

STUDY FOUR | EPHESIANS 2:11-22

RECONCILED

Our passage today is linked to the previous section by the word 'therefore'. It follows a similar structure, 'what you were', 'what God has done' and 'what you now are'. In our previous study we considered this in relationship to the theme of sinners reconciled to their creator. In this passage, a second (and necessary) type of reconciliation is explored – our reconciliation with one another 'in Christ'. The Jew-Gentile division was one of the most fundamental divisions in the first century world. This particular section is directed at Gentiles (non-Jewish people) to help them remember, firstly, all the things they were lacking when they were without Christ (v11-13), secondly, what Christ did to make the church (v14-18), and thirdly, what the church looks like (v19-22). All these lessons are given, so that we (particularly non-Jewish readers) appreciate and better understand the power of the gospel to make a new humanity. To make his argument, Paul employs a number of phrases and terms historically associated with the people and practices of Israel in the Old Testament, and reapplies them to the new humanity (Jew and Gentile) being formed in Christ.

Circumcision

Circumcision was a badge of God's covenant and an outward sign of being part of God's people. Paul wants to both highlight the historical significance of the badge of circumcision and also remind his readers of the spiritual insignificance of the the practice itself (done by human hands).

Laws and commands

When Jesus speaks (to a Jewish audience) in the sermon on the mount, he says that he has not come to abolish the law, but to fulfil it. It is significant that Old Testament law foreshadows and points forward to Jesus' ministry. In the context of Ephesians (written to a largely non-Jewish audience), Paul is able to say that Christ has also set aside 'the law with its commands and regulations' as the entry point, requirement and marker for the people of God.

Holy temple

In a similar way, God and his people no longer intersect in a physical place. Rather, the holy temple is the people of God being built together in Christ Jesus.

A NEW HUMANITY

APRIL 25

EPHESIANS 1:1-14 REDEEMED

MAY 2

EPHESIANS 1:15-23 RESURRECTED

MAY 9

EPHESIANS 2:1-10 RESTORED

MAY 16

EPHESIANS 2:11-22 RECONCILED

MAY 23

EPHESIANS 3:1-13 REVEALED

MAY 30

EPHESIANS 3:14-21 RENEWED

JUNE 6

EPHESIANS 4:1-16 REBUILT

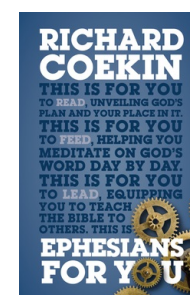
JUNE 13

EPHESIANS 4:17-5:2 REPENTANT

JUNE 20

EPHESIANS 5:3-20 REGENERATE

RESOURCE



RICHARD COEKIN | EPHESIANS FOR YOU

(GOD'S WORD FOR YOU SERIES)

GETTING STARTED [CHOOSE ONE]

1. Discuss a time when you have felt like a foreigner or stranger. What did you feel you were outside of/missing out on?
2. When it comes to a definition of church, what are the 'non negotiables'? What things are more of a cultural preference?

INTO THE TEXT

READ VERSES 11-12

3. Gentile is a word used to describe those outside the covenant of Israel (hence the term 'uncircumcised'). What was the status of the Gentiles prior to the coming of Jesus?
4. Why do you think Paul encourages his readers to 'remember' this reality?

READ VERSES 13-18

5. How does the story change for those Gentiles who come know Christ Jesus?
6. What kind of peace is Paul referring to in these verses? Peace with God or another kind of peace?
7. What might Paul mean by saying that Christ 'set aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations'? How does this square with Jesus' words in Matthew 5:17 'Do not think I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them.'
8. Discuss with your group what 'one new humanity' should look like for God's people. Why do you think the church often doesn't look like this?
9. Do you think some Christians seem more or less spiritual than others? How does vs 18 counter this view?

READ VERSES 19-22

10. How does knowing we are members of God's household shape our understanding of church? Is it something we go to or something we are? Discuss practical ways in which this reality should be reflected in our priorities.
11. What does it mean to be 'built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.' How does this foundation help us recognise true and false churches (see also 1 Cor 3:10-11)?

TAKEAWAY [CHOOSE ONE]

12. How well does the church live up to Paul's vision? Discuss practical ways you can be part of the solution instead of making things worse.
13. When we share our struggles in life, how does knowing who we were without Christ and who we are in him give us a framework through which we can view our difficulties? How can we encourage one another to remember our identity as members of God's household.