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C0440 -- October 13, 2004 -- Ephesians 2:19-22 – The Church: A Holy Temple

Last week, we finished vv. 17-18 and then we looked at dispensations a bit. Let's review dispensations and Dispensationalism because in Ephesians 2-3 we are in the heart of Paul's teaching regarding a major shift in world history, a shift from the Dispensation of the Mosaic Law to the Dispensation of the Church. First, what is a dispensation? The Greek word is *oikonomia* and it means "house rule", so a dispensation is **a distinct household arrangement in God's unfolding plan**. Second, how many dispensations are there? Explicitly we can prove three dispensations (Eph. 1:9-10; 3:1-6; Col. 1:25-27). Implicitly we can see seven dispensations. In other words, if we were to break up world history from the DVP we would see seven great chapters of world history: Innocence, Conscience, Human Government, Promise, Mosaic Law, Church, and Millennial Kingdom.

Salvation by Grace Through Faith						
Innocence	Conscience	Government	Promise	Law	Grace	Kingdom
Gentiles			Israel		Church	
P R O G R E S S I V E R E V E L A T I O N						

Third, what are the essentials of Dispensationalism? There are three: 1) literal or normal interpretation of all of Scripture, 2) consistent distinction between God's purpose for Israel and God's purpose for the Church and 3) God's ultimate purpose is to glorify Himself.

3. Consequence of the Union (2:19-22)

Ephesians 2:19-22 describe the consequences of the union of Jewish and Gentile believers in one new man, the Church. Their disunion and hostility *before the cross* were discussed in 2:11-13, their union and peace *after the cross* described in 2:14-18. The way this transformation from hostility to peace took place was through the fulfillment of the Mosaic Law by Christ who rendered the Law inoperative in His death *on the cross*. Now Paul

wishes to describe the consequences of this new union between believing Jews and Gentiles in the Church.

a. Fact: New Relationship (2:19)

Paul gives the consequences of the new union, first by a negative statement and then by a positive statement.

Greek Text 2:19: *Ara ou=n ouvke,ti evste. xe,noi kai. pa,roikoi avlla. evste. sumpoli/tai tw/n a`gi,wn kai. oivkei/oi tou/ qeou/*

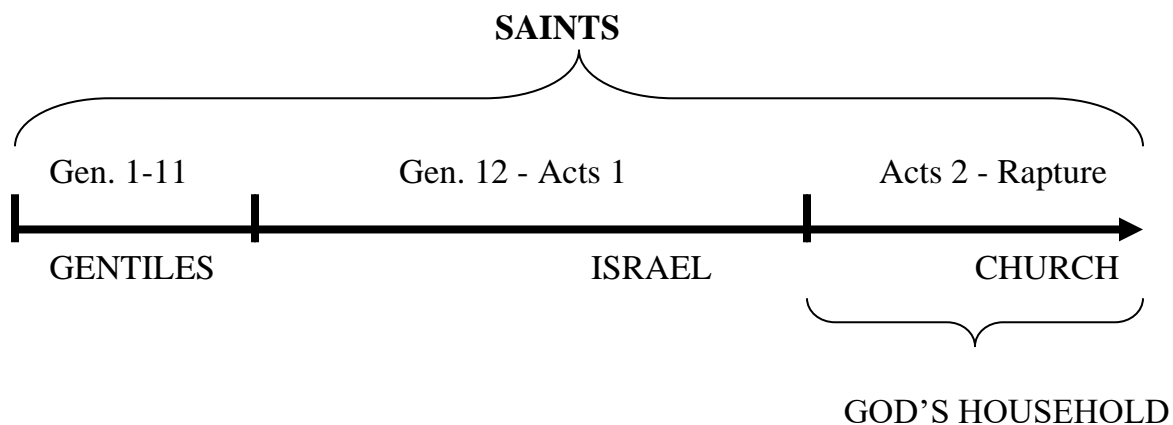
Translation 2:19 **Consequently you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but you are fellow-citizens with the saints and members of God's household,**

Ara ou=n ouvke,ti evste. xe,noi kai. pa,roikoi, “*Consequently you are no longer foreigners and strangers*,”. That the following verses describe the consequences is signaled by the Greek conjunctions *ara oun*. Both mean “consequently” or “so then”. The consequences Paul is interested in explaining are due to the fact of v. 13 which took place by means of vv. 14-18. First, he explains the negative consequences; that Gentiles who believe in the Messiahship of Jesus are **no longer foreigners and strangers**. The Greek words for **foreigners** and **strangers** are very similar but have a shade of difference. They were called **foreigners** in v. 12 (Gk. *zenos*). Here they are said to no longer be *zenos* and *paroikos*. A *zenos* is one who is vacationing in a foreign country. He is merely a traveler who has the rights of one passing through but not those of a citizen of the country. A *paroikos* is a legal resident alien. He lives in a foreign country with a residence visa but does not have the rights of a citizen of the country. He may have more than the *zenos* but he still lacks full citizenship and privileges. This is no longer true of Gentiles. We are no longer traveling **foreigners** or resident **strangers** excluded from the place of privilege. Instead, Paul tells us the positive, what we are...

avlla. evste. sumpoli/tai tw/n a`gi,wn kai. oivkei/oi tou/ qeou/ (“*but you are fellow-citizens with the saints and members of God's household*,”. *avlla* stands in sharp contrast. Positively they are **fellow-citizens**. The Greek word is *sumpolites*. *politeia* was used in 2:12 as a privilege the Gentiles lacked before the cross. They were excluded from the privileges that citizens of Israel enjoyed. Now believing Gentiles no longer lack those privileges but have become **citizens** of a “new man”, a new raceless race, that is, the Church. We are not an addendum to Israel. We have not become Jews or spiritual Jews. Instead, we have become a new race. The NT recognizes three people groups: Jews, Gentiles, and the Church

of God (1 Cor. 10:32). The prefix *sun-* enhances our citizenship by making us not just *citizens* but *fellow-citizens*. We are *fellow-citizens with the saints*.

Who are the *saints* Paul is referring to here? If *fellow-citizens* refers to believing Gentiles, then who are these *saints* that are our *fellow-citizens*? *Saints* here refers to the “redeemed people” of all ages beginning with Adam. This is consistent with the usage elsewhere in the epistle (cf. Eph. 1:1, 15, 18; 2:19; 3:8, 18; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18). Gentile believers have equal privileges; we are on equal footing with saints of other ages (both Gentile [Gen. 1-11] and Jew [Gen. 12-Acts 2]) and this occurred through the blood of Christ.



Not only are we *fellow-citizens* but we are also *members of God's household*. The Greek word here for *household* signifies an intimate family relationship. And the genitive *of God* signifies possession. We are now possessed by God in an intimate family relationship. Here we are likened to a *household* whereas in v. 20-22 we are likened to a *holy temple*. It's interesting that Paul uses antonyms to contrast our previous status with our present status:

v. 19a

foreigner (zenos)
stranger (paroikoi)

v. 19b

citizen (sumpolites)
member of household (oikeioi)

A significant observation here is in order. Notice that all *saints* do not necessarily enjoy membership in *God's household* but all who are *members of God's household* are *saints*. *Saints* therefore constitutes a much larger group than those who are *members of God's household*. This means that believing Jews and Gentiles in this dispensation have received both a common status and a unique status. We share the common status with all believers of becoming *saints* but we enjoy the unique status of becoming *members of God's household*. *Saints* of other dispensations do not enjoy this benefit. This is a unique status that Church saints have obtained and which makes us distinct from the saints of other ages.

So, we share something with all other believers (certain privileges all the redeemed enjoy) but are also distinct from them (distinct privileges that come with being members of God's household). This sets the Church off as something distinct from Israel and Gentiles as well as redeemed of other ages. This unique status began on the day of Pentecost. So, all saints are *fellow-citizens* but only Church saints are *members of God's household*.

b. Cause: New Establishment (2:20-22)

Now that Paul has described the consequences of the "new man" he proceeds to give the foundation, formation, and function of the "new man".

(1) The Foundation of the Building (2:20)

Greek Text 2:20 εὑοικδομηθε,ντεῖ ἐπι. τῶ| γεμελι,ῶ| τῶ/ν ἀποστο,λῶν καὶ. προφῆτῶ/ν(ο;ντοῖ ἀγκρογωνιαί,ου αὐτοῦ/ Χριστοῦ/ Ἰησοῦ/(

Translation 2:20 having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone,

εὑοικδομηθε,ντεῖ ἐπι. τῶ| γεμελι,ῶ|, "having been built upon the foundation".

Here Paul is giving the reason why we are *members of God's household*. It is because we have been built on the foundation of the *apostles and prophets*. The new entity is pictured as something God is presently building throughout the Church age in the next verse, but a building must have a foundation. And Paul says this foundation is *the apostles and prophets*. But what exactly is the *foundation*. I thought Jesus Christ was the foundation. And second, what group do *the apostles and prophets* refer to? First, what is the *foundation*? Two main interpretations have been given:

- 1) Doctrine of the apostles and prophets is the foundation (impersonal)
- 2) Apostles and prophets themselves are the foundation (personal)ⁱ

It seems best to take option 2 in this case because it is masculine and because the verse goes on to tell us that it is the person of *Christ Himself* who is the *cornerstone* not the teaching of Christ. Both the *foundation* and the *cornerstone* are personal masculine references, not impersonal (neuter). Of course, neither *Christ* nor *the apostles and prophets* can be totally separated from their teaching. Nevertheless, the *foundation* here is made up of the *apostles and prophets* themselves. They themselves are the *foundation* of the Church.

Second, we have to determine what group *the apostles and prophets* refer to. First let's look at the *apostles*. In Eph. 1:1 we looked at the word *apostle* because Paul claimed to be an *apostle*. We concluded then that an *apostle* was an official delegate of Jesus Christ, commissioned to proclaim authoritatively the word of God in oral and written form in order to establish and build up churches. We also discovered that there are 3 categories of NT apostles. The first two categories are divinely authorized "offices" and the last category is the divinely given "gift". The NT never confuses "offices" with "gifts". Those who hold offices necessarily have gifts but those who have gifts do not necessarily hold offices (e.g., elders and deacons hold offices and have spiritual gifts but many genuine believers in the church do not hold either of these offices yet they do all have at least one spiritual gift).

The first office of "apostle" was composed of the 12 that Jesus Himself appointed. This number was reduced to 11 when Judas betrayed our Lord and was hanged. The number was restored to 12 when he was replaced with Matthias. To be in this category of apostle one had to be a man and he had to be with the Lord from His baptism by John until His ascension (Acts 1:16-26).

The second office of "apostle" was composed of those who saw our Lord in His resurrection body. Many meet the scriptural qualifications for this office (James, the 500, Paul, cf. 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:6-8, probably Barnabas, Acts 13:2; 1 Cor. 9:6, Apollos, 1 Cor. 4:6, 9, Epaphroditus, Phil. 2:25, Titus, 2 Cor. 8:23, and possibly Andronicus and Junias, Rom. 16:7).

The third category of "apostle" was composed of those who had the spiritual "gift" of apostle. This category has less authority than those who held the office of "apostle". Those given the spiritual gift of apostle are mentioned in Ephesians 4:11. They were instrumental in building up the church but not in forming the foundation of the Church.

Which category or categories does Paul have in mind here in Eph. 2:20? It seems that Paul has in mind only those who held the office of "apostle". Why? Because the office of *apostle* was given as *foundational to the Church* while the spiritual gift of *apostle* was given to *build up the Church*. The *foundation* and that which is built upon it are connected but distinct. These foundational offices were given once for all. Once the *foundation* was laid some of the spiritual gifts continued to function in order to *build up the Church* (Eph. 2:22; 4:11-13; 15-16).

<p style="text-align:center">BUILDING UP OF CHURCH = SPIRITUAL GIFTS</p>
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**FOUNDATION OF CHURCH =
OFFICE OF APOSTLE AND
PROPHETS**

What about the *prophets* mentioned here? Who are they? Are they OT prophets or NT prophets? Since *apostles* precedes *prophets* it would seem that this refers to NT *prophets*. Additionally, how would the Church be built on the OT *prophets*? The Church was a mystery in the OT, not something revealed by the *prophets* (Eph. 3:5-6). There may be some evidence that *prophet* was a NT office (cf. Acts 11:27; 13:1; 15:32; 21:9-10). We know for certain that there is mention of the spiritual gift of *prophet*. I'm unsure exactly what group Paul has in mind here. What I can say is that, like the *apostles*, they were involved in receiving revelation from God and communicating that revelation. Their major role was communicating the revelation of God (Acts 15:32) although sometimes this revelation was predictive (Acts 11:27). It seems then that the foundation of the Church is composed of those who received direct revelation from God. The only two groups to receive revelation from God in the NT were those who held the *office of apostle* and those who were genuine *prophets*. Therefore, these men made up the two foundational groups that Paul has in mind here and in 3:5. Since the foundation has been laid there are no more *apostles* or *prophets* today. Instead, certain spiritual gifts remain active today in order to build up the Church.

But we still have to deal with a possible contradiction. What do we do with the Hymn that says, "The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ our Lord" and 1 Cor. 3:11 Jesus Christ is said to be the foundation but here Paul says it was the *apostles and prophets* who made up the foundation, which is it? This problem is not insurmountable. This is probably a development in Pauline thought. In the earlier letters Christ is the foundation and the Church is the body, in later letters Christ is the cornerstone, the most important part of the foundation and Christ is the head of the body. What we have here is a development in Paul's thinking and it therefore complements his earlier teachings. In ancient cultures the cornerstone was more important than the foundation because the foundation would be no good if the cornerstone was not properly laid.

Early Letters

Later Letters

Christ = Foundation
Church = Body

Christ = Cornerstone of Foundation
Christ = Head of Body

o;ntoj avkrogwniai,ou auvtou/ Cristou/ VIhsou/ (*“Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone,”*). If Christ is not the foundation of the building then what is He? He Himself is the *cornerstone* of the foundation. This phrase is a genitive absolute meaning it has no syntactical connection to the rest of the sentence. It stands alone. But the context also demonstrates that it is vitally connected to the foundational apostles and prophets. Paul may have had in mind **Isa. 28:16** when he wrote this because that is the only place in the LXX which uses this word *cornerstone* (*acrogoniaios*).

Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, A costly **cornerstone** for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes *in it* will not be disturbed.

The word is significant. In the ancient world the *cornerstone* was the first stone laid. The builder would set the *cornerstone* very carefully. Lloyd states, "The *acrogoniaios* here is the primary foundation-stone at the angle of structure by which the architect fixes a standard for the bearings of the walls and cross-walls throughout."ⁱⁱ It is this stone by which every other stone in the foundation and superstructure must be measured and set. Christ is the one by which every member of the church must ultimately be in conformity with. It is clear that this stone was the prophesied Messiah that Israel would stumble over. The leaders of both houses of Israel would reject this stone, but God would make Him the cornerstone and such He is (Ps. 118:22; Isa. 8:14; Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11).

(2) The Formation of the Building (2:21)

Now that Paul has identified the foundation of the building as the NT apostles and prophets and the cornerstone as the Messiah he turns to the gradual formation of the building.

Greek Text 2:21 evn w-| pa/sa oivkodomh. sunarmologoume,nh au;xei eivj nao.n a[giou evn kuri,w|(

Translation 2:21 in whom the whole building being fitted together grows into a holy temple in the Lord,

evn w-| pa/sa oivkodomh, "*in whom the whole building*". *in whom* refers back to *Christ Jesus*. Christ is the location where the *whole building* rests or has its ground and where this building is growing. The Church is like a structure that is presently being built. The

foundation of this building is the *apostles and prophets*. The *building* itself is not an inanimate structure but a living and growing organism. The Church is not a physical building but the compilation of all saints from the Day of Pentecost to the Rapture. This building, that is, the Church, is personal in nature, not impersonal.

sunarmologoume,nh au;xei, “*being fitted together grows*”. The present participle coupled with the present active indicative main verb here indicates that it this building is presently being fitted together and presently growing. The participle *being fitted together* is a word Paul coined. The root of the word was used of fitting together stones into some structure. “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.”ⁱⁱⁱ This is how Christ is fitting together individuals in the Church, believing Jews and Gentiles. He cuts us and smooths us out so that we fit exactly next to each other (individual growth).^{iv} He’s building perfection. He doesn’t need mortar to fill our gaps, instead He works on the stones themselves, gradually cutting out that which needs to be removed and grafting in us what we need. The ancient pyramids are an incredible example of their precision in cutting and smoothing huge stones. You can’t even slide a razor blade between the joints in the stones. If you back off far enough you can’t even see that the pyramids are made of individual stones. It looks like one solid rock. You can be assured that God’s grace is fitting us together in an even more precise fashion. His desire is to bring inner unity among Christians so that corporate growth can occur.

The main verb *auxei* (*grows*) is in the present tense indicating “continual growth”. The Church is a living organism that is growing. The building began on the Day of Pentecost and will be completed at the Rapture when construction is complete. You think we wait a long time for our builders to complete our homes? Look at the patience of God and how He is harnessing His power. He could build His dwelling place in an instant but He chooses to display grace and patience in building perfection. Each individual that is saved during the Church age is an integral and intimate part of the *whole building*. What is this building growing into? It’s growing...

eivj nao.n a[giou evn kuri,w(“*into a holy temple in the Lord,*”. *eis* indicates the direction of growth. The building is growing toward something. That something is a *holy temple*. There are two words for *temple* in the Greek; *ieron* and *naos*. They are used distinctly. *ieron* refers to the whole sacred area of the Jewish temple, including the three courts: the court of the Gentiles, the court of the Jewish women, and the court of the Jewish men (Matt. 21:12). Within the court of the Jewish men was the court of the priests and inside the court

of the priests was the sacred building called the *naos*, the second Greek word for *temple*. In the NT *naos* consistently refers to this inner sacred building we know as the Holy of Holies (Matt. 27:51). This is where God dwelled. This would have been a radical new idea for the Gentile believers in Ephesus. Can you guess why? Because they had the Temple of Artemis which was one of the Seven Wonders of the World. As a whole their temple was known as the *ieron* but there was also an inner sanctum where the heathen gods were thought to dwell, and it was known as the *naos*. In fact, the Ephesian silversmiths who sold trinkets along the Arcadian Way were selling *shrines* and the Greek word for *shrines* is *naos*. Demetrius and the silversmiths were selling silver miniatures of the inner sanctum of the Temple of Artemis. The application to the Ephesian believers would be that they themselves were being grown into a *holy temple*, not a temple made with human hands, but a temple made by God. In this dispensation God doesn't dwell in temples made with human hands (Acts 17:24). This is a radically different view of God and His dwelling place. Additionally, this is a *holy* temple. Something or someone that is holy means that it has been set apart by God for His use.

Notice the sphere in which this *holy temple* is located: *in the Lord*. This is a reference to Christ, not the Father or the Spirit (cf. 4:1, 17; 5:8; 6:1, 10, 21). The *holy temple* is composed of believing Jews and Gentiles who are in Christ, and thus the growth of the *holy temple* only occurs in Christ since the *holy temple* is composed solely of believers in Christ. So, the *holy temple* is not the Temple of Artemis where Artemis supposedly dwelt, nor is it the Temple of Solomon where the Shekinah Glory dwelt, but this is an organic, growing temple composed of believing Jews and Gentiles in Christ and is the dwelling place of God. The emphasis is on corporate growth and not on individual growth.

(3) The Function of the Building (2:22)

Now that the foundation has been laid and the formation of the building has been established Paul turns his attention to the function of the building, to serve as the habitation of God.

Greek Text 2:22 evn w-| kai. u`mei/j sunoikodomei/sqe eivj katoikhth,rion tou/ qeou/ evn pneu,mati

Translation 2:22 *in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.*

evn w-| kai. u`mei/j sunoikodomei/sqe, “*in whom you also are being built together*”. Verse 21 spoke about the building itself, verse 22 speaks about the people that make up the

building. *in whom* refers back to Christ once again. It is in Christ that *you also*, that is, the Gentile believers, *are being built together into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit*. The word *being built together* probably refers to the idea of Jews and Gentiles being brought together in Christ as individual pieces of this structure which is being built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Each individual believer is a stone carefully chiseled, cut, smoothed and fitted into the building which will ultimately grow into a holy temple in the Lord. This stresses unity. Both Jew and Gentile believers are a part of this building. The building is neither Jew nor Gentile, but it is the body of Christ, the Church. The verb is passive indicating the gracious act of God in building us together. What are we *being built together to be?*

eivj katoikhth,rion tou/ qeou, “into a dwelling place of God”. Ultimately the body of Jewish and Gentile believers is destined to become *a dwelling place of God*. The Greek word for *dwelling* refers to a place where one takes a deep seat or settles down (e.g., a place to retire). It refers to a permanent dwelling place of God. This dwelling place is, of course, the *holy temple* just mentioned in v. 21. It is not a temple made with human hands but a temple made by God and it is a living temple that God is pleased to dwell in. The construction is underway and the dwelling of God is sure to follow in this magnificent structure the Lord is carefully fitting together.

evn pneu,mati, “in the Spirit”. This is probably describing which member of the Trinity this dwelling is being built for. In this case it is being built for a dwelling of the Holy Spirit. In the OT God dwelt in the tabernacle and later in the temple. In the NT he dwells in the temple in two ways. First, he dwells in the individual Christian who is a temple (*naos*) of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). Secondly, He dwells in the corporate body of believers, the Church (1 Cor. 3:16, Eph. 2:22). This reference is to His dwelling in the corporate body of believers, the Church.

In conclusion, God does not dwell in the Temple of Artemis as the Ephesians claimed. God no longer dwells in temples made by human hands (Acts 17:24). God dwells in the corporate body of Christ, the Church. This is a radically different view of who God is and where He resides. Those who believe in Christ as the Son of God must radically alter their conception of who God is. Believing Jews and Gentiles “have been made one new person, growing into a holy temple...Before, both Jews and Gentiles could see the stone buildings in which their God or gods dwelt, but now the one true God is dwelling in them, the collective entity called the church.”^v

ⁱ Genitives of apposition.

ⁱⁱ Hoehner, Harold W., *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 407.

ⁱⁱⁱ Hoehner, Harold W., *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 409.

^{iv} This is why revival starts with God working in the inner man and with individuals. It cannot be genuinely successful when externally imposed. Today the Church is not in need of revival but a second reformation.

^v Hoehner, Harold W., *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 415.

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