

One in Christ
Study 4 – Ephesians – Living In Christ and the World
Ephesians 2:11-22

Message Mate

- Imagine centuries of religion, culture and tradition suddenly changing rapidly. This was the background of Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus Christ. The Jews followed the law which taught them how to live as holy people set apart to reveal God to other nations. In contrast, the Gentiles were ignorant about the law. The Jews worshipped God at the Temple in Jerusalem, but Gentiles had access limited to the outer Court of the Gentiles. Jews and Gentiles typically lived in separation. But when Jews put their faith in Christ and Gentiles put their faith in Christ, they became one new humanity, one body known as the church and the temple where God lives by His Spirit.
- Gentiles who had lived without hope and without God had come to know God through the blood of Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament, blood was used for forgiveness of sins and to purify the temple so that God could come and fill the temple with His presence and glory. Similarly, when a person puts their faith in Jesus, the blood of Christ removes their sin, cleanses them and the Holy Spirit comes and dwells in them.
- Christ is peace and because believers are in Christ, peace can prevail allowing differing groups to become one. The law that separated Jews and Gentiles was dealt with when Jesus fulfilled the Law. The wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles in the Temple was destroyed in Christ when Jesus became the Temple. Separations of Jews and Gentiles are removed when they are all in Christ (as are separations between slaves and free, men and women. Galatians 3:28). This means that people's ethnicity is no longer their primary identity, rather their primary identity is being in Christ. Where there is division or disunity amongst groups of Christians or churches, submit it to Christ and ask Him to bring His peace to those far away and near, so that we may be one in Christ.
- In Christ, the one new humanity, or one body is the Church. We become the temple, the dwelling place of God. The foundation is built on the apostles (leaders and teachers of the Word) and the prophets (those listening to God and speaking His words), with Christ as the chief cornerstone. A healthy church needs to have its foundations in the Word of God, led and empowered by the Holy Spirit with Christ as the Cornerstone. The Church is called to be God's temple filled with His presence and glory. It is by the Holy Spirit that we have access to God (v18) and it is by the Holy Spirit we become the dwelling place of God's presence and glory (v22). Come Holy Spirit!
- May we become the church that reveals and manifests God's presence and glory, so that we can bring God's blessings to our community, so that the community becomes more like God intended it to be.

Some Questions to Consider

1. Has there been a religious and cultural tradition that you grew up with that you have now moved away from? How easy or difficult was that for you? What made it easy or difficult?
2. Was there a time when you felt like the Gentiles had been, without hope or without God? V 13 says, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ." Have you experienced this or know someone who has? Discuss your understanding of the significance of the blood of Christ.
3. The early church grappled with the reality that their primary identity was now "in Christ" and their ethnicity was of secondary importance (as was their slave/free; male/female status. Galatians 3:28) since Christ made those previously divided into "one new humanity" and "one body". Have you experienced something similar in your life, or where can you see relevance for this in our churches today?
4. Read Ephesians 2:19-22 and note all the building related words. Discuss the significance of those "in Christ" being built together as the temple (dwelling place of God), built on the foundations of the apostles (leadership and teaching the Word of God) and prophets (being led by the Holy Spirit) with Christ as the chief cornerstone.
5. In the Old Testament, the people, Tabernacle/Temple were purified by the blood of a sacrificed animal and then the presence and glory of God filled the Tabernacle/Temple. Discuss the parallels of us being cleansed by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 1:7; 2:13) and being filled with the Holy Spirit.
6. Imagine being a church that reveals and manifests God's presence and glory, where there is His peace and freedom, and where people are being healed spiritually, emotionally, physically and relationally. Where people's lives are being transformed in ways that transform their families, workplaces and community. Verses 18 and 22 reveal the importance of the Holy Spirit in giving access to God and us becoming the dwelling place of God. How are you encouraged to pray for the Holy Spirit to come and reveal and manifest God's presence and glory?

Pray –

Read Ephesians 2:13 and 17 and give thanks to God that the blood of Jesus brings us near to God and Christ brings peace to those who were far and near, but are now one new humanity.

Pray according to your response to Question 6 above.