

I Will Shake the Heavens:

A Redemptive-Historical Interpretation of the Dividing Wall in Ephesians 2:11-22

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Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery: Exegesis Paper

February 2, 2026

One of the most profound shifts in reading the Bible happened for me when I read a children's storybook to my daughters. In *The Garden, The Curtain, and the Cross*, pictures from across Scripture — particularly God's temple and the keep-out sign of angels in the garden and on the curtain — were threaded together in a way my dispensationalist Baptist upbringing had never done. I had to re-learn how to view the temple, and G. K. Beale's *The Temple and The Church's Mission* was especially important in teaching me how. It had still not occurred to me how extensive this theme was, but a friend texted one day to ask, "Isn't that what happened in Ephesians 2?"

In Ephesians 2:11-22, Paul brings to the forefront those issues that distinguish between Jews and Gentiles, then immediately obliterates them by stating that the dividing wall of hostility has been torn down: they are reconciled to God in one new man. The meaning of these two results is highly contested among authors of exegetical commentaries; they tend to dwell on the unity of the Church universal and the figurative abolishment of the walls in the temple complex or of the Law as a whole. If this is the correct interpretation, Paul is merely dealing with Jews having their form of peace with God and Gentiles having their form of peace with God, along with the removal of open hostility and of the abiding presence of the Law. If this is right, it culminates in a distinctly dispensational interpretation of Scripture: there are two ways to peace with God, the Law has no abiding application, and Jews and Gentiles must each operate on their own redemptive principles.

Given Paul's overarching theme of union with Christ, coupled with his eschatological picture of the temple-dwelling, the present author believes that a more striking and theologically significant development is in view. This paper will seek to show that the fundamental aim of

Ephesians 2:11-22 is the reconciliation that Jews and Gentiles have with God in Christ in the heavenly Holy of Holies; furthermore, the Church must live and worship as a people who are being built into heaven's Most Holy Place through our Great High Priest, Jesus Christ.

The Context of Ephesians

Ephesians is one of the last letters written by the apostle Paul, written near the end of his life from a prison in Rome, likely to the Gentiles of the churches in Asia Minor. Modern commentators tend to suggest that it was written by a student or school of Paul (the increasingly accepted view among academia, cf. Lincon, Slater) after his death, while some still maintain that it may have been Paul writing to the church in Ephesus (the minority position in the present day).

There is no reason to doubt either the date or the Pauline authorship — as Charles Hodge said, it “has never been doubted, except by a few modern critics to whom nothing is sacred.”¹ The internal testimony of the inspired Word of God is entirely consistent with the traditional view. Regarding date, Hodge also explains that Scripture bears witness that the letter, along with those of Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon, was written during Paul's Roman imprisonment (wherein he preached even “to those in Caesar's household,” Phil. 4:22).²

The question of the audience of this epistle necessitates further inquiry. Manuscript evidence is divided rather evenly when attesting to the phrase “in Ephesus” in Ephesians 1:1. Some have suggested that it was originally a circular letter to the churches in the region and it was awarded its name based on the tradition that the letter was given to the care of the church in Ephesus. Others have suggested that the letter was originally sent to the church in Ephesus and

¹ Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Ephesians*, with Princeton Theological Seminary Library (New York, R. Carter and brothers, 1856), <http://archive.org/details/commentaryonepisephes00hodg>, xv.

² Hodge, ix-x.

was later circulated according to Paul's intent, at which point the words "in Ephesus" were removed from the few, later copies.³ With only this in mind, either option would be valid. However, Ephesians is an unusual letters of Paul, containing no references to doctrinal or practical issues in the recipient church. In fact, it is largely parallel to the Epistle to the Colossians, omitting some formal elements. It stands to reason that this aberrant epistolary form — neglecting thanksgiving, doctrinal correction, and individual salutations — would be explained by the initial intent that the letter be circulated. Furthermore, it is noted that while the church in Ephesus comprised both Gentiles and Jews (Acts 19:10), the letter addresses almost exclusively Gentile concerns. The audience is also explicitly addressed as Gentiles and never as having a Jewish component.

In terms of their ethnic background, these Christian readers who are part of the universal Church are Gentiles. This identification is made explicit in the way they are addressed in 2:11 and 3:1, in the depiction of their past as religiously deprived in comparison with that of Israel (2:11-13), and in the reference to their past Gentile lifestyle in 4:17. It is also implicit in the way that past is described in 2:1-3 and in the view of their relationship to Paul's ministry to the Gentiles which underlies the digression of 3:2-13.⁴

This is sufficiently explained by its being put into circulation first to the church in Ephesus and then in other churches containing Gentiles. This is the position of the present author.

As the epistle is addressed to a Gentile audience and concerns itself primarily with issues pertaining to Gentile conversion to Christianity, it is important to note which major themes arise, as they have bearing on the passage in question. In the first half of Ephesians, Paul's repeated use of some key words and phrases can be used to summarize his argument over the first three

³ Hodge, xiii, contra Beza.

⁴ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 42 (Word Books Publishing, 2005), lxxvi.

chapters: The “mystery” of the gospel is experienced in the “riches” of the “fullness” of “grace,” “in Christ.” This is almost exactly Paul’s explicit thesis of 1:10: “making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth in him.” This true union with Christ is apparently something the Gentiles in the churches needed to hear that ought to be overheard, if you will, by the Jewish Christians. It is how Paul accomplishes this argument in Ephesians 2:11-22 that is worth noting.

Ephesians 2:11-22 Verse-by-Verse

Ephesians 2:11-12

Therefore, remember that at one time you who were Gentiles in the flesh — the ones called “Foreskin” by those called “Circumcision” in the flesh, made by (human) hand — that you were at that appointed-time without the Messiah, estranged-ones from the citizenship of Israel and aliens in regard to the covenants based on the promise, not having hope and Godless in the world; ...

Paul opens the next section of his argument with the imperative “remember” or “bring to mind.” Clearly, Paul has in mind the Hebraic concept of acting upon the idea that is called to mind; the Gentile readers were to “walk in a manner of life worthy of the calling to which [they had been] called,” (Eph. 4:1) rather than in their former way of life. They had been τὰ ἔθνη ἐν σαρκί, “Gentiles in the flesh.” Prior to this point, 20 of the 38 uses of the preposition ἐν have had Christ as their object. Most of the remaining uses have been to the effect of “in kindness,” “in mercy,” or “in the heavenly places.” So it is quite startling in 2:2-3 to read of being dead according to the sins “in which you once walked” “in the passions of our flesh,” and all of this redeemed “in Christ.” To read in verse 11 of being τὰ ἔθνη ἐν σαρκί would be another shocking

shift of tone and a sober reminder of who the Gentiles were not-in-Christ. This “in-flesh or in-Christ” dichotomy will prove an important distinction as the passage continues.

It is for this reason that Paul brings up the derogatory name by which the Jews called the nations/Gentiles: “the ones called ‘Foreskin’ (ἀκροβυστία) by those called ‘Circumcision’ (περιτομῆς) in the flesh, made by (human) hand.”⁵ These Greek terms are not parallel, heightening the disparity between the two parties, but the participle λεγόμενοι/λεγομένης, “so-called” or “the ones called” is the same. When viewed in the flesh, both of these groups are merely “called” according to these names; in Christ, God does not necessarily arrive at the same conclusions. Those who are “called ‘Circumcision’” are only called this ἐν σαρκί; Their privileged status is only “in the flesh, made by hand.” G. K. Beale and Benjamin Gladd make the note that χειροποιήτου (“hand-made”) is a negative term, it “evokes the irony that the Jews have made an idol out of physical circumcision. In the OT, ‘handmade’ refers to idols (cp. Lev 26:1; Is 2:18; 46:6; Dn 5:4). It is used in the NT to refer to OT shadows that have become idolatrous for Jews and cause them to fail to grasp the antitypical realities to which they pointed.”⁶ “This is Paul’s first hint that Jews also needed what God would provide in Christ.”⁷ The privilege of Christians is not accorded to Jew or Gentile according to the flesh, but is founded in Christ.

Paul then turns from this oppositional statement to his original call to “remember” their former estate. He does this with five explanatory clauses: without Christ/the Messiah, estranged

⁵ Most English versions render this like the NASB: “who are called ‘Uncircumcision’ by the so-called ‘Circumcision’ which is performed in the flesh by human hands—.” While the term “Uncircumcision” makes a tidy verbal parallelism in English, the parallel is not present in the Greek or the Hebrew. This is not merely “not being circumcised,” but a derogatory term to the effect of “you foreskinned-ones.”

⁶ *Connecting Scripture: New Testament*, with G. K. Beale and Benjamin L. Gladd (Holman Bible Publishers, 2025), 364. See also Frank Thielman, *Ephesians* (Baker Academic, 2010), note on 2:11.

⁷ Darrell L. Bock, *Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Volume 10 (InterVarsity Press, 2019), 72.

from the citizenship of Israel, aliens to the covenants of promise, not having hope, and without God in the world, (some denote “in the world” as a separate, sixth clause). This was all “at that time.” As Larkin notes, “The use of *καίρῳ* probably indicates a stage of redemptive history rather than the Ephesian’s [sic] pre-Christian experience or the time period when Christ was on earth (cf. 1:10; BDAG, 498.3.a; contra Mitton, 103).”⁸ Rather than having the Gentiles recollect a time in their own lives, they are called to look on redemptive history, or the *historia salutis*, from their particular Gentile perspective. (This view will be revisited later in this paper.) At that appointed-time, they were *χωρὶς χριστοῦ*, “without Christ.” While most commentators translate this “without Christ,” Larkin writes in his translation, “without Messiah.”⁹ The Greek here lacks the definite article; while most of Paul’s references to Jesus Christ have included both his name and title, it is possible that the reference is explicitly to Jesus. However, what follows is not that the Gentiles were lacking Jesus while the Jews had possession of Him. Rather, the remaining clauses indicate the covenant relationship Israel had with God, providing them with *the* Messiah. Though anarthrous, *χωρὶς χριστοῦ* appears to be in reference to the mystery of the Anointed One. Regardless of whether they choose the Hellenistic or Hebraic translation, all commentators agree that this refers to being without *Messianic hope*.

Paul’s point is covenantal and therefore objective: Gentiles, by virtue of being separated from Israel, did not have the hope of the messianic promise and the privileged status with God that Israel’s covenant relationship with him brought.... And, what is all-important, [Jews] had the Messiah “according to the flesh” (Rom 9:5), which is what Paul is saying about the Gentiles in Eph 2:12.¹⁰

⁸ William J. Larkin, *Ephesians: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, BHGNT Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Baylor University Press, 2009), 35.

⁹ Larkin, 35. cf. Bock, 72. Bryan Chapell, *Ephesians*, Reformed Expository Commentaries Ser (P & R Publishing, 2009), 96. Markus Barth, *The Broken Wall: A Study of the Epistle to the Ephesians* (Judson Press, 1970), 256. S. M. Baugh, *Ephesians*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Lexham Press, 2016), 183.

¹⁰ Baugh, 183.

Gentiles were ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ “estranged from the citizenship of Israel.” This word πολιτείας is vague, as Hodge notes that

πολιτείας means — 1. Citizenship. 2. The order or constitution of the state. 3. The community or state itself. The last signification best suits the connection. Ἰσραὴλ means the theocratical people; and πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ is that community or commonwealth which was Israel. This includes the other senses, for in being aliens from the community of God's people, they were of course destitute of citizenship among them, and outside of the theocratical constitution.¹¹

The conclusion that “the community or state itself” enfolds both other meanings is questionable. It would hardly be worth noting that Gentiles are estranged from Option 3: the social community of Israel. Gentiles are obviously estranged from the community. If they were not, they would not be Gentiles. Surprisingly, it would be shocking if they were estranged from Option 2: the order or constitution of the state of Israel. In fact, Paul takes pains in Romans 2:12-16 to explain that Gentiles who do perform the Law (which is the constitution of the theocratic state of Israel) are a law unto themselves. Therefore, Gentiles are clearly not estranged from this.

What is worth noting, though it may be obvious at this point in Paul's argument, is that they are estranged from the rights and privileges of the covenant community of Israel — the benefits of citizenship. Therefore, Hodge's conclusion that “Ἰσραὴλ means the theocratical people” is either somewhat misleading or somewhat misled. Instead, Israel refers to the covenant community of God-fearers, who happen to also make up a political entity. To be estranged from the benefits of citizenship in the covenant community, while obvious, is the very point Paul is trying to make. Foulkes and Baugh also disagree with Hodge, stating that “the only other New Testament use of the word translated *commonwealth* [πολιτείας, “commonwealth” in the ASV,

¹¹ Hodge, 126-127.

ESV, KJV, NASB, NRSV, and others] is in Acts 22:28, where it refers to the much-coveted Roman citizenship.”¹²

This is the most congruent translation of the word, given the structure of Paul’s clauses. In the Greek, Paul lists “(you were)... without Christ estranged-ones from the citizenship of Israel **καὶ** aliens to the covenants of promise, having no hope **καὶ** Godless in the world.” While it is clear that the initial verb ἦτε, “you (pl.) were,” is applicable to “without Christ” and “estranged-ones” and “aliens,” there is a clear delineation between the first item and the second and third. It would seem, then, that Paul is using the **καὶ** conjunction to form a hendiadys of the two. This is mirrored in the following phrases, “not having hope **καὶ** Godless in the world.” Because the Gentiles did not have God (though they had many other gods), they were without hope. If the conjunction does serve to form this Hebraic thought pattern, then it makes the most sense that πολιτείας is in reference to the benefits and responsibilities of citizenship in the covenant community Israel, as the parallel idea is that they are aliens to the covenants of promise.

This phrase itself, ξένοι τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, is an interesting confirmation of covenant theology. The Gentiles are aliens τῶν διαθηκῶν, an unusual “genitive of reference,” translated “aliens in regard to the covenants.” The genitive is used here, rather than the dative, perhaps to create a distinction between the covenants (in the genitive) and the promise (in the dative). The reason the latter is in the dative presents some interpretive difficulty. Of Wallace’s twenty-seven uses of the dative case, only three seem to fit: the dative of simple apposition, of reference, or of cause. Most translations and commentators treat this as simple apposition, that is

¹² Francis Foulkes, *Ephesians*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, v. Volume 10 (InterVarsity Press, 2009), loc39%; Baugh, 184.

“covenants of promise” or even “promissory covenants.” This is acceptable, but suffers the same flaw as the dative of reference, which is used to “qualify a statement that would otherwise typically not be true.”¹³ But, of course, a covenant *would* be in reference to a promise — that is its very nature. There is no point in having “promissory covenants” — what other sort of covenant exists? The remaining option is the dative of cause, used to indicate the basis of something. This option is to be preferred because of the lack of agreement between τῶν διαθηκῶν (feminine plural) and τῆς ἐπαγγελίας (feminine singular). Rather than “covenants of promise,” as an description of character; this would provide the phrase, “covenants on the basis of the promise.”¹⁴ Since Paul has been driving us to the historic exclusion of Gentiles from all the benefits of the covenant community of Israel, it makes sense that he speaks of the Jews’s exclusion of the Gentiles from all of the “Jewish” covenants (Abrahamic, Mosaic, Davidic, etc.) which were formed on the basis of a single promise: the promise of the redeemer found in the covenant of grace.

Ephesians 2:13

...but now in Christ Jesus you who at one time were far-off have been brought near in the blood of Christ/the Messiah....

Paul next reaches into the language of his Jewish contemporaries: “The Rabbis had a way of speaking of Gentiles, who were far from the privileges of the covenant, as being ‘brought near’ as proselytes.”¹⁵ Gentiles were referred to as “far-off” until they had converted to Judaism, at which point they were called “near.” Paul’s subversive statement here is that they are “brought

¹³ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*, 9. Repr (Zondervan, 2001), 145.

¹⁴ cf. M. Barth, 258.

¹⁵ Foulkes, loc41.

near” through the blood of the Jewish Messiah that has been rejected by the Jews! They who formerly were “without Christ” and Far-Off Ones have now been brought near “in Christ Jesus”... “in the blood of Christ.” While it would be tempting to consider the dative τῷ αἵματι as a dative of cause “on account of the blood,” but the preceding preposition ἐν precludes this.

The construction of this verse (and its implementation of the Ephesians-style phrase “in Christ”), “νυνὶ δὲ ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ you who were at one time far off have been brought near ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ χριστοῦ” creates at the very least an inclusio, perhaps a chiasm, emphasizing the transition from their former state of separation and far-off-ness to their near-ness.

νυνὶ δὲ ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ
ὕμεῖς οἱ ποτὲ ὄντες μακρὰν
ἐγενήθητε ἐγγύς
ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ χριστοῦ

This also emphasizes the aorist passive indicative verb in the center and the accompanying fact that the audience has been no active producer of the blessings they have received. They come only “in Christ” and “in the blood of Christ.”

Ephesians 2:14-16

...For he is our peace, the one-who-made the two one and the wall of separation having destroyed — the hostility in his flesh — having abrogated the law of commandments, namely the ordinances, in order that the two he might create in himself into one new Man, making peace, and might reconcile to God the two in one flesh through the cross, having killed the hostility in him;...

The bulk of Paul’s argument and the present author’s thesis is to be found here in the death of Christ. He proclaims that “He” (Christ is the nearest referent in the word before) “is our peace.” This is an equivalent statement in the nominative case: αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ εἰρήνη ἡμῶν; Paul supplies the unnecessary verb ἐστὶν and uses the transitive nature of the verb to equate the articular ἡ εἰρήνη with αὐτὸς. Of great importance is the shift from Paul speaking to ὑμεῖς, “you

(pl.)” to speaking of ἡμῶν, “ours.” What follows is something that unites both Jew and Gentile — all who are “in Christ”; and what follows is that Christ is our peace and our peace is Christ. In other words, our peace is not found anywhere else but Christ, and He is nothing if not our peace. Why is this so? He is ὁ ποιήσας τὰ ἀμφοτέρα ἓν, “the one-who-made the two one.” It is clear that “Gentile” and “Jew,” possibly labeled as “Israel,” are the “two” in mind here; Christ has taken all of humanity and made them one. But in what way has He done this?

The next several phrases are all participial or appositional in nature, meaning they must be taken together under the primary verbal clause listed above, “He **is** our peace.” All of the participles are simultaneous occurrences or explanatory notes on the manner in which He is our peace.

The first of these occurrences is καὶ τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ λύσας, “and the wall of separation having destroyed.” μεσότοιχον is a *hapax logomena* in New Testament literature, occurring only one other time in ancient literature, with two derivatives elsewhere.¹⁶ The word appears to be from μεσόσ, meaning “middle” and τοῖχον, “wall, primarily within a house.”¹⁷ A μεσότοιχον (in the remaining contexts available to us) is a wall that divides, perhaps two interior rooms within a house, but certainly divides one space from another space. The following genitive phrase, τοῦ φραγμοῦ, is not unique to Ephesians. Matthew and Mark both employ the term in its accusative case, φραγμὸν, in the parable of the vineyard, wherein the owner of the vineyard planted it and placed a φραγμὸν around it — a “hedge” (ASV, KJV, RSV, WEB), “fence” (CSB, ESV, NASB, NET, NRSV), or “wall” (AMP, NIV, NASB1995, NLT). This parable of Jesus is in

¹⁶ Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature*, 3rd ed. (University of Chicago Press, 2000)., 635.

¹⁷ BDAG, 634. cf. Thayer’s Lexicon, G5109.

reference to Isaiah 5's Vineyard of the Lord of Hosts. Isaiah 5:5 reads, "I will remove its hedge (LXX: φραγμὸν), and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall (LXX: τοῖχον), and it shall be trampled down." While this may not be enough to clarify the precise definition of either μεσότοιχον or φραγμοῦ, it certainly defines both terms as delineators of separation.

The next question to answer is whether heaping the two words together indicates an allusion to Isaiah 5:5 on their own (with the reversed order, genitive construction, and unique variation on the word τοῖχον). If so, this would lead to the conclusion that whatever wall has been torn down is that which separates Gentile from Jew (the tenants of the vineyard). In fact, in the temple complex, there stood a wall that prohibited Gentiles from walking any further where they were not permitted. Gentiles were allowed into the Court of the Gentiles, but not into the Court of the Jews, nor into the temple itself. Commentators are divided on this solution:

The term μεσότοιχον is rare in Greek literature, but where it does occur, it refers either to an outside wall or to a partition wall in a house or temple. Josephus could use the closely related phrase τὸν μεσὸν τοῖχον (ton meson toichon, the middle wall) to refer to the wall that separated the holy of holies from the rest of Solomon's temple (Ant. 8.71; cf. 1 Kings 6:16-17; BDAG 635). Paul is using μεσότοιχον here metaphorically of something that keeps the two people groups, Jews and Gentiles, separate from each other.¹⁸

Josephus describes inscriptions at the temple in Jerusalem warning Gentiles not to enter on pain of death...." No foreigner is to enter within the balustrade and enclosure around the temple area. Whoever is caught will have himself to blame for his death which will follow."¹⁹

Charles Simeon seems to conflate several of the dividing walls into one:

The sacrifices of the mosaic law threw considerable light upon this interesting subject, yet while they revealed they tended to obscure it, for the Gentiles were forbidden to enter into the sanctuary and had a court assigned to them called the

¹⁸ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians* (Baker Academic, 2010), 222.

¹⁹ Charles H. Talbert, *Ephesians and Colossians*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Baker Academic, 2007), 79.

court of the Gentiles. If they became proselytes to the Jewish religion they were to gather with the received into the sanctuary or outward court of the temple. The priests & Levites were admitted into the inner court & the high priest into the holy of holies, but that only on one day in the year.²⁰

Some argue that the Gentile audience would not have known about this wall around the court of the Jerusalem temple, but it is important to note that Paul was arrested on account of allegedly bringing an Ephesian Gentile into the court in Acts 21:29.²¹ While this is a distinct possibility, it does not render this view certain.

Alternatively, other commentators recognize this dividing wall as the enmity which is broken down in verse 15 — a figurative depiction of “the law of commandments expressed in ordinances” found in the same verse. In other words, Christ has torn down the Mosaic Law, bringing the Gentiles close to the Jews. This view is held by Baugh (p. 91), Talbert (pp. 79-81), Foulkes (p. 82), (to a certain extent) Calvin (p. 217), and Hoehner, who says:

“...The law, which may have included many minute scribal additions, was to be strictly observed by the Jews and was at the same time offensive to the Gentiles, thus causing hostility between Jews and Gentiles. Consequently, it makes good sense to consider that the “wall of partition” was not a literal wall but a metaphorical wall that divided Jews and Gentiles. Often an attitude of superiority crept in that in turn engendered hostility. This metaphorical wall of partition was destroyed.²²

It is interesting to note that Hoehner suggests in his commentary that the wall cannot refer to the curtain in the temple because it is not a literal wall, though neither is enmity. Regardless, this would also put him in opposition to Andrew Lincoln, who has a third and wildly different interpretation of this dividing wall, often referred to as the heaven-pleroma view:

²⁰ Charles Simeon, *Horae Homileticae: Or, Discourses (Principally in the Form of Skeletons) Now First Digested into One Continued Series and Forming a Commentary upon Every Book of the Old and New Testament* (London, Holdsworth and Ball, 1833), <http://archive.org/details/horaehomileticae17sime>, 308.

²¹ M. Barth, 283-284.

²² Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Baker Academic, 2009), 370-371.

The neuter formulation ἡ ἀμφοτέρα is not easy to explain if the passage is treated purely on one level as a straightforward discussion of the relation between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. The upper and lower realms of the cosmos were often thought of as in antithesis, with humans in the lower realm of matter experiencing the upper realm and the powers that inhabit it as hostile and threatening. According to the hymn, in order to bring about unity (lines 2, 5) and to achieve reconciliation in the cosmos (lines 6, 7), Christ had to break down the wall dividing the two realms (line 3) and overcome the hostility between them (lines 4, 8). The notion of a cosmic wall between heaven and earth can be found not only in later Gnosticism (cf. Schlier, 129-30; Fischer, Tendenz, 133) but also in earlier Judaism (cf. 1 Enoch 14.9; 3 Apoc. Bar. 2.1, 2; T. Levi 2.7). The writer of Ephesians finds this notion of Christ as the bringer of cosmic peace and reconciliation appropriate for adaptation to his theme of how Christ has brought Gentiles near and has overcome the barrier that had existed between them and Israel.²³

At the same time, the commentators appear to be entirely right and entirely wrong! The wall of separation is certainly something within the Temple, but cannot merely be that which separates Jews from Gentiles. The wall of separation is certainly encoded in the “law of commandments expressed in ordinances,” which can more fittingly be translated as an exegetical genitive, for Christ did not “destroy” the full testimony of the law, but abrogated or set aside only the ceremonial law, or “abrogated the law — *namely*, the commandments in ordinances/regulations.” The wall of separation is certainly a dividing line between the earth we see and the created heavenly realm we do not, but is not a proto-Gnostic cosmology that drives us to this conclusion. It is the fact, as Beale frequently suggests, that the Most Holy Place is the place where the dimensions of heaven and earth meet; that the “cosmos itself was conceived of as a huge temple.”²⁴

The Cosmic House of God

²³ Lincoln, 129.

²⁴ Gregory K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 17 (InterVarsity press, 2004), 34.

Of note is the fact the word τοῖχον is the first of seven words in the passage that are formed from the root οἶκος, “house.” An earlier and more common variant of τοῖχος is τεῖχος, meaning “a wall of a city,” but this word was later employed regarding the inner wall of a house or temple; in this domestic or religious usage, the vowel morpheme shifts from “εῖχ” to “οῖχ,” reflecting the “home” setting.²⁵ As Paul builds the argument that Gentiles are no longer separated from God (n.b. recall that his argument is not based on separation from the race of Jews, but from the covenant, spiritual community of Israel), he begins to build a house in the mind of the readers:

v. 14	μεσότοιχον	the middle/central wall, particularly of a house or temple
v. 19	πάρουκοι	those outside the house
	οἰκεῖτοι	residents of the house
v. 20	ἐποικοδομηθέντες	having been built (as a house)
v. 21	οἰκοδομή	are being built (as a house)
v. 22	συνοικοδομεῖσθε	are being built up together
	κατοικητήριον	dwelling-house

Paul clearly has in mind the greater, spiritual reality that is present behind this house. It is, in fact, a κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ — “a dwelling-house of God.”

Paul’s abundant use of Jewish terminology in 2:11-22 similarly evokes the tabernacle and the Law using:

ἀκροβυστία	“foreskin,” often translated “Uncircumcision”
περιτομῆς	“circumcision”
χριστοῦ	“Christ” or “the Messiah” (in isolation from “Ἰησοῦ”) ²⁶

²⁵ Robert Stephen Paul Beekes, *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, 2 vols., Leiden Indo-European Etymological Dictionary Series 10 (Brill, 2009), 1458-1459.

²⁶ Larkin, 35.

χειροποιήτου	“hand-made,”
διαθηκῶν	“covenants”
ἐντολῶν	“commandments”
δόγμασιν	“ordinances”
τοῖς μακρὰν	“the far-off ones,” a Jewish euphemism for Gentiles
τοῖς ἐγγύς	“the near ones,” a Jewish euphemism for Gentile converts
ναὸν ἅγιον	“holy temple” or “holy innermost room of a temple”

Paul heaps up references to the Law, but it becomes clear that very little of this language is in reference to the physical realities of Jewish life, which he puts in a negative light from the opening reference to “‘Circumcision’ in the flesh, made by (human) hand.” Rather than show the necessity that the Gentiles become Jewish or are permitted entry into Jewish spiritual realms, he is emphasizing that the Gentiles have indeed partaken in the spiritual reality which these Jewish physical markers signified — the spiritual realities of the House of God. This is made even clearer when viewed in light of Paul’s similar statements in Colossians 2:11-14:

In him also you were circumcised with a **circumcision made without hands**, by putting off the body of the flesh, by **the circumcision of Christ**, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were **dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh**, God made alive together with him, **having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands**. This he **set aside**, nailing it **to the cross**. (emphases added in parallel phrases)

The verbal parallels with Ephesians 2:14-16 are astounding, and the ideological parallels help clarify the terms in question in Ephesians. If the legal demands of the law — its ceremonial ordinances of sacrifices and separations — are set aside, abrogated, or destroyed in his death on the cross (destroying “the hostility in his flesh”); then we might ask which portion of the ceremonial law that embodied separation and hostility was set aside when Jesus’s flesh was

destroyed? It is this question that even the meanest of Bible readers are equipped to answer. Matthew 27:50-51 says, “And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.” Luke, likewise, in 23:45-46 says, “And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!’ And having said this he breathed his last.” In other words, simultaneous to Jesus’s death was the rending of the temple curtain. Here, we remember that Josephus used the phrase τὸν μεσόν τοῖχον to describe the inner wall that delineated the Holy of Holies.²⁷ But even in Solomon’s temple, the physical marker merely pointed to the spiritual reality: Jesus destroyed the hostility between God and man when the real wall of separation between heaven and earth — between God and man — was opened up at his death. Then, and only then, can the human race be at peace with God and have access into His presence. What has been lost since Adam has been regained in Christ.

As in Col. I: 16, 17 Christ appears as not only the mediator, but also the goal of creation, in whom all things find consistency, so in Eph. I:10 all things in the heavens and on the earth are summed up in Christ.... He is the realization of the plan of the universe that existed in the counsel of God from all eternity, the basis of a unity which will embrace the whole creation.²⁸

Creating One New Man

Why has Christ torn down the curtain to the Cosmic Holy of Holies? Indeed, why did that veil ever enter into human history? Adam’s failure to keep all of God’s commandments

²⁷ Flavius Josephus, “Antiquities of the Jews,” biblical.ie, n.d., accessed December 18, 2025, <https://www.biblical.ie/page.php?fl=josephus/AJGk08>, 8.71.

²⁸ John Cowper Granverry, Outline of New Testament Christology: A Study of Genetic Relationships within the Christology of the New Testament Period (Chicago : University of Chicago, 1909), <http://archive.org/details/historicallingu02univ>, 65.

prevented Eden and the earth from being conformed to the glory proportions of heaven.²⁹ This is why Paul speaks in verse 15 of Christ breaking down the cosmic curtain “in order that the two” — that is, Gentile and Jew — “He might create in Himself into one new Man, making peace.” The verb “create” here is an aorist subjunctive verb, employed to indicate that this creative act is conditioned on the previous activity (destroying the curtain and abrogating the law). But it is also a past action that has been definitely completed. The uniqueness of this verb should not be lost, though. Paul later uses a typical verb, ποιῶν, to indicate that Christ “made” peace. But here, Christ κτίση, “created,” one new Man in place of the two. This verb is used in Matthew 19:4, Mark 13:9, and Romans 1:25 in reference to God’s creation of Heaven and Earth, and Paul now uses it to describe the new Man created in Christ’s death and entry into the sacred throne room of Heaven — the cosmic Holy of Holies.

Paul’s reference to “one new man” should ring a bell for the New Testament reader. The “one man” through whom sin entered the world is contrasted with the “one man,” the New or Second Adam through whom life entered the world in Romans 5. While one must admit that Paul is not shy in Romans 5:14 of using the proper name Ἀδὰμ for this man, that reader must also admit that v. 14 of Romans 5 is the only use of that proper name — the other instances of the “man” through whom sin or life entered is ἄνθρωπος. Paul is driving the readers of his letter back to the creation account, particularly by coupling ἄνθρωπος with the use of the verb κτίση. Jesus “created” ἕνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον — a “fresh” or “renewed” “man” or “mankind” While commentators univocally express that this “new mankind” is a sort of Third Race — something neither Jew nor Gentile — the use of the word καινός should prevent this understanding. Rather

²⁹ Lane Tipton, “Union With Christ: The Mountaintop Mediator,” in *The Mountaintop Mediator*, Lecture, Union With Christ, Reformed Presbyterian Theological Seminary, October 4, 2025.

than νέος, which is defined as “being in existence but a relatively short time,” “being superior in quality or state to what went before,” or “being in the early stages of life”³⁰; καινός expresses that which is “new (especially in freshness; while neos is properly so with respect to age -- new)” or “in the sense that what is old has become obsolete, and should be replaced by what is new.” This is not merely a new type of man appearing on the scene, but mankind “refreshed” or reset as it was always intended to be. Therefore, ἄνθρωπον is not a new race — νέος ἔθνος (admittedly, not to be confused with the definition of “Gentile” for ἔθνος) — but a fresh mankind and a renewed Man, a Second Adam. Because Christ has “reset” the state of the believer to be equal in standing before God to that of prelapsarian Adam; when man is in union with Christ Himself (“in Christ”), He has made peace.

Ephesians 2:16-18

...and (in order that) He might reconcile the both in one body to God through the cross, having killed the hostility in Him; and He came proclaiming the good news of peace to you the Far-Off ones and peace to the Near ones — that through Him we have access, the both in one Spirit, before the Father....

Because Christ has joined the two (Jew and Gentile) in the Second Adam, we can understand that the reconciliation that occurs is done through Jesus’s death on the cross and his piercing the heavenly curtain. The hostility which God had toward those who were sinners has been put to death when Jesus was put to death. It is not merely that the two are reconciled to God (the dative object of the reconciliation earlier in the text), but τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους “the both” (maintaining their independent historical backgrounds, but collected together) are reconciled ἐν ἑνὶ σώματι, in one body, that is the body of Jesus Christ, through the cross. This peace that comes

³⁰ BDAG, 669. Strong’s G2537; BDAG 496-497.

to both kinds of men, who remain outwardly and visibly in different groups on earth, grants them both peace before the Father.

Now, Paul forms a sort of double-inclusio (not, however, a chiasm, as Lincoln handily refutes)³¹, returning to the subject of those who were Far-Off ones, followed by stating their new status in Christ. Paul describes Christ's death and implied resurrection as "proclaiming the good news of peace to you the Far-Off ones and peace to the Near ones," much like Peter describes his death and resurrection: "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison" (1 Peter 3:18-19). Where Peter equates this to Noah's preaching redemption; Paul turns to Isaiah 57:19, which reads, "'Peace, peace, to the far and to the near,' says the Lord, 'and I will heal him.'"

Paul's allusion is not a direct quotation, which has spurred some debate among scholars. Slater summarizes the debate of the last 60 years:

Melbourne, following Bruce, argues that the far/near imagery comes from Isaiah 57:18-19 and the passage in Ephesians parallels Testament of Naphtali (TNaph) 4:5. Originally referring to Diaspora Jews, Ephesians has adapted it to refer to the Gentiles. Lincoln disagrees. He argues that the near/far dichotomy does not come from Isaiah but the then common Jewish belief, based on such passages as Deuteronomy 28:49; 1 Kings 8:41; Isaiah 5:26; and Jeremiah 5:15, which depict Israel as being near God and Gentiles as being far from God. Lincoln further notes that the far/near contrast is not found in Isaiah 57:19. While Lincoln clearly has a point, we should also remember that early Christians were not always rigorously faithful to the original context.³²

³¹ Lincoln, 126.

³² Thomas B. Slater, *Ephesians*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary Series 27a (Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2012), 68. While dismissive of pseudo-Paul ("whoever he or she may be")'s exegetical skills, Slater narrowly defines the comfort of "Israel" in Isaiah 57. The passage in question is in reference to Israel's former sorrows and God's comfort to His people. One wonders if moderate evangelical academics are always rigorously faithful to the original context or aware of the original Author.

However, Hoehner insightfully remarks that the rearrangement of the text, εἰρήνην ὑμῖν τοῖς μακρὰν καὶ εἰρήνην τοῖς ἐγγύς, he has ‘evenly distributed’ the peace so that it is equally applicable to both parties.³³ Just as both have reconciliation with God, so also both now have that peace proclaimed to them in His resurrection.

This peace is proclaimed “that through Him we have access,” or “a way of approach” is made possible through Him. Interestingly, it is not “in Him” that we have access, but (echoing v. 16, “τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι”) οἱ ἀμφότεροι ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι: “the both have access in one Spirit.” While “we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God,” (Hebrews 4:14) and “Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf,” (Hebrews 9:24); we are not merely waiting to follow in the footsteps of our forerunner. It is not only in our glorified bodies on the Last Great Day when we shall have access to the Father. Whereas we have reconciliation “both in one body,” we have access “both in one Spirit.” Christ’s death inaugurated a new mode of entering into the presence of God; we do not rely on the physical entry through the barrier, but we now enter through the open gates of the Veil through our prayers in the Spirit and our worship in the Spirit, even as the Great High Priest has paved the way for us and sits embodied at the right hand of the Father, ever making intercession for us. In this Spirit, in Christ, we stand before the very King of Heaven.

Ephesians 2:19-22

...So then, you are neither aliens nor outside-the-house; rather, you are fellow-citizens of the saints and are residents of the house of God, having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, the cornerstone being Christ Jesus Himself in whom all are being built

³³ Hoehner, 386-387.

(into a house), being fitted into a Holy Place in the Lord in whom you also are being built up together into a dwelling-house of God in the Spirit.

Paul concludes this portion of the text with the construction of the grandest house imaginable. When previously, the Gentiles were ξένοι τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας, “aliens in regard to the covenants based on the promise,” now they are οὐκέτι ἐστὲ ξένοι καὶ πάροικοι, “neither aliens nor outside-the-house.” Where formerly, they were ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ, “estranged from the citizenship of Israel,” now they are συνπολιῖται τῶν ἁγίων καὶ οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ, “fellow-citizens of the saints and residents of the house of God.” Not only are the Gentiles no longer strangers in a strange country, but they are also not even citizens or neighbors who happen to dwell in a different house! Paul, in retelling what Christ has done, has turned on its head the former status of the Gentile audience.

They are household residents, “having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets.” The identity of these apostles and prophets remains a mystery. Some have (weakly) argued that excavating a building will cause one to come upon newer material first and older material later; therefore, the apostles are the New Testament apostles and the prophets are the Old Testament prophets.³⁴ However, Paul uses this same phrase in Ephesians 3:5-6, where he speaks of the mystery of Christ “which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit. This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.” Clearly, the prophets of chapter three are not the Old Testament prophets, to whom it has “now (νῦν) been revealed.” There appear, then, to be

³⁴ Alexander Maclaren, *Ephesians*, Expositions of Holy Scripture (Hodder and Stoughton, 1846), <https://archive.org/details/ephesians49macl/page/>, 119.

apostles and prophets in the New Testament church of whom the Gentiles are aware and whose testimony of the faith is grounded in the person and work of Christ. Since there is a shared faith among “we who were the first to hope in Christ” (1:12) and “you also” (1:13); it is sensible that “we who were the first to hope in Christ” is quite simply the early Christian community, among whom are the Apostles (who were Jewish) and those with the gift of prophecy.

In essence, Paul is affirming these later Gentile converts, to whom the letter is addressed, that they are co-heirs with this Church. They were exiles and aliens to Israel, but they are now residents and household-members to New Israel. This House and Household of God is built upon Christ, who is the ἀκρογωνιάου. This word can be translated either “cornerstone” or “keystone/capstone” (as in an archway). While it is appropriate to speak of Christ as the finishing stone atop the doorway into the Church, it is most appropriate to translate this “cornerstone,” as the foundation has already been discussed; the Church is built of many stones, and we are built upon those who have gone before us, but all are built on Christ. Paul’s argument seems to progress similarly.

While Jesus is the Cornerstone of the Church, He is also the Architect and the Instrument. He is the One “in whom all are being built.” This “in Christ-ness” has already been a characteristic theological framework for the book of Ephesians and it is used here to unify the whole of the Church.

This verse contains the only variant text in this passage” “ἐν ᾧ πᾶσα οἰκοδομῆ” vs. “ἐν ᾧ ἡ πᾶσα οἰκοδομῆ.” These roughly translate to “in Whom all are being built” and “in Whom the whole is being built,” respectively. As most commentators, the present author agrees with the decision of the UBS committee in dismissing the feminine article; not because it is an impossible

reading, but because it is linguistically and theologically insignificant as well as lesser-attested in manuscript evidence.³⁵ Regardless of whether “all are being built” or “the whole is being built,” all those who are being built up are a part of the whole which is being built up. It would be difficult and unnecessary to determine whether Paul’s emphasis is on the House of God or its constituent members — the aim of his argument is that these are identical parties, being built up in and through Christ.³⁶ If a preference must be given, it would be to the anarthrous reading. This is due to the following participle, συναρμολογουμένη, is “being fitted together” or “being jointered together” and is slightly more appropriate to the collection of individuals than to the house as a whole. As they grow and are assembled, they are being shaped in order to better fit with one another — what a blessing and promise of sanctification in Christ!

Even as these members of the house are being shaped, they already belong to the ναὸν ἅγιον ἐν κυρίῳ, “holy temple in the Lord.” We see the culmination of Paul’s “house” theology in this phrase and the next — God’s people are being brought into the house even as they are transformed into the house “in the Lord.” This “Lord” is almost certainly an allusion to χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ in the previous verse: this is the antepenultimate reference to a member of the Godhead, the remaining two of which are “God” and “Spirit,” summing up the passage in a Trinitarian

³⁵ Kurt Aland et al., eds., *The Greek New Testament*, 5th Revised Edition (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2014), 287. The Committee gives their preferred (anarthrous) reading a “B” rating. The anarthrous rendering is attested to by ⱼ, B, D, F, G, Ψ, 19 papyri, and 2 lectionary families, and Clement, Origen, Basil, and Chrysostom in their commentaries. The articular rendering is attested to by the first editor of Sinaiticus (Ɀ¹), A, C, P, four papyri, one lectionary, two coptic scrolls, one Armenian tradition, one Ethiopian tradition, and two external quotes of Origen and Chrysostom (in which it appears that the author quoting them may have used a separate text and amended the quotation to bring it into conformity with the rendering they had before them). Given the overwhelming early evidence of the anarthrous reading and the lack of interpretive significance, this will be the selected reading here.

³⁶ Baugh, 180. “The phrase πᾶσα οἰκοδομὴ (“the whole building”) refers to “completeness wholeness” (BDAG, 783) even without an article, though there is a variant where the article is included.”

formulation of the adopting and sanctifying work of God. It is Christ “in whom you also are being built up together into a dwelling-house of God in the Spirit.”

Where translations almost universally employ the words “holy temple,” there is nuance to the word ναὸν Paul uses here. This nuance is attended to by Baugh who footnotes his translation with the fact that “the ναός of a Greek temple complex (ἱερόν) contained the cult* statue and refers to the inner ‘shrine’ where the god or goddess was thought to reside (LSJ, 1160), though it can be used by synecdoche* for the whole temple (as Acts 19:24 for the Artemisium; cf. BDAG, 665-66).”³⁷ While the Jewish temple was commanded by God’s design, not influenced by the pagan culture around it, Paul speaks to Gentiles from a pagan background, perhaps directly to the Gentiles in Ephesus where Artemis’s Artemisium was located.³⁸

It might seem strange to consider that Paul utilizes a term associated with the inner sanctum of a pagan temple to refer to the telos of the Christian community. But let us set aside the associations with the pagan temple and take the raw meaning of the word: the innermost room of a temple, wherein the god dwells. Where in the Jewish temple did God dwell? Above the cherubim who formed the mercy seat in the Most Holy Place, the innermost room of the temple. What physical wall of separation did Christ tear down in His death? The curtain that enclosed the Most Holy Place. What spiritual wall of separation did Christ tear down in His death? The veil that separates man from Heaven, the throne room of God where He sits enthroned above the cherubim. Is there a Most Holy Place any longer? Yes — the whole world is potentially the Most Holy Place, so long as it is filled with Christians who are indwelled by the Spirit, “because

³⁷ Baugh, 180.

³⁸ We might also acknowledge that pagan temples and worship often echoed or shadowed the means and manners involved in the worship of God. After all, Gentiles who practice the Law are a law unto themselves.

through [Christ] we both have access in one Spirit before the Father.” It is not strictly that we are spiritually transported to Heaven before the Father; the Father is near to us through the Spirit. Therefore, the people of God are being built together into the only form of the temple that can possibly exist anymore: the heavenly throne room of God on Earth — the Most Holy Place.

This was also true of Ezekiel’s eschatological Temple-City in 41:1-4:

Then he brought me to the nave and measured the jambs. On each side six cubits was the breadth of the jambs. And the breadth of the entrance was ten cubits, and the sidewalls of the entrance were five cubits on either side. And he measured the length of the nave, forty cubits, and its breadth, twenty cubits. Then he went into the inner room and measured the jambs of the entrance, two cubits; and the entrance, six cubits; and the sidewalls on either side of the entrance, seven cubits. And he measured the length of the room, twenty cubits, and its breadth, twenty cubits, across the nave. And he said to me, “This is the Most Holy Place.”

Ezekiel watches the angel enter the Most Holy Place (though he does not go in himself) and Ezekiel must be told where that room is — the Most Holy Place is open and without curtain and unrecognizable to a Jewish priest! But this is the remarkable truth of God’s Church-Temple: it is unrecognizable to the Jew, but comprises Jew and Gentile and covers the Earth as the spiritual dwelling-place of God is built by the Spirit in advance of being “reproportioned to the glory dimensions of Heaven.”³⁹

The Redemptive-Historical Arc of Ephesians 2:11-22

Ephesians begins (after the salutation) with the famous period of Eph. 1:3-14, in which every blessing and every aspect of life is found “in Christ,” for the Jew first, then for the Gentile. The next section (1:15-23) emphasizes the fact that redemptive, resurrection life is found “in Christ,” who has been raised and exalted. Next comes Paul’s statement that the audience was

³⁹ Tipton, “Mountaintop Mediator.”

dead in their trespasses and sins, having walked the way of the world, the flesh, and the devil; but God has made them alive together with Christ by grace through faith (2:1-10).

As Paul moves into the present text, he lays out the previous state of the Gentiles, the death and resurrection of Christ, and the sanctification of the Church. There are clear ideological parallels between 2:1-10 and 11-22, revealing that Paul is perhaps recapitulating his argument from a different perspective. In vv. 1-10, Paul sets forth the personal experience — a very simplified *ordo salutis*: he describes moving from sin to justification to glorification by means of sanctification. In vv. 11-22, he sets forth the *historia salutis* explicitly from the perspective of the Gentile audience: Gentiles are separated from Messianic hope, then come Christ’s death and resurrection and exaltation, and finally the ingrafting and sanctifying of the Gentiles as joint members of the covenant community of the true Israel.

This *historia* paradigm is also signaled through Paul’s use of the “in x” phrase. The passage begins “in flesh,” continues “in Christ,” and culminates “in the Spirit;” just as history did prior to Christ, during His advent, and at Pentecost and beyond. This linguistic pattern would *not* fit the *ordo* paradigm, since regarding the application of redemption, life “in Christ” never ceases nor gives way to life “in the Spirit” — they are united realities.

Ephesians 2:1-10 <i>Ordo Salutis</i>		Ephesians 2:11-22 <i>Historia Salutis from Gentile Perspective</i>	
1-3	And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world , following the prince of the power of the air , the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.	11-12	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— remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Ephesians 2:1-10 <i>Ordo Salutis</i>		Ephesians 2:11-22 <i>Historia Salutis from Gentile Perspective</i>	
4-5a	But God , being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses ,	13a	But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off
5b-9	made us alive together with Christ — by grace you have been saved — and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus , so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God , not a result of works, so that no one may boast.	13b-18	have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create 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. And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father .
10	For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them .	19-22	So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 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.

As regards personal experience: because Christ has been made alive and we are alive together with Christ, we are raised up with Him and seated with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. In history: this is possible because He has broken down the wall of separation in His flesh, giving access to the Father in one Spirit. We are seated with Christ in the heavenly places *because* Heaven has been made open to us by the trailblazing Jesus to whom we are joined, and is accessible by means of the Holy Spirit's indwelling all believers since Pentecost.

Concluding Meditations and Application

Christ has opened the way for us into Heaven, access to the Father is granted in the Spirit, and the Church is being built up into the very Most Holy Place of God Himself. Since these things are true, the Church must consider her holiness and how the Bible expresses her location

in worship. As Albert Barnes exclaims: “The church is designed as the place of the special residence of the Holy Spirit on earth.... How holy should that church be; how pure should be each Christian to be an appropriate habitation for such a guest!... With what solicitude should we guard our conduct that we may not grieve him away!”⁴⁰ It is not merely that each believer is “a temple of the Holy Spirit,” and that we must refrain from worldly uses of our bodies regarding alcohol, drugs, and tattoos! We have come together as the very place where Heaven meets earth, as the place where Heaven is represented to all, and as the place where even the High Priest of the ancient tabernacle entered with trepidation. Should not the Church worship with both dignity and an holy fear?

Since our corporate worship is not merely a “reflection” of what occurs in Heaven, but is an outpost of Heaven in the world, ought we not also to be doing what Heaven is doing? There is no room for idolatrous music-making, vainglorious prayer-piety, self-serving rhetorical flourishes, or anything at all that reveals to the world around us that God deserves anything less than falling on our faces in awe, singing praise in gratitude, and shrinking back from our practices of unholiness. We cannot hide our sins from an omniscient God, especially in His Throne Room, and especially when we are the very materials from which the House is made! Rather, we must remember that we are royal priests serving perpetually before the throne of God, so must “lift holy hands and pray,” (1 Tim. 2:8) we must “lift [our] hands within the temple,” blessing our God as we serve Him with one accord (Ps. 134:2)! If there is perpetual praise offered up to the glory of the Father and the praise of Christ through the Spirit, then let us corporately sing the Words of Christ as we are filled by the Spirit! If there is a celebratory feast

⁴⁰ Albert Barnes, Notes, Explanatory and Practical, on the Epistles of Paul to the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians (New York : Harper & Bros., 1848), <http://archive.org/details/notesexplanatory1845barn>, 60.

perpetually in Heaven, then our corporate worship must also include this perpetually. We must let our worship be informed by the fullness of our understanding of what it is: heavenly worship!

But let us also not bear any of the pietistic factionalism that convinced the Gentile believers that *they* were anything less than the Holy of Holies of God. Paul wrote this letter to convince them of their joint inheritance with the salvation of Christ and “every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.” If we ever proclaim that our rigorous theology, our confessional adherence, our convictional Psalm-singing, our missiological obedience, our faithfulness amid persecution, our documented mercy relief, or our exacting covenanting makes Reformed Presbyterians any other kind of Christian than the one saved by grace, then we are no better than the Jew looking down his nose at the second-class Gentiles and we must ask whether we are even willing to be fitted into the building by the Master Stonemason or whether we would prefer to be apart from *those* stones.

“If you are, remember it is not you who support the root, but the root that supports you. Then you will say, ‘Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.’ That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast through faith. So do not become proud, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you” (Rom. 11:18-21). May we not be broken off, but in Christ be “like a green olive tree in the house of God” (Ps. 50:8). The Church must take seriously not only the external matters of worship when we are before our Holy God, but we must also consider our hearts as we living stones are being built up into the dwelling-house of God.

Even as we consider that there is a Godward aspect to our heavenly worship, we must remember that God acts upon us from His throne; we must not forget that there are special

blessings that come from the King of Heaven as we stand before Him. The blessing of being the Lord's own house comes through the shed blood of Christ, our Great High Priest, "through the cross." Because we stand perpetually before the throne, we remember that "the LORD bless you from Zion, He who made both earth and sky," for He "has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places."

I, John M. Punt have written this paper exclusively for NT620. If this paper, in part or full, was submitted previously in another context, I have received permission from the course professor to use it for this assignment. While I may have received editing or proofreading advice, I made all corrections myself. I have cited each paraphrase, quotation, and borrowed idea that I included in this paper.

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