

This is a Great Mystery

A Study of Ephesians

Week 12 – Ephesians 2:16-22

Prayer – Lord Jesus, you have reconciled us to God and to each other. Help us to live with those renewed relationships always on our hearts and minds. Guide our study today so that we would learn more about you, trust ever more deeply in your Word, and become more mature in our faith. In your name we pray. Amen.

From Last Time – I went through all the verses so far to make sure we have an accurate count of all our “important” words. I’ve updated the tick marks accordingly.

Quick recap of last week: Salvation is not based on nationality or race, just like it is not based on works (2:6-9). It is only because of Jesus that we have been brought near to God and his gifts of salvation, forgiveness, and peace.

What thoughts and comments do you have?

Verse 16 - καὶ ἀποκαταλλάξῃ τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ, ἀποκτείνας τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν αὐτῷ.

[He did this] so that he might also reconcile both of them to God in one body through the cross by which he put the hostility to death.

1. In verses 14 and 15, Paul talked about how the dividing wall of hostility between the Jews and Gentiles had been broken down by Christ. Here, he speaks about another, more important, formerly hostile relationship that was reconciled by Christ. Who are the parties in this relationship?
2. “Reconcile” is a word we don’t use very often; at least, I don’t use it in everyday language. The form used here (ἀποκαταλλάξῃ) is an emphatic form of the more regularly used καταλλάσσω. ἀπο- is typically used as an emphatic preposition. Both words still mean the same thing; one just has a little more *oomph* – “to reestablish an interrupted or broken relationship” or “to exchange hostility for a friendly relationship.” In what circumstances might this word be used most frequently in our culture?
 - a. For what reasons is that such a fitting word for our relationship with God? Think about the definitions offered above.
3. Greek note: the language is somewhat free in its usage of definite articles (what we call “the”). Usually, though, when the definite article is used, it is because a specific thing is being referred to (in this case, hostility is that thing). While it’s clunky in English and might not come through this way in many translations, it helps because, otherwise, one could argue that Jesus didn’t fully do his job since hostility in general still exists in the world. The hostility he puts to death (at least in this context) is the hostility that existed between God and mankind.

Verses 17 and 18 – καὶ ἐλθὼν εὐηγγελίσατο εἰρήνην ὑμῖν τοῖς μακρὰν καὶ εἰρήνην τοῖς ἐγγύς · ¹⁸ ὅτι δι’ αὐτοῦ ἔχομεν τὴν προσαγωγὴν οἱ ἀμφότεροι ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα.

He came and proclaimed the good news of peace to you, the far-off ones, and peace to the near ones. ¹⁸ For through him we, the both of us, have access by (or in) one Spirit to the Father.

4. Let’s make sure we’re all talking about the same groups of people. Think about what the previous verses said about nearness and farness.
 - a. Who are the far-off ones?
 - b. Who are the near ones?
5. For those who were...
 - a. ...far off (the _____), in what way did Christ proclaim the good news of peace?
 - b. ...near (the _____), in what way did Christ proclaim the good news of peace?
6. Popular translations are seemingly split on a choice between “by” and “in” for the word ἐν in verse 18, noted by parentheses in my translation. Both are viable dictionary entries; I don’t see anything wrong with either one. Still, I’m curious: is there anything that changes for you between “in” and “by”?
7. We often talk about prayer giving us access to the throne room of God. Does talking about prayer fit the context here? If so, how so? If not, what fits better?

Verses 19 and 20 – ἄρα οὖν οὐκέτι ἐστὲ ζένοι καὶ πάροικοι ἀλλὰ ἐστὲ συμπολίται τῶν ἀγίων καὶ οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ, ²⁰ ἐποικοδομηθέντες ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν, ὄντος ἀκρογωνιαίου αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ,

So then, you are no longer strangers and foreigners; rather, you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.

8. Paul reaches his next logical conclusion, as noted by ἄρα οὖν, which is literally “consequently” and “therefore” put together (that’s typical for a strong conclusion). Even with the words “so then,” you can almost hear the pregnant pause as the reader/speaker gathers themselves for the conclusion.
9. Greek note: ζένοι is where we get words like “xenophobia” (fear of strangers) from.

10. If we are treating Ephesians as a sermon (and we are), this is Paul's illustration of the far/near concept.
- a. In what ways are strangers and foreigners people we would consider far away?
 - b. Comment on the degree to which they have been brought near.
11. Look at the layers Paul is stacking—God's household is supported by the apostles and prophets, which are supported by Christ Jesus. The picture speaks for itself. This is not some arbitrary thing that just so happened to come about; God planned it to be exactly this way, with Christ as our cornerstone, which is another way of saying that everything centers on him. We see this truth throughout the Scriptures:
- a. **Acts 4:11** (which reaches back to several other verses, but mainly **Psalm 118:22**, which Jesus himself referenced in the three synoptic Gospels)
 - b. **1 Corinthians 3:9-11**
 - c. **Isaiah 28:16** (which is quoted in **1 Peter 2:6**)
 - d. No real question here; just wanting to appreciate the connectedness of Scripture
12. Greek note: Only one article is used for what we might view as two separate groups of people, the apostles and prophets. However, since only the one article is used (τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν), it seems that the early Church viewed these people as one cohesive group. In what ways is that true?
- a. **2 Peter 3:1-2** seems to convey the same idea.

Verses 21 and 22 – ἐν ᾧ πάντα οἰκοδομὴ συναρμολογουμένη αὐξεῖ εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον ἐν κυρίῳ, 22 ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς συνοικοδομεῖσθε εἰς κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πνεύματι.

...in whom (Christ) the entire building, being joined together, grows to become a holy temple in the Lord, and in whom you are being built together for the dwelling of God in the Spirit.

13. Just like Christ's body grows, so does his building. What is the thrust behind going from a building to a holy temple? What does that take? What does that look like?
14. What word shows up multiple times in these closing verses that highlight the theme of this section?
- a. How is that a fitting word for Jews and Gentiles, knowing what we know?

- b. How might we, as members of a church body and members of a local congregation, apply this lesson from the history of the Jews and Gentiles?

15. Notice that, even though Christ has been at the center of Paul's message, he does not forget the work of the Holy Spirit. Neither does he cast aside the work of the Father. It's an amazing balance that could only be accomplished by the Spirit's inspiration. Here's my take on it: Even though Christ is always in the foreground (and that's the way it MUST be), the Father and the Spirit are never in the background.

What comments and questions do you have?

Closing Prayer – Christ is Our Cornerstone CW 528 v 1

**Christ is our cornerstone,
on him alone we build.**

**With his true saints alone
the courts of heav'n are filled.**

**On his great love our hopes we place
of present grace and joys above. Amen.**

For Next Week

If you have time and would want to "look ahead" a little bit, you could read Ephesians 3.