

**The New People of God**  
Ephesians 2:11-22

**Interpretive Translation/Paraphrase**

<sup>11</sup>Therefore remember that then y'all—the Gentiles in the flesh, the ones called foreskin by the ones called circumcision (an act done in the flesh by the hands of men)—<sup>12</sup>were for that time without Messiah, excluded from participation in Israel, strangers to the promissory covenants, without hope, and godless in the world. <sup>13</sup>But now in Christ Jesus, y'all—the ones who were far—have become near through the blood of Christ.

<sup>14</sup>For He is our peace, the One who made both Jew and Gentile into one and destroyed the barrier formed by the dividing wall—the hostility—in His flesh <sup>15</sup>when He made inoperative the law of commandments, which consists of ordinances, in order that in Him, He would make the two into one new man, resulting in peace, <sup>16</sup>and reconcile both in one body to God through the cross by destroying the enmity Himself. <sup>17</sup>And when He came, He proclaimed the good news of peace to y'all—those who were far—and peace to those who were near <sup>18</sup>so that through Him, we have access (both Jew and Gentile) with one Spirit to the Father.

<sup>19</sup>Consequently, therefore, y'all are no longer strangers and foreigners, but y'all are fellow citizens among the holy ones and members of God's household, <sup>20</sup>which was built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets—Christ himself being the cornerstone. <sup>21</sup>In Him, the whole building grows, being joined together into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup>In Him, y'all also are being built up together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.

**Exegetical Idea**

The Gentiles are to remember that God has brought them near, given them peace with the Jews, and made them into as one new people of God through Jesus.

**Exegetical Outline**

- I. The Gentiles need to remember that they were separated from God, His Law, and His Messiah but now have been brought near to God through the cross. (2:11-13)
  - A. What the Gentiles were to remember is that they were foreigners to the physical demands of being God's people, particularly circumcision. (2:11)
    1. The Ephesians were foreigners in the flesh. (2:11a)
    2. The Gentiles were being called the “uncircumcised.” (2:11b)
    3. The people calling the Gentiles “uncircumcised” were those who called themselves “circumcised,” an act which they had done to themselves. (2:11b)
  - B. What the Gentiles were to remember is that they were, for a time, without the Messiah because they were not Israel and subsequently were hopeless and godless. (2:12)
    1. In their former state, the Gentiles were without the Messiah, without citizenship in Israel, and without participation in the covenants of promise. (2:12a-b)
    2. The result of the Gentiles being without the Messiah was hopelessness and godlessness. (2:12c)
  - C. The Gentiles have been brought near because of Jesus's sacrificial death. (2:13)

- II. Jesus brought the Jews and Gentiles together by removing the hostility and rendering the law inoperative in order that together they could have access to God. (2:14-18)
  - A. The way in which the Gentiles have been brought near is through Jesus becoming their peace by removing the barrier and hostility between Jew and Gentile and uniting them. (2:14)
  - B. The means Jesus used to unite Jew and Gentile was abolishing the law, resulting in a new people of God. (2:15-16)
    - 1. The barrier between Jew and Gentile was destroyed when the law was abrogated. (2:15a)
    - 2. The purpose of abrogating the law was to create one new people in the reconciliation of Jew to the Gentile and, together, to God. (2:15b-16)
  - C. The reason Jesus preached this good news of peace to the Gentiles and Jews was to give them joint access to the Father in one Spirit. (2:17-18)
    - 1. When Jesus came, He proclaimed the good news of peace to the Gentiles who were far from God and Jews who were near. (2:17)
    - 2. The result of Jesus preaching peace was that both Jew and Gentile could have access to the Father through Jesus in one Spirit. (2:18)
- III. The result of Jesus's mission is the engrafting of the Gentiles into the people of God and altogether being grown together into the home of God. (2:19-22)
  - A. The result of Jesus' mission is that the Gentiles are no longer outsiders but full participants in the people and household of God. (2:19)
  - B. The reason the Gentiles are engrafted is because God has already placed them on the foundation composed of the apostles and prophets and Jesus Himself as the cornerstone. (2:20)
  - C. The end goal of the engrafting of Gentiles is their development into befitting worshippers and agents of God. (2:21-22)
    - 1. In the sphere of Christ, the whole building is growing together to be a holy temple in the Lord. (2:21)
    - 2. In the sphere of Christ, the Ephesians are being built together through the spirit into God's dwelling place. (2:22)

## Commentary

### Introduction

In Ephesians 2:1, Paul begins to expound on the “greatness of Christian salvation” to the gentiles (Guthrie, *New Testament Introduction*, 537-538). Vs. 1-10 focus on the individual's salvation of the believer, contrasting his past and present conditions. In v. 11, Paul begins to speak of the corporate ramifications of Christ's work. After discussing the unification of Jew and gentile, Paul proceeds to elaborate on the mystery and ministry of the church in 3:1-21. Witherington believes 2:1-22 to be part of the book's narratio—a statement in rhetoric laying out the central facts upon which Paul will call the Ephesians to act. “The reminder of what is already true about the audience prepares them to receive the word about what ought to be true about them” (*Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians*, SRC, 250).

### Commentary

#### *I. A State of Separation (2:11-12)*

The first statement of this section begins with the inferential conjunction  $\delta\iota\omicron$ , meaning “therefore” or “for this reason” (BDAG 290 s.v.). This signals that Paul's proceeding instruction is based up the argument he has just laid forth in 2:1-10—namely, that God has brought forth salvation on His own accord. The separation between man and God has been graciously closed, but now Paul will examine another separation

#### *A. Remember (2:11)*

The main verb μνημονεύετε (from μνημονεύω) means “remember, keep in mind, think of” or “retain in one’s memory” (BDAG 656 s.v. 1, 2). In the imperative mood, this verb is a straightforward command (Wallace, *ExSyn*, 485). The verb is second person plural; therefore the command is directed to “y’all,” or in this case the Ephesian readers. The present tense imperative is an iterative present—Paul wants them to repeatedly, continuously remember (Wallace, *ExSyn*, 520). It is not that the Ephesians have necessarily forgotten something, but rather that Paul needs them to have something—more specifically, their pre-Christian state (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, 131-132)—at the forefront of their minds as he proceeds in his argument (O’Brien, *Ephesians*, PNTC, 185).

### **1. Foreigners in the Flesh (2:11a)**

Paul introduces what he wants the readers to remember using a substantival ὅτι clause. The antecedent to ὑμεῖς is still his readers, and he describes them appositionally twice—the first time as “the gentiles in the flesh” (τὰ ἔθνη ἐν σαρκί), the second as “the ones called ‘uncircumcision’” (οἱ λεγόμενοι ἀκροβυστία). Τὰ ἔθνη can be understood as “people groups foreign to a specific people group” (BDAG 276 s.v. 2). The clause “in the flesh” (ἐν σαρκί) may be spatial/sphere (“in the realm of the flesh”), as in there was something different about their flesh (Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT, 153), or reference/respect (“with regards to the flesh”), as in they were born of a different ethnicity/nationality (cf. Eph 2:11, NIV84). Yet given the flow and content of Paul’s argument here about the physical differences between Jew and Gentile, the former is preferred.

### **2. The Foreskin (2:11b)**

Some people were calling attention to the differences in flesh, particularly who was and who was not circumcised. The second apposition is literally “the ones called ‘foreskin’” (BDAG 39 s.v. 1). This term is used both literally and metaphorically to refer to the uncircumcised, the Gentiles (Schmidt, *TDNT* 1:226). Given the hostility described by Paul in 2:14, the term likely carried a derogatory tone emphasizing the Gentile’s uncleanness (Betz, *EDNT* 1:55, s.v.).

### **3. The Circumcised (2:11b)**

The “uncircumcised” label was attached ὑπὸ τῆς λεγομένης περιτομῆς (“by the ones called ‘circumcision’”). Again, ἐν σαρκί is spatial/sphere, describing the circumcision as done in the body. The genitive adjective χειροποιήτου means “man-made” or “artificial” (see ‘Χειροποιήτος’ in Appendix C) and connotes an negative view towards this circumcision (Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT, 153), especially in view of the LXX identification with idols (LEH Logos Electronic Edition s.v.). An anathema to Paul, the idea of superior standing (righteousness) being achieved by something man could do to himself was a notion Paul repeatedly confronted (cf. Rom 4:16; 1 Cor 6:19; Gal 6:15; Col 2:11-12). Paul points out, though, that in contrast to what God had done to give the Ephesians right standing with Him (Eph 2:1-10), these Jews were taking pride in something they had merely done to themselves, believing they alone had right standing with God as a result (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 354).

## **B. Ethnic, Spiritual Outsiders (2:12)**

Nevertheless, there is something different about the gentile’s pre-Christian state. Paul uses the general customary imperfect verb, ἦτε, to communicate that they existed in for some time (Wallace, *ExSyn*, 548). Τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ (“for that time”) is a dative of time, foreshadowing that such a time has drawn to a close.

### **1. No Messiah, No Citizenship, No Covenants. (2:12a-b)**

The phrase χωρὶς Χριστοῦ (“without Christ”) should be taken as the predicate to ἦτε, not as an adverb modifying τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, 136). In addition, while χωρὶς can mean physically “separated from someone, far from someone, or without someone” (BDAG 1095 s.v. 2 a α), this context is not a reference to a physical distance from the person of Messiah. Rather, the separation is

from the promise or benefit or concept of Messiah (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 355), which accords with BDAG's definitions for χωρίς being used with a thing instead of a person—"outside," "without making use of something," or especially "without possessing something" and "without relation to or connection with" (BDAG 1095 s.v. 2 b α, β, γ, δ). The Messiah was a uniquely Jewish notion—a king for Israel and the hope of her restoration (O'Brien, *Ephesians*, PNTC, 188).

Using two written and two assumed participles of manner, Paul proceeds to give four descriptions of life for the Gentile Ephesians while they were apart from the concept of Messiah. First, they were ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ. From the word ἀπαλλοτριόω, ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι means to have been estranged or alienated (BDAG 96 s.v.). The question is: estranged from what? Lincoln says the Gentiles were estranged from Israel, the "theocratically constituted nation" (*Ephesians*, WBC, 137). However, Arnold argues that because the nation of Israel ceased to exist when Rome conquered it in 63 BC, the reference here is to Israel as the people of God (*Ephesians*, ZECNT, 154-155). BDAG notes that while it is improbable that the usage of πολιτείας here refers to "citizenship" (*contra* Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 357), it easily could mean "state, people, body politic" (BDAG 845 s.v. 1 cf. 2). Wallace uses "commonwealth" (*ExSyn*, 108), and if χωρίς Χριστοῦ in 2:12a is referring to the idea of a king for Israel, then a national, ethnic entity is preferred.

Second, they were καὶ ξένοι τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ("also strangers to the covenants of promise"). The Ephesian gentiles were not the descendants of the people with whom God had made covenant. Lincoln advocates that the author is speaking to the promissory nature of all the biblical covenants (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, 137), which is probably sufficient for this reading. To attempt to decipher if one or more particular covenants is in view seems unnecessary as they each hold out hope for the future in some fashion or another (*contra* Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT, 156).

## **2. Hopelessness and Godlessness. (2:12c)**

Third in the cascading series of descriptions is hopelessness—ἐλπίδα μὴ ἔχοντες ("not having hope"). Without access to the revelation in the covenants, without a means of knowing God, without eligibility for being in restored relationship with God, the Gentiles existed without hope. The absence of hope, here, should not be confused with a persistent state of despair or depression, but rather it is a future destined for wrath—as seen through the eyes of a convert (Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT, 157).

The final description of the pre-Christian Gentiles is καὶ ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ("and without God in the world"). Ἄθεοι means "being without a relationship to God" (BDAG s.v. 1). It is not that they have abandoned their multiplicity of deities and ceased worship altogether. Theirs is the "practical atheism of the ignorant, short-sighted, self-sufficient, hedonistic or careless" (Stauffer, *TDNT* 3:121).

## **C. Nearness (2:13)**

Verse 13 leads off with the contrastive conjunction νυνὶ δέ, "but now," which leads the reader to expect that something has changed for the gentile. The prepositional phrase ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ("in Christ Jesus") refers to the sphere in which the change has taken place. Here the sphere is blessings associated with Messiah. "Y'all" (ὅμοιως) is described appositionally by the participial phrase οἱ ποτε ὄντες μακρὰν ("the ones then being far"). Because the participle is present and adjectival, this description is antecedent of the time of the main verb (Wallace, *ExSyn*, 625-626). Μακρὰν ("far") is accusative of extent of space (Wallace, *ExSyn*, 201). Altogether, "the ones then being far" is a synopsis of their state described in vs. 11-12 (O'Brien, *Ephesians*, PNTC, 190-191). The change of state comes in the verb ἐγενήθητε, meaning "to make a change of location in space, move" (BDAG s.v. 6 g). As the deponent verb is aorist, it is inchoative, describing the "entrance into the state" (Wallace, *ExSyn*, 558)—in this case, nearness (ἐγγύς). Their sorry state of existence described in the two verses prior is no longer. The instrument in effecting this change is articulated in the prepositional phrase ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ ("by the blood of Christ"), otherwise known as His death. In short, Christ's crucifixion has moved gentiles from outsider to insider, giving them access to God, hope, the covenants and revelation, and membership in the people of God.

## **II. The New State (2:14-18)**

Paul begins to explain how the Gentile's new state came about. The short answer is that Christ is the Gentile's peace—and his too. The reason he is their peace is that made the two groups, Uncircumcised and Circumcised, Jew and Gentile, into one.

### **A. Destroying the Barrier (2:14)**

Paul says Christ destroyed the dividing wall of partition. In summary of Appendix D, “The Dividing Wall of Partition,” τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ draws off the image of the Jerusalem Temple where a wall separated the where the Gentiles could go versus the access enjoyed by Jews. Should a Gentile cross this partition, he would suffer the severest of consequences—a fact known all too well by Paul as it was for this very reason that he had been arrested and was imprisoned when he wrote the Ephesians. The actual referent is found in verse 15: τὸν νόμον (“the law”).

Paul describes the dividing wall by using the apposition τὴν ἔχθραν. The term means “hostility” (BDAG, 419 s.v. ἔχθρα). It depicts “an inner disposition, as objective opposition and as actual conflict between nations, groups and individuals” (Foerster, *TDNT* 2:815). In other words, the conflict between Jew and Gentile was not simply a war of words or some thought occupying the recesses of their minds. This was a personal hatred, deeply rooted and acted upon. In this context, Paul says it is a byproduct of the dividing wall, the law. “The objective situation of hostility because of the law’s exclusiveness engendered personal and social antagonisms” (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, 141).

The prepositional phrase ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ (“in his flesh”) refers to how Christ destroyed the dividing wall. It is a euphemistic reference to His death on the cross, fulfilling the law as the ultimate sacrifice (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 374).

### **B. Abrogating the Law (2:15-16)**

The dividing wall, the hostility, was destroyed when τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν καταργήσας (“the law of commandments in decrees was abrogated”). The participle καταργήσας means “to cause something to lose its power or effectiveness, invalidate, make powerless” (BDAG 525 s.v. καταργέω 2). Surveying the New Testament, the term carries “the entire spectrum of meaning from the negative aspect *make ineffective, destroy, render powerless, annul, use up* (Luke 13:7) to the positive aspect of *liberate, set free*” (Hübner, *EDNT* 2:267). Delling adds “to put out of use” on the list of definitions too (*TDNT* 1:452). Christ’s death then made the law ineffective, put it out to pasture, and brought about something new.

#### **1. The Law of Commandments (2:15a)**

Naturally, the question is: what is τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν (“the law of commandments in decrees”)? For an expanded discussion of the phrase, see Appendix D, “What Exactly Became Inoperative?” The law in view here is the Mosaic Law (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 375). The phrase “of commandments” is a description of the law’s composition (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 375). The prepositional phrase “in decrees” is not an attempt to isolate only certain parts of the law as abrogated (*contra* Calvin, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians*, 150-1). Paul’s use here is to emphasize the totality of the law being rendered inoperative (Arnold, *Ephesians*, ZECNT, 163).

The implication for the church-age believer, then, is of paramount importance. While some would argue that none of the Mosaic Law applies to the believer unless it is explicitly cited in the New Testament, such an assertion is an overstatement (*contra* Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 376). One must consider the frequency with which Paul persists in citing the law as authoritative. Perhaps the best explanation is that the law no longer functions as the demarcation of who is and who is not part of the people of God. It remains revelatory to the nature of God and the ways of righteous living (Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, NICNT, 298), but only in so far as it is viewed through the lens of the Christ-Event and rest of the New Testament.

## 2. *Unification and Reconciliation (2:15b-16)*

The purpose in Christ rendering the law inoperative was to create in himself one new people from the Jews and Gentiles. The verb κτίση (“might create”) harkens back to the creation motif of Genesis 1, especially since the verb is only used in the New Testament with God as its subject (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 378).

The phrase εἰς ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον (“into one new man”) is not the genetic merging of two individuals. Rather it is the establishment of a new corporate identity (O’Brien, *Ephesians*, PNTC, 200). O’Brien writes, “The new humanity is not achieved by transforming Gentiles into Jews, or vice versa” (*Ephesians*, PNTC, 200). Further, he says, “Nothing less than a new creation, an entirely new entity, was needed to transcend the deep rift between the two. It was effected through Christ’s death, and the result is not an amalgam of the best elements of the two, but a new person who transcends them both” (*Ephesians*, PNTC, 200).

This new class, this new people, is unique from all others in that it is ἐν αὐτῷ (“in Him”)—“that is, it was created by Christ, is dynamically related to the risen Christ and empowered by His Spirit, and will be the special people of God in the age to come” (Arnold, *Ephesians*, ZECNT, 164). Some significant Western and Byzantine text-type manuscripts have ἐν ἑαυτῷ (“in himself”), but equally significant and still earlier are the Alexandrian witnesses that have the more generalized ἐν αὐτῷ. The latter reading is preferred because of the vagueness of the reading—and subsequent greater difficulty—and its strong affiliation with the Alexandrian archetype that predates the other reading (*contra* Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 377).

With an entirely new people of God, peace was made (ποιῶν εἰρήνην). The resulting peace here is not peace with God, as Paul will speak of next, but rather it is between “two old enemies” (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, 144). This harkens back to verse 14 where Christ is said to be “our peace.” Hoehner asserts that this “text does not suggest that Christ’s death brought about a universal redemption so that all Jews and Gentiles are reconciled... Nor does the text propound that Gentiles have been accepted into ... Israel... The present context assumes that only believing Jews and believing Gentiles make up this new entity” (*Ephesians*, 380-1). While true that this context is explicitly Jew and Gentile, the broader understanding is that the people of God are no longer an ethnocentric community but open to all nationalities and ethnicities (Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT, 171).

Paul then says that both Jew and Gentile have been reconciled in one body to God through the cross. The resultant ἀποκατάλλαξις means “reconcile” (BDAG 112 s.v. ἀποκατάλλάσσω). The mention of Jew-Gentile reconciliation before God-humanity reconciliation is not to suggest that the former is preeminent over the later, much less a new “theological distinctive ... whereby ecclesiology absorbs soteriology” (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, 144). However, the usage of ἀποκατάλλάσσω as opposed to its root word καταλλάσσω suggests an intensification of the root’s meaning (Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT), which is “the exchange of hostility for a friendly relationship” (BDAG 521 s.v.).

Nevertheless, the instrument of both reconciliations is the cross of Christ (διὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ). “This is no doubt an ideal not yet fully realized in experience; but the insistence of this epistle is that the ideal will one day be seen as a worldwide reality, thanks to the completeness of Christ’s reconciling sacrifice” (Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, NICNT, 300).

Parallel to creation of a new people of God and its resulting peace, the reconciliation of Jew-Gentile results in ἀποκτείνας τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν αὐτῷ (“killing the hostility in Him”). Ἀποκτείνας is used figuratively to communicate “doing way with, putting to death, or eliminating” (BDAG 114 s.v. ἀποκτείνω 2). Lincoln believes that this participle is antecedent to the reconciliation and, therefore, is a separate event (*Ephesians*, WBC, 146). But an aorist participle following the verb it modifies is often times concurrent, and as such the killing of the hostility and the reconciliation are positive and negative terms used to depict the same event (O’Brien, *Ephesians*, PNTC, 204-5).

Again, τὴν ἔχθραν is a reference to verse 14 and the animosity between Jew and Gentile created by the law. Yet with the introduction of reconciliation to God, the τὴν ἔχθραν encompasses a broader

meaning—that of “the enmity between God and his rebellious creatures” (Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT, 172).

### **C. Joint Access (2:17-18)**

The idea of peace and reconciliation are not something Paul is plucking out of thin air. Paul begins verse 17 with καὶ ἔλθῶν (“and coming”). The καὶ is a coordinating conjunction connecting the rest of verses 17 and 18 to verse 14’s “he is our peace” (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 384). While ἔλθῶν may be a participle of attendant circumstance (“He came and preached”), it is more likely a temporal participle referring back to a specific time or event (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 384-5). Hoehner, Arnold, and O’Brien believe the time Paul has in mind must be after the peace was accomplished on the cross and at a time when both Jews and Gentiles were preached to (*Ephesians*, 385; *Ephesians*, ZECNT, 166; *Ephesians*, PNTC, 207). Thus the time must be at or after Pentecost when the Spirit of Christ infused the apostles and they began to preach to both Jew and Gentile, like when Peter engages with Cornelius (Acts 10).

However, I am unconvinced of the necessity of something needing to be accomplished before it can be proclaimed (cf. Luke 4:18-21). In addition, asserting that the Spirit of Christ accomplished the preaching through a non-divine third party seems like distant, stretching explanation compared to a straight-forward reading of Christ Himself.

Arnold mentions that other scholars believe that this coming refers uniquely to “[Christ’s] death on the cross, his entire earthly ministry culminating in his death on the cross, his resurrection, the whole of his saving work, or his proclamation to the disciples in the forty days after the resurrection” (*Ephesians*, ZECNT, 166). Thielman points to Isaiah 52:7 to connect this coming as well as the message preached in Ephesians 2:17 to Christ’s earthly ministry as the proclaimer of peace and restoration for Israel (*Ephesians*, BECNT, 173). I am uncertain that anything is gained by attempting to winnow down to one portion of the Christ-Event if Christ’s entire mission was defined by proclaiming peace (Luke 4:18-19).

#### **1. Preaching Peace (2:17)**

When Christ came, he εὐαγγελίσατο εἰρήνην (“proclaimed peace”). Generally, εὐαγγελίζω means “bring good news, announce good news” (BDAG 402 s.v. 1). Yet here, it means to “proclaim the divine message of salvation,” which in this case is εἰρήνην (BDAG 402 s.v. 2).

The recipients of this message are two groups: the ones who are near (τοῖς μακρὰν) and the ones who are far (τοῖς ἐγγύς). Paul is deftly using the language of Isaiah 57:19. In its original context, this verse had two groups of Jews in view, those who remained in and around Jerusalem and those scattered in the diaspora (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, 146). In this verse, however, Paul calls the Ephesians the ones who were far. He is replacing the exiled Jews with the Ephesian Gentiles using the same language of verse 13 where he described the Gentile’s status change.

Lincoln argues, though, that the peace being proclaimed to these groups is not peace with one another, but rather peace with God (*Ephesians*, WBC, 147-8). The double use of εἰρήνην suggests that two distinct proclamations of peace are issued instead one offer between the two (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, 148). In addition, verse 18’s culmination in access to the Father reinforces Lincoln’s view (*Ephesians*, WBC, 148). “But as the preceding context makes inescapably clear, this has inevitable repercussions on the horizontal level for peace between Jews and Gentiles” (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, 148).

#### **2. Access in One Spirit (2:18)**

Verse 18 begins with ὅτι, a Greek structural marker introducing a dependent clause. Some scholars believe that this clause is the content of what is being proclaimed, but the content of the proclamation has already been revealed in verse 17—peace (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 388). Lincoln considers this ὅτι an introduction to a causal clause (*Ephesians*, WBC, 149). “Since both have access to the Father through Christ in the one Spirit, the same good news of peace with God can be brought to both” (Lincoln,

*Ephesians*, WBC, 149). However, placing access before proclamation awkwardly communicates that the access granted to humanity caused or motivated Christ to proclaim peace (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 388). Thielman puts a slightly different spin, and instead of being purely causal, he sees the clause describing the proof of the proclamation (*Ephesians*, BECNT, 174). The access is the evidence of the proclaiming. The preferred understanding, though, comes from Hoehner who sees this as a result clause—the proclaiming was done in order that we could have access (*Ephesians*, 388).

Christ proclaimed peace in order that through him (δι' αὐτοῦ) we, believers, have (ἔχομεν) προσαγωγήν. Προσαγωγήν can be thought of as a “solemn approach” as one might be introduced to royalty (LSJ 1500 s.v. II 2). Yet Lincoln argues for the intransitive use of προσαγωγήν as “access” as a better fit for all three New Testament occurrences (*Ephesians*, WBC, 149). Thielman concurs because believers are not approaching a king, but a father (*Ephesians*, BECNT, 174). Therefore, the approach is one of a religious nature in the presentation of worship and offerings, a cultic nature more than political (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, 149).

This new access is possessed by both Jew and Gentile (οἱ ἀμφοτέροι) and gained through one Spirit (ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι) to the Father (πρὸς τὸν πατέρα). The one Spirit is the instrument in achieving access. “Through Christ, God is experienced as the Father of believers (cf. 1:5), and the Spirit plays his part in mediating a consciousness of that relationship” (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, 149). The “one Spirit” of this verse and the “one body” of verse 16 are intended to emphasize the unity now found between Jew and Gentile where once was only an unbridgeable chasm of enmity (O’Brien, *Ephesians*, PNTC, 210). “Within his family the Father makes no distinction between those children who are Jewish by birth and those who are Gentile” (Bruce, *Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, NICNT, 301). O’Brien also highlights the Trinitarian formulation of salvation in this verse: “Christ’s peacemaking work has provided access to the Father for both Jews and Gentiles through the one Spirit” (*Ephesians*, PNTC, 210).

### **III. The New People of God (2:19-22)**

Verse 19 begins ἄρα οὖν (“consequently therefore”), signaling a “tight logical connection between 2:18 and the statement Paul is about to make (Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT, 178). The phrase functions to introduce a summation of Paul’s thinking as well as to provide the launch point for further discussion of the imagery he has used (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, 150).

#### **A. Full Participants (2:19)**

Paul says the Ephesian Gentiles, his audience, are no longer strangers and foreigners (οὐκέτι ἕστε ξένοι καὶ πάροικοι). Ξένος is typically used as an adjective, but in this substantive usage, it means “one who comes as a stranger, alien” (BDAG 684 s.v. 2 a). It can also refer to guests (Friedrich, *EDNT* 2:486), but in this context—one of prior hostility and division—“foreigner” or “stranger” makes more sense. Paul used it in verse 12 to describe the conditions of the Gentiles without Christ. Πάροικος also means “stranger, alien” (BDAG 779 s.v.), but this is a licensed sojourner who has paid a small tax to secure his protection and status as a resident alien (MM 496 s.v.). Nevertheless, two extremely similar words beg the question: why Paul would redundantly use words with essentially the same meaning? Lincoln believes it is for sheer emphasis as the terms are used interchangeably in the LXX (*Ephesians*, WBC, 150; *contra* Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 392). Thielman explains it this way:

[Paul] neither intends to make a technical distinction ... nor is interested in the legal nicety that these groups were not entirely without rights, especially in Jewish society... Instead, he paints in broad brush strokes, indented to contrast the former status of his Gentile readers as outside the people of God, with their present status as full members of God’s household. (*Ephesians*, BECNT, 179)

Now, having been reconciled to the Jews and to God, the Ephesians have a new identity, a new place of belonging. Paul says they are συμπολίται τῶν ἁγίων. Συμπολίτης means “fellow-citizen/compatriot” (BDAG 959 s.v.). The genitive phrase τῶν ἁγίων (“of the holy ones”) is one of

association, which then translates as “fellow citizens with the holy ones” (Wallace, *ExSyn*, 129). Who are “the holy ones”?

Five views are commonly held: Israel or the Jews; Jewish Christians; the first Christians “seen as a golden generation”; all believers; or the angels (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, 150). Barth claims that intimacy with God is found through integration with Israel and submission to her king (*Ephesians*, AB, 1:270). Proksch describes the Jewish Christians as the trunk into which the Gentile Christians were engrafted (*TDNT* 1:106). “But neither of these interpretations, and particularly the first, does enough justice to the fact that in the contrast the writer presents, his Gentile readers’ new status transcends the old categories, and that in the creation of the one new person Jew-Gentile distinctions have been overcome” (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, 151).

The third view rises out of Ephesians 3:5, and in light of 2:20, these apostles and prophets should certainly be considered constituents of the group. Yet Lincoln raises the point that there is no reason to say that they are the sole constituents (*Ephesians*, WBC, 151).

Hoehner points to Ephesians 1:1 as having defined the term ἅγιος for this context: the ones who are faithful in Christ Jesus (*Ephesians*, 392). Moreover, he explains that the angelic understanding originates in the scrolls at Qumran, but no hint of angels is obvious in this context (*Ephesians*, 392-3).

I believe it is important that their citizenship is with the holy ones, the saints (τῶν ἁγίων) and not as a part of Israel, the point of comparison in verse 12. This is a significant, intentional delineation on Paul’s part. The Gentiles were not suddenly Jewish proselytes, heirs to the Davidic kingdom, or subject to the Mosaic Law. They were welcomed into the company of the redeemed, the new people of God, the new humanity.

One variant reading has ἀλλὰ καὶ συμπολίται (“but also fellow citizens”). This reading is much more difficult—it would seem to say that the Gentile Ephesians are no longer strangers and foreigners, but nor are they also fellow citizens among the saints and members of the God’s household. In other words, they would be something entirely new, separate, different. Yet the letter fails to define this entity as apart from the redeemed of God. Another way it could be understood they retained their outsider status while at the same time being insiders, which appears self-contradictory. Fortunately, the external evidence overwhelmingly rules out this variant (see Appendix A, ‘But Also’).

In addition to being fellow compatriots with the redeemed, Paul says the Ephesians are also οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ (“household members of God”). An οἰκεῖος is not just another member of the extended family, but it one who is a part of a close-knit relationship (see Appendix C, “Οἰκεῖοι”). The phrase τοῦ θεοῦ is a possessive genitive, meaning that the Ephesians are God’s household members. Obviously this a figurative, anthropomorphic understanding of God and His people. The Ephesians are conferred kinship to God spiritually.

### ***B. Placed on the Foundation (2:20)***

Paul changes images in verse 20. His metaphor is no longer the household, but the house or the building. The dependent clause of verse 20 beings with the aorist passive participle ἐποικοδομηθέντες, which means “to build something on something already built” (BDAG 387 s.v.). Hoehner, Thielman, and Arnold believe this participle is not a temporal participle, but a causal participle in that the Ephesians citizenship and familial status have been ascribed because God Himself has placed us into whatever edifice He is building (*Ephesians*, 397; *Ephesians*, BECNT, 179; *Ephesians*, ZECNT, 169).

The Gentiles, then, are part of the family, part of the citizenry, because the Master Builder has laid them as bricks ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν (“on the foundation of the apostles and prophets”). θεμέλιος means “the indispensable prerequisites for something to come into being” (BDAG 448 s.v. 2 b). The “of the apostles and prophets” is an apposition to the foundation. In other words, the foundation consists of or is made up of the apostles and prophets.

But who are these apostles and prophets? Some believe that these are two terms describing the same people—a TSKS construction. However because both apostles and prophets are plural, they violate Sharp’s Rule and cannot be one in the same (Wallace, *ExSyn*, 271-2).

Because of the first mention of apostles—a New Testament phenomenon—Lincoln believes the prophets are also New Testament prophets and not the Old Testament. “It is difficult to suppose that OT prophets would be placed second” (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, 152). The prophets of the New Testament would be those in view in 1 Corinthians 11 and 14, Romans 12:6, 1 Thessalonians 5:20, etc. Lincoln articulates:

The apostles and prophets are foundational in the sense of being primary and authoritative recipients and proclaimers of revelation. The apostles were those with special authority from their commissioning by the risen Lord, while the prophets were those with charismatic authority. Some apostles, like Paul, were also prophets, but not all apostles were prophets, and certainly not all prophets were apostles. The apostles provided a foundational link with the risen Christ and, together with the prophets, gave foundational interpretation of what God had done in Christ for the edification of the Church. (*Ephesians*, WBC, 153)

Paul continues to describe the foundation by saying that Jesus Christ Himself is the chief cornerstone (ὄντος ἀκρογωνιαίου αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ). Ἀκρογωνιάιος is something “lying at the extreme corner” (BDAG 39 s.v.). It is the “the primary foundation-stone at the angle of the structure by which the architect fixes a standard for the bearings of the walls and cross-walls throughout” (MM 19 s.v.). Alternatively, some consider the term to mean the “final stone” (Jeremias, *TDNT* 1:792-3). However, the evidence for such understanding is late, and the context of a foundation in Ephesians better fits with “cornerstone” (O’Brien, *Ephesians*, PNTC, 216-7).

### **C. The New House of God (2:21-22)**

Continuing with the construction theme of verse 20—especially the unique role of Christ in the foundation—Paul describes two contributions Jesus makes to the new house of God. “The central role played by Christ in the present construction of the building, that is, the new community, corresponds to his role as mediator in bringing peace (in him, v. 16) and common access to the Father (through him, v. 18)... This building functions only in relation to him” (O’Brien, *Ephesians*, PNTC, 218).

#### **1. A Holy Temple (2:21)**

First, Paul says in him, Christ, πᾶσα οἰκοδομὴ συναρμολογουμένη αὐξεῖ (“every building joined together grows”). However, πᾶσα οἰκοδομὴ does not mean each individual building, but instead speaks of the entire building, the collection of believers as a whole (O’Brien, *Ephesians*, PNTC, 218-9; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 407-8; see also Appendix A, “Every Building”). Συναρμολογουμένη is a participle of means describing the way the whole building is growing as “to join together so as to form a coherent entity” (BDAG 966 s.v. συναρμολογέω). The building is not a static object, but an organic entity (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 409; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, 157). Moreover, Paul’s use of the present tense of “grows” suggests that completion is yet to be reached because more and more believers are being built upon the foundation (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, 157-8).

Paul finishes this statement explaining what the building is growing into: εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον ἐν κυρίῳ (“into a holy temple in the Lord”). While ναός may generically mean “temple,” it is most often associated with the sacred inner court of the Jerusalem temple (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 410). Derived from the verb “to dwell,” ναός is “consistently used in the NT of the sacred place where God dwells, ... the holy of holies” (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 410). Combined, then, the entire collection of believers is being grown intertwined into the place where people can draw near and encounter God.

#### **2. A Dwelling Place for God (2:22)**

The second parallel in the building analogy is that in him, that is Christ, the Ephesians are being συνοικοδομεῖσθε (“built up”). Συνοικοδομέω means “to build up or construct of various parts” (BDAG 974 s.v. 1). Literally, it means “build together” (MM 611 s.v.). Whereas verse 21 spoke to the universal growth, here Paul takes aim at the Ephesians—the y’all (ὅμοις) of verse 22 (Hoehner, *Ephesian*, 412). The Ephesians are being fastened together into κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ (“God’s dwelling place”).

The phrase ἐν πνεύματι (“in spirit”) has three understandings. First, it may be adjectival, as if to say “God’s spiritual dwelling place” (cf. 1 Pet 2:5). Second, “in spirit” may express the means used to create God’s dwelling place—the Spirit builds the Ephesians together into the dwelling place. Third, “in spirit” may be the instrument by which God occupies His dwelling place—God’s dwelling place in which He resides as the Spirit. Hoehner rightly argues for the third view because it parallels verse 21 (*Ephesians*, 414).

### **Conclusion**

Paul exhorts the Gentiles to remember where they came from. They were far from God, outside of His chosen people, hopeless and godless. Christ made peace between the Jews and Gentiles by rendering the law inoperative. Reconciled together, He also reconciled them to God. Now the new people of God, the fellowship of believers, is founded upon Christ, the Apostles, and the prophets and being grown together into a holy temple and a dwelling place for God.

### **Applications**

With regards to applications, two readily stand out. First is that no ethnic group is exclusively the people of God. In essence, Paul says there were two types of people: those with the Law, and those without. Now, that division is done away with through the cross. There is no longer any grounds for ethnic superiority or privileged access to God. All are eligible for intimate access to the Father. Hence the church, in its ministry and missions, should not presume that one culture has the inside track to God. For instance, when white, developed-world Christians serve in non-white, developing world contexts with native believers, it would be presumptuous and biblically wrong to assume that the person with the money or the “Christian culture” is de facto more spiritually mature, wise, ...

The second application is especially for western Christianity. In a culture that values individualism and autonomy, Paul’s emphasis in Ephesians 2:11-22 on the unity and interconnectedness of the body of Christ should serve as a wake-up call. Through Christ, God has created this new man, this new humanity—*e pluribus unum*. Together, we grow. Together, we become the temple of God. Together we are one. We should not be quick to abandon our togetherness, both in small community relationship and in large church-to-church relationships.

### **Appendix A: Text Critical Problems**

#### **But Also, Ephesians 2:19**

In Ephesians 2:19, three readings exist. Reading 1 reads ἀλλὰ καὶ συμπολίται. Reading 2 reads ἀλλὰ συμπολίται. Reading 3 reads ἀλλὰ ἐστὲ συμπολίται.

The external evidence prefers Readings 2 and 3, the latter especially. Reading 1 is found only in the Alexandrian minuscules 1739 and 1881, the earliest being the former dating to the tenth century. But that the reading is anti-Byzantine after the fifth century is noteworthy. Attested to in only one secondary Alexandrian text yet used in  $\mathfrak{M}$ , Reading 2 carries the weight of the Byzantine archetype and dates to fourth century. Jerome uses it in AD 420. On the other hand, Reading 3 is found in Codices Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, Claromontanus, Augiensis, and Boernerianus as well as in all the Latin versions. Hence Reading 3 is very solid in the Alexandrian and Western texttypes, whose archetypes date to second century.

The internal evidence, however, presents a challenge. The clearly more difficult reading is Reading 1: “Consequently, therefore, y’all are no longer strangers and foreigners but also fellow citizens...” This reading suggests either that the Gentiles were fellow citizens but are not any more or that they are some new category other than strangers, foreigners, and fellow citizens. Such obscurity would certainly prompt a scribe to eliminate the καὶ or replace it with ἐστὲ so that Paul’s statement would

become clear. It is unclear how a scribe would move from either Reading 2 or 3 to Reading 1 apart from some idiosyncratic error.

Reading 1, however, does not fit with the flow of Paul's line of thought. Paul has painted a vivid picture of the Gentile condition before the Messiah (Eph 2:11-12), but then in 2:13, everything has changed. The Gentiles are now near—not some new category or without category, but a part of the in-crowd. Reading 1 says the Gentiles are something else while Readings 2 and 3 communicate essentially that the Gentiles are now included in the people of God.

Distinguishing between Readings 2 and 3, the shorter reading is 2. Yet a scribe could easily have attempted to eliminate the redundancy of a second ἔστῃ. Or the ἔστῃ may have been added for emphasis.

As a whole, Reading 1 is ruled out because of the overwhelming external evidence against it. Virtually equivalent in meaning, Reading 3 is preferred over Reading 2 because of its broader circulation and earlier date, with a grade of 'A'.

### Every Building, Ephesians 2:21

In Ephesians 2:21, two readings exist. Reading 1 has an article between πᾶσα and οἰκοδομή. Reading 2 omits such an article.

The external evidence heavily favors Reading 2. While both readings prevailed past the Byzantine "takeover" of the fifth century, Reading 1 dates back to the fifth century as it is found in Codices Alexandrinus and Ephraemi, both secondary Alexandrian texttype witnesses. An edit of Codex Sinaiticus also reflects this reading, possibly dating it to the fourth century—but obviously the edit of Sinaiticus cannot predate the original that excludes the article.

Reading 2 is supported by the behemoths Codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, which readily support a fourth century dating. However, the strong solidarity Reading 2 has across the Alexandrian, Western, and Byzantine texttypes allows it to be dated with the earliest archetype, early in the second century.

As for internal evidence, the move from Reading 1 to Reading 2 could be explained as an itacism because in Koine Greek, the η and οι began to sound alike (Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 255). Or it may have been an idiosyncratic error. However the move from Reading 2 to Reading 1 is readily explained by copyists attempting to clarify the meaning of the clause (Metzger, *TCGNT*, 534). An anarthous noun may be used with one of three forces—indefinite, qualitative, or definite—without clear demarcation between them (Wallace, *ExSyn*, 243). Adding the article later would greatly simplify the way the clause was understood.

Moreover, understanding Reading 2 as individual churches would constitute a significant deviation from Paul's concern for the church universal (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, 124). In fact, such a concern for the reader not reading "every building" may have justified a scribe in his addition of the article (O'Brien, *Ephesians*, PNTC, 218).

All told, Reading 2—without the article—is preferable with a grade of 'B'.

### Appendix B: Structural Layout of Greek Clauses

11 Διὸ μνημονεύετε

ὅτι ποτὲ ὑμεῖς

τὰ ἔθνη ἐν σαρκί,

οἱ λεγόμενοι ἀκροβυστία

ὑπὸ τῆς λεγομένης περιτομῆς ἐν σαρκὶ χειροποιήτου,

12 ὅτι ἦτε τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ χωρὶς Χριστοῦ,

ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ

καὶ

[\*] ξένοι τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας,

ἐλπίδα μὴ ἔχοντες

καὶ

[\*] ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ.

13 νυνὶ δὲ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ὑμεῖς οἳ ποτε ὄντες μακρὰν ἐγενήθητε ἐγγύς ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

14 Αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐστίν ἡ εἰρήνη ἡμῶν,

ὁ ποιήσας τὰ ἀμφοτέρα ἐν

καὶ

τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ λύσας,

τὴν ἔχθραν

ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ,

15 τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν καταργήσας,

ἵνα τοὺς δύο κτίσῃ ἐν αὐτῷ εἰς ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον

ποιῶν εἰρήνην

16 καὶ

ἀποκατάλλάξῃ τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ,

ἀποκτείνας τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν αὐτῷ.

17 καὶ ἐλθῶν

εὐηγγελίσατο εἰρήνην ὑμῖν τοῖς μακρὰν

καὶ

[\*] εἰρήνην τοῖς ἐγγύς·

18 ὅτι δι' αὐτοῦ ἔχομεν τὴν προσαγωγὴν οἱ ἀμφοτέροι ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα.

19 ἄρα οὖν οὐκέτι ἐστὲ ξένοι καὶ πάροικοι

ἀλλὰ

ἐστὲ συμπολίται τῶν ἁγίων καὶ οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ,

20 ἐποικοδομηθέντες ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν,

ὄντος ἀκρογωνιαίου αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ,

- 21 ἐν ᾧ πᾶσα οἰκοδομὴ συναρμολογουμένη αὖξει εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον ἐν κυρίῳ,  
22 ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς συναρμολογεῖσθε εἰς κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πνεύματι.

### Appendix C: Synchronic Word Studies

#### Χειροποιήτος, Ephesians 2:11

Based on how great a personal salvation Paul has described in Ephesians 2:1-10, Paul begins to highlight another incredible facet of the Christ Event by calling the Ephesians to remember. He wants it clear in their minds what their life prior to Christ. First, the Ephesians are Gentiles in the flesh. To explain what Paul is talking about he points to what they are being called: the “foreskin” (BDAG 39 s.v. ἀκροβυστία 3). The people ever so crassly calling the Ephesian Gentiles this were the people who called themselves “the Circumcision,” the Jews. Then Paul adds that their act, their circumcision, is merely in the flesh χειροποιήτου.

Χειροποιήτος is used six times in the New Testament. The general definition of χειροποιήτος is “made by human hands” (BDAG 1083 s.v.). It is “the antithesis of what is made with men’s hands to the work of God” (Lohse, *TDNT* 9:436). In Mark 14:58, Jesus uses the term to contrast the Jerusalem temple and another “transcendent temple” (BDAG 159 s.v. ἀχειροποίητος).

In Acts, Luke uses χειροποιήτος twice as he draws upon “the idea of the limitation of the temple’s significance, already suggested in the OT itself (cf. 1 Kgs 8:27)” (*EDNT* 3:464). This idea of an earthly, human creation as something less than the divine or heavenly is picked up by Stephen when he says, “Yet the Most High does not dwell in [χειροποιήτοις], as the prophet says, ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord, or what is the place of my rest?’” (Acts 7:48-49, ESV) Paul too highlights the inferiority and inadequacy of a man-made dwelling place for God (Acts 17:24).

The writer of Hebrews gets even more explicit. In Hebrews 9:11, the heavenly court is depicted as a “greater and more perfect tent” in contrast to χειροποιήτου (Heb 9:11, ESV). Then he proceeds to equate the holy places χειροποίητα (“made by hand”) to ἀντίτυπα (“a copy, antitype, representation”) of the real thing, the heavenly places (BDAG 90 s.v. ἀντίτυπος 2). In short, then, the description of something as χειροποιήτος is, by comparison to the heavenly or divine equivalent, second-rate.

Hence, in Ephesians 2:19 where Paul is describing the Jew’s circumcision, Paul is emphasizing the inferior nature of their act. Moreover, the LXX uses χειροποιήτος exclusively in reference to idols (LEH Logos Electronic Edition, s.v.). As the Jews thought themselves to be super-special because of circumcision, Paul’s application of the term that refers to wrongly worshipped false gods appears even more fitting and derogatory to the self-righteous Jews’ circumcision.

In addition, the older uses of χειροποιήτος carried the idea of being artificial, something that man had to bring about (LSJ 1985 s.v. χειροποιήτος). Anachronistically, one might equate artificial as fake or superficial, but the term was used in contrast to things that occurred naturally in creation—where again the comparison is between what man had to do versus what God has done.

Two translations warrant brief commentary. First, The Message does an injustice to the text by completely skipping over the self-righteous accusation of the Jews. Second, the NLT takes the liberty to elaborate on the inferiority of this circumcision, presumably drawing off of Paul’s other discussions of circumcision. In Colossians 2:11, Paul asserts that believers are circumcised by Christ Himself. In Romans 2:28-29, Paul explains that true circumcision is one of the heart. Therefore the NLT translators say the Jews “were proud of their circumcision, even though it affected only their bodies and not their hearts” (Eph 2:11, NLT). “Since fleshly circumcision is done by the hand of man, the reference is to the contrast to God’s act and hence only relative validity attaches to the judgment that the circumcised pass on the Gentiles” (Lohse, *TDNT* 9:437).

## **Οἰκεῖοι, Ephesians 2:19**

In verse 19, Paul is painting a picture of the new spiritual reality for the Gentile Ephesians. In verses 11-13, Paul spelled out that the Gentiles before Christ were outsiders. Physically, they didn't belong with Jews (Eph 2:11). Legally, they were not part of the nation of Israel (Eph 2:12). Genetically, they did not inherit the covenants of promise that the Jews had (Eph 2:12). As a result, the Gentiles were without hope and without God (Eph 2:12). But Christ's work on the cross had changed all that (Eph 2:13-18). Now, instead of foreigners and strangers, the Gentiles are συμπολίται τῶν ἁγίων καὶ οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ "fellow citizens among the saints and fellow members of God's household" (Eph 2:19).

Οἰκεῖος is an adjective that means "one's own" (MM 440 s.v.). It is used to contrast "another's" (MM 440 s.v.). In the genitive, οἰκεῖος communicates "a member of one's family or house hold" (MM 440 s.v.). The LXX uses the term to describe a person as "near kin, belonging to the same family" (LEH Logos Electronic Edition, s.v.). When used as a substantive, οἰκεῖος means "persons who are related by kinship or circumstances and form a closely knit group" (BDAG 694 s.v. οἰκεῖος). Michel says that the word is "obviously controlled by the understanding of the community" (TDNT 5:134). In other words, the point of connection or relationship is not inherent in the word itself. It must be derived from the word's context.

In the New Testament, the lemma οἰκεῖος is found three times: 1 Timothy 5:8, Galatians 6:10, and Ephesians 2:19. In each of the three instances, the adjective is used as a substantive (BDAG 694 s.v.). In the 1 Timothy reference, the focus is on "normal familial connections or association in common cause" (BDAG 694 s.v. a). Paul is denouncing any believer who fails to care for his relatives, ἰδίων—which means "associates, relations" (BDAG 467 s.v. ἴδιος 4 a). Using the superlative μάλιστα ("especially"), he treats οἰκεῖος as a subset of ἴδιος, one's relations, conveying a heightened intimacy than just an aunt, an uncle, or a second cousin twice removed (MM 440 s.v. οἰκεῖος).

In Galatians 6:10, Paul speaks of another household, but this household is "focused on association in [a] common cause or belief" (BDAG 694 s.v. οἰκεῖος b). Here Paul admonishes the Galatians to persevere in doing good, and like 1 Timothy 5:8, he begins with a broad term, saying, "Let us do good to everyone." The he uses οἰκεῖος to hone in a specific subset of 'everyone' that warrants special attention: those who are a part of the household of faith (τοὺς οἰκεῖους τῆς πίστεως). Faith is the common cause or belief that binds this group together, such that they warrant special treatment.

In Ephesians 2:19, however, Paul is not using οἰκεῖος as a subset of a larger population. Instead, it is a figurative use (EDNT 2:494 s.v. οἰκεῖος). The household of God is anthropomorphic in that God has no corporeal body, much less a physical family or household. The idea expressed is one of spiritual kinship (MM 440 s.v. οἰκεῖος). Status as *familia Dei*, as Michel calls it, is conferred "spiritually to the community" (TDNT 5:134-5).

## **Appendix D: Problem-Solving and Validation**

### **The Dividing Wall of Partition, Ephesians 2:14**

In Ephesians 2:14, Paul is expounding upon why Christ is the Ephesians' peace. Paul explains first that Christ has made the two, Jews and Gentiles, one. Then Paul answers how these two diametrically-opposed enemies are now one: Christ has destroyed τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ, "the dividing wall of the partition." The problem is that whatever this dividing wall of the partition may be, it is a referent as clear as mud. So how have people resolved this mystery?

Four views are typically held with regards to the referent of τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ. The first is that Paul is speaking of the wall in the Jerusalem temple that established where Gentiles were and were not allowed. This view is favored by F. F. Bruce (*Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians*, NICNT, 297-8). In the temple, a balustrade segregated the court of the Gentiles and their impurity from the inner courts and sanctuary (O'Brien, *Ephesians*, PNTC, 195). Josephus says that on this four-and-a-half-feet tall divide, warning signs in Latin and Greek were posted at regular intervals: "No foreigner should go within

that sanctuary” (Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 5.5.2). The consequence of ignoring the signs, death (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 15.11.5).

While a compelling image, Hoehner nails four flaws to such an understanding. First, Paul fails to speak explicitly of a wall in Herod’s Temple in his Ephesians (*Ephesians*, 369). Were Paul to make such a reference, he would be utterly dependent upon his audience’s knowledge of the temple. The second flaw is that the wall in Jerusalem is never referred to as “τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ” (*Ephesians*, 369). Third, the wall in Jerusalem’s temple still stood when Paul wrote *Ephesians* (*Ephesians*, 369). In other words, how can Paul speak of Jesus having destroyed something that still existed? It does not jive with a strict, literal interpretation. Fourth, Hoehner asserts that normal person involved in the Ephesian churches would not have the requisite awareness of temple architecture, layout, and signage to appreciate Paul’s reference (*Ephesians*, 369). After all, Paul’s audience lived over 600 miles away (as the crow flies) from Jerusalem.

In contrast, Bruce is quick to point out that the whole reason Paul was in prison when he wrote Ephesians was precisely because he had been accused of taking a Gentile past this divide in the temple—as described in Acts 21:27-36 (*Colossians*, *Philemon*, *Ephesians*, NICNT, 297-8). While the Ephesians may not have had a close relationship with the temple, they did have one with Paul according to Acts 20:17-36. It is conceivable that they would have kept tabs on Paul and, in doing so, been keenly aware of Paul’s supposed trespass of temple protocol (Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, Eph 2:14).

The second understanding of “the dividing wall of the partition” equates this phrase with the barrier between the Holy of Holies and the rest of the temple. Held by C. J. Ellicott (*Ephesians*, 47-8), This view changes the nature of Paul’s discussion from the reconciliation of Jew and Gentile to the reconciliation of man and God, as the curtain kept all men save the high priest from God (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 369-70). Such a shift seems unfounded in this context. The verses immediately preceding the phrase speak of the drawing near of the uncircumcised to the circumcised (Eph 2:11-13). The verse immediately following again talks about two becoming one—a new man out of two, not out of one man and one God (Eph 2:15b). Hoehner highlights that, the divider here is a wall, not a curtain (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 369).

The third understanding is that, based on Gnostic texts, this is a reference to “a cosmic wall that separates the heavenly *pleroma* from the lower world” (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 370). This view was championed by Schlier (*Christus und die Kirche im Epheserbrief*, 27–37). Lincoln considers verse 14ff as part of an ancient hymn like Colossians 1:15-20, which he asserts is a reference to “cosmic reconciliation” (*Ephesians*, WBC, 128). The connection between the two passages is the verb ἀποκατάλλάσσειν, “to reconcile.” The repeated references then to two entities becoming one in Ephesian 2:14-16 are the reunification of heaven and earth (*Ephesians*, WBC, 128-9). In addition, Paul’s use of neuter terms in 14a (“τὰ ἀμώτερα,” and “ἐν”) in contrast to the masculine terms before and after in Ephesians 2:11-13, 16, 18 opens the door for referents other than Jews and Gentiles (Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT, 164).

Like the argument for the barrier between the Holy of Holies and humanity, a separation between man and God is not in view in this context. Moreover, the sources used to substantiate such “Gnostic notions of a barrier between the world below and the upper world of fullness” are notably later than Paul’s authorship (O’Brien, *Ephesians*, PNTC, 195).

The fourth view states that “the dividing wall of the partition” is the Torah, the law of the Jewish people. This is Hoehner’s and O’Brien’s understanding (*Ephesians*, 368-71; *The Ephesians*, PNTC, 196). Paul strings together a series of three clauses in verses 14 and 15 that each begin with an accusative noun: “τὸ μεσότοιχον,” “τὴν ἔχθραν,” and “τὸν νόμον”—respectively, the dividing wall, the hostility, and the law. The hostility clause is without a verb and therefore thought of as an apposition to the dividing wall—some even consider “the partition” a genitive of apposition to “the dividing wall” (Arnold, *Ephesians*, ZECNT, 159). The parallels between the breaking down of the dividing wall and the abolishing of the law naturally appear as parallels, suggesting that Paul is using a symbol from his life and reality to communicate a truth about the reunification of Jew and Gentile into the one man (Thielman, *Ephesians*,

BECNT, 165). The law, especially circumcision, had divided the people of God from everyone else, creating an air of superiority among the Jews as well as hostility to outsiders who might infect them with their uncleanness (O'Brien, *Ephesians*, PNTC, 196).

The fourth view considers “the dividing wall of partition” to refer to nothing specifically other than a generic socio-divide between Jew and Gentile (Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT, 166). The parallels between “the wall,” “the hostility,” and the “the law” make such a generic reference unlikely. Such a critique is aided by the writings of the day describing the diaspora Jew as indistinguishable from the general population—except when it came to the practice of Jewish rites and religion, the law (Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT, 166).

It is my opinion that, while the reasons to believe that “the dividing wall of the partition” was the balustrade segregating the Gentiles in the Jerusalem temple are attractive, those same reasons better serve the law being the referent. Like any good writer, Paul writes using his experiences to illustrate metaphorically or symbolically what he desires to communicate. Obviously the best writers will use references and stories that their audience is familiar with, but that is not a requirement. If an audience may not appreciate such a reference, then a good writer adds just enough other detail to explain the imagery—hence “the dividing wall of the partition.” Grammatically, the parallels and appositions that follow “the dividing wall” best support the law as the referent. Though the discussion of whether or not Paul is referring to the Torah and/or the Mishnah is one worthy of further study and debate, nevertheless, I believe Paul had the law in some shape or form in view here. To such an assertion I give the grade ‘B’ with the support of scholars such as Hoehner and O'Brien.

### **What Exactly Became Inoperative? Ephesians 2:15**

In verse 15a, Paul is explaining how the hostility between Jew and Gentile, the dividing wall separating them, was destroyed. Paul says the cessation of hostilities came about when τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν καταργήσας, “the law of commandments in decrees was made inoperative.” The question is: what exactly became inoperative? In other words, how is this law of commandments in decrees to be understood?

The general consensus is that Paul's statement relates to the Mosaic law; however the extent or way in which the Mosaic law was made inoperative has three categories of answers: some portion of the Mosaic law has ceased, the entire law has ceased, or some aspect or application of the entire law has ceased. Calvin held the first view. Ceremonial laws, not moral legislation, were what Calvin felt truly created the separation and subsequent hostility between the Jews and Gentiles (*Galatians*, *Ephesians*, *Philippians*, *Colossians*, 151; Ambrosiaster, *Ephesians*, CSEL, 81.3:84). Their demise was necessary for Jew and Gentile to come together.

However, the context holds no inferences of just dietary regulations, circumcision, or other ceremonial acts being nullified (Best, *Ephesians*, ICC, 260). Moreover, the delineation of moral and ritual law is not a line explicitly drawn by Scripture—which is especially evident looking at Jesus's rebuttal of the moral law of retaliation in Matthew 5:38-42 (Best, *Ephesians*, ICC, 260). According to Romans 10:4, Christ is culmination of the law in its entirety, and according to Galatians 3:25, all believers are freed from the law as their teacher. Likewise, there is no delineation of moral law, civic law, or ritual law with regards to which laws the believer has died (Rom 7:1-6).

Hence, Hoehner argues for the second view—that the entire law has been made inoperative. The Greek clause ἐν δόγμασιν can be understood as describing the “nature of the commandments” (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 375). In other words, what is inoperative is the law consisting of commandments “consisting in” decrees (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 375). The phrase ἐν δόγμασιν, then, emphasizes the entirety of the law being done away with (Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT, 169). As a result, believers are only obligated to laws which “have been reiterated in the [New Testament],” having only to abide exclusively by the New Covenant (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 376). In short, Paul's argument is “that Christ destroyed the symptom, that is, the enmity between Jews and Gentiles, by making inoperative the root or cause, namely, the law of commandments in decrees”—which Paul then proceeds to explain in the remainder of verses 15 and 16 (Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 377).

Lincoln's arrives at the same conclusion (*Ephesians*, WBC, 142), but his approach requires a suspension of the belief that Paul wrote *Ephesians*. If Paul did not write the book, then this statement is actually a contradiction between Paul's thoughts in *Romans*, *Galatians*, etc., and a post-Pauline author, or more accurately, it is an expansion on Paul's earlier presentations. Assumed to be written at a point when Judaism's influence on Christianity had greatly waned, "[the writer of *Ephesians*] finds no need to tread as delicately as the Paul of *Romans* and can present the logic of his master's position in an unqualified fashion" (Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC, 143).

In rebuttal, Thielman points to the *hauptbriefe* and especially *Romans* 3:31 as evidence of Paul's persistent affirmation of the law and its authority, not an abandonment of it (*Ephesians*, BECNT, 168). In *Galatians* 5:14 and *Romans* 13:8, Paul speaks of believers fulfilling the law by loving. In *1 Corinthians* 9:8-9, Paul establishes his authority based on the fact that he is echoing what the law says—a stance that is remarkably inconsistent if the law no longer has any authority (Barth, *Ephesians*, AB, 1:287). In addition, to accept Lincoln's approach requires punting on the inerrancy of Scripture—that when the Scriptures claim Pauline authorship, he actually wrote it.

Thielman, Barth, Best, Arnold, Bruce, and O'Brien agree that the Mosaic Law is in focus. Yet the law itself has not been abrogated, but rather an application or result of the law that has ceased. Thielman thinks the sinful and hostile usage of the law has been terminated by Christ (*Ephesians*, BECNT, 170). Similarly, Barth believes the divisive nature of the law has come to an end, but the ethical demands remain intact (Barth, *Ephesians*, AB, 1:291, 287). Best believes this verse to communicate that the Mosaic Law is no longer the means to salvation (*Ephesians*, ICC, 261). Arnold and O'Brien hold to the cessation of the Mosaic Law in its function of "regulating the covenant relationship" (*Ephesians*, ZECNT, 162; *Ephesians*, PNTC, 198-9). What God has made known about Himself remains intact in the law—says Bruce—but according to *2 Corinthians* 3:6-15, the threat of death at the hands of the law has ceased (*Colossians*, *Philemon*, *Ephesians*, NICNT, 298-9).

In my opinion, Calvin's answer is the easiest to make sense of the statement but the hardest to justify without any clear evidence of the Scriptures themselves differentiating the types of law. Hoehner's answer of a total abrogation of the law for the believer seems untenable in light of so many other positive affirmations of the law's application to the believer's life. Lincoln's presuppositions are faulty. I see no evidence of Thielman's or Barth's answers actually happening. Sinful and divisive usage of the law still exists today among believers. Best is wrong because the law was never a means to salvation as it was issued to a redeemed people. Arnold and O'Brien are wrong because the Mosaic Law still functions as the covenant for Israel. As a people, they are operating outside the covenant, but prior to the Second Advent, a remnant will return to the ways prescribed under the Mosaic Law. Bruce's answer as the do-or-die nature of the law, then, is most preferable, but I grade the answer 'C' at best.