

# I Belong

Series: Becoming Who We Are (Engaging Ephesians)

February 2, 2014 - Brad Bailey

## Intro

Today is the Super Bowl... Any Seattle Seahawk fans? Any Denver Bronco fans?

It's great to be a fan...to have a team that you can identify with.

If you don't have a strong identity with a team...you sort of feel you're missing something.

In a very mild way...it reflects our desire is to belong.

And for some football fans...there is a major sense of identity. (Some images of fans)

> Identity is rooted in belonging...and in what we belong to.

It also reflects that belonging is always defined by our differences... by being in or out. Once you are in...we raise the wall that we once found so painful.

> The **deepest pain** is to be **excluded**. [1]

- An **adolescent boy** is **never picked for the team**.

- A **teenage girl** is **shunned** by those she had **thought were her friends**.

- Someone is **de-friended on social media** for all to see.

- The romantic love that **turns away...in silence**.

- One gets "**terminated**" from their **work place community**... and it brings a wall of isolation.

All of these are **reflections of the pain** of being **excluded**. Luckily they are **generally** just **temporary** and we **can navigate** our way through them. But could they be **faint echoes** of what a **greater exclusion**...of being ultimately excluded...**eternally isolated**? That is what the Scriptures refer to as **hell...an outer darkness**.

> **As we continue our series**.... we face the question: Do you belong? the Apostle Paul... is declaring the big picture ...the divine drama. This is where we find ourselves. The playwright entered the play in Christ.... and called human lives back to the creator... and Paul explaining that storyline.

Last week... separated from God as the source of life....means we are dead...dead already.... for we must face judgment...**BUT GOD**.... rescued us.

**But if we're Gentiles, we have never belonged to God's people and purposes.**

**So do we really belong?**

**Lets pick up in Ephesians 2:11...**

**[Separation: Hopelessly Outside (2:11-12)]**

**Ephesians 2:11-12 (NLT)**

<sup>11</sup> Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders. You were called "uncircumcised heathens" by the Jews, who were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts. <sup>12</sup> In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them. You lived in this world without God and without hope.

To understand who you are...you **need to understand what you were** and the significance of what has changed.

**So Paul begins, "Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders."**

Paul begins by declaring the state of utter **separation and being Hopelessly Outside...that all Gentiles faced.**

The majority of us here are likely Gentiles...and it's **hard to feel** like we are "**outsiders**" among **those gathering to worship God.** But not only did every Gentile understand how they were "outsiders".... it **defined them at the core of their being.**

**We have to grasp that Israel was defined** as the **Hebrew people...the Jewish people...**for whom the living God had **called and formed** and made a **covenant** with. And it was the Jewish Messiah-Savior who had come to save the Jews. **No one thought of the Gentiles** as even being a **part of the work of God.** [2]

So Paul begins at this point...writing to primarily Gentiles... and speaking to the reality of what Gentiles were.

**Socially...**you were cast aside as "**uncircumcised heathens.**" Those words **aren't that big** on the **schoolyard of rivalries today...** but what the word "uncircumcised" bore back then...was the **ultimate denouncing** of another as **completely outside of God.** It was a sign of the covenant God had made... of being part of the clean vs. the unclean... of belonging to the people.

And this is what Paul reminded them of, as he now expounds to note what they were without. He notes they were:

***Without Christ.*** ("apart from Christ") Christ was the long awaited Messiah... who God had promised he would send to save he people. He came to the Jews...and at one time... the Gentiles seemed to have no part in God's plan...and no means to God.

***Without citizenship.*** God called the Jews and built them into a nation. They had become the **unusual nation** who were known for understanding that **they were a nation of God's.**

**Israel was God's nation,** in a way that was not true of any Gentile nation. Now imagine if you were to live amongst them. A Gentile could enter the nation as a proselyte, but **they were never seen as the same as true citizens.** They were always **second class...**outsiders.

Many **non-European immigrants** have **felt that way in the United States.** Even when there families have lived here for generations...even when they have become equal citizens... the evil of racial superiority will treat one as a second class person who never really belongs. For a Gentile it was far more than this. They were simply not nor ever would be deemed true citizens...and they were openly despised.

***Without covenant promises.*** Imagine if God had made a covenant with your nation and with every person who belonged by ancestry to that nation. Imagine if you lived as one God had bound Himself with...and continually proved Himself with over history. You would feel like you were the ultimate "insider."

While the blessing of the Gentiles is included in God's covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3), **God did not make any covenants with the Gentile nations.** The Gentiles were "**aliens**" and "**strangers**"—and the Jews never let them forget it.

Many of the **Pharisees would pray daily,** "**O God, I give thanks that I am a Jew, not a Gentile.**"

***Without God.*** The heathen had plenty of man-made gods. But the pagan, no matter how religious or moral he might have been, did not know the true God. [3]

**Without hope.** Historians tell us that a great cloud of hopelessness covered the ancient world. Philosophies were empty; traditions were disappearing; religions were powerless to help men face either life or death. People longed to pierce the veil and get some message of hope from the other side, but there was none (1 Thes. 4:13–18).

**So Paul begins, "Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders."** You didn't belong to God's nation, God's people, or God Himself.

All of this was **captured** in the very real **walls of the temple**. [4]

There was a **wall in the Jewish temple**, separating the **court of the Gentiles** from the rest of the temple areas. Imagine...there is where God has made a place to dwell...and there are his chosen people...and their priest. But here is the wall that keeps me out. **Archeologists have discovered the inscription from Herod's temple, and it reads like this:**

**"No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death."**

Separated from God and his people. Excluded. Outside.

Now many of us may not feel such a depth of exclusion... we may have that Gentile experience. So Paul might not say to us...."remember" you were outsiders...but "realize" you were outsiders. You were once separated ...with no hope. As people began to ponder what spiritual separation from God meant....the first term for hell was Ghehena... which referred to the trash heaps outside the city walls... where the refuse would burn. that is ultimate separation.

**So lets listen to what the text next declares...**

**[Reconciliation: What God Has Done (2:13–18)]**

**Ephesians 2:13-18 (NLT)**

<sup>13</sup> **But now** you have been **united with Christ** Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been **brought near** to him through the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For Christ himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles **into one people** when, in his own body on the cross, he **broke down the wall of hostility that separated us**. <sup>15</sup> He did this by ending the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by **creating in himself one new people** from the two groups. <sup>16</sup> Together as one body, Christ **reconciled both groups to God by means of his death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death**. <sup>17</sup> He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from him, and peace to the Jews who were near. <sup>18</sup> Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.

Again... we are **brought before** our **sheer hopelessness**.... exclusion from any hope.

**And then comes the word** that should **pierce our souls** with hope...it is **the word "but."**

Verse 13 he begins... ***"But now you have been united with Christ Jesus."***

Paul here speaks of **Reconciliation: What God Has Done (2:13–18)**

He had 'brought them near'... reconciled them. The word *reconcile* means "to bring together again." [6]

**God had a plan that comes for you...** a peace mission to reconcile you to himself and his purposes... and to all others. Paul describes here the **greatest peace mission** in history: Jesus Christ not only reconciled Jews and Gentiles, but He reconciled both to Himself in the one body, the church.

Sin is the great separator in this world. It has been dividing people since the very beginning of human history. When Adam and Eve sinned, they were separated from God. Before long, their sons were separated from each other and Cain killed Abel. The earth was filled with violence (Gen. 6:5–13.) God had called out Abraham and what became the Jewish nation of Israel to be his own... which meant to be different. [5] These differences were essential in saving creation. He gave them His Law...His Word. His Torah to shape them as His own.

But His Law was not the end. **Rules help understand what is good but they don't make us good.** Ultimately we cannot be made right with God by rules.

God had never planned for us to be made right through the rules...but to ultimately come and save us with his righteousness...and mercy. So in Christ God bears our consequences...and gives us his "rightness"...his righteousness.

It was a **new covenant**. God had made a covenant with the people of Israel... and involved the **giving of the Law** which would shape them as God's people. But all along God had said that he would ultimately bless the whole world through them...through Abrahams lineage. That is what the Messiah brought... a savior that came through the Jewish people...but to save the whole world.

**What the Law could not do** was reconcile anyone to God. But God had always planned to reveal **His mercy**...through **His own sacrifice**...and to make a **new covenant** based on the death in which he bore our sin and separation upon Himself.

**So in Christ fulfilling the Law in himself...and reconciling us to God...** "he ended the system of law with its commandments and regulations. He made peace between Jews and Gentiles." **The cause of that enmity was the Law, because the Law made a definite distinction between Jews and Gentiles...** between the clean and unclean (Lev. 11:44–47). **By fulfilling the demands of the Law in His righteous life, and by bearing the curse of the Law in His sacrificial death (Gal. 3:10–13), Jesus removed the legal barrier that separated Jew from Gentile.**

In order for Jews and Gentiles to be reconciled, the **wall had to be destroyed**, and this Jesus did on the cross. The cost of destroying the enmity was the blood of Christ. **When He died, the veil in the temple was literally torn in two, and the wall of separation (figuratively) was torn down.**

So now,

**Romans 10:12-13 (NIV)**

"...there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

What the **common ground?**

**Calling on God to save us.** We could say that **our most fundamental** start to identity begins with being **sinner**s. In fact, if you could tell someone anything about you... I don't think anything will open up more connection than choosing to identify yourself as a sinner.

It's become common today for people to express that Christianity is too "exclusive." In our age of tolerance, people want to believe that they accept everyone...and don't judge anything. SO the idea of any one God or belief or truth is a problem.

But if we explore more...it becomes clearer that the idea of what is exclusive is not so clear. If we presume that there may be a personal Creator who is good...and then consider how people might be included in life with such goodness...people often express that they think people should be accepted because they are pretty good...generally good...try to be good. So this suggests that people who are good would be included and people who are bad should not be excluded. That doesn't sound very inclusive. And if we were to explore this more...who is good and bad is defined by the person who is suggesting this. Or perhaps people feel that everyone should be mad to enter God's reign. But that implies people who don't want to be. And that raises some problems.

The Scriptures tell us that "whoever will" may come. It's not our will that provides the means...God provides the means... and so it's grace. It is such grace that we choose and such grace that unites us.

This grace is the basis for a **new covenant for all**...and which forms a **"new people" ...a new humanity**.

God says "he... united Jews and Gentiles **into one people** ...and was **creating in himself one new people** from the two groups.

This one new man **isn't some hybrid** between Jew and Gentile... but **completely new**.

It's **kind of like a wedding**. In a wedding there are a husband and a wife, a bride and a groom, and they come together. He doesn't join her family; she doesn't join his family. Together, the two become what? One, and they make a new family that has some elements and aspects of their former family, but it's a totally new family. And do you know what that new family is called? The Church.

This New Humanity...this **"one new people" is the body of Christ... the church**.

**It redefines the whole nature of belonging.**

It is the end of all privilege. At the core of exclusion...and hostility...is identity that carries with it superiority and privilege.

This is what we must face in all of our differences. As every difference becomes a means to identify our place...our belonging.

But the new humanity... is defined by God restoring any and all children who receive His grace through Christ.

**One cannot identify with the new humanity based on anything but the common grace of our common Father.**

**It was HARD for them...and it's hard for us.**

We've spent our whole lives finding our identity on other things.

At the high school lunch table... at one table you'll see the jocks, the athletes...the academics...the list goes on.

We have learned what it means to be white, black, Hispanic, Asian...more than children of God.

Democrats and Republicans.

**The true nature of the church redefines what it means to belong.**

...Lets look at the **final verses** in this section,

### [Unification: Belonging to the New Humanity (2:19–22)]

#### **Ephesians 2:19-22 (NLT)**

<sup>19</sup>So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. <sup>20</sup>Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. <sup>21</sup>We are carefully joined together in him, becoming a holy temple for the Lord. <sup>22</sup>Through him you Gentiles are also being made part of this dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.

**This section begins, "So now..."** He has described what we were... what God has done...and now it time to declare who we are. He describes our

#### **Unification...and what it means to belong together to the New Humanity**

In the closing verses of this chapter, Paul gives three ways that capture our new humanity... our unity.

#### **Through God's Reconciliation in Christ...**

##### **We are Citizens of One New Nation (v. 19a).**

Paul says those who were outside are "no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people." (v. 19)

Imagine never being a citizen....never having a sense of the identity...the security. Never belonging.

Paul says..."You've **just been made a citizen**." And he says to you...**you've just been given your citizenship**...in the new and only nation of God... the only nation that will be lasting. [7]

> You **just got issued a passport**.

Paul goes on..."*You are members of God's family.*"

##### **We are Members of One New Family (v. 19b).**

Not only are we fellow citizens of God's kingdom (a legal relationship) but members of God's family (an intimate relationship).

Through faith in Christ, we enter into God's family, and God becomes our Father. We are all brothers and sisters in the one family, no matter what racial, national, or physical distinctions we may possess.

**Now for some of us...this may seem like a natural flow** from our experience of our natural blood line family. **For some** it may seem like a **loaded idea**. Family **isn't something** we really **want more of**.

I would encourage us to **stop for a moment and be honest** with ourselves about what we really feel about being a part of a new family. It may be helpful to realize **most of our fear** lies in the **disappointments** of our **earthly bonding**. And the disappointment is because those bonds are so fundamental to life itself.

In other words... being bound together with God and His family is at the core of our human nature. It is not an option.

So I would challenge us to rise above our fears...and decide to help begin to develop the family we already are.

> You see, that **person you can't imagine as your brother or sister... well...they already are.** The **question is ...what kind of brother or sister** are you going to be?

### **We are Parts of One New Dwelling (vv. 20–22).**

Paul tells us **we are now God's house... temple... dwelling where God lives by his Spirit.** [8]

Such a dwelling is "**built on the foundation** of the **apostles and the prophets**"...which means **not on our own ideas** but on what is rooted in the work of God in history. And Paul says, "the **cornerstone** is Christ Jesus himself." The Cornerstone... that **primary load-bearing stone** that determines how solid the building was going to be. (*One cornerstone uncovered in Palestine: 570 tons!*)

**So what are we? Living stones.**

**1 Peter 2:5 (NLT)**

**"you are living stones that God is building into his spiritual temple."**

You not only have a place...but a fit. Imagine all who know Christ being separated...diffused like embers of a fire that have been scattered. God's presence would be diffused. Now imagine all gathered... and how the power of God's presence.

### **CLOSING:**

So let me ask you: **Do you belong?** The question is **not** "Do you **feel** like you belong?" The question is **not** "How much you **experience** belonging?" The question is more ultimate: Do you belong?

> God's **plan** is that you belong. God's **provision** is for you to belong.

Part of embracing belonging...is **embracing others.** (I don't mean just hugging each other.) [9]

It mean I give your heart to the **"we" over the "me."**

[At this point invited up a volunteer from each "side" of the gathering...joking they were representing right siders and left siders. Then spoe into them the previous three ways of now relating... they shared a new citizenship...passports that will never expire... in a new nation...the Kingdom of God that will never end. They were family...and that meant learning to relate as brother / sister. They were part of a dwelling in which God's presence sought to have a place to be manifest.]

It means that the differences that we have made our identity...we lay down.

As MD notes, **If you idolize, you demonize.** So, if you idolize your race, you demonize other races; if you idolize your culture, you demonize other cultures; if you idolize your nation, you demonize other nations; if you idolize your gender, you demonize other genders; if you idolize your political party, you demonize other political parties.

Old things may explain us, but they no longer define us in Christ. So, perhaps your previous, primary identity was, "I'm American, or this is my race, or this is my culture, or this is my gender, this is my family, this is our history, this is our tradition." That might explain you,

but it no longer defines you. No longer defines you. Your primary identity is in Christ, which means your primary allegiance is to those who are in Christ.

It means that while I may enjoy preferences...I will **dismantle my prejudices**.

We begin to see in others...that they are wayward children in need of God's fathering love just like we are. We begin to realize His heart for them... and slowly move from exclusion to embrace.

It means that if I am **included**...I include. I become an **includer**.

Jesus Christ died to make reconciliation possible. You and I must live to make the message of reconciliation personal. God has "given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18). We are His ambassadors of peace (2 Cor. 5:20).

### **Communion**

When you receive the element...that which represents the body of Christ... and we receive he who unites us as the new humanity.... we do well to consider who we come as.

Whites...Blacks...Asians... men...women... wealthy...poor... ?

Or fellow citizens of God's Kingdom.... family... the fellow dwelling of God?

(Note: If you have not received Christ as your savior and Lord.. please let these elements pass by. )

**Resources:** The title and general thematic idea used for this series on Ephesians was drawn and adapted from Mark Driscoll 'Who Do You Think You Are?: Finding Your True Identity in Christ.' and others who have chosen the theme of identity as a thread through which to engage Ephesians. This message drew a little from Mark's related message, but more from Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Eph 2:11–22 ) (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) and others, including

### **Notes**

1. In recent years colleagues across UCLA, Purdue, and elsewhere found that social rejection activates many of the same brain regions involved in physical pain (Science, 2003).

Rejection can explode into aggression...as those analyzing the cases of school shooters found nearly all suffered from social rejection. From: The Pain Of Social Rejection By Kirsten Weir APA - April 2012, Vol 43, No. 4 - <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/04/rejection.aspx>

It's also been noted that today...these and so many other forms of rejection become more public. We watch shows like Survivor where someone gets kicked off the island...sort of an adult version of musical chairs...where someone has to be cut. Cyber bullying is more humiliating.

From - Is rejection on the rise? APA April 2012, Vol 43, No. 4

<http://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/04/rejection-rise.aspx>

### Research Shows that Loneliness Is Deadly

According to an article in *Slate Magazine*, "Loneliness has doubled: 40 percent of adults in two recent surveys said they were lonely, up from 20 percent in the 1980s." Increased loneliness has lead to the following serous health risks:

Studies of elderly people and social isolation concluded that those without adequate social interaction were twice as likely to die early.

The increased mortality risk [from loneliness] is comparable to that of smoking and twice as dangerous as obesity.



Social isolation impairs immune function and boosts inflammation, which can lead to arthritis, type II diabetes, and heart disease.

Loneliness is not just making us sick, it is killing us. But, sadly, as a culture we rarely talk about it. John T. Cacioppo, a researcher at the University of Chicago who studies the effects of loneliness, put it this way: "Admitting you are lonely is like holding a big L [for loser] on your forehead." *Jessica Olien, "Loneliness Can Kill You. Don't Let It." Slate Magazine(8-23-13)*

2. It is worth noting that the spiritual plight of the Gentiles was caused not by God but by their own willful sin. Paul said the Gentiles knew the true God but deliberately refused to honor Him (Rom. 1:18–23). Religious history is not a record of man starting with many gods (idolatry) and gradually discovering the one true God.

Rather, it is the sad story of man knowing the truth about God and deliberately turning away from it! It is a story of devolution, not evolution! The first eleven chapters of Genesis give the story of the decline of the Gentiles; and from Genesis 12 on (the call of Abraham), it is the story of the Jews. God separated the Jews from the Gentiles that He might be able to save the Gentiles also. "Salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22).

3. The writer of Psalm 115 contrasted the true God with the idols of the heathen.

Ps 115:4-8, "But their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but they cannot smell; they have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but they cannot walk; nor can they utter a sound with their throats. Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them."

4. It was this wall that the Jews thought Paul and his Gentile friends crossed when the Jews attacked him in the temple and threatened to kill him (Acts 21:28–31).

5. Romans 9:1-5 (NIV)

I speak the truth in Christ--I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit-- <sup>2</sup> I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. <sup>3</sup> For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, <sup>4</sup> the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises. <sup>5</sup> Theirs are the patriarchs, and from them is traced the human ancestry of Christ, who is God over all, forever praised! Amen.

6. Access by one Spirit to the Father. The Greek word *prosagoge*, translated "access," is a technical term for the right of free approach into the presence of a king. In the Persian royal court, there was an official called the *prosagogeus* whose function was to introduce people who desired an audience with the king. The image is beautiful and the truth is clear: through Christ we have open access to the Father. On the Cross Jesus flung the door open—in fact, nailed it open so that it could never be closed again—the door into the presence of God. (From Preachers Commentary)

7. Wiersbe regarding a new "nation" of God.

Israel was God's chosen nation, but they rejected their Redeemer and suffered the consequences. The kingdom was taken from them and given to "a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof" (Matt. 21:43). This "new nation" is the church, "a chosen generation . . . a holy nation, a peculiar people" (Ex. 19:6; 1 Peter 2:9). In the Old Testament, the nations were reckoned by their descent from Shem, Ham, or Japheth (Gen. 10). In the Book of Acts, we see these three families united in Christ. In Acts 8, a descendant of Ham is saved, the Ethiopian treasurer; in Acts 9, a descendant of Shem, Saul of Tarsus, who became Paul the apostle; and in Acts 10, the descendants of Japheth, the

Gentiles in the household of the Roman soldier, Cornelius. Sin has divided mankind, but Christ unites by His Spirit. All believers, regardless of national background, belong to that “holy nation” with citizenship in heaven (Phil. 3:20–21). Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Eph 2:11–22). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

#### 8. Bible Knowledge Commentary re becoming the "dwelling of God"

Paul described the church as a great building, a holy temple in which God dwells. This figure of God dwelling in a temple comes from the Old Testament. Paul wrote of the building’s foundation (v. 20), formation (v. 21), and function (v. 22).

2:20. Paul first described the foundation of the building. The reason Gentile believers are “fellow citizens” (v. 19) is that they are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. The “prophets” are of the New Testament era, not the Old Testament. “Prophets” follows the word “apostles” here and in 3:5 and 4:11. These men received the revelation of the mystery of the church in the present Age, which had been hidden in days past, that is, in Old Testament times (3:5).

The words “apostles and prophets” could modify “the foundation.” This could mean (a) that the foundation was built by them, or (b) that the foundation came from them, or (c) that they own a foundation or, as seems best, (d) that they are the foundation. The words could be translated, “the foundation which consists of the apostles and prophets.” This makes the best sense when one sees in 4:11 that the apostles and prophets were gifted men given to the church as its “foundation.”

Furthermore, this fits well in the present context, which states that Christ Jesus Himself is the chief Cornerstone, that is, He is part of the foundation. In ancient building practices “the chief cornerstone” was carefully placed. It was crucial because the entire building was lined up with it.

The church’s foundation, that is, the apostles and prophets, needed to be correctly aligned with Christ. All other believers are built on that foundation, measuring their lives with Christ.

2:21. Paul then discussed the formation of the building. In Christ the whole building is joined together. The ASV has “each several building” (rather than “the whole building”). But it is preferable to understand the Greek to refer to one whole superstructure, perhaps in several parts. The participle translated “is joined together” is *synarmologoumenē*, used only here and in 4:16. It denotes that the various parts of the building are skillfully fitted to each other, not haphazardly thrown together. This structure rises to become (lit., “continually grows [pres. tense] into”) a holy temple in the Lord. This indicates that the church is a living and growing organism, as new believers are included in this temple’s superstructure (cf. 4:15–16; 1 Peter 2:5). Both Jewish and Gentile believers are being “joined together” into this one organism labeled “a holy temple” (cf. “one new man” [Eph. 2:15] and “one body” [v. 16]). The word for temple (*naos*) always refers to the sanctuary within the physical structure in Jerusalem, not to the entire temple area with its open courts (*hieron*).

2:22. Paul now discussed the function of the temple. God places individual believers into the structure; thus it is being built together. The goal of this temple is to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit. In the Old Testament God’s glory was in the temple, which represented His presence with the people. In this Age God dwells in His new temple which is constructed not from inanimate materials but of living believers. The Holy Spirit indwells each individual believer (cf. John 14:17; Rom. 5:5; 8:9, 11; 1 Cor. 2:12; Gal. 3:2; 4:6; 1 John 3:24; 4:13), who is thus a “temple” (1 Cor. 6:19). But the temple in Ephesians 2:21–22 refers to the Holy Spirit’s corporate “dwelling” (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16), His “temple” composed of all Jewish and Gentile believers. “By His Spirit” is literally, “by the Spirit,” as it is translated in Ephesians 3:5.

In conclusion, Paul has shown that though the Gentiles were formerly outside God’s household, they are now one “new man” with Jewish believers. This new entity is like a temple that is structured on the apostles and prophets, with Christ being the chief Cornerstone; it is indwelt by God through the agency of the Holy Spirit.

Hoehner, H. W. (1985). Ephesians. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck, Ed.) (Eph 2:11–3:13). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

9. To embrace others is to join God.

Leviticus 19:34 (NIV)

The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God.

Psalms 68:6 (NIV)

God sets the lonely in families, he leads forth the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.

Revelation 7:9-14 (NIV)

<sup>9</sup> After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. <sup>10</sup> And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb." <sup>11</sup> All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, <sup>12</sup> saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!" <sup>13</sup> Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes--who are they, and where did they come from?" <sup>14</sup> I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."