

The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON XXXIII : VERTICAL AND HORIZONTAL RECONCILIATION (2: 11-22)

Present Position of Gentile Christians (2:19-22)

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (KJV)

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (NIV)

Then, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being chief corner-[stone], in whom all the building fitly framed together doth increase to an holy sanctuary in the Lord, in whom also ye are builded together, for a habitation of God in the Spirit. (Young's Literal Translation)

¹¹ Therefore, remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh,

who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands —

¹² remember that you were at that time:

- separate from Christ,
- excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and
- strangers to the covenants of promise,
- having no hope
- and without God in the world.

¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

¹⁴ For He Himself is our peace,

- who did make both groups into one
- and did break down the dividing wall of hostility,

¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances,

so that, in order that

- *in Himself He might make the two into one new man*, thus establishing peace,
- ¹⁶ *and might reconcile them both in one body* to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.

¹⁷ AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR;

¹⁸ for through Him we both have our access by one Spirit to the Father.

¹⁹ ***So then ... [CONSEQUENTLY, THEREFORE]***

imagery: the STATE —

you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints,

imagery: the FAMILY —

and are members of God's household,

imagery: a BUILDING —

²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,

imagery: a TEMPLE —

²¹ *in whom* the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord,

²² *in whom* you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.

v21 — THE IMAGERY CHANGES TO THE INNER SANCTUARY OF THE TEMPLE — in whom — ἐν ᾧ [en hō] “The image again changes; the building is said to grow and is identified as a temple. **Both this verse and v. 22 are introduced by ἐν ᾧ [en hō, ‘in whom’] and are parallel; for this reason the relative in both cases probably refers to Christ rather than to the foundation or the angle-stone, though of course the latter is Christ.**” [Best, 286]

the whole structure — πᾶσα οἰκοδομή [pasa oikodomē] This is considered by most to mean “each building, every building.” The difference is minor but it does have implications on a local church emphasis. We will touch on this here but go into more detail in next week’s lesson the Lord willing. Below are what others are saying:

William Tyndale (1526) translated it like this: “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners:|guests| but citizens with the saints, and of the household of God: and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the head cornerstone, in whom every building coupled together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom ye also are built together, and made an habitation for God in the spirit.” (2:19-22)

Matthew’s Bible (1537 edition) which combined the translations of William Tyndale and Myles Coverdale, translated it like this: “Now therefore ye are no moare fraungers and foreners: but cytelyns wyth the faynctes / and of the houtholde of God: & are bylt upon the foundaciō of the Apofiles & Prophetes / Jefus Chrifft beyng the heed cornerftone / in whom euery byldinge coupled together groweth unto an holy tēple in the Lorde / in whom ye alfo are bylt together / and made an habitacyon for God in the Fyrete.” (2:19-22)

“Each several building. Ordinary Greek idiom here calls for ‘every building,’ not for ‘all the building.’” [Robertson, Word Pictures]

Salmond goes through much explanation of the Greek words being used here and concludes as follows: “**Hence the rendering here must be ‘every building’ or ‘every several building.’**” [Salmond, Expositor’s GK Testament, 301]

T. K. Abbott goes into great depth of the Greek and the variances in manuscripts but concludes as follows: “**We must therefore acquiesce in some such rendering as ‘every building,’ or ‘each several building,’**” [Abbott, 74]

THE PRIVILEGE AND IMPORTANCE OF CHURCH INVOLVEMENT —

being joined together — συναρμολογουμένη [sunarmologoumenē] “The participle

συναρμολογέω [sunarmologoeō] is used only here and 4:16. Paul coined this word by adding the prepositional prefix συν- [sun] to the rare verb ἄρμολογέω [harmologeō] meaning ‘to join’ or ‘pile together’ stones for a tomb. Hence, it would have the resultant meaning ‘to join, fit together,’ especially in regard to a construction made of stones. Today the process of fitting stones together is rather simple because mortar

is used. In that day with no use of mortar, there was an elaborate process of cutting and smoothing the stones so that they fit exactly next to each other. The prepositional prefix συν- [sun], which is common in Ephesians only, intensifies the fitting together. It speaks of the inner unity or harmony among believers who, before their conversion, were at enmity with one another. The present passive participle describes the manner of their growth. Specifically, as recipients of God’s grace, they grow by being carefully fitted together rather than growing apart individually from one another. Notice that it is not self-initiative that causes the growth but the gracious action of God who fits individual believers with each other and with the foundation and cornerstone. If ancient masons used an elaborate process to fit the stones together, one can be assured that God, even more, by his grace is carefully fitting together the individuals who are a part of his building. His desire is to bring inner unity in order that corporate growth can occur.” [Hoehner, 409] “They need to be aware of the immensely privileged nature of their new situation. In Christ they are being built into the dwelling place of God himself. They are the bricks that are being built into God’s new temple (cf. also 1 Pet 2:5). Again, there is the need for a corporate awareness. The συν- [sun-, ‘together with’] compound here indicates that this is more than an individual experience; the process of being formed into the Church has to take place in the company of fellow believers.” [Lincoln, 158] “In important ancient buildings the stones were carefully fitted together, συναρμολογουμένη [sunarmologoumenē, ‘being joined together’] (only elsewhere at 4.16), being smoothed where the surfaces met, dowel holes drilled and dowels inserted. The stones which are here being fitted together (present tense) are not the two groups, Jewish and Gentile Christians, but individual believers. Thus the argument which moved in v. 20 from believers as members of a household into the material with which the house was built and indicated the positions of apostles, prophets and Christ now depicts believers as harmoniously related to the believers beside, above and below them. No stone should be out of place. Since in fact believers do not always fit harmoniously together, as 4.25ff shows, the church is pictured as it ought to be rather than as it is.” [Best, 286f] This is not an uncommon theme in the NT; Paul emphasizes this at length in his letter to the Corinthians:

“For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ.... If the foot should say, ‘Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, ‘Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,’ is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? **But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.**” (1 Cor 12:12,15-18 NKJV)

That Paul was speaking of the local ecclesia at Corinth is clear by his later clarification:

“Now you [the Corinthian believers] are the body of Christ, and members individually” (1 Cor 12:27 NKJV)

So the Lord guides, directs, and places within each of His NT ecclesias those of whom it pleases Him. We are all here for a

συν – [sun] is a prefix used in Greek meaning ‘together with’; it is comparable to our prefix ‘co-’ used for example, ‘co-founder, co-pilot, co-conspirator’
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reason. We each have a purpose and none can say they are not important or necessary. **“But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body as He pleased.”**

THE CHURCH AS AN ORGANISM — grows — αὐξεῖ [auxei] “The participle ‘being joined together’ is met with again in the NT only in 4:16, and the verb ‘grows’ also occurs again together with its cognate noun in 4:15, 16. Both terms introduce the notion of the Church as an organism, which is more fully developed in 4:15, 16 and which has Col 2:19 as its most immediate inspiration.” [Lincoln, 157] **“While growth is something more normally associated with organic life it is not difficult to see it being transferred metaphorically to buildings in the course of erection and 1 Cor 3.6-17 shows how easy it is to move from the organic to the building metaphor.** 1 Pet 2.5 refers to ‘living stones’. Growth (note the present tense of the verb and participle) suggests that not all the stones have yet been built in; believers are added daily to the church and the growth is extensive in numbers rather than intensive in love as at 4.16. Growth implies incompleteness which conflicts with any idea of Christ as the final stone and with an over-realised eschatology.” [Best, 287]

into a holy temple — εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον [eis naon hagion] **“The Greek [naos] is not the temple-area with its courts and porches [hieron], but the temple-house; the place of the presence.”** [Moule, 85] “The imagery changes again and the building is viewed as a temple or sanctuary (there is no idea of a slow change into a temple); ναός [naos] is the actual sanctuary where the god may be supposed to dwell as distinct from the whole temple complex, τὸ ἱερόν [to hieron] (cf 1 Cor 3.16). The movement in metaphor from house to temple is made easier since the Jerusalem temple was sometimes termed the house of God and the idea of the temple had already been spiritualised in both Greco-Roman and Jewish thought, so that the world or man or a part of man (his mind or heart) could be termed ‘temple’. Paul had already applied the image of the temple to the community (1 Cor 3.16f; 2 Cor 6.16; cf 1 Pet 2.4f); he had taught this during his first stay in Corinth (note the ‘do you not know’ of 1 Cor 3.16), and his disciples would know it; the idea probably also underlies Jn 2.13-22.... **Gentiles who were once not allowed to enter the Jerusalem temple have become a part of this temple.** As the material of the temple the position of believers contrasts here with 1 Pet 2.4f where they serve within the temple as a spiritual priesthood.” [Best, 287f] The naos referred to the temple sanctuary, the inner court and the Holy of Holies. Only priests were allowed to enter the naos. This helps explain Jesus’ comment in Matthew 23:35 when He said. “... that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar.” (Matt 23:35) At first glance His comment is confusing: “What do you mean, ‘between the temple and the altar’? – The altar is in the midst of the temple.” But the word Jesus uses is naos, the inner sanctuary of the temple. The altar is in the midst of the hieron, the general temple area, but Zechariah was murdered between the altar and the naos, the inner sanctuary of the Temple. **Paul here says God is building us into a holy temple, an inner-sanctuary where the presence of God dwells.**

THE ECCLESIA IS GOD’S PRESENCE HERE ON EARTH — The OT tabernacle / temple housed the presence of God, even though it was always true God is omnipresent and with each of His children always and everywhere. In the NT this presence of God is now within the local churches. CP: Rev 1~3 where Christ walks in the midst of His churches. (cp Rev 1:10,11,19,20; 2:1) **“In the OT and in apocalyptic literature Yahweh’s earthly abode in the temple was seen as the counterpart of his heavenly abode, and after the exile the hope of the divine presence in the eschatological temple was increasingly transferred to the heavenly Jerusalem and its heavenly temple.** In rabbinic thought, via the concept of the sacred stone, which was connected with Gen 28:17, the temple was considered as the gate from earth to heaven and as inhabited by heavenly beings. At Qumran the link between the elect community on earth and the inhabitants of heaven was an intrinsic part of the temple symbolism (e.g., 1 QS 11.7, 8). Particularly if 2:20 sees Christ at the top stone of the temple, [Paul’s] use of temple imagery in a letter which frequently links the Church with the heavenly realm may well also carry heavenly connotations. The major emphasis in the use of the temple imagery in v 21 is, however, on the relationship of the building to Christ. The Church is constituted and functions only in relation to Christ.” [Lincoln, 157]

in the Lord. — ἐν κυρίῳ, [en kuriō] **“The existence of the church is centered on Christ.”** [Best, 288]

v22 — In him you also — ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς [en hō kai humeis] “This verse is in part parallel to the preceding and in part develops it so that the temple is expressly identified as the place of God’s dwelling. **The verse with its sudden renewed direct address to the readers forms a suitable climax to the whole section, 2.11-22. What was theory in vv. 20f is now made relevant to the readers; they have not been left out, but have been built together with those already in the church on a foundation of the apostles and prophets and with Christ as the angle-stone.**” [Best, 288f]

are being built together — συνικοδομεῖσθε [sunoikodomeisthe] Present passive indicative (continuous process) of common old verb [sunoikodomeō], to build together with others or out of varied materials as here. **The verb is a hapax legomenon in the NT (meaning this is the only place the word occurs). The temple already exists and the readers are built into it. The best explanation for the “temple” is the existing church which consists of both Jewish and Gentile believers. The present tense suggests a continuing process. The passive would imply we are placed in the ecclesia by God.**

into a dwelling place for God — εἰς κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ [eis katoikētērion tou theou] “The temple is now identified as the place of God’s dwelling. Believers are built together for the purpose of being a place where God would dwell.... If unbelievers point to their temples as the place where their gods live and ask Christians where theirs are to be found they can respond by saying that God dwells in their community. It is true he may also dwell in individuals and local house churches but the emphasis here is on his dwelling in the community as a whole. But can God live in what is incomplete? Presumably if the angle-stone, as a high-up stone, is in position there is a sense in which the building is complete.” [Best, 289f]

by the Spirit — ἐν πνεύματι. [en pneumatī.] This refers to the Holy Spirit. “The Spirit is the Spirit of power and this lends a

dynamic aspect to God's presence in the temple." [Best, 290]

AGAIN, NOTE THE TRINITARIAN REFERENCE — "The readers' experience as part of the Church is described in this verse by means of a 'trinitarian' patter of thought — 'in Christ,' 'dwelling place of God,' and 'in the Spirit.'" [Lincoln, 158f]

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED? — ¹¹ *Therefore, for this reason, keep on remembering (command, present tense) that formerly you (plural), the Gentiles in the flesh, the ones habitually called "Uncircumcision" by that which is called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands — ¹² remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, from Israel's Messiah, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, the rights, privileges and duties which go along with belonging to Israel as a political and religious community, and strangers to the covenants (plural) of promise (singular, they were strangers to the forward look of the promise, probably either the promise of the continuance of Israel or the promise of the Messiah), having no true hope which lasts both in time and in eternity, and you were without God in the world, you were atheists (transliteration), although you may have been religious or even polytheistic, you were without the true God of Israel. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ, the focal point of all of God's goodness to anyone.*

¹⁴ *For Jesus Christ Himself (possibly with the sense of 'He Himself and no others') is our peace, who has made us, both groups of Jews and Gentiles, one (note "both" and "one" are neuter, therefore talking about entities and not individual believers), having broken down the dividing wall of hostilities, the law which separated the Jews from the Gentiles and protected the Jews from impurities, ¹⁵ by abolishing, nullifying, rendering ineffective in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, in order that (hina) in Himself He might make the two into one new man, into one new humanity, thus establishing horizontal peace between Jewish believers and Gentile believers, ¹⁶ and that He might reconcile both Jewish believers and Gentile believers unto God, vertical peace between the believers and God, in one body of believers, the local church, through the cross, having put to death the enmity between the Jews and the Gentiles by the cross. ¹⁷ As Isaiah said in 57:19, AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY, AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; emphasizing the vertical relationship of the believers to God, ¹⁸ for through Him both we Jewish believers and Gentile believers have our access in one Holy Spirit to the Father.*

¹⁹ *So then, consequently, therefore, you Gentile believers are no longer strangers and aliens without a homeland, not even second-class citizens in some alien homeland, but you Gentile believers are fellow citizens with the saints, the holy ones, either angels and / or all believers both living and dead, and are members of God's household, not slaves nor even guests but family, ²⁰ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and the NT prophets, foundations because they first heralded the good news of the evangelism of the Gentiles, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, ²¹ in whom the whole building, which is continually being closely fitted together, is growing into a holy inner sanctuary which is inhabited by the Lord, a place previously forbidden to you Gentiles, ²² in whom you Jewish and Gentile believers also are continually being built together by the Lord into a dwelling of God in the Holy Spirit.*