

The Apostle Paul had just explained a radical concept that was foreign to both Jew and Gentile. It wasn't that it wasn't found in the Scriptures, but rather that it had been overlooked. God is the God of the whole earth. (Deuteronomy 10:14) Numerous prophecies spoke of the ends of the earth, not just Israel, worshiping God. (Psalm 22:27; 2:8) But because the Jews had the special heritage of the covenants and the historical experiences of God working so powerfully among them to reveal Himself through the words of the prophets, they began to see themselves as a superior race. The idea was reinforced by the decadence of the cultures around them. They should have understood by their own numerous failures and backslidings that mankind is all of the same fallen condition. It is our pride that is the source of us thinking of ourselves more highly than we should. (Romans 12:3)

Paul points out this pride in ritual that neglects what God is truly after when he writes that the Jews are those circumcised by the hands of men (2:11; Hebrews 9:24). God desired a circumcision of the heart. (Deuteronomy 10:16) The Jews did indeed have some special revelations and encounters with God, and the Gentiles missed out on those things. Now in Christ the Jew and Gentile are one new creation. The shadows of the worship rituals that pointed to heavenly things were no longer needed now that the reality was seen in Christ. (Hebrews 10:1) Jews weren't abandoning their past, nor were new believers in Christ becoming Jews. The two now had become something new, the body of Christ, the habitation of the Spirit, the new temple.

Access to God had been through the priestly system that culminated on the Day of Atonement when the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies where the manifest presence of God was visible over the Ark of the Covenant. In our final verse last week we read that this new man, those in Christ have access to the Father by one Spirit. (2:18) We no longer need the priest for we have Jesus, the Great High Priest. (Hebrews 4:14)

It is His Holy Spirit that makes us one. Those who have their sins covered by the Lamb of God who gave Himself for them, are sanctified by His blood, and are therefore recipients of the Spirit of God. He makes us one. The Spirit is the answer to Jesus' prayer that we might be one as He and the Father are one. (John 17:11) Those who access God by one Spirit are one. He is our unity. He is our joy. He is our peace. As we experience Christ together we are one. Therefore, we have the same unity, peace, joy, and purpose because we have the same Spirit indwelling us.

Because we have the same Spirit indwelling us, Paul writes, <sup>19</sup> *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of*

**Commented [notes1]: Deuteronomy 10:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it.

**Commented [notes2]: Psalm 22:27 (ESV)**

<sup>27</sup> All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before you.

**Commented [notes3]: Psalm 2:8 (KJV)**

<sup>8</sup> Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

**Commented [notes4]: Romans 12:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

**Commented [notes5]: Ephesians 2:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands

**Commented [notes6]: Hebrews 9:24 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.

**Commented [notes7]: Deuteronomy 10:16 (ESV)**

<sup>16</sup> Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.

**Commented [notes8]: Hebrews 10:1 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near.

**Commented [notes9]: Ephesians 2:18 (ESV)**

<sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

**Commented [notes10]: Hebrews 4:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

**Commented [notes11]: John 17:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

*the household of God*, Because we've been brought near to God through the blood of Christ (verse 13), we are no longer strangers and aliens. That reminds us of the expression in Hebrews that states that patriarchs consider themselves as strangers and aliens in the earth. It must have been an expression that was familiar to the Jews that Paul used in new way. The patriarchs were strangers and pilgrims because they sought a heavenly city. (Hebrews 11:13) This world was not their home. But that does not mean it was true of all Jews, only of those who truly sought their heavenly home like the patriarchs. Paul is saying that now the Gentiles in Christ are no longer strangers and aliens to the Jewish nation, but are now strangers and aliens *with* the patriarchs and saints.

Notice that Paul does not say they are fellow citizens of Israel. In the past they were alienated from the commonwealth of Israel that had the revelation of God. Now since they are in Christ they are not just a part of the commonwealth of Israel but something much greater, fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household. In other words, Paul is saying what he says elsewhere, "not all who are descended from Israel are of Israel" (Romans 9:6). Even the expression, "citizens of the holy city", was used by the prophet Isaiah to denounce the hypocrisy of the Jewish people of his day. (Isaiah 48:2) A fellow citizen of the heavenly Jerusalem is infinitely better than being descended from Abraham's flesh and living in earthly Jerusalem. **Entrance to God's household has always been a matter of faith not of genealogy or ritual.** (Romans 9:8) Not all Israelites were saints as the sad accounts in the Old Testament so clearly reveal. (2Kings 21:14-15)

Being in Christ meant you had become a part of that family of faith that God calls "saints". We've seen that used before in the greeting of the letter (1:1). We are adopted sons and daughters of God. To be of the king's household during the history of Israel, meant special favor, and a place at the king's table. The prophet Isaiah's invitation to "come and dine" (Isaiah 55:1) is an invitation to accept the grace of God and become an adopted child of God. The feast set before us is the Word of God. That is why Jesus, the incarnate Word, said unless you eat my flesh... you do not have life. (John 6:53) If you do not accept the invitation and claim the seat at the King's table by grace through faith, you will not dine on the Word. You will have no hunger for the Word, Jesus. (John 1:14)

Being a part of the New Jerusalem is not something we experience at death or in some distant age when Christ returns. Though we are the real strangers and pilgrims in the earth, we have a foretaste of being in that city whose builder and maker is God. (Galatians 4:26; Philippians 3:20) We experience it as we walk in the Spirit with our brothers and sisters in Christ. The saints in heaven already form the heavenly Jerusalem, but the city, the bride, is not yet complete. (Hebrews 12:40) We, as chosen stones of that new temple, are still being shaped here below. Listen to how The New

**Commented [notes12]: Ephesians 2:13 (ESV)**  
<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

**Commented [notes13]: Hebrews 11:13 (ESV)**  
<sup>13</sup> These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

**Commented [notes14]: Romans 9:6 (ESV)**  
<sup>6</sup> But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel,

**Commented [notes15]: Isaiah 48:2 (ESV)**  
<sup>2</sup> For they call themselves after the holy city, and stay themselves on the God of Israel; the LORD of hosts is his name.

**Commented [notes16]: Romans 9:8 (ESV)**  
<sup>8</sup> This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as offspring.

**Commented [notes17]: 2 Kings 21:14-15 (ESV)**  
<sup>14</sup> And I will forsake the remnant of my heritage and give them into the hand of their enemies, and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies,  
<sup>15</sup> because they have done what is evil in my sight and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came out of Egypt, even to this day.

**Commented [notes18]: Ephesians 1:1 (ESV)**  
<sup>1</sup> Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus:

**Commented [notes19]: Isaiah 55:1 (ESV)**  
<sup>1</sup> "Come, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

**Commented [notes20]: John 6:52-53 (ESV)**  
<sup>52</sup> The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" E  
<sup>53</sup> So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.

**Commented [notes21]: John 1:14 (ESV)**  
<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

**Commented [notes22]: Galatians 4:26 (ESV)**  
<sup>26</sup> But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.

**Commented [notes23]: Philippians 3:20 (ESV)**  
<sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

**Commented [notes24]: Hebrews 11:40 (ESV)**  
<sup>40</sup> since God had provided something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

Bible Commentary expresses this: "...the age to come is already realized in heaven, and Jerusalem, as she shall be in the new creation, is waiting to descend (see e.g. Revelation 21:1-4; and 21:10-22:5). To say we are already citizens of that temple-city is to say we now, in union with Christ, participate in that heavenly city radiant with the glory of God, and that it shall finally be revealed and displace all that we know of as reality in this age."

This household of God is <sup>20</sup> *built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone*, The foundation of the heavenly city is the revelation of God. It was revealed through the prophets and apostles. It is the unchanging, eternal truth of God's word. It is Jesus. (1Corinthians 3:11) There is one article applied to the apostles and prophets. Paul puts them together as the instruments through whom the foundation came, and so they themselves are figuratively the foundation. In Revelation the foundation is said to have twelve foundations, with the name of an Apostle written upon each one. (Revelation 21:14)

The cornerstone can be no other than Christ. The cornerstone is the first stone laid from which the rest of the building takes shape. As He is the Word, we see that the Word is the plumb line and starting point for the whole structure. If anyone is out of line with the cornerstone, they need to be adjusted to line up.

The word for cornerstone was also used to mean the capstone. However, that was a later use of the word. The capstone was the final stone that finished the building or held the sides of an arch together. It is true that Jesus holds all things together (Hebrews 1:3), but the meaning Paul most likely had in mind was cornerstone. It is upon Jesus and the revelation of Him through the apostles and prophets that we as a temple of God are built.

In a world where earthquakes destroyed the most fantastic of structures, to be on an unshakable foundation was priceless. (Psalm 46:2-3) The world's temples and grand architecture all rest on the unstable footing of the world. We, brothers and sisters in Christ, are built on an unshakable foundation. Even if the earth stopped spinning in space, our foundation would remain. (Isaiah 40:8; 2Timothy 2:19)

Our foundation is Jesus <sup>21</sup> *in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord*. When we are in Christ, we are joined together. When we get in our flesh, we end up in disunity. Only when we are in Him, in the Spirit, do we experience being joined together in perfect harmony.

We just had some tile replaced in our house. Just as I came to this verse, the tile layer complained about the poor cement slab work. He had to keep making the cement floor level by filling in dips. It was because the man that poured the footings and slab was skimping on material and did a poor job. The tile won't join together evenly if the floor

**Commented [notes25]: 1 Corinthians 3:11 (ESV)**

<sup>11</sup> For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

**Commented [notes26]: Revelation 21:14 (ESV)**

<sup>14</sup> And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

**Commented [notes27]: Hebrews 1:3 (ESV)**

<sup>3</sup> He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

**Commented [notes28]: Psalm 46:2-3 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,  
<sup>3</sup> though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. *Selah*

**Commented [notes29]: Isaiah 40:8 (ESV)**

<sup>8</sup> The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever.

**Commented [notes30]: 2 Timothy 2:19 (ESV)**

<sup>19</sup> But God's firm foundation stands, bearing this seal: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from iniquity." *E*

is uneven. What a perfect illustration just as I came to this verse. We who believe have the best foundation, a perfect one. The only reason we won't join together perfectly is because we get in the flesh instead of remaining in Jesus. We can't blame our lack of fitting together on our foundation. He's perfect! And so are we when we are in Him.

In Him we are joined together and grow into a holy temple in the Lord. Is the building growing as each is added through salvation, or are we individually growing spiritually into the shape that fits perfectly with the rest of the heavenly structure? (4:15) Perhaps we should read it both ways. The building is growing as more come to know Christ and be found in Him, and then we grow up into Christ and fit with one another in the body.

**Contention is a sign that someone is not walking in Christ.** They may have all the religious rituals down and be obeying the letter of every rule they can find, but if they are not in Christ, there is disunity and division. The one new command of Jesus is to love one another as He loves us. (John 13:34) That makes us fit together. That puts pride aside and seeks unity. That love prefers others above our desires. (Romans 12:10)

*22 In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.* As you individually grow up in Christ, we are together growing into a dwelling place for God. We are becoming the temple. That is why God allowed the old temple to be destroyed. It no longer served its purpose. The believers in Jesus are the new temple. Remember that Jesus said that if they destroyed the temple that he would raise it again in three days. (John 2:19) He was speaking of His body and His physical resurrection, but His corporeal body is a picture of His spiritual body, the church. **We are individually and corporately the new temple of God empowered by resurrection life.**

The Jews of Jesus' day felt their temple was the most wonderful site on earth. Yet, they were looking forward to a new temple. The prophet Ezekiel wrote about 8 chapters describing a coming temple. Certain parts of Judaism had already concluded that the new temple would be made of God's people. I'm always amazed when I find these Jewish insights that so clearly find their fulfillment in Jesus and the church. We shouldn't be though, for many of them were seeking the truth of Scripture and to learn more about the one true God. Indeed, we have become the new temple and constitute the new Holy of Holies.

As the new temple of God, the world comes to worship the one true God in our midst. **We are the house of prayer for all nations.** (Matthew 21:13) As I said last week, the beautiful, glorious bride without spot or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless, is the final product. She will be the finished temple of God, the New Jerusalem, coming out of heaven from God. (Revelation 21:2) The Master craftsman and designer of all the beauty we see will surely make her the grandest of all He has created, for He has made her for Himself.

**Commented [notes31]: Ephesians 4:15 (ESV)**  
<sup>15</sup> Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,

**Commented [notes32]: John 13:34 (ESV)**  
<sup>34</sup> A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

**Commented [notes33]: Romans 12:10 (ESV)**  
<sup>10</sup> Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.

**Commented [notes34]: John 2:19 (ESV)**  
<sup>19</sup> Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.

**Commented [notes35]: Matthew 21:13 (ESV)**  
<sup>13</sup> He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' But you make it a den of robbers.

**Commented [notes36]: Revelation 21:2 (ESV)**  
<sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

We are being built together. The work is not completed, but we are experiencing the wonder of it even now. Like the bumper sticker says, "Be patient with me; I'm still a work in progress." There is a little ditty that says, "Oh to be with saints above, how that will be glory, but now to be with the saints below, well that's another story." Thank the Lord we are the material He has chosen to work with. The cross is the work by which He made us the material set apart for this holy structure in which God resides.

It is hard for us to get excited about being a building or a city, because we don't have this Jewish mindset that the most magnificent thing that one could ever be called to is service in the Temple. David said that there was only one thing he desired, to be in the temple asking questions of God, forever beholding His beauty. (Psalm 27:4)

One psalmist described the abundant blessing on his life as being like an olive tree planted in the courts of the Lord, thriving there. (Psalm 52:8) Another psalmist asks for the privilege of just opening the door to the temple for people. (Psalm 84:10) The people of Israel would sing songs about the joy of approaching the temple of God. <sup>1</sup> *How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts! <sup>2</sup> My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD; my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.* Psalm 84:1-2 (ESV) It wasn't that the building was so lovely, but that God was manifestly present there.

We need to catch the vision of how they would have heard this wonder of becoming a stone in the Temple of God by the Spirit. (1Peter 2:5) It is the highest privilege afforded to man. We could hope for nothing greater. May God expand our understanding to fully appreciate this glorious calling and what it means to our life each day.

Another psalmist describes the privilege of being the city. Jesus drew on the picture when speaking to the woman at the well. (John 4:14) The city of God has the river of living water, the Holy Spirit. <sup>4</sup> *There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.* Psalm 46:4 (ESV) This can give you brand new insights to Old Testament passages about the temple and the city of God.

Paul began the chapter telling us of the depths of the depravity of all men. He closes the chapter with the wonder of God in shaping some of those defiled stones into integral parts of His eternal home. It's because of such incomparable grace that we should adore Him and desire to serve with our whole heart. Think of the implications. We are the building to which the lost come to find the presence of God. He didn't have to choose us, or use us, but He wants us to know how incredibly gracious He is. (Isaiah 57:15)

#### Questions

- 1 Were the Jews any better than any other nation?
- 2 What was the new race created by the cross?

#### Commented [notes37]: Psalm 27:4 (ESV)

<sup>4</sup> One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.

#### Commented [notes38]: Psalm 52:8 (ESV)

<sup>8</sup> But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God. I trust in the steadfast love of God forever and ever.

#### Commented [notes39]: Psalm 84:10 (ESV)

<sup>10</sup> For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.

#### Commented [notes40]: 1 Peter 2:5 (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

#### Commented [notes41]: John 4:14 (ESV)

<sup>14</sup> but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

#### Commented [notes42]: Isaiah 57:15 (ESV)

<sup>15</sup> For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite."

- 3 How did Paul change the use of strangers and aliens?
- 4 What privileges come with being in the King's family?
- 5 When do we experience being citizens of God's kingdom? How?
- 6 What is the foundation?
- 7 What does the cornerstone determine?
- 8 How do the living stones fit together?
- 9 How does the building grow?
- 10 What is so special about being the new temple?
- 11 What are the three metaphors in these verses?