

Ephesians 2:11-22 BCP

INTRO SERIES

Having described all the blessings that Christians enjoy in ch1, chapter 2 focuses on the two barriers which stop people from enjoying those blessings. The first is laid out in 2:1-3: our natural state of rebellion against God ('dead in transgressions and sins') – and then in vv4-10 how Christ rescues us from that.

But there is also a second barrier: the Jews were God's chosen people. How do the rest of us get the chance to become one of God's chosen people? Verses 11-22 describe how Jesus not only deals with our sin, but also makes God's blessings available to everyone: Jew and non-Jew alike.

How much do you read of the OT? Psalms, maybe Proverbs and few inspiring passages from Isaiah. But lots we avoid: law, history books, minor prophets. Can be challenging, perplexing, scary.

Challenge: leaves us short of understanding big story of God's salvation. Nowadays we take it for granted that good news of Jesus' love available to everyone – but then it was a fundamental question. God's promises made to Jews: how do we all get to share in that?

'Remember' – what you were: READ v12. 5 omissions: dealt with 3 of them already: separate from Christ, without hope, without God.

Other two: excluded from citizenship... foreigners to covenants. SHOW PASSPORT – badge of citizenship. V1-10 – 2 passports (heaven as well). V11-22 – different issue – where's your passport to God's people, where's your proof of citizenship. Think of covenants made to Abraham, Moses...

BUT NOW... READ v13 – glorious phrase – all down to Jesus. But how?

READ v14-15 – needs explanation! V14 – dividing wall – The ‘dividing wall of hostility’ refers generally to the hostility the Jewish people have always experienced with other nations (sadly this is not a new thing). But it could also refer to the layout of the temple, where the Court of the Jews was separated from the Court of the Gentiles by a huge wall which was several feet thick. Much as the temple curtain was torn in two when Jesus died, so the wall which separated God’s ‘real’ people from the ‘tourists’ was also metaphorically destroyed.

Then v15: what does it mean for Jesus to ‘set aside the law’? Two things, probably: firstly, his death fulfils the ‘righteous requirements of the law’ i.e. that breaking it demands punishment. We have all broken God’s laws, but Jesus takes the punishment for that on our behalf ‘in his flesh’ i.e. when he dies on the cross.

It also has a broader meaning. How did a good Jew prove he was part of God’s people? By obeying the law. But since Jesus has fulfilled the law, now we can be part of God’s people by believing in Jesus and following him. So in that sense too, the law is now ‘set aside’. It is still God’s law and its basic requirements – love God, love others, live out the 10 Commandments – are still just as relevant. But it is not the way we become part of God’s people. That is now through Jesus: he brought us near (v13), he is our peace (v14), he preaches peace to all (v17), our access to God is through him (v18).

So two have become one – Jews and non-Jews can all be part of God’s kingdom. Good news! Might not think about it much, but extraordinary idea – whole world can know and be saved by same God, through Jesus. Unique, and mustn’t forget it.

Two applications: (1) need for unity – God did all this to bring all people together. How dare we split them apart? Part of reason why came to WCP – all moan about challenges, but this is a great thing. Different churches working together. Hard – but small way of showing bigger picture.

Personal challenge too – important not to live in disharmony with fellow Christians. If ongoing dispute – sort it out quickly. Always be people we don't get on with: but let it not become division and disunity.

(2) Beautiful idea of building. Just as a building has lots of different parts and stones – so we are like that in a church. READ v22. What sort of stone are you? What sort of stone are we? What is God building? What is he repairing?

Take that thought away. And if you have any reflections: tell me. God's purpose is to build and to build with lots of different materials. Christ is the cornerstone: but by his grace we all get to play our part. Amen.

