



Sermon Notes: August 9, 2015

The Nation

10 of 14 from the teaching series "The Messiah's Community"
Ephesians 2:11-22 • Pastor Paul Bradford

Ephesians 2:11-22

Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)— remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

What we once were. (11-12)

- *Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (which is done in the body by human hands)...*
 - There was a deep, two-way hostility between Jew and Gentile. Even entering the house of a Gentile rendered a Jew unclean.
 - The divide was physical. The Temple was surrounded by a wall to keep foreigners out. At the "Gate Beautiful", the door into the Temple, a sign was posted that, translated from Greek, read, "No foreigner may enter within the barrier and enclosure round the temple. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuring death."
 - The divide was more than physical. Paul continues:
- *...remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.*
 - We weren't always chosen, adopted as sons, forgiven, sealed with the Holy Spirit, and given a glorious inheritance. Non-Jews were 5x outsiders: (1) outside of Christ, (2) outside citizenship in Israel, (3) outside the promises of God, (4) without hope, and (5) without God in the world.

What Jesus Christ has done. (13-18)

- Verse 13 is pivotal - now the good news!
- *But now in Christ Jesus* (personal union) *you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ* (historic sacrifice of Christ on the cross). *For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility...*
- Paul mentions 4 things that Christ accomplished:

- **The abolition of the law and its commandments:** *by setting aside in his flesh* (that is, by his death) *the law with its commands and regulations*. Before Christ, the only way to draw near to God was through the Jews. Heaven and earth met in the temple in Jerusalem, and to enter you had to be a ceremonially clean Jew. When Jesus died, he cleansed us of our sins, making us clean inside and right with God. Walls no longer keep us out - we can be in the very presence of God.
- **The creation of a single new humanity:** *His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace*. This new human race, united by Jesus Christ in himself, spans more than the Jew-Gentile divide: *Here there is no Gentile or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all (Colossians 3:11); There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28)*.
- **The reconciliation of Jew and Gentile to God:** *and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility*. We are reconciled not only to each other, but to God himself. Here “hostility” refers to the hostility between God and man. We were hostile because of our rebellion, and God was hostile towards us because of our sin. But through the cross, both hostilities were dealt with.
- **The proclamation of peace - reconciliation:** *He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit*. Jesus first made peace through the cross, then he proclaimed it - in post resurrection appearances, through the apostles, and through the Church - us. Our “access” is our permission to come before our King and Father.

What we have now become. (19-22)

- *Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers:* We were outsiders, without home, country or God - but all is new. Three realities describe our new identity: Citizens of Israel, Family of God, and Temple of God.
 - **God’s nation:** but fellow citizens with God’s people. We are part of the true Israel - not a replacement, but an addition. We are now all God’s people, children of Abraham in Christ. All the promises of God to Israel are ours, and we can claim them as our own. We don’t have all the laws, for they have been fulfilled in Christ. We have none of the curses, for they have been borne by Christ. But we do have all of the promises. *(2 Corinthians 1:20, Jeremiah 29:11, 1 Peter 2:9-10)*
 - **God’s family:** *and also members of his household*. The metaphor becomes more intimate. All Christians are family - deeper than blood, this is an eternal bond of spirit.
 - **God’s temple:** *built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit*. We are the replacement of the earthly temple, the true temple or dwelling place of God for all eternity. More on this next week!

Our Response

Christ won peace for you on the cross – you are now God’s nation, family and temple – rest in that peace, live in that peace, and share that peace with others.

- Peace: reconciliation with God, his people, and one another.
- Rest in that peace: You have peace with God. You can relax. Don’t strive for what you already have.
- Live in that peace: *Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:3)* - don’t rebuild walls in Christ.
- Share that peace with others: Those who aren’t followers of Christ are still “without God and without Peace in the world.” We are called to share with them the good news of peace through Christ!