

“God’s New Man — The Church”

Ephesians 2:11-14

Pastor David Frampton

Introduction:

1. You may not realize it, but this moment you are in one of the most special places on earth. Why is this place special? It is special because it is an assembly of God’s people, the church. Someone of a worldly wise opinion might say, “You must be a little off your rocker! No one here looks that special. Where are those wise by human standards? Where are the influential? Where are those of noble birth, those born into a privileged family and who live in wealth? This group seems very common and average at best. Take a realistic look at yourselves!”
2. So then, how should we respond? I think we should say to those who judge by worldly standards that we do have a realistic view of our assembly. “Yes, according to the standards of this world, you are quite right. We don’t amount to much. Hopefully, you might admit that we are kind and caring, but you might not see much else. However, if we look at this assembly according to God’s revealed truth written in the Bible, you will see something amazing. Look with spiritual eyes and see a gathering of the saints, those who are in Christ the Lord. You are in an assembly of the sons of God, whose God-given glory will be revealed when Christ returns. If you look with eyes of faith, you may see a building, a temple of living stones that will cause you to say to us, ‘**God** is really among you!’”
3. Sadly, even the people of God often fail to see our meetings in their full, spiritual reality. Sadly, we look at each other according to the **flesh** rather than according to the **Spirit**. However, let’s turn our eyes to the truth, and see what we share in the Lord Jesus Christ together.
4. I had originally planned to look at verses 11-22 at one time, but I think it is necessary to change that plan. If we are to gain a proper appreciation of what the church is, it is first necessary to remember what existed before the church came into being. The apostle reminds us a little of the old covenant situation, so that we may be glad about the greater glory of the new covenant church. So, **let us remember** what existed before God made a new humanity in Christ.

Exposition:

- I. It was a time when humanity was divided on fleshly distinctions.

- A. There were two divisions: Israel and the Gentiles.
 - 1. God commanded Israel to be always at war with the Canaanites and the Amalekites.
 - 2. God allowed Israel to coexist with other nations, but strictly regulated any religious contact with them (Dt 23:3-8).

Comment: In this situation, there was no concern for missionary activity. Israel's mission was to defend God's honor—with a sword, if necessary.

B. One's entrance into either Israel or the Gentile nations was by natural birth (Dt 23:2).

- 1. A person was a Gentile just by being born into a Gentile family.
- 2. A person was a Jew just by being born into an Israelite family. No act of faith was necessary for admittance.

C. God separated Israel from the Gentile nations.

- 1. He separated them by the physical sign of male circumcision (2:11).
- 2. He separated them by the law, which functioned as a dividing wall of hostility.

Example: Nehemiah's stand for the law provoked other nations to hostility.

II. It was a time of utter misery for the Gentiles (2:12).

A. The Gentiles were separate from Christ in every sense.

- 1. This means that they were in Adam and condemnation, instead of being in Christ and having justification (Rm 5:12-21).
- 2. To be outside Christ means to be cut off from the source of spiritual blessings (cf. 1:3-4).

B. The Gentiles were excluded from citizenship in Israel.

- 1. To be an Israelite meant that the one was part of the visible people of God. The Lord regarded all the Gentiles as "not my people" (Rm 9:25).
- 2. In this situation, the Gentiles had nothing to look for but wrath and judgment (Ps 79; **108:6-13**).

C. The Gentiles were foreigners to the covenants of promise. They had no basis for a relationship with the living God.

D. The Gentiles were spiritually desolate.

1. They were without hope. All they could look forward to was doom, which bred despair and dread in their hearts.

2. They were without God. They were cut off from the source of joy, hope, life and significance. In the words of Ecclesiastes, “everything was meaningless.”

Apply: If you understand, weep. God gave the Gentiles over to wrath (Rm 1:18-32) for thousands of years. What if you and I had lived as Gentiles prior to Christ? We would have been hopeless! Dread, despair, doom, death and destruction would have been the notes of our funeral dirge.

III. It was a time of imperfection for God’s people.

A. They had an imperfect relationship to Christ.

1. They were related to Christ according to the flesh (Rm 9:15).

2. But most of them despised and rejected him (Is 53:3).

B. They possessed an incomplete citizenship in God’s kingdom.

1. They had the position of minor children—citizens but lacking full rights (Gal 3:21-25; 4:1-3). It was an enormous blessing to have this position (Dt 32:7-14; 33:26-29; Ps 147:19-20; Is 63:7-64:12; Ezk 16; Am 3:1-2).

2. Their citizenship always had the “if you obey” of the old covenant attached to it (Ex 19:5-6).

Comment: Old covenant Israel met its end because it would not listen to Jesus Christ, God’s anointed prophet (Mt 8:11-12; 21:33-46; cf. Lk 20:9-19).

C. They received a revelation of God’s glory (Rm 9:4), but some of them became idolaters (1 Cor 10:7).

1. One might think that every testimony of God’s glory would have combined to keep Israel from idolatry forever.

2. But idolatry was the darling sin of old covenant Israel (Ex 32-34; Josh 24:14-15; 2 Ki 17:7-23; Jer 7:1-29; Ezk 14:1-11; etc.).

D. They possessed covenants of promise, but they were governed by a covenant of law.

1. The law covenant was given by God and was good (Rm 7:12). It magnified sin and so showed the need for Jesus Christ. But it was never a way that a sinner could

be right with God. The only way any sinner, before or after the law (Rm 4), can be right with God is by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. The covenants of promise always proclaimed “Have faith in God!” But Israel under the law did not have a heart for God (Dt 5:29). The law could not give that. It could show the need for it, but it couldn’t give it.

3. The tragedy of Israel is that they sought righteousness with God by the law and not by faith in Christ (Rm 9:30-32).

Application: Why should we remember these things?

1. Since we are no longer in the old age of fleshly distinctions, we must never evaluate anyone according to the flesh (2 Cor 5:16). We must never separate because of racial, ethnic, cultural, economic, educational or other distinctions.

2. Since most of us are Gentile in heritage, we ought to praise God most grateful for the way of access he has opened for us through Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God for Jesus Christ!

3. Since the old covenant was a time of imperfection, we must never try to reestablish that system in any way. What we have in Christ in the new covenant is much better!

4. Since God’s way of being right with him is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, trust in him today!