,” and “well-being” (via εἰρή), here, the original sense of the word as cessation of hostility is retained. Being “in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:13) brings both Jew and Gentile into a new relationship, not only with God, but with each other. The old enmity is gone. They are fellow-partakers of God’s blessings, equally guilty before God, and equally justified in Christ; neither Jew nor Gentile is either nearer or farther from God than the other.

ἡμῶν] Gen. Masc. Pl. 1<sup>st</sup> Pers. Pronoun. Genitive of Possession to εἰρήνη. The antecedent of this pronoun would be both Jew and Gentiles of the Ephesian

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<sup>23</sup> An articular nominative with a copula would normally be considered the subject; however, when there is a personal pronoun in the nominative, the pronoun becomes the subject.

<sup>24</sup> Some commentators attempt to explain this on the basis of “peace” being “recognized by the Talmud as a name for God” (A. Skevington Wood, “Ephesians” in Frank E. Gaebelein, Gen. Ed., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Vol. 11 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978] 39). This is as opposed to its being metonymy. But it is one thing for Jesus to say “I am the life” but another when Paul says, “He is our peace.” The addition of the modifier “our” makes this a different kind of saying. Thus it is better to see this as metonymy

<sup>25</sup> As, e.g., Calvin, 235.

congregation who are in Christ. The thrust of the passage is to show that the Gentiles who were once far off have now been brought near. Calvin reverses this focus by stating, “He now includes Jews in the privilege of reconciliation, and shews that, through one Messiah, all are united to God.”<sup>26</sup> This is just backwards. Paul is not arguing here that Jews have been included, but rather that the Gentiles have been included in something the Jews already had (viz. a relationship with God)!

ὁ ποιήσας] Nom. Masc. Sing. definite article + Aor. Act. Ptcpl. Nom. Masc. Sing. ποιέω “to do,” “to make.” The article has the effect of substantivizing the participle and placing it in apposition to αὐτός. The aorist tense is constative.

τὰ ἀμφοτέρα] Acc. Neut. Pl. definite article + Acc. Neut. Pl. of the adjective ἀμφοτέροι “both.” The article substantivizes the adjective and makes it the direct object of ποιήσας. The neuter gender is perhaps a bit surprising (the same word appears in the masc. in vv.16 and 18); however, BDF makes the point that “the neuter is sometimes used with reference to persons if it is not the individuals but a general quality that is to be emphasized.”<sup>27</sup> Here the Jews and Gentiles are two groups each with their own general qualities that have been discussed in the preceding verses. It is with a view to the general qualities of “Jewishness” and “Gentileness” that Christ’s work of uniting what no one else could unite is seen to be so remarkable.

ἔν] Acc. Neut. Sing. from εἷς “one.” There is an omitted infinitive εἶναι after ἀμφοτέρα. ἔν is predicate accusative to this infinitive (“He made them both so as to be [εἶναι] one [ἔν]).<sup>28</sup> The adjective is neuter to agree with ἀμφοτέρα.

καί] The conjunction joins ποιήσας and λύσας in a Granville Sharpe construction. There is intended irony here: the same One both “joined” and “destroyed.”

τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ] Acc. Neut. Sing. definite article + Acc. Neut. Sing. μεσότοιχος “dividing wall” + Gen. Masc. Sing. definite article + Gen. Masc. Sing. φραγμός “fence,” “partition.” This exact phrase is unattested apart from Eph 2:14. Even the word μεσότοιχον is quite rare in the literature, though its meaning is clear, its being a compound of μέσος, “middle” and

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<sup>26</sup> Calvin, 235.

<sup>27</sup> BDF §138. On the other hand, Westcott took the neuter to be a reference to “two organisations, systems (τὰ ἀμφοτέρα), under which Jews and Gentiles were gathered as hostile bodies, separated by a dividing fence...” (p. 36). However, the neuter does not express “two systems,” because the two systems were not made one! Rather, the neuter refers to Jews and Gentiles as persons, but has reference to their general qualities of “Jewishness” and “Gentileness” as described in the preceding verses. It is Jews and Gentiles that have been made one, not the Jewish system and the Gentile system.

<sup>28</sup> Alternately, it could be considered the double accusative after ποιέω, Hoehner, *Ephesians, Exegetical Commentary*, 368. Lincoln offers another explanation: “the neuter ... is best explained as a remnant of the traditional [hymnic] material which originally referred to heaven and earth.” (Andrew T. Lincoln, “Ephesians” in Bruce Metzger *et al* edd., *Word Biblical Commentary*, Vol. 42 [Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990.] 140). The idea that this verse was based on an original early Christian hymn is highly speculative, and, in part, based on Lincoln’s view that the book is post-Pauline.

τοιχος “a wall.” φράγμος is more common, being found as early as Sophocles and Herodotus in the 5<sup>th</sup> cent. BC, meaning “a fence,” “wall” or “partition.”

Josephus uses an expression almost identical to the term μεσότοιχον in his description of the building of Solomon’s temple. In *Antiquities* 8.71 he says,

“Now when the king had divided the temple into two parts, he made the inner house of twenty cubits [every way] to be the most secret chamber, but he appointed that of forty cubits to be the sanctuary; and when he had cut a door-place *in the midst of the wall* [τὸν μέσον τοῖχον], he put therein doors of cedar, and overlaid them with a great deal of gold, that had sculpture upon it.”

The second temple, as expanded by Herod the Great, had a Court of the Gentiles at the outside perimeter of the temple compound. A wall separated the Court of the Gentiles from the interior courts which were only for Jews. There were passageways that permitted Jews to pass beyond the Court of the Gentiles into these inner courts, but Gentiles were forbidden to pass on pain of death. It should be remembered that Paul wrote this epistle from his Roman imprisonment which was due to his being charged with bringing Gentiles into the inner temple courts (Acts 21:28). It is highly likely that Paul had in mind this barrier separating the Court of the Gentiles from the inner temple courts when he used the phrase μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ.<sup>29</sup>

λύσας] Aor. Act. Ptcp. Nom. Masc. Sing. λύω “to destroy.” This is the second noun in a Granville Sharpe construction (ὁ ποιήσας ... καὶ ... λύσας). Thus, like ποιήσας, this participle is substantival in apposition with αὐτός. See other comments on καί *supra*.

τὴν ἔχθραν] Acc. Fem. Sing. definite article, + Acc. Fem. Sing. ἔχθρα “enmity.” This is the first of two nouns in apposition to the “middle wall.” To say, “The middle wall is enmity” is a metonymy whereby the effect is put for the cause. The middle wall actually caused enmity.<sup>30</sup> In the second appositional phrase, Paul will spell out what the wall literally referred to, namely the “law of commandments in ordinances.” The Law (of Moses) produced enmity because of the abuse of the Law by the Jews. It ought to have produced love for the alien (Lev 19:34; Deut 10:18-19), but instead it produced arrogance, bigotry and prejudice. This is no fault of the Law itself, for “the Law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good” (Rom 7:12), but it was an abuse of a good thing. Not only did the law promote hostile feelings on the part of the Jews toward the Gentiles, but the opposite was true as well. An example of hostile feelings of Gentiles toward Jews in light of the law comes from Tacitus, *History* 5.5,

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<sup>29</sup> Hoehner objects to this reference, insisting that the wall “was not a literal wall but a metaphorical wall that divided Jews and Gentiles” (*Exegetical Commentary*, 371). I agree that the usage here is metaphorical, but Paul probably had the temple wall in mind to serve as a conceptual image for the metaphor.

<sup>30</sup> Hoehner, *Bible Knowledge Commentary*, II.626.

This worship, however introduced, is upheld by its antiquity; all their other customs, which are at once perverse and disgusting, owe their strength to their very badness. The most degraded out of other races, scorning their national beliefs, brought to them their contributions and presents. This augmented the wealth of the Jews, as also did the fact, that among themselves they are inflexibly honest and ever ready to shew compassion, though they regard the rest of mankind with all the hatred of enemies. They sit apart at meals, they sleep apart, and though, as a nation, they are singularly prone to lust, they abstain from intercourse with foreign women; among themselves nothing is unlawful. Circumcision was adopted by them as a mark of difference from other men. Those who come over to their religion adopt the practice, and have this lesson first instilled into them, to despise all gods, to disown their country, and set at nought parents, children, and brethren.<sup>31</sup>

ἐν τῇ σαρκί] Preposition ἐν “by” + Dat. Fem. Sing. definite article + Dat. Fem. Sing. σὰρξ “flesh.” The prepositional phrase is adverbial, modifying λύσαν and expressing the means by which the destroying of the Law took place. Σαρκί has reference to the body of Christ and the redemptive work that was carried out through its crucifixion (cf. Col 1:22).

αὐτοῦ] Gen. Masc. Sing. of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Personal Pronoun. Genitive of possession to σαρκί. The antecedent is αὐτός at the beginning of the verse. The One who made peace is the same one who destroyed the Law by means of His flesh (death).

Verse 15

τὸν νόμον] Acc. Masc. Sing. definite article + Acc. Masc. Sing. νόμος “law.” This is the second substantive in apposition to the dividing wall. The first was τὸν ἔχθραν which by metonymy expressed the result of the dividing wall. This appositive (νόμον) expresses the literal referent of the figure. The actual thing that separated Jew from Gentile was the Law (of Moses). See comments above on ἔχθραν.

τῶν ἐντολῶν] Gen. Fem. Pl. definite article + Gen. Fem. Pl. ἐντολή “commandment.” Genitive of apposition to νόμον (the Law which consists of commandments). The great Jewish Rabbi, Maimonides, codified the Law of Moses into 613 specific commandments. τῶν ἐντολῶν is not intended to limit the Law, either to the ten commandments, or to the ceremonial law<sup>32</sup>; rather, it characterizes the entire Law as something that consists of commandments.

ἐν δόγμασιν] Preposition ἐν “in” + Dat. Neut. Pl. δόγμα “ordinance,” “command,” “decree.” The prepositional phrase is adjectival, modifying

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<sup>31</sup> <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.02.0080:book%3D5:chapter%3D5>. Accessed June 29, 2010.

<sup>32</sup> Calvin limits this to the ceremonial law, an artificial division of the law that the text of Scripture does not make. Calvin, 237.

νόμον, yielding a meaning something like “the law that consists of commandments existing in ordinances.” The addition of the prepositional phrase does appear to be almost redundant after the genitive of apposition (τῶν ἐντολῶν). In fact, the phrase was omitted in both p<sup>46</sup> and vg<sup>ms</sup>, likely scribal attempts to remove the apparent redundancy. But by reinforcing the idea that the law consisted of both “commands” and “decrees,” Paul may be intentionally contrasting the harshness and severity of the law with the grace of the gospel, as he does, for example, in Romans 3.

καταργήσας] Aor. Act. Ptcpl. Nom. Masc. Sing. καταργέω “*invalidate*,” “*make powerless*.” The participle is circumstantial to λύσας. Since both participles are aorist, their relative time is probably coincidental; i.e., they both took place at the same time. The syntactical force of this participle is to express the means by which the dividing wall was destroyed. The dividing wall was destroyed by means of making the law powerless. Unlike the eternal and unconditional covenants of God (Abrahamic, Land, Davidic and New), the Mosaic was both conditional and temporary. It was never designed to be in force throughout perpetuity. The very fact that Jeremiah speaks of a “New Covenant” that would supersede the Mosaic Covenant requires that the Mosaic be understood as temporary (Jer 31:31-32; Heb 7-10; cf. also Jn 1:17). Paul explained in Colossians 2:14 that Christ has “canceled out (ἐξαλείψας) the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way (ἐκ τοῦ μέσου), having nailed it to the cross.” The Law of Moses, having administered God’s affairs for a millennium and a half, came to an end at the cross. Subsequently, God has initiated a change of administration/dispensation in which He is building the Body of Christ, wherein there is now no distinction between Jew and Gentile.

ἵνα] This introduces the purpose clause to the main sentence begun in verse 14. The main clause is Ἀυτὸς γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ εἰρήνη ἡμῶν “For He is our peace.” The purpose of the peacemaking is two-fold, and two subjunctive verbs connected by καὶ follow this ἵνα – κτίση and ἀποκαταλλάξει.

τοὺς δύο] Acc. Masc. Pl. definite article + Acc.<sup>33</sup> of δύο “two.” Direct object of κτίση. Refers to both Jew and Gentile.

κτίση] Aor. Act. Subj. 3 Pers. Sing. κρίζω “to create,” used frequently of God’s creative power. This is the first of two subjunctive verbs following ἵνα. The first purpose of Christ’s making peace is to create both Jew and Gentile into one new man.

ἐν αὐτῷ] Preposition ἐν “in” + Dat. Mas. Sing. 3<sup>rd</sup> personal pronoun. The prepositional phrase is adverbial to κτίση. The antecedent of the pronoun is directly the αὐτός at the beginning of verse 14, but ultimately the reference goes back to Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in verse 13. The prepositional phrase expresses the sphere in which this new creation takes place.

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<sup>33</sup> δύο is largely indeclinable, having a separate form only for the dative (δυσί), see BDF §63.

εἰς ἕνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον] Preposition εἰς “into” + Acc. Masc. εἷς “one” + Acc. Masc. Sing. καινός “new” + Acc. Masc. Sing. ἄνθρωπος “man.” The prepositional phrase is adverbial to κτίση, and expresses the goal of this creation. The creation will result in one new man. Elsewhere, the uniting of various members in Christ is referred to by the metaphor of the “body” of Christ. Here the metaphor is slightly different; it is a “new man.” This might be synecdoche whereby the whole “man” stands for the part, namely the “body.” But one wonders why Paul used the adjective “new.” In Eph. 4:22, 24 there is a contrast between the “old man” and the “new man,” but there, the reference is to individual believers; whereas, here in 2:15 the reference is corporately to the church. In keeping with Paul’s theology as expressed in Rom. 5:12ff., it is possible that the “old man” (unexpressed, but nevertheless implied here) refers to “Adam,” and the “new man” to Christ, as spheres in which men live, either in condemnation or righteousness. But in view of the immediate context, it seems more likely that the implied “old man” here would be the people of God under the Mosaic Covenant and the “new man,” the Body of Christ, the church.

ποιῶν] Pres. Act. Ptcpl. Nom. Masc. Sing. ποιέω “to make.” The participle is circumstantial to κτίση expressing result. The result of the creation of the new man (the church) is peace between Jew and Gentile. The present tense has reference to this peace as an ongoing process (durative present). While the provision was accomplished at the cross (Note the aorist participles v.14 ποιήσας, λύσας; v.15 καταργήσας, and the verb κτίση. These are all constative aorists expressing the fact that the law has been done away and the church has been brought into existence.), this is a positional truth, accomplished completely. On the other hand, the establishing of peace between Jew and Gentile is an experiential reality that must be brought about. At various stages in the history of the Church there has been varying degrees of peace between Jew and Gentile within the body of Christ.

εἰρήνην] Acc. Fem. Sing. εἰρήνη “peace.” See comments on verse 14 *supra*.

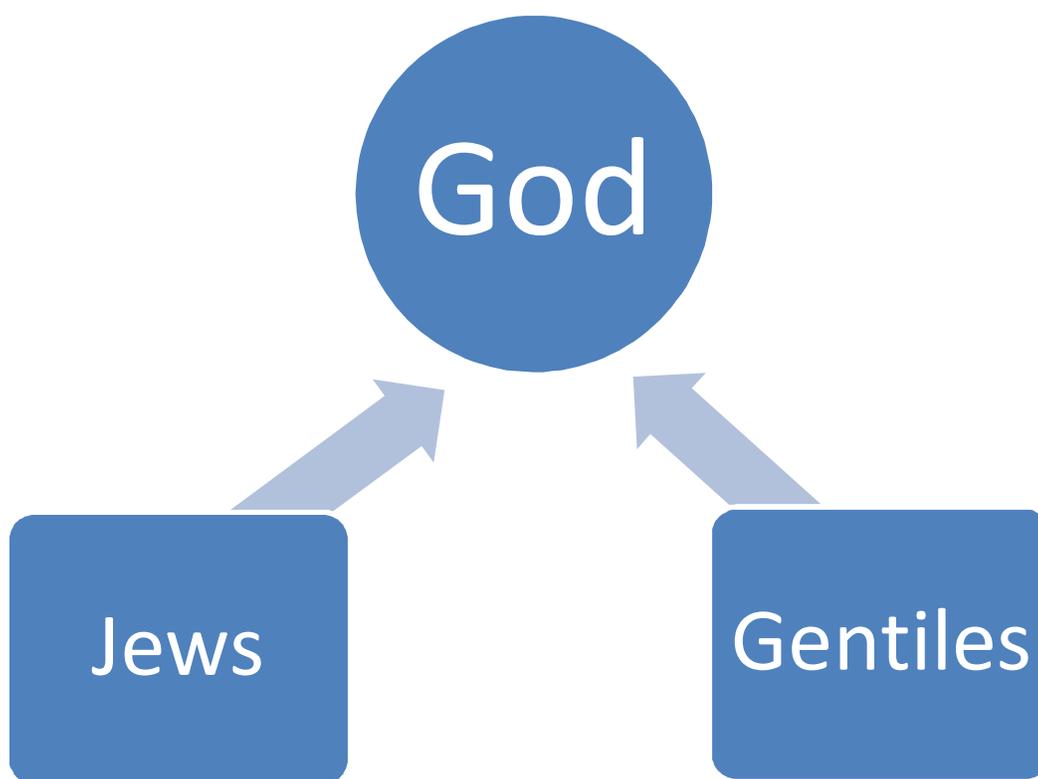
Verse 16

καί] The conjunction joins the two subjunctive verbs that are associated with ἵνα in verse 15. The next clause will express the second part of the two-fold purpose in Christ’s making peace.

ἀποκαταλλάξῃ] Aor. Act. Subj. 3pers. Sing. ἀποκαταλλάσσω (ἀπό + κατά + ἀλλάσσω) “to reconcile.” This word is not attested in earlier Greek, though the simpler form, καταλλάσσω is found as early as the 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> cent. BC Plato; the entirely simplex form ἀλλάσσω is found as early as Euripides in the 5<sup>th</sup> cent. BC. Our doubly compounded form (ἀποκαταλλάσσω) occurs only 3 times in the New Testament (here, and Col 1:20, 22); whereas καταλλάσσω occurs 6 times (Ro 5:10 [2x]; 1Co 7:11; 2Co 5:18, 19, 20), and ἀλλάσσω also occurs 6 times (Ac 6:14; Ro 1:23; 1Co 15:51, 52; Gal 4:20; Heb 1:12). The simplex form ἀλλάσσω does not mean “reconcile,” but rather has the idea of “to change,” “to alter,” “to give in exchange for,” “to barter,” “to

*interchange,*” “*to alternate.*” Both καταλλάσσω and ἀποκαταλλάσσω have the idea of *to reconcile,*” where it is assumed that parties previously at some sort of personal impasse in their relationship have made some sort of meaningful exchange that gets them beyond that impasse.

In our text Christ is the one who acts to make reconciliation between sinful men and God. But the reconciling action here is complex, because the “sinful men” is really composed of two groups: sinful Jews and sinful Gentiles. Each group of sinful men is reconciled to God, and this draws the two sinful groups closer to each other. Consider the following diagram:



τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους] Acc. Masc. Pl. definite article + Acc. Masc. Pl. ἀμφότεροι “*both.*” This is the direct object of ἀποκαταλλάξῃ. This word has already appeared in our text (see comments on v.14 *supra*). However, in verse 14, the adjective was put in the neuter gender to express “general characteristics”; whereas, here it is masculine to highlight the distinct persons. These are

persons that are being reconciled, not concepts or ideas! The adjective will occur once again in verse 18, where it is also in the masculine.

ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι] Preposition ἐν “in” + Dat. Neut. Sing. εἷς “one” + Dat. Neut. Sing. σῶμα “body.” The prepositional phrase is the first in a series of three adverbial phrases, all modifying ἀποκαταλλάξει. This phrase, using ἐν, signifies the sphere in which the reconciliation takes place. It is possible to see this as a reference to Christ’s physical body which was crucified. If so, then the phrase expresses means, not sphere. However, Paul previously used the word σὰρξ (“flesh”) to refer to Christ’s crucified body. Most likely the term σῶμα (“body”) is used of the church as it clearly is in six of the eight occurrences of this term in Ephesians (1:23; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:23, 30). The only exception to this usage in Ephesians is 5:28 where it refers to a husband’s “body,” but even there, the husband’s body is used as an analogy to the body of Christ which is the church.

τῷ θεῷ] Dat. Masc. Sing. definite article + Dat. Masc. Sing. θεός “God.” Indirect Object of ἀποκαταλλάξει. This is the second of the three adverbial phrases modifying ἀποκαταλλάξει (see comment *supra* on ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι). This phrase expresses the goal of the reconciliation.

διὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ] Preposition διὰ “through” (with a genitive object) + Gen. Masc. Sing. definite article + Gen. Masc. Sing. σταυρός “cross.” This prepositional phrase is the second in a series of three adverbial phrases modifying ἀποκαταλλάξει (see comment *supra* on ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι). Here the force of διὰ is to express the means by which the reconciliation was effected.

ἀποκτείνας] Aor. Act. Ptcpl. Nom. Masc. Sing. ἀποκτείνω “to kill,” “to put to death.” The participle is circumstantial to the main clause of verse 14, Ἄυτὸς γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ εἰρήνη ἡμῶν (“For He is our peace”), and expresses the cause. He is our peace because He has put to death the enmity. The aorist tense is constative, as with previous aorists in this passage.

τὴν ἔχθραν] Acc. Fem. Sing. definite article + Acc. Fem. Sing. ἔχθρα “enmity.” See comments on this word in verse 14.

ἐν αὐτῷ] Preposition ἐν “in” or “by” + Dat. Masc. Sing. 3<sup>rd</sup> Personal Pronoun. The prepositional phrase is adverbial, modifying ἀποκτείνας. But what is the antecedent of αὐτῷ? It might refer back to Jesus Christ, as with other 3<sup>rd</sup> Personal Pronouns in this context;<sup>34</sup> however, the nearer antecedent is σταυροῦ. Thus, the phrase expresses the means by which the enmity was slain. The parallel with Colossians 2:14 is striking.

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<sup>34</sup> Lincoln, 146.

## Verse 17

καί] The conjunction joins this clause to the main clause of verse 14 as a coordinate, connective clause. “He is our peace ... *and* He proclaimed peace.”

ἐλθών] Aor. Act. Ptcpl. Nom. Masc. Sing. ἔρχομαι “*to go*,” “*to come*.” The participle is circumstantial to εὐηγγελίσατο. Since both the participle and the main verb are in the aorist, the participle can express contemporaneous time. The “coming” here is probably a reference to the coming of Christ in the Holy Spirit on Pentecost to preach the gospel through the apostles.

εὐηγγελίσατο] Aor. Mid. Ind. 3pers. Sing. εὐαγγελίζω “*to bring good news*,” “*to announce good news*”; mid., “*to proclaim*,” “*to preach*.” This verb is used in the NT a number of times in the middle voice: Luke 4:43 of Jesus’ preaching the gospel of the kingdom in His early Galilean ministry, Acts 8:35 of Philip’s preaching the gospel of the crucified risen Christ at his martyrdom, Acts 13:32 of Paul and Barnabas’ preaching the gospel in the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch, 1 Corinthians 15:1, 2 of Paul’s preaching of the gospel generally, 2 Corinthians 11:7 of Paul’s preaching the gospel to the Corinthians in particular, Galatians 1:8 of Paul’s preaching the gospel to the Galatians, Galatians 1:16 of Paul’s preaching generally among the Gentiles, and Ephesians 3:8 of Paul’s preaching generally among the Gentiles. The middle voice may be expressive of the personal interest on the part of the preacher in the message he brings.

εἰρήνην] Acc. Fem. Sing. εἰρήνη “*peace*.” Direct object of εὐηγγελίσατο. Reconciliation between man and God results in peace between man and man. Here, as in the previous references to εἰρήνη in this passage (vv. 14, 15), the reference is to peace between Jew and Gentile. It is seen as the content of the gospel only secondarily. When Paul says that Christ “preached peace,” he employs a metonymy whereby he substitutes the result for the actual message. The message itself is a message of man being reconciled to God (v. 16; cf. 2Co 5:18ff.), but its result is that peace is established between such reconciled men.

ὑμῖν] Dat. Masc. Pl. 2 Pers. Pron. Antecedent is the Gentile believers in the Ephesian congregation. The Dative is Dative of Interest (Advantage). The message was proclaimed for the advantage of the Gentile believers.

τοῖς μακρὰν] Dat. Masc. Pl. definite article + μακρὰν an adverb meaning “*far*.” On the term μακρὰν, see comments *supra* at verse 13. The article substantivizes this adverb and places it in apposition to ὑμῖν.

καί] The conjunction joins an omitted second occurrence of εὐηγγελίσατο to the first occurrence at the beginning of the verse. “He proclaimed peace to you ... and [He proclaimed] peace to those who were near.”

εἰρήνην] Acc. Fem. Sing. εἰρήνη “*peace*.” Direct object of an implied second occurrence of εὐηγγελίσατο. See comments on εἰρήνην *supra* earlier in this verse.

τοῖς ἐγγύς] Dat. Masc. Pl. definite article + ἐγγύς an adverb meaning “near.” The article substantivizes ἐγγύς so that it means something like “those who are near.” The Dative is a Dative of Interest (Advantage) to the implied second occurrence of εὐηγγελίσατο in this verse. On the meaning of the term ἐγγύς, see comments *supra* on verse 13.

#### Verse 18

ὅτι] The conjunction introduces the cause of Christ’s proclaiming peace to the Jews (those near) and Gentiles (those far). The argument is similar to that in verse 16, where both, being *reconciled* to God are thereby brought near to each other. Here, as both *approach* God they are brought near each other. The same diagram used to illustrate ἀποκαταλλάξῃ in verse 16 can be used to illustrate the argument here in this verse.

δι’ αὐτοῦ] Preposition διὰ “through” (with a genitive object) + Gen. Masc. Sing. 3<sup>rd</sup> Personal Pronoun. The antecedent of the pronoun looks back to the subject of εὐηγγελίσατο of the previous verse, and ultimately back to Χριστοῦ of verse 13. The prepositional phrase is adverbial, modifying ἔχομεν, and expresses the agency by whom we have access to God. There is a dual agency expressed in this verse, the other Agent is the “Spirit”; see additional comments *infra* on the prepositional phrase ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι.

ἔχομεν] Pres. Act. Ind. 3pers. Pl. ἔχω “to have.” The verb serves as the main verb of the ὅτι clause. The present tense is durative and expresses the believers continuous possession of access to God through Jesus Christ.

τὴν προσαγωγήν] Acc. Fem. Sing. definite article + Acc. Fem. Sing. προσαγωγή “access.” Access to God was limited both for Jew and Gentile under the previous (Mosaic) administration/dispensation. Gentiles, of course, were excluded from approaching Yahveh’s temple (see discussion *supra* under μεσότοιχον, v. 14). But even Jews who were not priests, though there was access to the altar of burnt offerings, there was still no access to the inner temple courts and rooms. Only the Levites had access to the area beyond the altar, and only priests could enter the holy place. The holy of holies, the actual dwelling place of Yahweh, was totally inaccessible to any but the High Priest, and he only had access one day a year, on *Yom Kippur*, the Day of Atonement. This high priestly access on *Yom Kippur* is described in Leviticus 16. One of the prominent features of the Mosaic dispensation was the holiness of God. His holiness spoke of His transcendence, His separateness from the people. By way of contrast, the present dispensation features God’s immanence, His nearness, and the access that God’s people have to Him; see also, Eph 3:12; Ro 5:2.

οἱ ἀμφοτέροι] Nom. Masc. Pl. definite article + Nom. Masc. Pl. ἀμφοτέροι “both.” The article is used to substantivize the adjective, making it the subject of ἔχομεν. ἀμφοτέροι here, as in verses 14 and 16 (see comments there), refers to both Jews and Gentiles.

ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι] Preposition ἐν “in” + Dat. Neut. Sing. εἷς “one” + Dat. Neut. Sing. πνεῦμα “Spirit.” The prepositional phrase is adverbial, modifying ἔχομεν, expressing agency. The preposition ἐν might express sphere in some contexts;<sup>35</sup> however, here in Eph 2, the sphere of Christian position and walk in the mind of the author is ἐν Χριστῷ (cf. v. 13). 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. ἐν in this passage probably denotes means or instrument. This is the second expression of agency for this verb, the first being expressed by δι’ αὐτοῦ. Though Greek may sometimes use διὰ with the genitive to express personal agency, while ἐν with the dative expresses impersonal means, certainly ἐν with the dative is found in the NT used of personal agency.<sup>36</sup> However, here the change of prepositions is probably due more either to grammatical gender (πνεῦμα being grammatically neuter, though conceptually masculine [i.e., personal]), not implying that the Holy Spirit is somehow impersonal, or simply as a way of distinguishing between Christ and the Holy Spirit.

Compare verse 16 ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι (“in one body”); the combination of “one body” and “one Spirit” will occur again in Eph 4:4.

πρὸς τὸν πατέρα] Preposition πρὸς + Acc. Masc. Sing. definite article + Acc. Masc. Sing. πατήρ “father.” 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 Mosaic dispensation.

The noun πατήρ, when used of God is definite in such contexts, even without the article; however, like many Greek substantives, it often occurs with the article anyway. It functions much like a proper noun. Apart from the vocative and in expressions where it is in apposition to θεός, it usually takes the article.

### III. Conclusion: Gentiles are included with Jews as the people of God, 19-22

#### Verse 19

##### A. Pictured as Citizenship in a Commonwealth, 19

ἄρα οὖν] The normal inferential force of ἄρα is strengthened by the addition of οὖν.<sup>37</sup> This strong inferential marker is used to transition into the conclusion of the passage.

οὐκέτι] Adverb meaning “no longer” (a compound of οὐ (“no, not”) and ἔτι “still, yet”). All through this paragraph, the contrast has been between the condition of Jews and Gentiles under the Mosaic dispensation vs. the condition of Jews and Gentiles under the present dispensation.

<sup>35</sup> Lincoln (p. 18) sees it as expressing sphere here in Eph 2:18.

<sup>36</sup> BDF §219(1).

<sup>37</sup> BDF §451(2)(b).

ἐστε] Pres. Ind. 2Pers. Pl. εἰμί “*to be*,” main verb of this sentence.

ξένοι] Nom. Masc. Pl. ξένος “*stranger*,” “*alien*.” Predicate nominative to ἐστε.  
See comments on this word in verse 12.

καί] The conjunction joins ξένοι and πάροικοι as the two parts of a compound predicate nominative to ἐστε.

πάροικοι] Nom. Masc. Pl. πάροικος “*stranger*,” “*alien*.” Predicate nominative to ἐστε.

ἀλλά] Strong adversative conjunction, “*but*,” making a contrast between οὐκέτι ἐστε (“you are no longer”) and ἐστε (“you are”).

συμπολίται] Nom. Masc. Pl. συμπολίτης “*fellow-citizen*.” This is the only NT occurrence of this word, though it occurs in classical as early as Euripides in the 5<sup>th</sup> cent. BC. Here, it is the predicate nominative to ἐστε. 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). These Gentile believers are no more citizens of Israel than they were stones in a temple. The language here is clearly that of metaphor.

τῶν ἁγίων] Gen. Masc. Pl. definite article + Gen. Masc. Pl. ἅγιος “*holy*,” or as a substantive, “*saint*.” The article substantivizes the adjective making it a noun in relation to συμπολίται. As a genitive, it is the genitive of association, “*with the saints*.” The term “*saints*,” here, refers to *all* believers in the church. Neither Jew nor Gentile has second-rate status. All believers are “*fellow-citizens*” together.

καί] The conjunction joins συμπολίται and οἰκεῖοι as two parts of a compound predicate nominative to ἐστε.

οἰκεῖοι] Nom. Masc. Pl. οἰκεῖος, (α), ον in the NT only as a substantive, “*member of a household*.” It is the second part of the compound predicate nominative of ἐστε.

τοῦ θεοῦ] Gen. Masc. Sing. definite article + Gen. Masc. Sing. θεός “*God*,” genitive of possession to οἰκεῖοι.

## B. Pictured as a Building and Temple, 20-22

### 1. The Foundation, 20a

ἐποικοδομηθέντες] Aor. Pass. Ptcp. Nom. Masc. Pl. ἐποικοδομέω “*build on*,” “*build on to*,” “*build up*,” “*edify*.” The participle is circumstantial to ἐστὲ ... 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*.

ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ] Preposition ἐπί “*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.

τῶν ἀποστόλων] Gen. Masc. Pl. definite article + Gen. Masc. Pl. ἀπόστολος “*apostle*.” Genitive of apposition, the apostles *are* the foundation.<sup>38</sup> The article joins ἀποστόλων and προφητῶν very closely together. If the two nouns had been singular, this would constitute a Granville Sharpe’s construction. Since they are plural, however, the construction does not meet the strict requirements of Granville Sharpe. Nevertheless, the two distinct groups (apostles and prophets) are linked together as forming the collective “foundation” of the church. The foundational work of the apostles was primarily to serve as eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus (Ac 1:8, 21, 22), while the prophets’ foundational work was to provide the Word of God for the infant church while they were awaiting the completion of the NT canon (1Co 13:9-10; 2Pe 1:15-21; see also Eph 4:11).

καί] The conjunction joins ἀποστόλων and προφητῶν. See comments in preceding entry.

προφητῶν] Gen. Masc. Pl. προφήτης “*prophet*” joined with ἀποστόλων as the second member in a compound genitive of apposition. See comments *supra* on ἀποστόλων.

## 2. The Cornerstone, 20b

ὄντος] Pres. Ptcpl. Gen. Masc. Sing. εἶμι “*to be*.” The participle forms the verbal element of a genitive absolute construction. The genitive absolute is circumstantial to ἐποικοδομηθέντες, and expresses attendant circumstance. The present tense is used to express contemporaneous time; i.e., at the same time as the prophets and apostles are serving as the foundation, Christ is serving as the cornerstone.

ἀκρογωνιαίου] Gen. Masc. Sing. ἀκρογωνιαῖος “*cornerstone*.” The genitive here forms the predicate genitive to ὄντος. Building practices in the first century Near Eastern culture used a large cornerstone, carefully cut to be perfectly square and plumb, to give the entire building a frame of reference for all three dimensions.<sup>39</sup> Thus, the metaphor fits Christ perfectly, since He is the One who gives direction, purpose, and definition to the church.

αὐτοῦ] Gen. Masc. Sing. 3<sup>rd</sup> Personal Pronoun. Here the pronoun intensifies Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ, “Jesus Christ *himself*.” There is none other that could serve the function of the cornerstone.

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<sup>38</sup> Some commentators prefer to see this as a possessive genitive, claiming that the apostles’ and prophets’ foundation is Christ, on the strength of 1Co 3:10. However 1Co 3 is not really parallel. There, the building is believers’ works that are to be judged. Here, the building is the church, the body of Christ.

<sup>39</sup> The meaning “crowning stone,” or “top stone” of the edifice (TDNT 1, 791-93; TDNT 4, 268-80; Lincoln, 154-56) is to be rejected. The association of the ἀκρογωνιαῖος with the θεμέλιος runs contrary to such an idea. An excellent discussion of the various views is to be found in Hoehner, *Exegetical Commentary*, 404-06.

Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ] Gen. Masc. Sing. Χριστός Ἰησοῦς “*Christ Jesus*.” The genitive case is used here for the subject of the genitive absolute construction.

### 3. The Building Stones, 21-22

#### Verse 21

ἐν ᾧ] Preposition ἐν “*in*” + Dat. Masc. Sing. Relative Pronoun. The antecedent of the pronoun is Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ. There is an interesting mixture of metaphorical and literal use of language here. For the most part, Paul continues the metaphor of a temple building; however, the prepositional phrase here appears to utilize Paul’s frequent use of the expressions “in Christ,” “in Him,” “in Whom” “in the Lord” (later in this verse) where the preposition expresses the sphere in which the Christian relationship exists. This is exactly the point of the metaphor here; however, in the language of the metaphor itself, we might have expected something like ἐφ’ ᾧ, or ἐκ οὗ, since a building is built *upon* the cornerstone, or derives its direction *from* the cornerstone.

πᾶσα] Nom. Fem. Sing. πᾶς “*all*,” “*every*,” “*whole*.” When used without the article in the singular, πᾶς emphasizes “the individual members of the class.”<sup>40</sup> It is nearly impossible to represent this nuance in English translation. Translations such as “the *whole* building,” “the *entire* building,” or “*all* the building” tend to focus on the whole structure, rather than the individual building stones.

οἰκοδομή] Nom. Fem. Sing. οἰκοδομή “*building*.” Subject of αὐξει.

συναρμολογουμένη] Pres. Pass. Ptcpl. Nom. Fem. Sing. συναρμολογέω “*to fit/join together*.” The participle is circumstantial to the main verb αὐξει and expresses the manner or means by which the building grows. This word is not attested in Classical Greek being found only in Christian writers, and occurs only here and in Ephesians 4:16 in the NT. It appears to be a compound of σύν “*together*,” “*with*” + ἁρμονία “*a fastening*,” “*a clamp*”; “*a joining*,” “*a joint*”<sup>41</sup> + λέγω “*to say*,” “*to speak*,” “*to call*,” “*to name*.” The fitting together of stones in a first century temple is magnificently illustrated by the still standing retaining wall around the Herodian temple complex in Jerusalem. This wall built of massive lime stone blocks, some weighing over 100 tons, is built entirely without mortar, and the stones are fitted so carefully and accurately that a knife blade cannot be inserted between them. This wall has survived intact for nearly two millennia in an earthquake prone region of the world! Paul was very familiar with this Herodian temple structure, and may well have had it in mind when he employed this term.

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<sup>40</sup> BDAG, s.v. πᾶς, 1.a.

<sup>41</sup> It was also used musically to refer to *harmony*. In this respect, I find it interesting the Plato uses the word metaphorically to refer to *harmony*, or *concord* among men (Liddell and Scott, s.v. ἁρμονία). Could there be a hint of this notion in Paul’s use of the word in Ephesians? It certainly fits the context, but without more semantic data on the entire term συναρμολογέω, it would be tenuous at best to suggest this connection.

αὕξει] Pres. Act. Ind. 3pers. Sing. αὕξανω/αὕξω “to grow,” “to cause to grow,” “to increase.” This is the main verb of the sentence. The present tense is durative and indicates that the building is in progress. In Jesus’ day, the Jerusalem temple had been in the process of construction for forty-six years (Jn 2:20), and was still in the process of construction for forty more years until its destruction by the Romans. Again, it is possible that the Jerusalem temple provides the model on which Paul’s metaphor is built.

εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον] Preposition εἰς “into” + Acc. Masc. Sing. ναός “temple” + Acc. Neut. Sing. ἅγιος “holy.” The prepositional phrase is adverbial to αὕξει and expresses the goal of the process of increase. The adjective ἅγιος may seem somewhat redundant alongside a noun like ναός; however, Ephesus was renowned for its great temple of Artemis (cf. Acts 19:24-27), and Paul may have used the adjective here for the sake of the Ephesians to contrast Christ’s temple with their city’s well known temple.

ἐν κυρίῳ] Preposition ἐν “in” + Dat. Masc. Sing. of κύριος “Lord.” The prepositional phrase is the second phrase adverbial to αὕξει.<sup>42</sup> For this phrase, see comments *supra* on ἐν ᾧ at the beginning of this verse.

#### Verse 22

ἐν ᾧ] Preposition ἐν + Dat. Masc. Sing. Relative Pronoun. The antecedent of the pronoun is κυρίῳ. This prepositional phrase is adverbial to συνοικοδομεῖσθε and expresses the sphere in which this building activity takes place. See comments *supra* on ἐν ᾧ in verse 21.

ὁμοῖς] Nom. Masc. Pl. Second Personal Pronoun, subject of συνοικοδομεῖσθε. The pronoun is intensive and has reference to the Gentile believers, in contrast to the Jewish believers. Verse 21 looked at the *whole building* (πᾶσα οἰκοδομή) – both Jewish believers and Gentile believers. Here the focus is on the Gentile believers who are built along with the Jewish believers (note the prefixed συν on the following συνοικοδομεῖσθε). The Gentiles are privileged to be built along with the Jews into this holy temple.

συνοικοδομεῖσθε] Pres. Pass. Ind. 2pers. Pl. συνοικοδομέω “to build up (together)” (of the various parts of a structure). The present tense is durative. See notes *supra* on αὕξει regarding this durative present. Note also the contrast between this συνοικοδομέω which points to the relationship between Jew and Gentile as different building blocks in this metaphorical temple, and ἐποικοδομέω in verse 20 which looks at the relationship of both Jew and Gentile to the foundation.

εἰς κατοικητήριον] Preposition εἰς “into” + Acc. Neut. Sing. κατοικητήριον “dwelling-place.” The prepositional phrase is adverbial to συνοικοδομεῖσθε

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<sup>42</sup> Hoehner believes this would be redundant, and that therefore the phrase must modify ναὸν ἅγιον (*Exegetical Commentary*, 411). This is a plausible alternative interpretation, but I am not convinced that the phrase is overly redundant being adverbial to αὕξει; it may simply be repetition for the sake of emphasis.

and expresses the goal of the building. κατοικητήριον occurs only here and in Revelation 18:2 (eschatological fallen Babylon becomes a *dwelling-place* for demons) in the NT and is unattested in Classical. The cognate term κατοίκησις “*living quarters*,” “*dwelling*” occurs as early as Thucydides in the fifth cent. BC, and the termination –τήριον frequently indicates a “place where something happens.”<sup>43</sup> The Church is seen as the temple (ναός) of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Corinthians 6:16.

τοῦ θεοῦ] Gen. Masc. Sing. definite article + Gen. Masc. Sing. θεός “*God*.” The genitive expresses possession; it is *God’s* dwelling place.

ἐν πνεύματι] Preposition ἐν “*in*,” “*by*” + Dat. Neut. Sing. πνεῦμα “*Spirit*.” The prepositional phrase is adverbial to συνοικοδομεῖσθε and expresses the means<sup>44</sup> by which this building process takes place.<sup>45</sup> This is conceptually very much like the baptizing ministry of the Holy Spirit, by which the Spirit places believers into the body of Christ (1Co 12:13).

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<sup>43</sup> BDAG, *s.v.* κατοικητήριον, also BDF §109(9).

<sup>44</sup> Abbott takes it as both means and sphere: “He is at once the means and the element” (p. 42). It can mean one or the other, but not both. The sphere is expressed by ἐν ᾧ, thus, “by the Spirit” probably expresses means, not sphere.

<sup>45</sup> Hoehner (*Exegetical Commentary*, 414) believes the phrase is too far removed from the verb to be adverbial, and therefore understands it as being adjectival to κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ. While this is a possible alternative interpretation, it must be kept in mind that the vast majority of prepositional phrases are adverbial, and one would need a compelling reason not to understand this one as adverbial. Distance from the governing verb is not such a compelling reason in Pauline literature!