

Welcome to Promise Land Bible Church
We're glad you're here!



An open Bible is shown from a low angle, looking up at the pages. The pages are filled with text, but it is mostly out of focus. The background is a bright blue sky with some light clouds. The text is overlaid in a large, bold, black font.

One in Christ

Scripture text: Ephesians 2:11-22

One in Christ

THE GREAT PEACE MISSION

Ephesians 2:11–22

The only “eternal covenant” that has lasted—and that will last—is **the one made by the eternal God, sealed by the blood of Jesus Christ**. It is Christ’s peace mission that Paul explains in this section, and three **very important** words summarize this **great work: separation, reconciliation, and unification**.

Separation: What the Gentiles Were (Eph. 2:11–12)

In the first ten verses of Ephesians 2, Paul has discussed the salvation of sinners in general, but **now he turns to the work of Christ for Gentiles in particular**. Most of the converts in the Ephesian church were Gentiles, and they knew that much of God's program in the Old Testament involved the Jews. For centuries, the "circumcision" (Jews) had looked down on the "uncircumcision" (Gentiles) with an attitude that God had never intended them to display. The fact that a Jew had received the physical mark of the covenant was no proof he was a man of faith (Rom. 2:25–29; Gal. 5:6; 6:15).

Romans 2:25-29 For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but **break the law**. For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is **one inwardly**, and circumcision is a **matter of the heart, by the Spirit**, not by the letter. **His praise is not from man but from God.**

Galatians 5:6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but **only faith working through love.**

Galatians 6:15 For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but **a new creation.**

Those who have trusted Christ have received a spiritual circumcision “made without hands”.

Colossians 2:11 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,

But since the hour that God called Abraham, **God made a difference between Jews and Gentiles.** He made this difference, not that the Jews might boast, but **that they might be a blessing and a help to the Gentiles.** God set them apart that **He might use them to be a channel of His revelation and goodness to the heathen nations.** Sad to say, Israel kept this difference nationally and ritually, but **not morally.** Israel became like the lost nations around her.

For this reason, God often had to discipline the Jews because **they would not maintain their spiritual separation and minister to the nations** in the name of the true God.

The one word that best describes the Gentiles is without. **They were “outside” in several respects.**

Without Christ.

The Ephesians worshiped the goddess, Diana, and, before the coming of the Gospel, **knew nothing about Christ.** Those who claim that pagan religions are just as acceptable to God as the Christian faith will have a problem here, **for Paul cites the Ephesians’ Christless state as a definite tragedy.** But then, keep in mind that every unsaved person, Jew or Gentile, is **“outside Christ” and that means condemnation.**

Without citizenship. - God called the Jews and built them into a nation. **He gave them His laws and His blessings.** A Gentile could enter the nation as a proselyte, but he was not born into that very special nation. **Israel was God's nation,** in a way that was not true of any Gentile nation.

Without covenants. - While the blessing of the Gentiles is included in God's covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3), God did not make any covenants with the Gentile nations. The Gentiles were “aliens” and “strangers”—and the Jews never let them forget it. Many of the Pharisees would pray daily, “O God, I give thanks that I am a Jew, not a Gentile.”

Genesis 12:1-4 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And **I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."** So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Without hope.

Historians tell us that a great cloud of hopelessness covered the ancient world.

Philosophies were empty; traditions were disappearing; religions were powerless to help men face either life or death.

People longed to pierce the veil and get some message of hope from the other side, but there was none (1 Thes. 4:13–18).

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, **that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.** For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, **that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep.** For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. **Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord.** Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Without God.

The heathen had gods aplenty, as Paul discovered in Athens (Acts 17:16–23).

Someone in that day said that it was easier to find a god than a man in Athens. “There be gods many and lords many,” wrote Paul (1 Cor. 8:5). But the pagan, **no matter how religious or moral he might have been, did not know the true God.** The writer of Psalm 115 contrasted the true God with the idols of the heathen. **It is worth noting that the spiritual plight of the Gentiles was caused not by God but by their own willful sin.**

Paul said the Gentiles knew the true God but deliberately refused to honor Him (Rom. 1:18–23).

Religious history is not a record of man starting with many gods (idolatry) and gradually discovering the one true God.

Rather, it is the sad story of man knowing the truth about God and deliberately turning away from it! It is a story of devolution, not evolution! The first eleven chapters of Genesis give **the story of the decline of the Gentiles**; and from Genesis 12 on (the call of Abraham), **it is the story of the Jews.**

God separated the Jews from the Gentiles **that He might be able to save the Gentiles** also. “Salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22).

God called the Jews, beginning with Abraham, **that through them He might reveal Himself as the one true God**. With the Jews He deposited His Word, and through the Jews He gave the world the Savior (Rom. 9:1–5). **Israel was to be a light to the Gentiles that they too might be saved**. But sad to say, Israel became like the Gentiles, and the light burned but dimly. **This fact is a warning to the church today. When the church is least like the world, it does the most for the world.**

Romans 9:1-5 I am speaking the truth in Christ--I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit-- that I **have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart.** For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, **my kinsmen according to the flesh.** They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. **To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.**

Reconciliation: What God Did for the Gentiles (Eph. 2:13–18)

The “**but now**” in Ephesians 2:13 parallels the “but God” in Ephesians 2:4. **Both speak of the gracious intervention of God on behalf of lost sinners.**

“**Enmity**” is the key word in this section (Eph. 2:15–16); and you will **note that it is a twofold enmity: between Jews and Gentiles (Eph. 2:13–15) and between sinners and God (Eph. 2:16–18).** Paul describes here **the greatest peace mission in history: Jesus Christ not only reconciled Jews and Gentiles, but He reconciled both to Himself in the one body, the church.**

The word reconcile means “**to bring together again.**” A distraught husband wants to be reconciled to his wife who has left him; a worried mother longs to be reconciled to a wayward daughter; and the lost sinner needs to be reconciled to God. **Sin is the great separator in this world.** It has been dividing people since the very beginning of human history. When Adam and Eve sinned, **they were separated from God.** Before long, their sons were separated from each other and Cain killed Abel. The earth was filled with violence (Gen. 6:5–13) and **the only remedy seemed to be judgment.**

But even after the Flood, men sinned against God and each other, and even tried to build their own unity without God's help.

The result was another judgment that scattered the nations and confused the tongues. **It was then that God called Abraham, and through the nation of Israel, Jesus Christ came to the world.**

It was His work on the cross that abolished the enmity between Jew and Gentile and between sinners and God.

The enmity between Jews and Gentiles (vv. 13–15).

God had put a difference between Jews and Gentiles so that His purposes in salvation might be accomplished. But once those purposes were accomplished, **there was no more difference.** In fact, it was His purpose that these differences be erased forever, and **they are erased through the work of Christ in reconciliation.**

It was this lesson that was so difficult for the early church to understand. For centuries, the Jews had been different from the Gentiles—in religion, dress, diet, and laws.

Until Peter was sent to the Gentiles (Acts 10), **the church had no problems**. But with the salvation of the Gentiles on the same terms as the Jews, **problems began to develop**. The Jewish Christians reprimanded Peter for going to the Gentiles and eating with them (Acts 11), and **representatives of the churches gathered for an important conference on the place of the Gentiles in the church** (Acts 15). Must a Gentile become a Jew to become a Christian? Their conclusion was, **“No! Jews and Gentiles are saved the same way—by faith in Jesus Christ.”** The enmity was gone!

The cause of that enmity was the Law, because the Law made a definite distinction between Jews and Gentiles. The dietary laws reminded the Jews that God had put a difference between the clean and unclean (Lev. 11:44–47). But the Gentiles did not obey these laws; **therefore they were unclean**. Ezekiel the prophet reminded the priests that their task was to teach the Jews “**the difference between the holy and the profane**” (Ezek. 44:23). The divine ordinances given by God to Israel stood as a wall between the Jews and the other nations. In fact, there was a wall in the Jewish temple, separating the court of the Gentiles from the rest of the temple areas

Archeologists have discovered the inscription from Herod's temple, and it reads like this:

No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds the sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death.

It was this wall that the Jews thought Paul and his Gentile friends **crossed when the Jews attacked him in the temple and threatened to kill him** (Acts 21:28–31).

Act 21:28-31 crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who is teaching everyone everywhere against the people and the law and this place.

Moreover, he even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place." For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, and **they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple.** Then all the city was stirred up, and the people ran together. They seized Paul and dragged him out of the temple, and at once the gates were shut. And as **they were seeking to kill him,** word came to the tribune of the cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion.

In order for Jews and Gentiles to be reconciled, this wall had to be destroyed, and **this Jesus did on the cross. The cost of destroying the enmity was the blood of Christ.** When He died, the veil in the temple was literally torn in two, and **the wall of separation (figuratively) was torn down.** By fulfilling the demands of the Law in His righteous life, and by bearing the curse of the Law in His sacrificial death (Gal. 3:10–13), **Jesus removed the legal barrier that separated Jew from Gentile.**

For centuries, there was a difference between them. But today, “there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek.

For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. 10:12–13).

In Jesus Christ, Jew and Gentile become one. “**He is our peace**” (Eph. 2:14). Through Christ, the far-off Gentile is made nigh (Eph. 2:13, 17), and **both Jew and Gentile are made one.**

The consequences of Christ’s work are, then, **the destroying of the enmity by the abolishing of the Law,** and the **creating of a new man—the church, the body of Christ.**

The word abolish simply means “**to nullify.**” The Law no longer holds sway over either Jew or Gentile, since **in Christ believers are not under Law but under grace.**

The righteousness of the Law, revealing God’s holiness, **is still God’s standard.** But this **is fulfilled in the believer by the Holy Spirit** (Rom. 8:1–4). It took the early church a long time to get accustomed to “**there is no difference!**” In fact, some religious groups have not learned the lesson yet, **for they are trying to get Christians back under Law** (Gal. 4:8–11; 5:1; Col. 2:13–23).

Romans 8:1-4 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. **For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.** For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, **in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**

Galatians 4:8-11 Formerly, when you did not know God, you were enslaved to those that by nature are not gods. But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more? You observe days and months and seasons and years! I am afraid I may have labored over you in vain.

Galatians 5:1 For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.