

Ephesians 2:11-22 (NIV)**Jew and Gentile Reconciled Through Christ**

¹¹ 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)—¹² 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. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ 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, ¹⁶ and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Ephesians 2:11-22 (HCSB)**Unity in Christ**

¹¹ So then, remember that at one time you were Gentiles in the flesh—called “the uncircumcised” by those called “the circumcised,” which is done in the flesh by human hands. ¹² At that time you were without the Messiah, excluded from the citizenship of Israel, and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus, you who were far away have been brought near by the blood of the Messiah. ¹⁴ For He is our peace, who made both groups one and tore down the dividing wall of hostility. In His flesh, ¹⁵ He made of no effect the law consisting of commands and expressed in regulations, so that He might create in Himself one new man from the two, resulting in peace. ¹⁶ He did this so that He might reconcile both to God in one body through the cross and put the hostility to death by it. ¹⁷ When the Messiah came, He proclaimed the good news of peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹ So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God’s household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone. ²¹ The whole building, being put together by Him, grows into a holy sanctuary in the Lord. ²² You also are being built together for God’s dwelling in the Spirit.

Footnotes: [Ephesians 2:16](#) Or *death in Himself*

Holman Christian Standard Bible - Study Bible¹

Ephesians 2:11-22

2:11-22 This section of Paul's letter touches on three states of being for the recipients: (1) their former corporate condition apart from Christ ([vv. 11-13](#)); (2) their corporate reconciliation in Christ ([vv. 14-18](#)); and (3) their new standing as members of God's new humanity ([vv. 19-22](#)). The theme of this entire section is reconciliation, which involves bringing fallen humanity out of alienation into a state of peace and harmony with God. Jesus, as Reconciler, heals the separation and brokenness created by sin and restores communion between God and people. Reconciliation is not a process by which people gradually become more acceptable to God but a decisive act (like a legal verdict) by which believers are delivered from estrangement to fellowship with God.

2:11-12 Gentiles in the flesh: Not only were the Gentiles morally separated from God ([vv. 1-3](#)), but they were also separated from God's covenant people. They were without any knowledge of Christ. They had no rights in God's family and were not recipients of God's covenants. They were without hope and ultimately without God. Paul did not reproach the Gentiles for their plight; he merely recorded the sad truth of the matter.

2:13 Paul used the strong transitional phrase **But now in Christ Jesus** to point to the Gentiles' new relationship in Christ. The Gentile believers no longer were in their alienated state. They knew Christ, took part in God's covenant blessings, and had hope and fellowship with God. This remarkable turnaround took place "in Christ Jesus." Those who trust in Him have a present salvation and a future hope.

2:14-16 Who made both groups one: This verse emphasizes the centrality of Jesus Christ in bringing Gentiles and Jews together, not only with one another but also with God. Christ is both our **peace** and our Peacemaker. His reconciling death on the cross has made the two—Jews and Gentiles—into one. Gentiles do not become Jews, but the two groups become one at a deeper level than ethnicity, forming Christ's church. The new humanity is greater than the former humanity; God has torn down **the dividing wall of hostility** and removed the hatred forever. By "dividing wall" Paul likely had in mind the area in the Jerusalem temple that separated the court of the Gentiles from the temple. The temple was constructed on an elevated platform. Around it was the court of priests. East of this was the court of Israel. Farther east was the court of women. These three courts were all on the same elevation as the temple. From here a walled platform was five steps away. Fourteen steps away was another wall, which was the outer court of the Gentiles. There was an inscription on this wall warning Gentiles of their ensuing death if they entered the enclosure around the temple. In Christ this dividing wall was broken down, thus banishing the specific commandments that separated Jews from Gentiles because Gentiles did not observe the Jewish law. The burden of the commandments was taken away at the cross in our Lord's crucified body.

1. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Ephesians 2".



Archaeologists have found one full copy and two fragmentary copies of the inscriptions, in Latin and Greek, designed to warn Gentiles about entering the temple in Jerusalem.

The inscription reads: "No foreigner is to go beyond the balustrade and the plaza of the temple zone.

Whoever is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his death which will follow."

2:16 Reconcile both to God: The phrase extends the concept of "peace" and involves the idea of restoration to a unity. The goal was not merely to reconcile two groups but to reconcile them to God. The **one body** is the church, the new humanity, the place of peace. At the cross, everything that caused the disunion was destroyed.

2:18 Access to the Father is available to all who come to Christ. The imagery is of a court official who conducts visitors into the King's presence. Through Christ's reconciling work we have been ushered into God's presence.

2:19 Foreigners means short-term transients, nonresidents with no rights. **Strangers** is a similar word, pointing to resident foreigners who had settled permanently in the country of their choice but who nevertheless had only limited rights. These terms described the Gentiles' position before Christ. **Fellow citizens... and members** are terms that picture the Gentiles' new position. Now they enjoy all the privileges of God's **household**, where "household" describes their togetherness and inclusion. Believers are adopted into God's family and are united with the saints of every era—past, present, and future.

2:20 God's new family is not only a new nation, but also a new building with a distinctive foundation. The **apostles and prophets** in their unique relationship to Christ, exemplified by the authoritative teachings they communicated to the church, are the **foundation**. Paul proclaimed Christ Jesus as the **cornerstone** of the foundation. "Cornerstone" refers to a capstone that holds an entire structure together. In ancient structures it was placed at a right angle joining two walls, with the royal name inscribed on it to signify the ruler who took credit for the building's erection.

2:22 You also are being built together: The description of a building under construction is indicated by the word "grows" (v. 21). It conveys the idea of a dynamic church in the process of expansion. The major theme of union with Christ reappears in Paul's conclusion to this chapter. Paul declared that God's abode is not in the Jerusalem temple but in the church, which is accomplished by the work of the Holy Spirit who indwells the new believing community.

English Standard Version - Study Bible²
Ephesians 2:11-22

2:11-22 Unity and Peace of Christ. Paul continues the theme of the new creation which he introduced in [v. 10](#). In the previous sections God had been the main subject of the action, but now the focus falls on Christ Jesus and his redemption. There are three subsections: [vv. 11-15](#), [16-18](#), and [19-22](#).

2:11-15 Unity of Christ's People. Christ makes peace between Jew and Gentile to unify both in the church. There is only one unified people of God.

2:11 the circumcision. That is, the Jews. To be called “uncircumcised” was a Jewish term of derision (see [1 Sam. 17:26](#) and note on [Acts 15:1](#)) and signified that one was a Gentile, outside the covenant people of God.

2:12 separated. To be separated from OT Israel was to be separated from Christ, because “salvation is from the Jews” ([John 4:22](#); [Rom. 9:4-5](#)). **commonwealth.** For “citizenship” and **strangers**, see note on [Eph. 2:19](#). **covenants of promise.** God administered his OT redemption and promises by his oath-bound covenants ([Luke 1:72-73](#)), the chief of which were the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants. The new covenant fulfills all the divine promises ([2 Cor. 1:20](#); [Heb. 7:20-22](#); [8:6](#); [9:15](#)). Note that Paul believed that all Gentiles apart from Christ were unsaved and **without God**.

2:13 in Christ Jesus. The old division of all people into two classifications, Jews or Gentiles ([Acts 14:5](#); [Rom. 3:29](#); [9:24](#); [1 Cor. 1:23](#)), or Jews and Greeks ([John 7:35](#); [Acts 14:1](#); [18:4](#); [Rom. 3:9](#); [1 Cor. 1:22](#), [24](#); etc.), has been transcended by a new entity in Christ: “the church of God” ([1 Cor. 10:32](#)). **near.** To be brought near means to have access to God (see [Eph. 2:18](#)). **blood.** Christ's substitutionary death. He died not only for the Jews but for all his sheep ([John 10:16](#)), even those who are **far off** (cf. [Acts 2:39](#)).

2:14 peace. This refers to the state of harmonious friendship with God and with one another in the church. **made us both one.** That is, Jews and Gentiles. The opposite of peace is the **hostility** that Christ has quenched. Christ created a unified new people from the old hostile camps ([Col. 3:15](#); cf. [John 17:20-21](#)). **in his flesh.** This refers to Christ's bodily death on the cross (see [Eph. 2:16](#)). **dividing wall.** There was an inscription on the wall of the outer courtyard of the Jerusalem temple warning Gentiles that they would only have themselves to blame for their death if they passed beyond it into the inner courts. Paul may or may not be alluding to this wall, but it well illustrates Christ's reconciliation of all people into a new humanity (see [v. 15](#)).

2:15 law. The additional mention of **commandments** and **ordinances** identifies this as the Mosaic law, which included many commandments that served to separate Israel from the other nations. Thus the law was a “dividing wall” ([v. 14](#)) which Christ has abolished or rendered powerless both by fulfilling it and by removing believers from the law's condemnation (see [Matt. 5:17](#); [Rom. 8:1](#); [Heb. 9:11-14](#); [10:1-10](#)). The result is a **new man**, denoting a new human race under the second Adam (Christ), in whose image the Christian is re-created ([1 Cor. 15:45](#), [49](#); see also [Eph. 4:24](#)).

2:16-18 Peace with God. On the cross, Christ put to death the hostility between Israel and the other nations. In this section the focus shifts to the new, unified group being brought near to God.

2. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Ephesians 2".

2:16-17 reconcile. To bring two parties into peaceful relations, in this case, to satisfy God's wrath against his enemies (see [Rom. 5:1-11](#)). They are now friends ([John 15:13-15](#)) **in one body**, the church (see [Eph. 4:4-5](#)). Paul describes Christ's reconciliation very vividly as **killing the hostility** that stood in the way of peace with God. **preached peace.** Paul refers to Christ's messianic ministry to the whole world both **far** and **near**, alluding to [Isa. 57:19](#).

2:18 access. To draw near to God and to enjoy him forever in a new creation is both mankind's greatest good and the ultimate accomplishment of Christ's earthly work of redemption. **one Spirit.** See note on [4:4](#).

2:19-22 Implications of Christ's Peace. Paul indicates with "So then" that he is drawing out key implications of what he has taught in [vv. 11-18](#). The Christian's assurance is based on these facts.

2:19 So then. Christians have to know and be thoroughly convinced of who they are as **saints and members of the household of God** if they are to live accordingly. **strangers.** As in [v. 12](#) ("commonwealth"), Paul employs a term that was common to political life in ancient cities like Ephesus. Strangers (also [v. 12](#)) were complete foreigners with no rights or privileges (see [Acts 16:20-23](#)); **aliens** were non-citizens who dwelt in the city and were accorded customary privileges as neighbors. Only **citizens** had full protections and rights in the city (see [Acts 21:39](#)).

2:20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. There are several views about the apostles and prophets referred to here:

(1) Some think that they were "foundational" because they proclaimed the very words of God, and some of their words became the books of the NT. Since a "foundation" is laid only once (i.e., at the beginning of the church) there are no more apostles or prophets today, but their function of speaking the words of God has been replaced by the written Bible, which is the foundation today.

(2) Others argue that these "prophets" are very closely tied to apostles in the phrase "the apostles and prophets," and that these prophets do not represent all who had a gift of prophecy in the early church (see note on [1 Cor. 12:10](#)); they were a small group closely associated with the apostles (or else identical to the apostles) to whom God had revealed the mystery of the Gentile inclusion in the church (see [Eph. 3:5](#), where the same phrase, "the apostles and prophets," occurs). In this case ordinary Christians who had the gift of prophecy in Ephesus ([4:11](#)) and other churches (cf. [Acts 11:27](#); [19:6](#); [21:9-10](#); [Rom. 12:6](#); [1 Cor. 12:10](#); [1 Thess. 5:19-21](#); [1 Tim. 1:18](#); [4:14](#)) were not part of the "foundation" but were part of the rest of the building that was being built (that is, the church) and would continue so throughout the church age.

(3) Finally, some think the "prophets" here could be the OT prophets, though the same words in [Eph. 3:5](#) point to prophets of the NT era. **cornerstone.** The critical stone in the corner of the foundation that ensures that a stone building is square and stable.

2:21 joined together. Christians are the temple of God corporately; belonging to the visible church is not optional for followers of Christ. **holy temple.** Where God meets with his people in joyful worship and fellowship. Believers do not have to worship in Jerusalem today because they themselves have become the new temple of God (see [John 4:21](#)).

NLT Life Application Study Bible³

Ephesians 2:11-22

2:11-13 Pious Jews considered all non-Jews (Gentiles) ceremonially unclean. They thought of themselves as pure and clean because of their national heritage and religious ceremonies. Paul pointed out that Jews and Gentiles alike were unclean before God and needed to be cleansed by Christ. In order to realize how great a gift salvation is, we need to remember our former natural, unclean condition. Have you ever felt separate, excluded, hopeless? These verses are for you. No one is alienated from Christ's love or from the body of believers.

2:11-13 Jews and Gentiles alike could be guilty of spiritual pride—Jews for thinking their faith and traditions elevated them above everyone else, Gentiles for trusting in their achievements, power, or position. Spiritual pride blinds us to our own faults and magnifies the faults of others. Be careful not to become proud of your salvation. Instead, humbly thank God for what he has done, and encourage others who might be struggling in their faith.

2:11-16 Before Christ's coming, Gentiles and Jews kept apart from one another. Jews considered Gentiles beyond God's saving power and therefore without hope. Gentiles resented Jewish claims. Christ revealed the total sinfulness of both Jews and Gentiles, and then he offered his salvation to both. Only Christ breaks down the walls of prejudice, reconciles all believers to God, and unifies us in one body.

2:14ff Christ has destroyed the barriers people build between themselves. Because these walls have been removed, we can have real unity with people who are not like us. This is true reconciliation. Because of Christ's death, we are all one ([2:14](#)); our hostility against each other has been put to death ([2:16](#)); we can all have access to the Father by the Holy Spirit ([2:18](#)); we are no longer strangers or foreigners to God ([2:19](#)); and we are all being built into a holy temple with Christ as our chief cornerstone ([2:20, 21](#)).

2:14-22 There are many barriers that can divide us from other Christians: age, appearance, intelligence, political persuasion, economic status, race, theological perspective. One of the best ways to stifle Christ's love is to be friendly with only those people that we like. Fortunately, Christ has knocked down the barriers and has unified all believers in one family. His cross should be the focus of our unity. The Holy Spirit helps us look beyond the barriers to the unity we are called to enjoy.

2:15 By his death, Christ ended the angry resentment between Jews and Gentiles, caused by the Jewish laws that favored the Jews and excluded the Gentiles. Christ died to abolish that whole system of Jewish laws. Then he took the two groups that had been opposed to each other and made them parts of himself. "One new people" means that Christ made a single entity out of the two. Thus, he fused all believers together to become one in himself.

2:17, 18 The Jews were near to God because they already knew of him through the Scriptures and worshiped him in their religious ceremonies. The Gentiles were far away because they knew little or nothing about God. Because neither group could be saved by good deeds, knowledge, or sincerity, both needed to hear about the salvation available through Jesus Christ. Both Jews and Gentiles are now free to come to God through Christ. You have been brought near to him ([2:13](#)).

3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 2002-3.

Our Lives Before and After Christ

<i>Before</i>	<i>After</i>
Dead because of sin	Made alive with Christ
Under God's anger	Shown God's mercy and given salvation
Followed the ways of the world	Stand for Christ and truth
God's enemies	God's children
Enslaved to the devil	Free in Christ to love serve and sit with him
Followed our evil thoughts & desires	Raised up with Christ to glory

2:19-22 A church building is sometimes called God's house. In reality, God's household is not a building but a group of people. He lives in us and shows himself to a watching world through us. People can see that God is love and that Christ is Lord as we live in harmony with each other and in accordance with what God says in his Word. We are citizens of God's Kingdom and members of his household.

2:20 What does it mean to be built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets? It means that the church is not built on modern ideas but rather on the spiritual heritage given to us by the early apostles and prophets of the Christian church.

Life Essentials Study Bible⁴

A Principle to Live By Ephesians #5: Oneness in Christ

from Ephesians 2:11-22

Regardless of our ethnic backgrounds, social status, gender, or race, when we become believers we are to function as members of one family.

There is no question regarding Paul's audience in this section of his letter: he addressed the Gentile believers directly and exhorted them to remember that they were "without hope . . . in the world" ([v. 12](#); see also [1:18](#)). The reason for this hopelessness was that they were "without the Messiah" and "without God." But this miraculously changed when they were redeemed through Christ's blood and forgiven by His grace ([1:7](#); [2:13](#)). The Gentiles were now one in Christ with the covenant people of God ([2:11](#)). Paul expanded on this oneness in his letter to the Galatians:

*There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male or female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. ([Gl 3:28](#))
(See *Gl #6: Unity in Christ*, [p. 1617](#).)*

Here in Ephesians, Paul described the church using two vivid metaphors: God's household, and a holy sanctuary or building. As Gentile believers, they were "fellow citizens" with Jewish believers. Together, they were one household and one "holy sanctuary" in Christ ([Eph 2:19,21](#)).

Reflection and Response

When we are reared in a particular religious environment, why is it easy to develop a sense of elitism and prejudice?

4. Gene Getz, *Life Essentials Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2011), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1628.