

Ephesians 2:11-22^{vi}

So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision”— a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands— remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

^{vi} **About Ephesians 2:11-22**

Today’s reading explains the consequences of Christ’s saving work. The division between Gentile and Jew is as now obsolete and the distinguishing characteristic of circumcision abolished.

The Gentiles are reminded of their former state of separation from God and from Israel. They

had no part in the hope of the Messiah or in the promises made to the covenant people. But they have now been “brought near” (v. 13)—a term used by the rabbis for Gentile proselytes—when Jesus freely surrendered his life and sealed the new covenant as a universal possibility for both Jew and Gentile.

Verses 14-18 are a hymn to the peace of Christ, who has broken down the wall of the law that kept Jew and Gentile apart. In the temple at Jerusalem there was an actual stone wall, dividing the outer and the inner courts of the temple, beyond which Gentiles could not go. This is symbolic of the whole system of separation that divided peoples now united in Christ.

Jesus has brought together those “far off...and near” (Isaiah 57:19). In Christ, “one new humanity...in one body” (vv. 15-16) is created—the Church. In the Church the divided groups of humankind are reconciled to one another and together are reconciled to God. Then the image shifts from body to household. The Gentiles are “no longer strangers...but citizens with the saints” (v. 19) built up into the same “dwelling place for God” (v. 22; see 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Peter 2:4), whose cornerstone is Christ Jesus (Isaiah 28:16; Matthew. 21:42).