

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

EPHESIANS 1-2

Several summers ago, Kathy and I vacationed near Sebastian, Florida - home of **the Mel Fisher Treasure Museum**. Mel moved to Florida in 1963 to search for sunken treasure. He made his most famous discovery in 1985, when he found the *Nuestra Señora de Atocha*, a treasure-laden Spanish galleon, that was bound for Madrid, when it sunk in a storm off the Florida coast.

The Atocha yielded the largest underwater treasure in history. Today, you can go to the Sebastian museum and browse *the Atocha's* gold and silver and jewels.

And in a sense, this is what we want to do this morning. We're going to comb through some treasure.

For that's how we should view Paul's letter to the Ephesians. **This book is a treasure chest!** It's full of the spiritual riches we discover when we're *in Christ*.

The book begins, ^{1:1} "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and faithful in Christ Jesus..." I'm glad this letter was delivered to the Ephesians by a courier. If it had been sent via the post office it would've caused confusion.

What do you do with a letter that has two addresses?

Paul writes to believers who are ^{1:1} "in Ephesus," and at the same time ^{1:1} "in Christ Jesus." These believers were living simultaneously in two locations. Physically they were ^{1:1} "in Ephesus," but spiritually they were ^{1:1} "in Christ."

And we also have two locations - two simultaneous addresses - one physical and one spiritual. If Paul were writing to our church today, he would pen, "to the saints who are in Lilburn, and faithful in Christ Jesus."

Paul greets these believers, ^{1:2} "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

^{1:3} Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ..." Wherever you're stationed physically you'll find the location to be limited. For example, Lilburn has no a beachfront, and if you like to snow sky - sorry! Physically speaking, every location has its limitations, but not so with our spiritual address. All God's blessings come to us ^{1:3} *in Christ*.

Spiritually our lives butt up against another world. We're connected by the Holy Spirit to a spiritual realm where we can draw upon the love, and power, and presence, and

peace, and joy of Almighty God.

This means the key to living the Christian life and overcoming sin - *is to avoid getting landlocked*. Don't get tied down to what's tangible and temporal. We need to see ourselves not just *in Lilburn*, but ^{1:3} *in Christ*.

Stay focused on *who you are and what you have as a child of God*. *If we know who we are, we'll live like it. If we know what we have, we'll possess it and use it.*

So for the rest of the chapter Paul takes us on a tour. He acquaints us with our many treasures in Christ.

The treasure chest opens in verse 4, ^{1:4} *“Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love...”* Here's our first blessing - **we're chosen**.

Out of the hordes of humanity who have ever walked this planet God picked you to be His child... This means you didn't just wander into God's family. Your conversion was no fluke. God had His eye on you before the foundation of the world. *Here's a mind blower* - **Jesus went to the cross with you in mind!**

He continues in verse 5, ^{1:5} *“having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself...”*

It's true, in passages like Acts 10:43 it says of Jesus, ^{10:43} *“whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins.”* The emphasis, is that our salvation depends on us choosing God. But the Bible also tells us that when we do believe, we discover God chose us first.

Someone said when we walk into heaven we'll look up and read a banner over the pearly gates that says, *“Whosoever will may come!”* - but after we've entered we'll look at the other side of the banner, and read the words, *“Chosen before the foundation of the world.”*

And Paul adds that we've been predestined for ^{1:5} *“adoption.”* This is a marvelous truth! If you're in Christ, God has adopted you as His son or daughter!

And every adopted child has one big blessing! He or she knows they were wanted! If you're adopted you're no accident - adoptions are not mistakes. Our inclusion into God's family wasn't forced on a reluctant Father. God cherishes us, and sacrificed to make us His own.

And here's why God adopted you, it's ^{1:5} *“according to the good pleasure of His will, ^{1:6} to the praise of the glory of His grace...”* God chose **you** to show off His **grace!**

When I was saved everyone knew there's no way a Bozo like me deserved such favor - no way I did anything to earn God's blessing - it was given freely. You and I are proof that God is full of grace and mercy!

And he continues, by His grace ^{1:6} "He has made us accepted in the Beloved." There's no sweeter emotion than to feel accepted. To be granted full membership.

And ^{1:3} "*in Christ*" we have been accepted into the most exclusive club in the universe - *the family of God*.

Also, ^{1:7} "In Him (i.e. in Christ) we have redemption..." The word ^{1:7} "redemption" means "*to buy back*."

Remember the story of the gingerbread man. As soon as he came out of the oven he popped up from the cookie sheet and began taunting the grandma who'd baked him. He shouted, "Run, run as fast as you can, but nobody can catch a gingerbread man."

And off he ran with grandma nipping at his heels. She chased him up and down the city streets until she found him trying to hide in the window of the bakery.

She grabbed the gingerbread man out of the window, and was leaving when the baker said, "Wait, that'll be ten cents." The grandma pulled out a dime and handed it to the baker. And that's when the sweet lady held the gingerbread man to her chest, and whispered, "First I made you, then I bought you - now, you're really mine."

And if you listen closely you'll hear the Spirit of God whisper the same statement to you. "*First I made you, in Christ I have bought you, now you are really mine!*"

And note how we're redeemed, ^{1:7} "through His blood." The shed blood of Jesus was our purchase price.

The background behind the idea of redemption was Roman slavery. A slave was never just turned loose. He had to be purchased or ransomed to be truly liberated. And for us to be fully free from *the stain of sin* and *slavery of Satan* the price is the sinless blood of Jesus. As the old hymn puts it, "*Would you be free from the burden of sin? Would you o'er evil a victory win? There's wonder-working power in the blood.*"

And notice we were redeemed for ^{1:7} "the forgiveness of sins." God purchased us, not to further enslave us, but to forgive us and bestow on us a new, family status.

Understand, since God takes sin serious and assigns it the penalty of death, *a life has to be taken*. Since blood is what fuels life, to satisfy that penalty *blood has to be shed*. Thus, a sacrifice was necessary.

And over the thousand-plus years of the OT system tens of millions of animals were

sacrificed. Given each bull contained a gallon or two of blood, and each goat a quart - a literal river of blood flowed from the Temple.

But it took only one ultimate, perfect sacrifice to end the carnage. The sinless blood of Jesus has satisfied the penalty for us all. **In Christ we are forgiven!**

There's a company in Michigan that has posted a notice on its bulletin board... "Too err is human. To forgive is company policy!" And forgiveness is company policy in God's Kingdom. It's God's specialty.

In fact, the end of verse 7 tells us the extent of His forgiveness. It's ^{1:7} "according to the riches of His grace."

At times, I look at my bank account and get depressed. *My bills have exceeded my balance.* But what if I were Bill Gates, Jr., *and dad was paying my debts?* I could breathe a sigh of relief. Ole *Bill Sr.* has more than enough to cover *my past, even future bills...*

And realize if we're in Christ, God is our Father. He pays our debts out of ^{1:7} "the riches of His grace." That's why there's more than enough to cover you! He forgives our sin according to His riches, not our merit.

Verse 8 tells us God made His grace to ^{1:8} "abound (or spill over) toward us in all wisdom and prudence, ^{1:9} having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself..." In other words, this lavish grace was God's idea, and no one else's. It pleased Him to be this kind.

^{1:10} "That in the dispensation of the fullness of the times..." Or when *the time is right and the age is over.* Then ^{1:10} "He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth in Him." All history is headed for a grand climax.

Everything will come together ^{1:10} "in Christ," and the redeemed of all the ages will live forever with our Lord.

Verse 11, ^{1:11} "In Him..." And I hope it's sinking in. *Where are our blessings found?* Always "In Him... In Christ..."

^{1:11} "In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will..."

Did you hear of the heirs who gathered to see what the rich old man had left them? They were eager to inherit his substantial fortune. But their hopes were dashed in the will's opening line. The lawyer read, "I, John Jones, of sound mind and body, spent it all."

Don't worry that won't happen to us! God has us an inheritance. His blessings are

for *now and eternity*.

1:12 “That we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of His glory. 1:13 In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation...”

The way the first believers were saved - by faith, they 1:13 “*trusted*”- is the same way the Ephesians were saved, as well as every other Christian since. We’re all saved through grace - by faith - in Christ - for His glory.

1:13 “In whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise...” In the ancient world a seal was a mark of ownership. A merchant would dab his ring into hot wax, and the impression it left was the merchant’s mark. It denoted what belonged to him.

Likewise the Holy Spirit is God’s mark of ownership.

The Holy Spirit’s power and influence in us is proof that we belong to God. Those who are 1:12 “*in Christ*” are people who live impacted by *the Spirit of Christ!*

And the Holy Spirit is a big deal! Verse 14 says He is 1:14 “the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.” The word translated 1:14 “*guarantee*” refers to a purchaser’s “earnest money.” The Holy Spirit is God’s downpayment. He’s the foretaste of the joys of heaven.

But this Greek word, “arrabon” had another meaning. In antiquity it also referred to the dowry or bridal price. A dowry was a financial pledge given by the husband to the family of his bride-to-be. It was proof of his intentions to marry and support their daughter.

And this makes for a beautiful picture when applied to our relationship with Jesus. God’s Spirit is our promise from Jesus - our assurance - that He intends to return and take us as His bride! **That His Spirit lives in us is proof that we’ll one day live with Jesus.**

You and I have been given tremendous blessings in Christ Jesus, *but are we accessing those treasures?*

It reminds me of Henrietta Green, or “*Hetty*” as she was called. She was the world's stingiest miser. When the woman died her estate valued \$95 million, yet she was so tight with her money she ate cold oatmeal each morning because she didn't want to pay to heat up her stove... The poor gal was destructively stingy!

And I’m afraid the church is full of Hetty Greens - *believers who don’t draw on their blessings*. So what if there’s an abundance in your bank account, if you never make a withdrawal. There’re Christians spiritually starving while their pantry is stocked full.

And in the rest of the chapter Paul prays a prayer designed to help us take advantage of our blessings...

Verse 15, ^{1:15} “Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints...”

Notice the link here between **faith in Jesus** and **love for His people**. E. Stanley Jones describes the change in his life the day he met Jesus, “**When I was converted and rose from my knees, the first thing I wanted to do was put my arms around the world.**” Faith creates love.

And Paul prays, ^{1:16} “(I) do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers ^{1:17} that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him...” The Bible teaches us about God, but that's where many Christians stop. *Knowing about God* and *knowing God* are not the same. God wants us to sense His presence, be awed by His glory, warm ourselves by the fire of His love. We need to encounter God not only academically as we fill our minds with His Word, but spiritually as we open up our hearts to Him.

There's an old hymn that reads, “**Beyond the sacred page, I seek Thee, Lord - My spirit pants for Thee, O living Word.**” *Beyond the sacred page* - Paul prays that God will reveal Himself to us personally and intimately.

He also prays that ^{1:18} “**the eyes of your understanding being enlightened...**” *Not only that we'll know the truths of Scripture, but we'll have the insight to apply them.*

How many people saw apples drop from trees before Isaac Newton deduced the law of gravity... James Watt wasn't the first person to see a kettle boil over. But from what he saw he invented the steam engine...

I've seen apples fall and steam rise, but that's all I saw. My understanding lacked eyes to apply the truth in healing ways. We can't be this dense when it comes to spiritual blessings. *We need to make application!*

And Paul lists three truths that we should definitely apply. ^{1:18} “**That you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, ^{1:19} and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power ^{1:20} which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places...**”

Here're the truths Paul wants us to grasp:

First, ^{1:18} **the hope of His calling**. Realize you're a child of God, an heir of the King.

Why crave the fickle attention of *earthly friends - and the world around us* - when you are now somebody special in Christ!

Second, realize God considers you ^{1:18} **His inheritance!** We've mentioned God gives us an inheritance, but He too has an inheritance. *And guess what God longs for?* Hold onto your hat - **It's you!** You and I are what God treasures - to spend eternity with us. We are truly cherished by the One person who really matters.

And third, Paul prays they experience **the greatness of His power.** The same power that raised Christ from the dead and exalted Him to heaven is available to us! Thus, acknowledge your weakness and hold your cup under God's spigot. He wants to fill it to overflowing!

In verse 21 Paul tells us that Jesus has been exalted ^{1:21} **"Far above all principality and power and might and dominion..."** He's above the ranks of men and angels.

^{1:21} **"And" above** ^{1:21} **"every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come,** ^{1:22} **and He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church,** ^{1:23} **which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."** Jesus has authority over men and angels, time and eternity - even over all that goes on in His church. The head of the church is not the pastor, or elders, or the members - it's Jesus Christ!

Ephesians 2 is a rags to riches story... *and the main character is you!* It describes how you grew up on the wrong side of the spiritual tracks, but in Christ you've overcome impossible odds to gain a glorious future...

The story begins, ^{2:1} **"And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins..."** Notice our problem wasn't that we were maladjusted, or immature, or even sick - before we came to Jesus you and I were dead!

Death is separation. Physical death occurs when the spirit leaves the body, while spiritual death is our spirit separated from God. Spiritually speaking we were all stillborn. We've inherited the sin of the first man, Adam. We're born in sin and isolated from the life of God.

And realize there are no degrees to death. A person is either dead or alive. And this is true spiritually. You're either dead or you're not - *in Christ or outside Christ.*

But there are degrees to decay! After death the body gradually degrades. Which reminds me, *know what the great musical composer, Leonard Bernstein, is doing today? He's de-composing - He's dead...*

And likewise, spiritual decay also comes in degrees. Sin corrupts. It rots away our soul. Persist in certain habits and they sour your mind and corrupt your heart.

Some folks are less rotten than others, but everyone without Christ - even good people - are spiritually dead.

Paul continues his description of us before we came to Christ, ^{2:2} “in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience...” Dead in sin, cut off from God - we fell under the influence of Satan and this wicked world.

^{2:3} “Among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.” Under Satan’s sway we seek fulfillment in sensual pleasure and earthly gain. *We look for love in all the wrong places...* Here’s the age-old mistake all of us make - we try to meet spiritual needs with material things and physical thrills. Yet all these attempts only lead to more and more emptiness.

Verse 4, ^{2:4} “But God...” *Are these not the two most comforting words in Scripture?* God saw our dire plight. He could've allowed us to have our way and stumble into eternity without Him, ^{2:4} “but God!” God crashed our party. He loves us enough to intervene in our misery.

^{2:4} “But God who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us...” Notice, God is rich in what we need most, *mercy!* It’s been said, “God’s throne isn’t made of marble, but of mercy.” The Bible calls His throne “the mercyseat.” It’s comforting to know, the place from where God rules, is the place where rebels find forgiveness. *That tells us a lot about God!* He doesn’t just lay down laws. He extends mercy!

Once, an old man was on his deathbed, when a relative whispered, “he’s going to receive his reward.” The dying man heard it, and managed to utter, “No! I’m going to receive mercy.” Only a fool wants what’s coming to him, what he deserves - *I want God’s mercy!*

Paul explains that ^{2:5} “even when we were dead in trespasses, (God) made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)...” God made us alive with spiritual life. He jump started us by His Holy Spirit.

Like a car thief hot-wiring a car. Jesus took hold of God’s wire in one hand, and your burned out wire in the other, and arced a spark. He initiated a connection! Real life starts only when you become alive with God.

That’s why it’s said, “Fear not that your life will come to an end, but rather that it’ll never have a beginning.”

And God has ^{2:6} “raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...”

Air Force One is the President's private 747. It has a protective thermonuclear shield, 19 TV monitors, 85 telephones, 7 lavatories. The President has his own stateroom, dressing room, office, dining room, *and all the Sun Chips, granola, and Bischoff cookies he wants.*

In the event of a nuclear war the President can lift-off on Air Force 1 and sit comfortably above it all...

And similarly, God has us seated in heavenly places. In Christ you have all that you need to sit comfortably and peacefully even when all hell breaks loose in the situations around you. You have an eternal perspective from which you can make the right calls here on Earth.

Ironically, the first **step** in the Christian life is not *a step* at all - it's *a sit!* **The first step is to learn to sit.**

Before we *do anything for God* we need to see *what God has done for us...* Before you *stand* first learn to *sit*. We'll never impact our surroundings in the way God desires until we learn to rest and abide in Christ.

I love verse 7. It tells us what we'll do for all eternity **in heaven...** As a matter of fact, I've got a list - a Top Ten - The Top Ten reasons to look forward to heaven...

10) You can begin the Lord's Prayer, 'Our Father, who art here...' **9)** You can get answers to the question, 'why?' **8)** In heaven '*Touched By An Angel*' isn't just a TV rerun. **7)** Soul music for eternity. **6)** Real golden arches. **5)** A great view. **4)** '*No pain, no gain*' becomes '*no pain, no pain*'. **3)** When you say, '*Oh God,*' you hear, '*What?*' **2)** Mansions with no mortgages. And the **#1** reason to look forward to heaven. "Totally fat free." But in verse 7 we find the real #1 reason to look forward to heaven... ^{2:7} “**That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.**”

It'll take all eternity for Jesus to explain His grace and peel back layer after layer of His kindness to us.

Here's a quote that's funny, but true, "**Millions long for immortality who don't know what to do with themselves on a rainy Saturday afternoon.**" Eternity will be a long time... *will you be bored? How will you spend forever?* There's only one thing to keep us mesmerized for eternity, and that's the grace and sacrifice of Jesus.

Many years ago our family was in the car headed home, and we were discussing how God gives out rewards in eternity. Zach has always been our thinker. Even at

seven years old he was a budding theologian. He asked, "Dad, if we're going to have everything in heaven, what's left for God to give to us as a reward?"

That's a good question. I was groping for an answer, when suddenly my silence was broken by Natalie. My sweet daughter answered for me. She told her brother, "*Zach, God will reward us with a hug and a kiss!*" Could there be a greater reward? God will spend the ages to come showing us ^{2:7} "*His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ.*" He'll fill our eternity with hugs and kisses.

Verse 8, ^{2:8} "*For by grace you have been saved through faith...*" What prompted God to *butt in* and save us? Make no mistake about it - it had nothing to do with *our performance, our goodness, our righteous deeds, our noble heritage*. Paul declares, ^{2:8} "*and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God...*" It's prompted by His grace, and flows from God's heart. It's a gift I receive.

Paul adds, ^{2:9} "*not of works, lest anyone should boast.*" If it were wages earned, then I could brag and take credit. Rather than abolish my pride, salvation would play right into its hands... *God is smarter than that...*

For me to be saved I have to humble myself - *admit I'm slacker...* All salvation costs any of us is our pride!

Then verse 10, ^{2:10} "*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*"

There's an old saying, "*Good works never make us fit for God, but God does make us fit for good works.*"

Like buying a used car, God accepts me "*as is,*" but He doesn't leave me that way. He works to refurbish my life. He goes to work turning ugliness into beauty.

Paul says, ^{2:10} "*we are (God's) workmanship,*" or His "*poema*" - *His poem*. We are God's special work of art. Our lives are the canvas on which God paints. On which He expresses His thoughts, and will, and heart.

^{2:11} "*Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands...*" In the Old Testament, God distinguished Jews from Gentiles by an external, physical mark called circumcision. It highlighted that Jews were a separate people group.

And ^{2:12} "*at that time you (Gentiles) were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.*" God's salvation had been given to Israel, and since Gentiles were alienated from Jews - the Gentiles had no hope.

It was not because God was unwilling to be gracious, but outside of Israel the

Gentiles had limited access to God. In that sense, **race was a barrier to grace.**

2:13 “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

Realize, before Christ, Jews and Gentiles were as far apart as the **North American Hunting Club** and **Peta**. Jews were religious and principled. Gentiles were secular and pragmatic. The two groups had little in common. But when a Jew and Gentile receives the free gift of Jesus the distance between them is erased.

All distinctions are abolished. They’re now standing on common ground. They’re 2:13 “**brought near!**” Or literally in Greek, “**compressed together.**” Through the blood of Jesus, people are united who had little in common.

And this happens today among *males and females, among marrieds and singles, among blacks, whites, and Hispanics, rich and poor, Baby Boomers and Generation Zs, even Bulldogs and Yellow Jackets.* In Christ our blessings overshadow all of our differences.

Verse 14, 2:14 “**For He Himself is our peace...**” Notice, Jesus doesn't give peace. 2:14 “**He Himself is our peace!**”

It’s His presence - *it’s knowing He’s near, holding His hand* - that’s what brings about a sense of peace, and rest, and security. Don’t pray for God’s peace - pray that God will reveal to you the presence of Jesus!

2:14 “**Who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,** 2:15 **having abolished in His flesh the enmity** (the source of our friction and hostility), **that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances.**”

The Law of Moses was the culprit that kept Jews and Gentiles separate. Its customs and rituals created a different culture for Jews that made it difficult for them to relate to Gentiles, and for Gentiles to relate to Jews.

The myriad of distinctions created by the Law also produced a pride in the Jews, and a judgmental spirit.

But by replacing the Law with Jesus, God tore down the reasons for our division. The Law belonged to Jews, but Jesus belongs to anyone who puts faith in Him. The Law was exclusive, for Jews only. Whereas Jesus is inclusive. He’s for everyone who trusts in Him.

Sadly, today there are a whole host of distinctions and traditions that cause people to divide. Only Jesus can transcend those wedges and make us one! He’s the commonality greater than all our differences.

And Jesus intends ^{2:15} “to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace...” We've missed the whole point of Christianity if the Church separates into subcultures - like black churches and white churches - Hispanic, Nigerian, and Ukrainian churches.

What makes racial unity so difficult is that one group proudly holds on to its own diversity and refuses to put a higher value on our collective unity. We believe God wants us to be one, we just disagree over which one.

Whereas, Paul says God is making ^{2:15} “One new man from the two.” All groups need to see that it's diversity isn't as important as our unity. Jesus starts with the two (whatever two they are) and whittles at our differences until we realize little matters supremely but Him.

Verse 16, ^{2:16} “And that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.” Here's the big unifier! We all come to God through the same door - *the cross of Jesus*.

^{2:17} “And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.” Jesus is everyone preacher - both far and near. The Gospel is one size fits all! Its everyman's answer - Jew and Gentile - hipster or button-down - redneck or urban.

^{2:18} “For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.” And here's another unifying factor. The same Spirit of the same Father, dwells in each of us.

^{2:19} “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God...” All this means there's no second class or lower tier citizenship in God's kingdom. There're no green cards or temporary visas. All Heaven's citizens travel on one passport!

And Jesus is building a house - an earthly embassy, an outpost of His kingdom. Verse 20, ^{2:20} “having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone...”

Apostles and prophets played a formative role in the early church. They established doctrine and practice.

But Jesus is the cornerstone - the one load-bearing rock - on which everything rests. Many a church has learned the hard way - remove Him and it all crumbles.

And *in Christ* ^{2:21} “the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, ^{2:22} in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” God is building His Temple on earth.

In the OT, the Temple in Jerusalem was God's dwelling place. But today, His Spirit hangs out in His Church. He dwells among us! The Bible says we're all living stones in God's Temple. *Oh, that our community sees our church as a place where they can meet God!*