

The Household of Faith

Ephesians 2:11-22

God is assembling a family of Jewish and Gentile believers.

This new household is built upon Jesus Christ as a residence for the Holy Spirit. We know it as the Church.

- I. The Old Condition: _____ (11-12)
 - A. No _____ - *separate from Christ*
 - B. No _____ - *excluded from citizenship in Israel*
 - C. No _____ - *foreigners to the covenants*
 - D. No _____ - *having no hope*
 - E. No _____ - *without God in the world*
- II. The New Position: _____ (13-18)
 - A. _____ with God
 - B. _____ to God
- III. The Future Action: _____ (19-22)
 - A. There is no room _____
 - B. There is only room _____
 - C. We are in the room _____

In Paul's mind there was a great visible symbol of alienation in the wall that surrounded the inner courtyards of the Jewish temple at Jerusalem, dividing them from the outermost courtyard, called the Court of the Gentiles. The temple of Paul's day had been built by Herod the Great to replace the older, inadequate temple dating from the days of Nehemiah. Much of it was overlaid with gold, and quite naturally it was the glory of the city. It sat on a raised platform on what is today still called the temple mount. The temple was surrounded by courts. The innermost court was called the Court of the Priests, because only male members of the priestly tribe of Levi were to enter it. The next court was the Court of Israel; it could be entered by any male Jew. After this there was the Court of Women, which any Jew could enter and which was called the Court of the Women because it was as far as a woman could go in this hierarchy.

These courtyards were all on the same level. So although there were great differences between them, they were not as great as the monumental division that came next. From the Court of the Women one descended five steps to a level area in which there was erected a five-foot stone barricade that went around the temple enclosure; then, after another level space, there were fourteen more steps that descended to the Court of the Gentiles. According to the Jewish historian Josephus, the wall dividing Jews from Gentiles was marked at intervals by stone inscriptions stating that no foreigner was permitted to enter the Jewish enclosures upon penalty of death.

In the last century or so several of these inscriptions have been found. One incomplete inscription was discovered as recently as 1935. Another whole inscription was unearthed in 1871 and is now in a museum in Istanbul. It reads: "No foreigner is to enter within the balustrade and embankment around the sanctuary. Whoever is caught will have himself to blame for his death which follows."

- James Montgomery Boice