



## The Glorious Church of God

*Series: The Grand Plan of the Glorious God*

Ephesians 2:11-22

August 22, 2010

Pastor Nick Shaffer

---

### Introduction

Last week, Paul laid out for us the work of God to save us and this week, he is going to show us who we are as the people of God. He wants us to grasp the glorious nature of the church, the uniqueness of the church, the beauty of the church. Paul wants us to rightly understand the miracle of the church and he is going to show it to us by showing us what we were, what Christ has done and who we are now as the people of God. This is a vitally important text for many reasons, but in particular because we live in a time that has a very small view of what the church really is. I pray that we will have a proper view of the church after this morning. But before Paul describes the church, he is going to describe how the Ephesians became part of that church and he begins by reminding them of

**What We Were (v.11-12)** Paul begins this section talking about the animosity and spiritual disadvantages between Jews and Gentiles -- a Gentile is just anyone that is not ethnically a Jew --the majority of the Ephesians and all of us. **Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands.** "Uncircumcision" was a belittling and insulting term, used by the Jews to refer to Gentiles who were outside of the covenant people of God. It was a term of reproach to show towards them: "You don't belong to God. You're not God's chosen people. You are a Gentile dog." It was a term that was used to puff up the Jews and to put the Gentiles down. There is no secret that throughout history there had been great animosity between unfaithful Israel and the nations of the world. There was a deep enmity between Jews and Gentiles. You remember that Israel was to be a great missionary nation. God had called the Jews to be the missionary force to the world, proclaiming that He and He alone was the true and living God, that He was going to send a Messiah to save the world. But the Jews failed in their mission. They became exclusive, hyper-spiritual, legalistic, prideful, and boastful in their religion and their position as God's chosen people. So deep was their hatred that to the Jew the Gentile was simply fuel for the flames of hell. That's all they were worth, that's all they were good for. One common saying: "The best of the serpents - crush them, and the best of the

Gentiles - kill them.” It wasn't even lawful to help a Gentile woman giving birth, for that would bring another heathen pagan Gentile into the world.

But there was another obstacle for the Ephesians, even after they were saved -- the Judaizers, those of the circumcision party, a group of Jews who said that in order for the Gentiles to be saved, because they were not Jews, they needed to be circumcised and to keep the ceremonial laws of Moses. They were not a problem only in Galatia, but everywhere that Paul preached. They would go in after Paul had preached somewhere and accuse him of not preaching the true gospel. They would tell the Gentile converts that they were still lacking if they wanted to be saved. They said that you needed to believe in Jesus, but you also needed to be circumcised and to keep the law in order to be saved. These Judaizers were offended that as the early church spread it became mainly Gentile and it had the nerve - in Jewish eyes - of taking the Old Testament Scriptures and claiming that many of its prophecies were being fulfilled in them. But the point that Paul is going to make here is that the church is something new, something unique. These Judaizers did not understand what the church really is. It is not just a continuation of Judaism – it is something far more, far greater, far more glorious. It a new race, a new people of God created by the blood of Christ, made to reflect His glory, and he is going to show us how.

But first, he admits that what the Jews said about the Gentiles, about the Ephesian believers, was true. As Gentiles, in comparison to the Jews, they were at a great disadvantage spiritually and they were outside of the covenant people of God and so were and he describe their condition so that he can shine an even greater light oi Christ and His church. He says we were:

**separated from Christ...**As Gentiles they had no expectation of a coming Messiah. The Messiah belonged to the Jews. The Messiah was not promised to the Gentiles, the Messiah was promised to Israel. Although it is predicted in the Old Testament, and throughout the word of God, that the blessing and the benefits of Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, would flow through to every nation and every man through His ministry - yet He would be born a Jew. **(Joh 4:22)** Not only that, as Gentiles, we were

**alienated from the commonwealth of Israel...** The Jews had a nation over which God ruled. They gloried in the fact that God was the head of their nation. They were a Theocracy. They

had a sense of destiny, a sense of God's protection, a sense of belonging to a single people who were all under the guidance of God. Moses could say of the nation, in contrast to all of the Gentile nations: **(Deu 4:7-8)** They had a sense of solidarity, a sense of brotherhood which came from belonging to God, from being his people. But the Gentiles didn't have this. Moreover Paul admits that the Gentiles were

**strangers to the covenants of promise...**Literally Paul says that the Gentiles, you and me, were strangers to the covenants of the promise. It is speaking of the first and original promise of God to Abraham from which all of the other various covenants made with Israel sprung forth. In that original promise, God had told Abraham: **(Gen 12:1-3)** This covenant of promise was made to the Jews. They did not possess the great promise reiterated throughout Scripture where God says: **"I will be your God and you will be my people."** For that reason, Paul could say of them that they:

**(had) no hope and (were) without God in the world...**They were hopeless, because although God had determined to include the Gentiles in His salvation, they did not know it and so they had no hope to sustain them. They were without God because although God had revealed Himself to all mankind in nature, and had not left Himself without a witness in all that had been made, yet in the words of Romans 1: **(Rom 1:21-23)** That was the condition of these Ephesians, of all Gentiles, of you and me. That is what we were but Paul wants us to know

**What Christ Has Done (v. 13-18)** We were hopeless, helpless, outside of the covenant people of God, strangers to God's promises, without a Messiah. We were as far from God as we could possibly get, **but now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (Eph 2:13)**

Through the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary, upon whom God counted our sin and judged it, upon whom God poured His wrath for our sin in our place and counted to us Christ's righteousness instead – because of His blood poured out for our redemption and forgiveness and salvation and justification before God, we who were once far off have been brought near to God. Because of the blood of Christ, though as Gentiles we were ignorant, pagan, darkened, foolish, struggling, hopeless – we were brought nearer to God, in the blood of Christ, than any Jew could ever come only by way of the temple, the Law, the priesthood, and

the sacrifice. He bought us into the fold of God, to be children of Abraham by faith, heirs of the promise of salvation and the covenant of promise which He made to Abraham so long ago. By this the apostle is trying to emphasize to us the exceedingly amazing wonder of the grace of God, which laid all these liabilities aside and reached out to us and found us just as we were, and brought us near to God by the blood of Jesus Christ our Lord. But there is even more that we need to grasp here. Paul writes:

**Eph 2:14-16** -- Jesus Christ, Himself, is our peace and in two ways. There are two things that Christ did through the cross, through His blood, through His sacrifice. First, Paul says, he broke down the dividing wall of hostility that was between the Jews and the Gentiles. There is a very clear picture of the separation that Paul has in mind -- the wall that separated the Gentiles from the Jews at the Temple. Let me explain. The Jewish Temple was comprised of a series of concentric courtyards. The courtyard closest to the Temple was only for the priests, and then next to that, the court of Israel which was just for men, and the next enclosure was the court for the women. Those three courtyards were all on the same level, but when you left the court of women you walked down five steps to a level terrace, and then continued on through a gap in a wall which was five feet high, down 14 more steps to the courtyard where the Gentiles had their place. The Gentiles could come no closer than that. Warnings were posted: "Anyone unauthorized entering into this Court has himself to blame for his ensuing death."

That physical wall was a picture of the separation between Jew and Gentile, the division between Jew and Gentile because of the ceremonial laws of Moses. The spiritual wall that separated Jews from Gentiles was based upon the Jewish religious rituals – washings, baptisms, the dietary laws, the system of sacrifices, the system of worship and approach to the Holy God. That separation between believing Jew and Gentile was forever abolished by Christ. The Mosaic ceremonial law, the OT system of sacrifice and worship was forever abolished by the death of Jesus Christ as the "once for all" sacrifice for sins by the shedding of his own blood – Jesus Christ, the only sacrifice which truly atones for sin. This abolishing of the Mosaic ceremonial law was also the breaking down of the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile. Believing Jews and Gentiles are together the church. **(Gal 3:27-29)**

What Paul means for us to see is this: Christ has created **in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.** Gentile believers do not just receive membership in Judaism.

Christ has made of believing Jews and Gentiles something entirely new, the mystery hidden for ages in God – the church. Christ has joined together believing Jew and believing Gentile and has made of them one new man and has forged for that one new man, for his church, peace with God, reconciliation with God through the cross. There is only one means of reconciliation and one means of redemption and that is the cross on which the Prince of Glory died. It is at the cross all redeemed sinners meet. No one, regardless of heritage, regardless of any other factor, finds peace with God except in the cross. Paul goes on to say: **(Eph 2:17-18)**

Paul's point is simply this: that through Christ's earthly ministry and through His apostles and faithful preachers of the gospel, Christ preached the gospel to Gentiles and to the Jews, those far off and those near, and through faith in Him, we both, together, have access in one Spirit to the Father. The one place of access to the one true God is through Jesus Christ, and therefore everyone who comes to the Father through Jesus the Son is a brother and sister to everyone else who comes to the Father through Jesus the Son. We are together with every believer something new. And that is where Paul is going with all of this. The climax of this section is found right here in verses 19-22. Everything else was setting the stage for Paul to tell us

**What We Are Now as God's People (v. 19-22)** Everything that came before was leading to this glorious depiction of the church of God. We need to see the church as she is. This is so important and it is important because so many have such inadequate or misguided views of what the church really is. And now, having explained how the Ephesians became part of the church of God, he tells us what that church is and he does it using three pictures. First, Paul shows us that

**The church is the kingdom of God...**Paul says, **So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints.** The point Paul is making is this: No longer are you strangers and aliens as you once were from the commonwealth of Israel, the nation over which God ruled as king, but now you are fellow citizens with the saints in the Kingdom of God. God's kingdom refers to the rule of God manifested in the lives of His people. The Kingdom of God is a people who are bound together by a common allegiance to one King, Jesus Christ. The church is the Kingdom of God manifest on this earth. The church is not a social club, it is not a Sunday morning meeting place, not primarily an evangelistic center, missions center, information center, a program center, or a counseling center. We are the city of God in a fallen world, created and sustained by the power of God. And we are citizens in that great Kingdom and that

must take precedence over every other citizenship that we enjoy. That must be true of all of us. As the visible manifestation of the Kingdom of God, we are called in the midst of the nations and in the midst of this city to be a living, breathing, walking, talking, witness that there is a God, that He is holy and sovereign and worthy of glory and of allegiance and of worship and praise. Then Paul changes the metaphor and it becomes more intimate. A kingdom is one thing, but Paul means for us to see that

**The church is the household of God...**Paul writes, you are **members of the household of God.** The church is God's home and that takes the picture of the church to another level. Paul has already told us that we are citizens of God's kingdom and that is a great status, but it's not the same kind of closeness as the family of God. You know what I mean? I grew up in a great town, never had to lock our doors, all the parents looked out for all the kids, the kids played together, got in trouble together but still there was a degree of separation involved there, especially when we got in trouble for something. More than being just fellow citizens in the kingdom of God, we are a family and God is our Father. It is important for us to realize just how significant this is. It highlights for us the marvelous, wondrous grace of God. God's grace is so extensive that He elevates us to dignity of being His children, he adopts us into His own family.

What does that mean? When you are truly a member of a family, you have access to the Father and to your brothers and sisters all time, not in a cold, formal sort of way, but in the atmosphere of love and faith. God the Father has made Himself accessible to us and promised us his provision, and his Fatherly presence. We've been put into a divine family. And if you are a part of a family, when the family gets together, you want to be there. When the family talks about the things that matter most, the things of God, you delight in the conversation. You want to spend time with the family when they get together just because you're family. You want to hang out with them. If the family of God gathers for worship, you're there. If they gather for a meal, you bring the dessert. If they meet to talk about family matters, you're there. If a member of the family needs help, you're first in line. You're willing to sacrifice for the good of the family. You can't be a casual part of a family. You're committed because you're part of the family. Being in a family means something. Our lives are intertwined with one another and they are purposeful.

The point of the family is not to just give warm fuzzies, it is not just to pump up egos and make us feel good about ourselves. The purpose of a home is not to bolster all the family's self-esteem and self-fulfilment in an atmosphere of self-absorption. And that is not the purpose of

the household of God either. The purpose of this family is to continually turn one another's hearts and attention to the greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ, magnifying the real Father, God Himself. The purpose of the family of God is not to make its members merely happy; it is to make them holy, glorifying God and enjoying him. That is how a family behaves. It holds its members accountable for their behavior. It guides them in righteousness and encourages them in repentance. It supports the weak and builds into them the life of God. A family acts like that in an atmosphere of loving support and acceptance, with a strong, holy love. It is like the Jerusalem church in the book of Acts, **(Acts 4:32-35)** But Paul goes even further. We are citizens of a Kingdom, we are members in a family, but more than both of those, his words come to a climax by calling us the temple of God, a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

**The temple of God...Paul says you are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.** We are the temple. This is not speaking of us individually, this is speaking of the church collectively. All of God's people make up this single temple. We are the Temple of God. Individually and collectively, we are the Holy Temple of God **built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.**

What Paul is saying is that the true church is founded upon the preaching and the teaching of the apostles and the prophets – the faithful preachers and recorders of the Word of God. And the cornerstone of that foundation is Jesus Christ, Savior and Lord. The true church, the true temple of God is founded upon the faithful preaching of the saving work of Jesus Christ the cornerstone. The true church is built upon the sure foundation of completed atonement and completed canon of Scripture. That is why any church that diminishes the person or work of Jesus Christ is not a true church. Any church that undermines the inspiration and authority of the Bible must be rejected. Such “churches” are buildings without a solid foundation.

We are the Temple of God and Jesus is the cornerstone of that Temple. Can you picture our construction as God's temple? Our Lord Jesus Christ, the foundation of our justification and salvation set as the only cornerstone of the Temple of God, and we - the living stones cut from the quarry of sin by the grace of the Father and the sword of the Spirit and cemented to Christ by the blood of His sacrifice, fashioned into the Temple of God. A temple made of souls, a structure made of hearts beating with holy love for God and for one another. We are the living temple of God, fashioned by His love so that He could indwell us and commune with us and fellowship with us. We are made into the Temple of God, a dwelling place for God in the Spirit, where God manifests His gracious presence and loving power.

We are the place of worship, we are the place of fellowship, we are the place of glory, we are the place of holiness, we are the place of His manifest presence – us, His people, not a building. Oh, Beloved, grasp this. The temple represented the dwelling place of God. It was the chief holy place where God's presence especially resided providing Israel with a tangible reminder of

God's favor, blessing, and protection. Because God's glory inhabited the holy temple, it was set apart as a special place of worship, sacrifice, and celebration. The church - God's spiritual community - is the new temple of the Spirit. The true Church is where the Lord is at home, a place where God, by the Spirit, finds His portion and delight and manifests Himself.

When is a temple a temple? When you have the presence of God in it, and not until. You can have the buildings; you can have the organization; you can have the corporations; you can have the committees; you can have all the machinery of the church; you can have everything; you can say that is the body of Christ; but let me tell you, if the Spirit is not in it, it is dead. Only when God dwells there is a church the true temple of God. We must ask ourselves, do we invite His presence? Where are our real affections set? Who has pre-eminence with us? What is the heart of our songs? What is the heart of our preaching? What is the motivation of our living? I love the comments of Charles Spurgeon regarding this text. In closing his sermon on the church as the dwelling place of God, he said, **“And now, brethren and sisters, in conclusion I make these remarks. If the church of God is God's house, what should you and I do? Why we should earnestly seek as being a part of that temple always to retain the great inhabitant. Let us not grieve his Spirit lest he leave his church for awhile; above all let us not be hypocrites lest he never come into our hearts at all. And if the church be God's temple and God's house, let us not defile it. If you defile yourself you defile the church, for your sin if you be a church member is the church's sin. The defilement of one stone in rebuilding virtually mars its perfection. Take care that thou be holy even as he is holy. Let not thine heart become a house for Belial. Think not that God and the devil can dwell in the same habitation. Give thyself wholly to God. Seek for more of his Spirit, that as a living stone thou mayest be wholly consecrated; and never be contort unless thou feelest in thyself the perpetual presence of the divine inhabitant who dwelleth in his church. May God now bless every living stone of the temple. And as for you that as yet are not hewn out of the quarries of sin, I pray that divine grace may meet with you, that you may be renewed and converted, and at last be partakers of the inheritance of the saints of light.”**

## **Responding to This Revelation**

Paul says we are the Kingdom of God, the family of God and the Temple of God. How must we respond to this?

What joins Christians together is not their race or language or class or money or anything like that. It is in Christ that the whole building is joined together. Are you joined to Christ?

Honor your King, love your Father and Worship Your God.

Being the church demands that we be joined with one another. Are you investing your life in the pursuit of Christ with others here? Being a Christian and being a faithful, invested part of a church go hand in hand.

Invest your life in this church as a priority -- make other considerations flow around your commitment to the church. Find ways to serve and pour your life into the body.

Give faithfully.

Love and protect this church. If Christ loves His church then I need to love it too.

What Paul describes here is not the "ideal" church, it is this church -- WSBC, this congregation. Let us love this church, and pray for this church, and spend our lives loving and serving God and loving and serving the people of God.

---

© West Salem Baptist Church, 2010

Permissions: You are free to reproduce and distribute this material but you may not alter its contents in any way or charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction. If you are posting online, a link back to this original document is preferred. Anything beyond these guidelines will require prior approval by West Salem Baptist Church.