

5. Reconciliation in Christ and in the Church—Ephesians 2:11-22

Previously Paul has shown that God's eternal purpose was in Christ (Eph 1:1-10) and in the church (Eph 1:11-23), stating in plain terms in Eph 1:11b-12 that all this was according to the eternal plan of God:

. . . according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, 12 in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

In Eph 2:1:10, Paul taught that both Gentiles and Jews are saved "by grace through faith." With faith as our part in God's eternal plan of salvation, we must ". . . do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do (Eph 2:10). Immediately, for the alien sinner, these good works include repentance (Acts 17:30; 2 Pet 3:9), confession of Christ as Lord (Rom 10:10; Matt 10:32-33), and baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet 3:21). For those who are already children of God, the loving Father has told us to do all the works that he has prepared and delivered to us in the New Testament (Gal 1:6-10; Matt 7:21; 2 Cor 5:10). Through his eternal plan of salvation, God reconciles people unto himself in Christ and in the church.

Reconciliation Comes in Christ and through His Blood

Eph 2:11-22

11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)— 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 through the blood of Christ. [Emphasis added]

In Old Testament times, the Jews, who called themselves *the circumcision*, referred to the Gentiles as *the uncircumcised*. During the Jewish dispensation, which paralleled the Old Testament period of history, the Gentiles were excluded from citizenship in Israel and were foreigners to the covenants made by God with the Israelites; such as, God's covenants of promise with Abraham and David. Of Abraham's promise, Paul wrote in Gal 3:16:

16 The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.

Of David's promise, Peter preached in Acts 2:30-31:

30 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. 31 Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay.

Since the Gentiles were alienated and far away, they had no knowledge of or hope in these promises, even though the promises included "all the nations of the earth." Now, according to verse 13 above, they "have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

Paul in his letter to the Colossians wrote in Col 2:11-12 that circumcision done by Christ is the putting off of one's sinful nature and occurs in baptism:

11 In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ, 12

having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.

Jesus commanded that this spiritual circumcision through baptism should be extended to all men in Matt 28:19-20:

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Thus, God set the stage for the reconciliation of all men through the Blood of Christ.

God Reconciles Jew and Gentile in One Body, the Church

Eph 2:14-18

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this 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. [Emphasis added]

Christ made Jew and Gentile one by destroying the barrier—the dividing wall of hostility, which was the Old Testament, with its commands and regulations. Paul restated this principle in Col 2:13b-14

He forgave us all our sins, 14 having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.

Of the two, God made one body, the one body of verse 16 above, and the one body, the church in Eph 1:22-23:

22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for **the church**, 23 which is **his body**, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. [Emphasis added]

God's reconciliation through the cross and in the body, the church, brought peace and not division, one church not many, excluding any notion of the modern idea of denominationalism. Thus, Paul could write, describing God's reconciliation in 2 Cor 5:17-21:

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

God Reconciles His People as His Kingdom, as His Household, as His Holy Temple, and as His Household

Eph 2:19-22

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's 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. [Emphasis Added]*

“Fellow citizens with God’s people” describes our reconciled relationship in the kingdom of God with Christ on his throne as described in Eph 1:19b-22:

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

In Christ’s kingdom, God reconciles us in his household. The words *kingdom* and *household* synonymously describe the saved and their relationship to Christ the king and elder brother and to God the father. The saved are, therefore, the church, the kingdom, and the household of God – words all of which describe God’s people. Paul clearly defines the oneness of all these concepts in 1 Tim 3:14-15:

14 Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, 15 if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

No one can deny the oneness of God’s people: the church is the body; the church is the kingdom; the church is the household of God. The saved are in this one and only church of Christ, which is the body of Christ, the kingdom of Christ, and the household of God. Paul wrote about the saved in the church in Eph 5:25b-27:

. . . Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Christ cleansed the church and, therefore, the household of God, by washing with water (baptism) through the word. Just as the last lesson found that we are baptized into Christ’s death (Rom 3:3-6) and raised to walk in newness of life, this lesson teaches that we are baptized into the church and the household of God. Since the church is also the body of Christ, Paul affirmed directly that we need to be baptized into the church and, therefore, into the household of God. There is no other way. In 1 Cor 12:13, Paul wrote:

13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free – and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

In this way, our God and Father reconciles us to himself in the church. We are also a “holy temple in the Lord.” Peter describes this concept in detail in 1 Peter 2:4-10:

4 As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him – 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. . . .

They stumble because they disobey the message – which is also what they were destined for.

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Finally, the church is dwelling where God lives by his Spirit. Paul wrote in 1 Cor 3:16-17:

16 Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? 17 If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.

Reconciliation in Christ and in the Church—Eph 2:11-22

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Eph 1:1-10: In whom was God's eternal purpose fulfilled?
2. Eph 1:11-23: Who is the fullness of Christ?
3. Eph 1:11b-12: In accord with what is God's eternal plan worked out?
4. Eph 2:1:10: In what are we saved? Through what are we saved?
5. Eph 2:10: When did God plan the good works that we must do?
6. Acts 17:30; 2 Pet 3:9: What is repentance?
7. Rom 10:10; Matt 10:32-33: What comes to us when we confess with the mouth?
8. Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet 3:21: Why is baptism essential?
10. Gal 1:6-10; Matt 7:21; 2 Cor 5:10: What kind of lives must Christians live?
11. Eph 2:11-22: In whom are we brought near? Through what?
12. Gal 3:16: Who is the seed of Abraham?
13. Acts 2:30-32: On whose throne does Christ sit?
14. Col 2:11-12: What is spiritual circumcision? Where does it occur?
15. Matt 28:19-20: Who must be baptized?
16. Eph 2:14-18: Into what are we reconciled? Through what are we reconciled?
17. Col 2:13-14: What did God cancel and take out of the way? Where was it nailed?
18. Eph 1:22-23: What is the church?
19. 2 Cor 5:17-21: To whom are we reconciled? Who are the ambassadors of reconciliation?
20. Eph 2:19-22: Can you list all the terms used to describe the church?
21. 1 Tim 3:14-15: What is the pillar and foundation of the truth?
22. Eph 5:25-27: How did Christ save the church?
23. 1 Cor 12:13: Into what are we baptized?
24. 1 Peter 2:4-10: In what way are we the temple of God?
25. 1 Cor 3:16-17: Where does God's Spirit live?

The Church: The Fullness of Christ. Eph. 1:22-23: "... And gave him to be head over all things to the church which is his body the fullness of him who fills all in all."

Eph. 2:11-22

- Separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. V. 12
- But now in Christ Jesus you that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. V. 13
- He might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace. V. 15
- (He) might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross. V. 16
- He came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh. V. 17
- You are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God. V. 19
- In whom you also are built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit V. 22

The Church: The Fullness of Christ. Eph. 1:22-23

