Christ brought believing Gentiles into God's household
by uniting them with believing Jews to form the Church
Ephesians 2.11-22

[Highly] Interpretive Translation

[11]Therefore, remember that formerly you – those who were not Jews, the ones called 'uncircumcision' by the Jews who were known for their bodily circumcision – [12]were without Christ, because of having been excluded from the citizenship of Israel and having been strangers to their covenants of promise with God; and remember that as a result you had no hope and were without God in the world. [13]But now, in Christ Jesus, you – the ones who formerly were far away from God – have become near to God because of Christ's sacrificial death. [14]For Christ himself is the source of a believer's peace. He is the one who made non-Jews and Jews into one group and destroyed the barrier between non-Jews and Jews [15]when he replaced the covenant of the Mosaic Law. He did this so he could create non-Jews and Jews into one new entity of the church, thus making peace between them, [16]and so that he could reconcile to God both non-Jews and Jews in one body of the church through his death on the cross, thus eliminating the hostility between peoples. [17]And when Christ came he preached peace to you who were far from God, and peace to the Jews who were near, [18]teaching that through him both would have access to God the Father by the one Holy Spirit. [19]As a result then, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, rather you are fellow citizens with the believing Jews and members of the household of God, [20]which is built upon the foundation of the apostles and other prophets, with Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone. [21]We believers are all being joined together in this household, which Christ is growing into a holy temple. [22]And Christ is making you a part of the church which is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

Exegetical Central Idea

What the Ephesians should remember was Christ brought Gentiles into God's household by removing the barrier of the Law, thus uniting Gentiles and Jews in peace, and forming the church [11-22].

[Somewhat Interpretive] Exegetical Sentence Outline

I. What Paul wanted the Ephesians to remember was they were without Christ, thus excluded from God's household, but had been brought near to God by Christ's sacrificial death [11-13].
  A. <u>What Paul wanted the Ephesians to remember was they had been Gentiles without Christ</u> [11-12a].
    1. What Paul wanted the Ephesians to do was remember what Paul was about to say [11a].
    2. Who the Ephesians were was uncircumcised Gentiles to Jews circumcised in the flesh [11b].
    3. What the Ephesians were to remember was they formerly were without Christ [12a].

  B. <u>The reason they were without Christ was exclusion from God's people and promises</u> [12b-c]
    1. The reason the Ephesians were without Christ was exclusion from citizenship of Israel [12b].
    2. The reason the Ephesians were without Christ was ignorance of God's promises [12c].

  C. <u>The result of being without Christ was they were hopeless and without God</u> [12d-e]
    1. The result for the Ephesians of being without Christ was they were without hope [12d].
    2. The result for the Ephesians of being without Christ was they were without God [12e].

  D. <u>What Paul wanted them to remember was they came near to God by Christ's sacrificial death</u> [13].

II. How Christ brought the Ephesians near to God was by replacing the covenant of the Mosaic Law, thus uniting Gentiles and Jews in peace, and forming the church [14-18].

    A. <u>How Christ brought the Ephesians near to God was by removing the barrier of the Mosaic Law between Gentiles and Jews, thus uniting them in peace</u> [14-15a].
        1. How Christ brought the Ephesians near was by being peace for Gentile and Jew [14a].
        2. How Christ brought Gentiles near was by making them one with the Jews [14b].
        3. How Christ brought Gentiles near was by destroying the barrier between them and Jews [14c].
        4. The means by which Christ destroyed the barrier was by replacing the Mosaic Law Covenant [15a].

    B. <u>The purpose and result of Christ replacing the Mosaic Law Covenant was to unite Gentiles and Jews in peace, forming the church</u> [15b-16].
        1. The purpose of replacing the Mosaic Law Covenant was to unite Gentiles and Jews into one new entity, the church [15b].
        2. The result of Christ uniting the Gentiles with the Jews was peace [15c].
        3. The purpose of replacing the Mosaic Law Covenant was to unite Gentiles and Jews into one body, the church [16a].
        4. The result of Christ uniting Gentiles with Jews was to end the enmity between them [16b].

    C. <u>How Christ brought peace was to come provide access to God to both Gentiles and Jews</u> [17-18].
        1. How Christ brought peace was to come [17a].
        2. The activity of Christ when he came was to preach peace to both Gentiles and Jews [17b].
        3. What Christ preached was that Gentiles and Jews would have access to God through him [18].

III. The result of Christ uniting Gentiles and Jews was Gentiles became a part of God's household, and together the church becomes a dwelling place for the Spirit [19-22].

    A. <u>The result of Christ's preaching was to bring the Gentiles into God's household and promises</u> [19].
        1. The result of Christ's preaching was Gentiles no longer were excluded from God's people and promises [19a].
        2. The result of Christ's preaching was Gentiles were fellow citizens with Jews and members of God's household [19b].

    B. <u>What Christ does is unite God's house on a foundation of the apostles and other prophets</u> [20].
        1. The identity of the foundation of the house of God is the apostles and other prophets [20a].
        2. The identity of the cornerstone of the house of God is Christ [20b].

    C. <u>The result of Christ's work is unity and growth into a dwelling place for the Spirit</u> [21-22].
        1. What Christ does is unite the household of God [21a].
        2. The result of the household of God being united is it grows into a temple [21b].
        3. What Christ does is make the Ephesian Gentiles a part of the dwelling for the Spirit [22].

Commentary with Phrase Outline Headings

To this point in the letter, Paul has made three important theological points regarding the blessing of salvation. First, Paul declared that all believers should praise God for the blessing of salvation, which includes being chosen by God, being predestined to adoption by God, and receiving grace, redemption, the spiritual understanding that God is bringing all things together in Christ, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, who seals believers in Christ and is a pledge of their salvation [1.1-14]. Second, Paul prayed God would give the Ephesians further spiritual wisdom so they would understand the hope of God's calling on believers, the glorious wealth of God's inheritance in believers, and the surpassing greatness of God's

power toward believers, which was manifested when God raised Christ from the dead, elevated him above all others, and put him in charge of the church [1.15-23]. Third, Paul taught that nobody deserved this salvation, but – despite believers formerly being spiritually dead in sin and wallowing in fleshly lust – God, in love and mercy, made them alive with Christ, by grace, through faith, as a gift, for the purpose of living in good works [2.1-10]. Throughout the previous discussion, Paul has alternately addressed the Ephesians directly or included them in with all believers [though at times there is a question of whether he was being inclusive or contrastive]. In 2.11-22, Paul will elaborate on how salvation for the Ephesians was brought about by unifying them as Gentiles with the believing Jews into one household of God, before elaborating further on these themes in 3.1-12.

I. Remembering the contrast of life before Christ and life now with Christ [2.11-13]

Being Gentiles without Christ [2.11-12a]: Paul began this section with an inferential διὸ, linking this discussion to the previous section. Paul had just explained the gift of salvation for the purpose of living out good works, and now he offered the Ephesians another perspective of this salvation, how it was effected by uniting believing Gentiles with believing Jews into God's one household and church.

This conjunction is followed by a command "to remember," μνημονεύετε [BDAG, 654], but before Paul finished the thought, he offered a revealing parenthetical statement. With τὰ ἔθνη ἐν σαρκί, for the first time in the letter the Ephesians were identified as Gentiles. This distinction was blurred previously in the letter, but now it became important for the argument Paul was about to make. With οἱ λεγόμενοι ἀκροβυστία ὑπὸ τῆς λεγομένης περιτομῆς ἐν σαρκὶ χειροποιήτου, a separation is evident between two groups [of which the Gentiles are one], and the other group is identified as the Jews [τῆς λεγομένης περιτομῆς, "circumcision"]. That the Jews had a derisive sobriquet for the Gentiles indicates enmity between the two groups. Their choice of sobriquet [ἀκροβυστία, "uncircumcision," BDAG, 39] emphasized the exclusion of the Gentiles from the covenants with God [Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 352; Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, NICNT, 292]. This parenthetical statement sets up the discussion about God uniting believing Gentiles with believing Jews into one household of God.

χειροποίητος is an adjective specifying something made by hand, rather than by God [W. Rebell, *EDNT*, 3:464; see word study "2.11 χειροποίητος" in appendix]. Thus the stress here is that there is a circumcision that is done by human hands which is not equivalent to the circumcision [of the heart] accomplished by God. This is Paul's comment on the inadequacy of this circumcision in the flesh [O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar, 187; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word, 136], and a hint that fleshly circumcision is not going to solve the enmity between the two groups nor be a salvation for either.

μνημονεύετε being present tense could indicate it is gnomic [Hoehner, 353], so what Paul was about to explain was something Gentiles like the Ephesians should always appreciate. The purpose for this command might have been to keep the Gentile believers humble in relations with believing Jews now that they were a majority in the church [Hoehner, 355], to promote humble appreciation of Christ's amazing work of grace on their behalf [vv.12-13; O'Brien, 185; Bruce, 135], or, in the greater context, so they would remember this amazing work and how it was effected by uniting them with Jews [vv.12-22].

When Paul finished his command, it was that the Ephesians should remember two main thoughts. The first, in this verse, was that the Ephesians, as Gentiles, were formerly without Christ. ὅτι continues the command from before the parenthetical statement [2.11]. Continuing the thought of the ποτὲ at the start of 2.11, and referring back to when the Ephesians were dead in their sins [2.1], ἦτε τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ χωρὶς Χριστοῦ reminds the Ephesians they were without Christ. This indicates they were not yet saved, but more so in this context that they were excluded from God's people and the promise of a Messiah, as the present discussion will make clear [Hoehner, 355; O'Brien, 188].

Being excluded from God's people and promises [2.12b-c]: Paul then gave two reasons for the Gentiles being without Christ. Some think ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι is a participle of manner [Hoehner, 356] or attendant circumstance [O'Brien, 188, apparently], but – as an adverbial perfect participle – it more likely

is causal [Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 631]. Though causal participles usually precede the verb they modify, there are other biblical examples of them following, as here [Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 632]. So, the first reason for being without Christ was ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ: the Gentiles had been "excluded" [BDAG, 96] from the "citizenship" [BDAG, 845; alternatively, "commonwealth" as a theocratic institution, as in Lincoln, 137] of Israel, so they were not of "God's people" and did not live by God's laws. By giving details of what Gentiles lacked in relation to Israel, Paul implies the validity of Israel's history and heritage with God, most particularly of election as God's people and the messianic promise of Christ [Lincoln, 136-137].

        Second, ξένοι τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας: they were unaware about, and seemingly excluded from, the covenant promises God had given to his people of Israel. These are the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New Covenants, which God had made with Israel as revealed through Israel's prophets [Hoehner, 359; contra O'Brien, 189; and Lincoln, 137; who exclude the New but include the Mosaic, the latter of which was replaced, even "invalidated" as shall be seen in 2.14; on the other hand, since what is presently at issue is Gentile exclusion, perhaps Mosaic is relevant too], and which promised Israel several things, most particularly a permanent role as God's people, a righteous Davidic king, messianic deliverance, and a future intimacy with God.

Being without hope and without God [12.d-e]: Paul also offered two results of the Gentiles being without Christ [or possibly of being excluded from Israel and its covenants; Hoehner, 360]: ἐλπίδα μὴ ἔχοντες καὶ ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ; the Gentiles could have no hope nor access to God. Hope [ἐλπίδα; BDAG, 319-320] implies an expectation of a future fulfillment of some kind, and in the scriptural context this is of a future fulfillment of God's promises as God's plan unfolds [Hoehner, 360]. The present tense of ἔχοντες suggests a continual lack of hope, because of their ignorance and apparent exclusion from God's promises [Hoehner, 360]. While the Gentiles believed in and worshipped many gods, ἄθεοι indicates they did not have a relationship with the true God [Hoehner, 361; O'Brien, 190; Lincoln, 138].

        In another sense, we could see this verse as summarizing five privileges newly given to Gentile believers: Christ, membership in God's household, inclusion in the covenants of promise, hope, and access to God [Hoehner, 355; O'Brien, 187]. However, the syntax suggests there is one key privilege in view, Christ, which God brought about by membership in God's household and [thus] inclusion in the covenants of promise, thereby rectifying the lack of hope and access to God [about all of which Paul would elaborate in the following verses].

Being brought near to God by Christ [2.13]: νυνὶ δὲ opens the stark contrastive statement, in comparison with ποτὲ at the start of 2.11, τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ in 2.12, and the parenthetical οἵ ποτε ὄντες μακρὰν here. ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ is not the result Paul will bring out here, but signifies what has changed to be the means of that result: they were without Christ [the Messiah] before, but now – having received their salvation through Christ's blood [1.7] and by believing in his gospel deliverance [1.13] – they have come to know this Messiah to be Christ Jesus [O'Brien, 188, 190; though on 190, he also first attributed to this phrase the sacrifice of Christ, which is better placed at the end of the verse, and then said being in Christ was a consequence of coming near, which is reversed causality].

        The contrastive result for believing Gentiles [and specifically for the Ephesian readers: ὑμεῖς] of now having Christ is ἐγενήθητε ἐγγύς: though once far away from God, they now have "become" near [BDAG, 196-199, suggests "come"; NET, NASB, translate "been brought" to bring out the passive]. In the Old Testament scriptures of the Jews, Gentile nations were sometimes described as "far off" while Jewish Israel was described as "near" [Lincoln, 138-139]. In those contexts [Deu 28.49; 29.22; 1 Kgs 8.41; Isa 5.26; Jer 5.15], the term "far off" reflects the geographic distance of Gentile nations from Israel without theological implication, but that geographic distance is significant enough for this present context: those who were separate from Israel and thus not of God's people can now be near to God [O'Brien, 191], a nearness that does have theological implications in Psalm 148.14 [NET]: "He has made his people victorious, and given all his loyal followers reason to praise– the Israelites, the people who are close to him. Praise the LORD!" Another interesting connection is to Isaiah 57.19 [O'Brien, 191; Bruce,

295], to which Paul apparently referred in 2.17, and in which God promises [NASB], "peace to him who is far and to him who is near."

As Paul would elaborate in the verses that follow, the Gentiles had now become part of the household of God, they no longer suffered the lack of hope and lack of access to God, because that had been rectified ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ, by the blood of Christ [1.7; instrumental dative, as Hoehner, 363], and [as we shall see in the following verses] through the uniting of the believing Gentiles with the believing Jews, which also was effected by the blood of Christ.

II. Forming the church with believing Jews [14-18].

Removing the barrier between Gentiles and Jews [2.14-15a]: Christ had brought the Gentiles near, for [γάρ; explanatory] he is our [ἡμῶν; inclusive] peace [εἰρήνη]. There are two vectors of effectiveness of Christ's blood here: he has reconciled believers to God by his blood; and – as we shall see presently – he has ended the exclusion of the Gentiles from God's people by his blood. That Christ is our peace symbolizes that he is the Messiah who brought about these deliverances [an end to alienation: Best, 252; Lincoln, 140] with his death on the cross.

Paul then elaborated on Christ's role with two adjectival participles. The first elaboration was that Christ is the one who made both groups of believers – Gentiles and Jews – into one [ὁ ποιήσας τὰ ἀμφότερα ἓν]. There is no Jew-Gentile division anymore for believers, we are all one people of God. There not only should be no hostility between believing Jews and believing Gentiles, there should actually be acceptance and friendship [Hoehner, 367]. The aorist tense of the participle suggests this unification was accomplished on the cross [Hoehner, 368]. The second elaboration was that Christ is the one who destroyed what was dividing the two groups. This part of the passage is the hardest to work out syntactically and lexically [see validation "2.14 τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ" in appendix]. However one works out these difficulties, it is clear that Christ destroyed [λύσας] what was separating the two groups, ending their enmity [ἔχθραν].

How Christ accomplished this was by "invalidating" [καταργήσας; see word study "2.15 καταργέω" in appendix] the Mosaic Law [τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν]. Even after a lexical study, the meaning of the verb here is challenging. Certainly, the Law's distinction between Jew and Gentile is being abrogated here, but just as certainly Paul still values the moral instruction of the Law insofar as it reflects the character of God, particularly since he employs one command from it later in the letter [6.2]. We have to make sense of the fact that in Romans 3.31 [in the context of stating God is the God of the Gentiles and the Jews], Paul said we do not invalidate [same Greek verb] the Law through faith, instead we uphold it, yet here he says Christ invalidated the Law. In Romans, Paul's thought was that the Law did not have the power to save and never did, but did still have moral value as a reflection of God's character; in Ephesians his thought is that the Law separated Gentiles from Jews to help uphold that moral value for God's distinctive people in Israel, but now that distinction has been invalidated by the coming and death of Christ, and so there now is one people of God comprised of both believing Gentiles and believing Jews. If those people truly live in the light [5.8], by being empowered by the Holy Spirit [3.16; 5.18; 6.17], then they will reflect God's character even better than by trying to follow the Mosaic Law. Some also see the Mosaic Covenant of the Law as being invalidated here, replaced by the New Covenant which God has now revealed will encompass Gentile believers as well as Jewish believers [O'Brien, 199; Hoehner, 376].

Forming the church by uniting Gentiles and Jews [2.15b-16]: Paul offered two reasons for Christ removing the barrier that had been between Gentiles and Jews by invalidating the Law. The first reason was an elaboration on what he already had said: in order that [ἵνα] Christ might in himself "create" [κτίσῃ; BDAG, 572] the two groups into "one new man" [ἕνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον], thus making peace. [For discussion of why the Greek has εν αὐτῷ instead of εν ἑαυτῷ for "in himself," see textual criticism problem "2.15: εν αὐτῷ [NA²⁷] vs. εν ἑαυτῷ in appendix]. Christ formed a new entity, the church, out of believing Gentiles and believing Jews, together. Some argue that what is in view is that Christ formed a

new type of person, the Christian, comprised of former Gentiles and Jews who now believe [Best, 261-263], but the church clearly is the emphasis in this immediate context [Hoehner, 379].

The verb choice of κτίζω is interesting. Christ brought Gentiles and Jews together in an act of new creation to form the church, similar to the new creation of believers in 2.10 [O'Brien, 199; Lincoln, 143-144]. This is not an act of transforming Gentiles into Jews, but the creation of a new entity, the church [Hoehner, 378-379; O'Brien, 200; Lincoln, 144]. That Christ created the church "in himself" [εν αὐτῷ] suggests his intimate identification with the church [Best, 263].

The second reason for Christ removing the barrier that had been between Gentiles and Jews by invalidating the Law was that Christ might "reconcile" [ἀποκαταλλάξῃ; BDAG, 112; found only here and in Col 1.20-22] to God both groups in one body [ἐν ἑνὶ σώματι] through the cross [διὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ], and thus "eliminate" [ἀποκτείνας] this enmity [τὴν ἔχθραν]. We see the parallelism: in 2.15b the result was unification in Christ and so peace; in 2.16 the result is unification with each other and so reconciliation to God together and so an end to hostility.

The "one body" [ἑνὶ σώματι] is a reference to the church [which is a consistent use of the term in this letter: 1.23; 4.12-16; 5.23, 30]. If Paul had meant to imply the means of unification through the death of Christ's physical body, he likely would have used different terminology [Best, 265], and what we have here is a parallel thought to the "new man" in 2.15b [Hoehner, 382]. So Christ reconciled mankind to God as one [single, unified] body, the church. There is no reason to look here at timing issues and think the church was formed and then man was reconciled with God; rather, this arrangement is Paul's emphasis that Christ's work was not to reconcile Gentiles and Jews to God apart from each other and as two distinct groups, but rather that he worked to reconcile the church body of believers to God as a single group [O'Brien, 202]. This reconciliation with God occurred by means of Christ's death on the cross [1.7; 2.13]; and by the same means, and through this reconciliation with God, Christ ended the enmity between Gentiles and Jews who are now part of God's people in the church. Thus, Christ's death ended the need for hostility between God and man, and the need for hostility among people who believe in Christ [Bruce, 300].

Preaching access to God for Gentiles and Jews [2.17-18]: Still referring to Christ being our peace, Paul wrote that when Christ came [ἐλθὼν], he preached peace [εὐηγγελίσατο εἰρήνην] to the Gentiles who were far [ὑμῖν τοῖς μακρὰν] and to the Jews who were near [καὶ εἰρήνην τοῖς ἐγγύς]. It was important to make the offer of peace known if it were to be effective [Best, 270].

The participle ἐλθὼν is temporal, indicating Christ preached peace when he came, when he walked the earth. Some argue that during his earthly life, Christ focused his preaching to Jews, not Gentiles [Best, 271; Hoehner, 385]. It is true that Jesus himself said he had been sent to the lost sheep of Israel [Matt 15.24], but he did have some interaction with Gentiles and Samaritans, and he traveled through and performed miracles in the Decapolis [Mark 7.31-8.9], so it is hard to believe he never taught them while there. Hoehner [385] argued that this coming must be after Christ's crucifixion because the crucifixion was the basis of the peace Christ was proclaiming, but Christ offered salvation during his ministry which was not accomplished until the cross. Some believe this refers to Jesus' post-resurrection teaching, which certainly inspired others to bring this message to Gentiles, though giving commands to preach is not the same as Christ preaching himself [Best, 271-272]. Still others think it means the ascended Christ proclaimed peace through the Holy Spirit, in turn through the apostles [Hoehner, 385; O'Brien, 207], but this suffers the same criticism as Jesus teaching his disciples post-resurrection. Others consider this "preaching" to be Christ's death on the cross itself [Lincoln, 149], but this would be a strange verb to choose for such a metaphor, in that Paul always used it elsewhere to designate actual proclamation of the gospel message [O'Brien, 206].

In any case, what is clear is that Christ "preached" peace and that both groups needed to hear the message. The verb εὐαγγελίζω indicates not just that Christ preached, but that what he brought was "good news" [Best, 270], in fact his gospel. There is a possible reference to Isaiah 57.19, though in that context "the far" were dispersed Jews and here they would be Gentiles in a Christological interpretation [O'Brien, 205; Bruce, 300].

Some have interpreted the ὅτι in 2.18 as providing the result of Christ's preaching [Hoehner, 387] or as explaining why Christ preached peace [O'Brien, 208; Lincoln, 149]. However, it seems best to see this ὅτι as giving us the content of the preaching. Hoehner [388] argues against this, saying the content was identified as peace in v.17, but that is obscure enough to beg for elaboration, which is given here. Christ's message of peace was that through him [δι' αὐτοῦ] all us believers could have access [ἔχομεν τὴν προσαγωγὴν] in the Spirit [ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι] to God the Father [πρὸς τὸν πατέρα]. This is similar to 3.12, where Paul said believers have access to God through Christ's faithfulness, that is, his death. The message here focuses on peace with God, but the fact that the Gentiles can have it equally with the Jews continues the theme of the passage that the division between the two groups is gone for believers who have this access [O'Brien, 209].

ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι could indicate the means by which Christ provides access [the Holy Spirit] or the attitude of unity of believers getting this access. In 4.4, there is one body and one Spirit, and it seems best to see that usage as the Holy Spirit [Best 274], and this seems reasonable for a letter in which believers are sealed in the Spirit [1.13], are growing into a dwelling place for God in the Spirit [2.22], are receiving revelation given to the apostles and prophets by the Spirit [3.5], are strengthened through the Spirit [3.16], are not to grieve the Spirit [4.30], are to be filled by the Spirit [5.18], and to pray at all times in the Spirit [6.18]. Hoehner [389] prefers to see this as a dative of sphere, arguing this cannot be means, for that is Christ [δι' αὐτοῦ], but in the New Testament there are plenty of examples of intermediate agency [here Christ] and means the agent uses [here the Spirit; see Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 373-374, 431-435]. After all, this is an act of the Triune God: through Christ, by the Spirit, reconciled to God [Lincoln, 150; Hoehner, 389]. So, Gentiles and Jews enjoy access through Christ by the one Holy Spirit, just as they received redemption through the one Lord [Best, 275]. We should note that this access is only through Christ [Hoehner, 388].

III. Being a part of God's household and a church indwelled by the Spirit [19-22].

Bringing the Gentiles into God's household [2.19]: Paul drew an inference [Ἄρα οὖν] from this previous section. First, that no longer were the Ephesians "strangers" [ξένοι, as in 2.12, where it referred to the covenant of promise] and "aliens" [πάροικοι, no doubt referring back to their exclusion from God's people referred to in 2.12, as indicated by the use of συμπολῖται in the next phrase to contrast with πολιτείας in 2.12; see BDAG, 779]. Second, rather [ἀλλὰ], they now were "fellow citizens" [συμπολῖται; BDAG, 959], meaning they were full members in God's kingdom [O'Brien, 211].

They were fellow citizens with the saints [τῶν ἁγίων; a genitive of association according to Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 129], but scholars debate over to whom Paul referred here as saints. Some want to include angels [Best, 278], but there is nothing in the context which suggests this [despite Best's contentions about 1.18], and this would provide no contrast with the alienation from Israel in 2.12 [Hoehner, 393]. Some want to draw a strong contrast with 2.12, thinking this might refer to Jews of Israel, but this would imply believing Gentiles are now a part of an Israel which retains its position as the people of God, and so must be rejected [Best, 277]. Indeed, the contrast might be thought of as even greater, for Paul was not saying merely that the Gentiles were citizens of Israel, but that they were part of something new, and not merely as resident aliens but as co-heirs [Hoehner, 395; Lincoln, 151]; they were now full members of God's kingdom [O'Brien, 211], not Israel.

While there is some opaqueness regarding referents for pronouns throughout this letter, other than in 1.1 when Paul calls the Ephesians themselves saints, every other instance in this letter of this adjective being used substantivally refers to all living believers [1.15, 18; 3.18; Lincoln, 151; O'Brien, 211; contra Best, 278]. This makes a case for all living believers here too, and it provides a sufficient contrast with 2.12 in that the Ephesians are now part of God's people [Jew and Gentile together] along with all other believers [Lincoln, 151]. However, throughout this section, Paul has been addressing the Ephesians as Gentiles and drawing the distinction between Gentile and Jews, how they once were separate with the Gentiles excluded from God's people, but now they are unified and reconciled to God in Christ. So when he addresses them here and says, "As a result then, you…" one would think he is still discussing them as

Gentiles, and in that case it makes more sense to see the saints here as Jewish believers. Some think this would only weakly be supported in the immediate context [Best, 277; Lincoln, 151], but it provides a good contrast with 2.12, in that the Gentiles who were excluded from God's people Israel are now fellow citizens of God's people the church along with the believing Jews. It is true that in other letters, when Paul explicitly used the term to refer to Jewish believers, he had the church in Jerusalem in mind [Lincoln, 151], but that does not rule out this usage here if the context warrants it. Furthermore, if the Gentiles are joining all other believers, what believers are other than Gentile, except believing Jews? Some want to include all believers of all times here [Best, 278; Hoehner, 393], and there is nothing wrong with seeing God's people transcending time, but there is no call for this inclusion in this context: what is in view is the body of Christ on Earth. So the best option appears to be that the saints here are the living, believing, Jews.

To complete the contrast with 2.12, Paul said they also were now members of God's household [οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ], not just equal under God's rule, but also in God's family, with the cultural implications of refuge, identity, belonging, and security [O'Brien, 212]. Again, some think this household includes angels [Best, 279], but there is no reason to think so in the context; it is enough to realize that believing Gentiles like the Ephesian readers were now included in God's people. So, though the Gentiles had once been excluded [2.11-12], Christ has brought them near [2.13], reconciling them to the Jews [2.14-15] and to God with the Jews [2.16-18], thus making them part of God's household [2.19].

Uniting the house of God on a strong foundation [2.20]: This household of God was built upon the foundation [ἐποικοδομηθέντες ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ] of the apostles and other prophets [τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν] of the church, who had initiated the spread of the gospel, begun the church planting movement, and delivered God's progressive revelation to the church [see validation "2.20 τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν" in appendix]. Thus the church rests on the normative teaching of divine revelation [O'Brien, 216] and the leadership of inspired people.

There is an important genitive absolute construction here that reveals that the foundation itself was founded on Christ, who was the "cornerstone" [ἀκρογωνιαίου; BDAG, 39]. In contemporary construction, the builder carefully laid the cornerstone first, which set the measuring standards for the rest of the building [Hoehner, 406-407; O'Brien, 217], so here it would imply the apostles and prophets who make up the foundation must be aligned with Christ and the church must be built on that foundation, also in conformity with Christ [Hoehner, 406-407]. Some have challenged this word's meaning to be "capstone," because of the usage of the term sometimes in the Septuagint, the exalted stature of Christ in this letter, and the idea of the church growing toward Christ in this letter [Lincoln, 154, 156], but the context seems to indicate "cornerstone" with regard to both a foundation and the start of the building [Hoehner, 405-406; Lincoln, 155], being such a cornerstone is the most exalted position possible [O'Brien, 217], and there seems to be a connection to the prophecy in Isaiah 28.16 [Hoehner, 405-406; O'Brien, 217], in which the Hebrew clearly refers to such a cornerstone and the Greek uses the same term, ἀκρογωνιαίου, saying [NET]: "Therefore, this is what the sovereign master, the LORD, says: "Look, I am laying a stone in Zion, an approved stone, set in place as a precious cornerstone for the foundation. The one who maintains his faith will not panic." In any case, the point is that Christ is over all the church [1.22], which is his body [2.16].

Effecting unity and growth for the church [2.21-22]:   Paul completed this section with two references to Christ in relation to this building. First, in Christ the "whole building" [πᾶσα οἰκοδομὴ; see textual criticism problem "2.20b-21: πᾶσα οἰκοδομὴ [NA[27]] vs. πᾶσα ἡ οἰκοδομὴ" in appendix], being joined together [συναρμολογουμένη, BDAG, 966], grows in to a holy temple in the Lord [αὔξει εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον ἐν κυρίῳ]. The language suggests that Christ [Bruce, 306] is carefully fitting together believers [Best, 286-288; Hoehner, 409, discusses need for care when mortar is not used and how the συν- prefix adds to this implication of care]. To some, this suggests harmony, which therefore means this is an ideal [Best, 286-287]; others say it suggests unity in contrast to the enmity mentioned earlier in the passage [Hoehner, 409]. The participle is the means of the growth [Hoehner, 409], and its present tense suggests the joining

together continues [O'Brien, 219; Lincoln, 157-158], and its passive voice emphasizes Christ is building the temple, not us [Hoehner, 409]. The building grows as believers are added [Best, 287; contra Lincoln, 158, who saw it as qualitative].

The building grows into a temple. Believers being fitted together by Christ into a church are now the temple, which replaces earthly structures. Some think this possibly is a realization of the anticipated heavenly temple [Best, 288, O'Brien, 219-220], but there is no indication about this in the context. The temple's holiness indicates it is consecrated to God [Hoehner, 411; O'Brien, 219, said this reflected the holy God who dwelled in it]. The last phrase, in the Lord, shows the church is centered on Christ [Best, 288]. The temple in Ephesus was where Artemis supposedly dwelled and the temple in Jerusalem was where God once dwelled, but this growing temple of believers known as the church is the residence of God "in Christ" [Hoehner, 411]. Lincoln [157] said that in Pauline letters, what believers are in relation to Christ is "in Christ," while what they are to become or do in relation to Christ is "in the Lord."

Second, in a parallel thought, in Christ the Ephesian Gentiles [ὑμεῖς, which forms a sort of *inclusio* with 2.11; O'Brien, 221] were being built [συνοικοδομεῖσθε; BDAG, 974] into a dwelling place [κατοικητήριον, BDAG, 534-535] of God in the Spirit [ἐν πνεύματι]. This last phrase indicates the Holy Spirit is the manner in which God dwells in the church [Hoehner, 414; Bruce, 307]. The verb is rare [this is its only use in the New Testament], but the prefix suggests being built together with something, so Paul was telling the Ephesians that they too were being added to this temple which he had been discussing [Hoehner, 412-413; Bruce, 307; Lincoln, 158], and that makes this a fitting conclusion for this section, which focused on Gentile equality with Jews in God's people: while once divided in the flesh, the Gentiles and Jews are now united by Christ into a dwelling place of the Spirit [O'Brien, 221; Lincoln, 158]; and the Ephesians are to be aware of their immense privilege in Christ of being built into the very dwelling place of God [Lincoln, 158].

In 2.11-22, Paul elaborated on how salvation for the Ephesians was brought about by unifying them as Gentiles with the believing Jews into one household of God. The Gentiles had been excluded from God's people of Israel and their covenants, and thus without the Messianic promise, which left them without God or hope [2.11-12]. Thankfully, Christ brought the Gentiles to God [2.13], by removing the distinction and antagonism between Jews and Gentiles, and creating them into a new entity, the church, which he also reconciled to God, giving them access to God [2.14-18]. Thus, the Gentiles in Ephesus could now be assured that they were no longer excluded from God's people, but rather were now fellow citizens with believing Jews in the kingdom and members of God's household, which was anchored on Christ, was built on the foundation of Christ's loyal apostles and other prophets, and was growing into a temple, the dwelling place for the Holy Spirit [2.19-22]. Paul would go on to elaborate further on these themes, to pray that God would strengthen and enlighten the Ephesians further, and that they would learn to live like the people of God they had become.

Applications

First, we should remember, [the one clear command in this passage] and so have profound gratitude toward, and willingness to follow, Christ [O'Brien, 221]. Most believers in our churches today are Gentiles, and so this message can be taken as if written directly to them, to remember all that Christ provided for us by dying on the cross: reconciliation with God, access to God, membership in God's household, and equality and unity with Jewish believers in the church. Even for Jewish believers, there is a reason here for gratitude and motivation, for it is clear that they too needed Christ for these blessings, despite being born into the heritage of God's people the Jews.

Second, we should see no divisions in the body of Christ [Bruce, 301]. In the church, there should be no favoritism, no racism, for we all needed Christ equally and we see here that Christ has united all believers into one household, one church, with equal privileges.

Appendices

Textual Criticism Problems

2.15: εν αὐτῷ [NA²⁷] vs. εν ἑαυτῷ: <u>External</u>: NA²⁷ is witnessed by 𝔓⁴⁶, ℵ, and B. 𝔓⁴⁶ is the earliest Pauline witness, early third century. 𝔓⁴⁶ is Alexandrian in text type, as are ℵ and B, both from the fourth century. ℵ and B are considered high quality, with ℵ considered the best manuscript for the epistles, and the ℵ–B agreement to point back to a second century archetype [evaluation of manuscripts is from Wallace, "A Brief Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism," 54-55]. 𝔓⁴⁶ is a looser translation, but that makes its agreement with ℵ and B even more significant. The variant is supported by the Latin tradition, including the itala, which date to the second century and represent the Western text type; and the Byzantine minuscules, which scholars believe reflect a fourth century archetype. The shorter NA²⁷ is characteristic of its Alexandrian manuscripts, while the longer variant is characteristic of its Western and Byzantine manuscripts [Metzger and Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament*, 276-280]. The variant has a better early geographic spread in the Western and Byzantine text types, compared to just Alexandrian for NA²⁷. With 𝔓⁴⁶, ℵ, and B supporting it, NA²⁷ has genealogical solidarity for Alexandrian; with the itala and D [sixth century], the variant has genealogical solidarity for Western, and has the Byzantine minuscules for solidarity in the Byzantine text type. <u>Internal</u>: Inadvertent insertion or deletion of the additional letters or an unintentional transcriptional error due to visual issues is unlikely [unless a scribe was copying a block of words together, as three of the surrounding words begin with ε], though either is possible through an error of memory or hearing. There is no evidence of doctrinal influences. Since Paul never used the variant, but used the NA²⁷ construction several times even in Ephesians, a scribe might delete the initial ε for consistency; on the other hand, if NA²⁷ was original, a scribe might have added the ε to clarify the reflexive meaning, as the other instances of Paul using εν αὐτῷ were not reflexive. NA²⁷ is the harder and shorter reading. <u>Overall</u>: NA²⁷ is preferred [C]. The variant has better geographical spread and some early witnesses, but overall NA²⁷ has better witnesses from a better text type. It seems likely a scribe added the ε to make the reflexivity clear.

2.20b-21: πᾶσα οἰκοδομὴ [NA²⁷] vs. πᾶσα ἡ οἰκοδομὴ: <u>External</u>: NA²⁷ is witnessed by ℵ and B, both from the fourth century, along with the Byzantine minuscules which scholars believe reflect a fourth century archetype. ℵ mostly is Primary Alexandrian, as is B. Both are considered high quality, with ℵ considered the best manuscript for the epistles, and the ℵ–B agreement to point back to a second century archetype [evaluation of manuscripts is from Wallace, "A Brief Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism," 54-55]. This shorter reading is characteristic of the Alexandrian text-type, but not of the Byzantine [Metzger and Ehrman, 276-280], so the latter's support is significant. The earliest witnesses for the variant are from the fifth century, A and C, both classified as Secondary Alexandrian. NA²⁷ has good early distribution with both Alexandrian and Byzantine. The variant primarily is represented in Secondary Alexandrian witnesses, none of which are early. With both ℵ and B attesting to NA²⁷, there is genealogical solidarity for the Primary Alexandrian text-type, and NA²⁷ also has genealogical solidarity for the Byzantine text-type. With both A and C attesting to the variant, this reading has genealogical solidarity for the Secondary Alexandrian text-type. <u>Internal</u>: Inadvertent insertion or deletion of the article or an unintentional transcriptional error due to visual issues is unlikely, though either is possible through an error of memory or hearing. There is no evidence of harmonizing or doctrinal influences; if the variant was original, there would be no reason for intentional deletion; if NA²⁷ was original, a scribe might have added the article to clarify an assumed meaning, or incorporated a margin note originally for that purpose. NA²⁷ is the harder and shorter reading. Paul often used an article between πᾶς and a countable, singular, substantive [e.g. Ephesians 3.18, 21]; however Paul sometimes omitted the article in this construction, even when context suggested a collective sense [though this is less compelling; e.g. Romans 14.5; Ephesians 4.29; 2 Timothy 3.16, which might be taken as distributive; Hoehner, 408 provided examples, but none were countable, an issue raised by Johnston, *The Use of Πᾶς in the New Testament*, 67-68]. <u>Overall</u>: NA²⁷ is preferred [B+]. The external evidence strongly favors this reading in

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every way, with earlier and better primary witnesses, and better geographic spread and solidarity of witnesses in the Primary Alexandrian and Byzantine text-types. The internal evidence, while less compelling, still seems to favor NA[27]. It is likely scribes were tempted to add the article to clarify the meaning of the anarthrous construction, which is the shorter and harder reading.

Structural Layout of Greek Clauses

11   Διὸ μνημονεύετε

      ὅτι ποτὲ ὑμεῖς [τὰ ἔθνη ἐν σαρκί, οἱ λεγόμενοι ἀκροβυστία ὑπὸ τῆς λεγομένης περιτομῆς ἐν σαρκὶ χειροποιήτου]

> I used brackets to offset long adjectival clauses, just for clarity.

12   ὅτι ἦτε τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ χωρὶς Χριστοῦ,

      ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ

      καὶ [*] ξένοι τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας,

      ἐλπίδα μὴ ἔχοντες

> I highlighted coordinating conjunctions as well as verbal structural markers. Smith set off the coordinating conjunctions on their own lines, but it looked confusing.

      καὶ [*] ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ.

13   νυνὶ δὲ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ὑμεῖς [οἵ ποτε ὄντες μακρὰν] ἐγενήθητε ἐγγὺς ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

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14   Αὐτὸς γάρ ἐστιν ἡ εἰρήνη ἡμῶν,

      ὁ ποιήσας τὰ ἀμφότερα ἓν

> These are adjectival participles, but add significantly to the flow of thought, so I gave them their own lines.

      καὶ τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ λύσας, τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ

15   τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν καταργήσας,

        ἵνα τοὺς δύο κτίσῃ ἐν αὐτῷ εἰς ἕνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον

          ποιῶν εἰρήνην

16   καὶ ἀποκαταλλάξῃ τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους ἐν ἑνὶ σώματι τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ,

        ἀποκτείνας τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν αὐτῷ.

- -

17   καὶ ἐλθὼν

    εὐηγγελίσατο εἰρήνην ὑμῖν τοῖς μακρὰν

> The dashed line simply indicates to me that καὶ ἐλθὼν modifies the following verb, εὐηγγελίσατο.

    καὶ [*] εἰρήνην τοῖς ἐγγύς·

18   ὅτι δι᾽ αὐτοῦ ἔχομεν τὴν προσαγωγὴν οἱ ἀμφότεροι ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα.

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19   Ἄρα οὖν οὐκέτι ἐστὲ ξένοι καὶ πάροικοι

    ἀλλὰ ἐστὲ συμπολῖται τῶν ἁγίων καὶ οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ,

20   ἐποικοδομηθέντες ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν,

    ὄντος ἀκρογωνιαίου αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ,

21   ἐν ᾧ πᾶσα οἰκοδομὴ συναρμολογουμένη αὔξει εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον ἐν κυρίῳ,

22   ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς συνοικοδομεῖσθε εἰς κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πνεύματι.

> In v.21, συναρμολογουμένη is an adverbial participle, but I kept it with the finite verb αὔξει for formatting reasons of aligning the two ἐν ᾧ

Synchronic Word Studies

2.11 χειροποίητος: A review of classical [using LSJ] and Septuagint [using LEH] usage does not reveal anything which would influence this study in a direction other than what was found in New Testament and other Koine usage. In other Koine literature, we have two examples, both of which indicate χειροποίητος is an adjective specifying something made by hand [Moulton and Milligan, 687]: handmade works of art [P Lond 854; 1st-2nd century AD]; and handmade walls [Josephus, *Bellum Judaicum*, 4.10.5; 1st century AD].

In the New Testament, there are five uses outside of Ephesians, none with Paul as author [according to a word search in BibleWorks; the following translations/interpretations are mine, but are supported generally by NET and NASB]: a temple made with human hands [Mark 14.58; in contrast to a temple made by Christ without human hands]; houses made by human hands in which God does not dwell [Acts 7.48; a substantival use, in contrast to God residing in Heaven and being responsible for all creation]; temples made by human hands in which God does not dwell [Acts 17.24; emphasis being that God cannot be contained by human creation when he is the creator of all]; a tabernacle not of this creation, not made by human hands, through which Christ passed [Heb 9.11; the contrast being this was a heavenly tabernacle]; and a holy place made by human hands which Christ did not enter [Heb 9.24; the contrast being this was a heavenly holy place]. There are also three uses of antonym ἀχειροποίητος, two of which by Paul: a temple made by Christ without human hands [Mark 14.58; see above]; a building from God, not made with human hands [2 Cor 5.1]; and – of particular notice – a circumcision done by Christ, not by human hands [Col 2.11].

Thus, at the time of the writing of Ephesians, χειροποίητος was an adjective specifying something made by hand, rather than by God. Thus the stress in Eph 2.11 is that there is a circumcision that is done by human hands which is not equivalent to the circumcision [of the heart] accomplished by God [as also Col 2.11]. This conclusion is supported by major lexical works [W. Rebell, *EDNT*, 3:464; Lohse, *TDNT*, 9:436; note BDAG, 1083, only goes as far as "made by human hands"]. In Eph 2.11, modern translations all translate to signify this meaning of being made by human hands [CSB, ESV, NASB, NET, NIV, NKJ, NRSV, TNIV]. The exceptions, such as NLT, apparently do not translate the word at all.

2.15 καταργέω: Classical usage suggests this verb means "to leave idle" [LSJ, 908]. Septuagint usage [all in Ezra] is related, with the active form of the verb meaning "to stop someone working" [LEH, word #4878: "to cause to be idle"]. Contemporary Koine usage offers only one example [MM, 331]: something hindering a man in his handicraft [P Oxy 1.38[17], AD49-50]. These limited examples, all of which suggest causing idleness [cessation of working] are instructive because there is a sudden burst of usage in the New Testament with a variety of possible meanings.

Outside of the Pauline letters, there are two examples in the New Testament. In Luke 13.7, a tree depletes the soil [BDAG, 525]; there is no other example of such usage through the New Testament era. For Heb 2.14, some translate Christ will "destroy" the devil [NET; ESV; NIV; NKJ; NRS], but the context of the following verse only suggests Christ will render the devil ineffective [NASB; TNIV; NLT].

Other than in the subject verse, Paul used this verb twenty-four times. Broadly speaking, BDAG groups these uses into three categories [525-526]. One category is "be discharged, be released," which meaning occurs three times, always in the passive voice. For most of Paul's uses of the verb, BDAG's definition is, "abolish, wipe out, set aside." For the subject verse, their definition is "invalidate, make powerless." Other verses BDAG includes in the same category as the subject verse have an asterisk.

Eight of Paul's uses are in the active voice, as in the subject verse. One of these was a participle, 2 Timothy 1.10. This is rendered, "broken the power of death" [NET; NLT; BDAG] or "abolished death" [NASB; CSB; ESV; NKJ; NRSV] or "destroyed death" [NIV; TNIV]. The immediate context of the verse itself suggests "broken the power" is the best of these three options, for he renders it ineffective. In Rom 3.31*, Paul questioned whether we cancel the law through faith. Though there is variety in the words used in translation for this verse, the main thrust is consistent with the idea of invalidating. In 1 Cor 1.28*, God invalidates the things valued by the world. In 1 Cor 6.13, God will set aside both food and stomachs. In 1 Cor 13.11, Paul said he put set aside childish things. In 1 Cor 15.24*, Christ will

have abolished earthly authorities, which might be consistent with rendering them ineffective or invalidating them. In Gal 3.17*, Paul declared that the coming of the Law did not invalidate the Abrahamic Covenant. In 2 Thes 2.8, Christ will bring to an end the lawless one when he returns. This is the most troublesome of these examples; perhaps it could be taken as being rendered ineffective. This survey of the active voice uses results in three possibilities for our subject verse [representative of all the uses]: the idea of rendering something ineffective; invalidating something; or setting something aside. Both of the first two could be derived from the earlier meaning of causing to cease working. Some see all these senses as part of a single broad array of meaning, from the negative of "make ineffective, destroy, render powerless, annul, use up" through the positive of "liberate, set free" [Hubner, EDNT, 2:267], all of which would mean the object no longer was effective ["render inoperative" was the summary of both NIDNTT, 73, and Delling, TDNT, 452-454].

In the two instances in all the Pauline uses when the Mosaic Law was at issue as either the subject or object of the verb, the best translation is "invalidate" [Rom 3.31; Gal 3.17]. In the four New Testament uses when Christ was the subject, "invalidate" seems the best translation in three [1 Cor 15.24; Heb 2.14; 2 Tim 1.10], while the other is 2 Thes 2.8. It is not possible to come to a dogmatic level of confidence, but the evidence points toward "invalidate" for the definition in Eph 2.15. Most translations prefer "abolish" [NASB; ESV; NIV; NKJ; NRSV], while others prefer "set aside" [TNIV], "nullify" [NET; O'Brien, 197; Hoehner, 375, who also offered "render inoperative"], or the idea of ending [CSB; NLT], all of which could be interpreted similarly to "invalidate" [though Lincoln, 142, sees Christ as "doing away" with the Law, which is argued against in the commentary above].

Problem-Solving and Validation

2.14 τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ: μεσότοιχον does not appear elsewhere in the New Testament, nor in the Septuagint. There is limited evidence of its use leading up to the New Testament era, though it appears related to μεσότοιχος [LSJ, 1108; MM, 400], for which there are examples from Eratosthenes [3rd century BC], Josephus [1st AD], and the Vitae Aesopi [1st AD], suggesting the meaning of a dividing wall [BDAG, 635]. φραγμός has classical examples from Sophocles [5th century BC], Herodotus [5th BC], and Xenophon [5th-4th BC] suggesting a fence, railing of a bridge, fortification, or hedge [LSJ, 1952]. The Septuagint usage suggests a barrier, wall, fence, or hedge [my definitions, supported by LEH, word #9466]. New Testament usage [Matt 21.33; Mark 12.1; Luke 14.23] suggests a fence or hedge [my definitions, supported by BDAG, 1064]. The reasonable conclusion is μεσότοιχον is a dividing wall and φραγμοῦ is something similar, a fence or hedge.

Most see τοῦ φραγμοῦ as a genitive of apposition [O'Brien, 195; Bruce, 294; Abbott, 61; Lincoln, 141; Best, 257; Schnackenburg, 113; Hoehner, 368], but other options put forward include genitive of possession [Abbott, 61], attributive genitive [Abbott, 61], genitive of product [seemingly Robinson, 59; BDAG, 635], and genitive of production [EDNT, 2:411]. Given our glosses, it is most reasonable to conclude the two terms are related by a genitive of apposition, though – as it is not clear that φραγμοῦ is a specific example of a μεσότοιχον – one would expect to find an accusative of simple apposition instead [see Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 95, 198-199]. τὸ μεσότοιχον clearly is the object of λύσας.

Theories about referents abound, but only three deal directly with the division between Gentiles and Jews. One is that the barrier refers to the actual cultural enmity between Jews and Gentiles, the visual concept of a wall that separates serving to illustrate this enmity [which was known to exist] without having another referent [Best, 256-257].

Another possibility is the wall in the Jerusalem temple which separated the court for Gentiles from courts for Jews. Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter because of the accusation that he had brought an Ephesian Gentile beyond this barrier [Acts 21.29], and his readers would have known this [Keener, 544; Abbott, 61; Best, 253]. Also, Temple imagery is obvious in 2.20-22, suggesting the author believed his audience would have familiarity with the temple concept [Lincoln, 141; Best, 253]. However, this wall was still standing when Paul wrote this letter [Hoehner, 360; Bruce, 297] or, even if not, it would be strange to connect Christ to the wall's destruction [Schnackenburg, 113-114; Best, 254]. Also, destruction of this wall would have allowed access only to the court for Jewish women [Harris,

class discussion], and this wall would be relevant only if the issue was sharing in Jewish privileges, whereas here there is a higher unity at stake [Best, 254]. Some consider the phrase to refer to the wall as a metaphor for the Mosaic Law [see below], arguing the wall was a physical representation of the Mosaic commandments which separated Jews and Gentiles, and the wall was the imagery Paul chose to make his point [O'Brien, 195; Abbott, 61; Ellicott, 47-48]. Proponents argue that, in this case, it would not be a problem if the wall was still standing, because the wall was only an illustration of the barrier between the Jews and Gentiles [Abbott, 61] and it was obsolete spiritually as was what it symbolized in the Law, which in turn was the cause and symbol of the separation of Jews from Gentiles [Robinson, 60-62].

The third possibility is the Mosaic Law itself, which was a real barrier between the Jews and Gentiles, as it was strictly to be obeyed by the Jews and offensive in exclusion to the Gentiles, thus creating the hostility and separation discussed in our context [Hoehner, 390; O'Brien, 196; Lincoln, 141-142; Best, 255-256]. The following clause in 2.15 implies the barrier was the Law [O'Brien, 196; Bruce, 296; Robinson, 63; Schnackenburg, 114; Best, 255], and the Law did lose its relevance because of Christ's death on the cross [Schnackenburg, 114]. The arguments against are weaker than for the other options: in no other literature is the term μεσότοιχον applied to the Law, the concept of the Law being a barrier would be more Jewish than Gentile, and seeing the Law as enmity would be anti-Pauline and contrary to other scriptural teaching [Best, 256].

How the rest of the sentence fits together affects how we judge referents. τὴν ἔχθραν has been taken as appositional to τὸ μεσότοιχον [Hoehner, 366-374; Best, 234; NET], a modifier for τὸ μεσότοιχον [ESV; NLT], a modifier for τοῦ φραγμοῦ [TNIV], or as the object of καταργήσας and appositional with τὸ νόμον [NASB; Lincoln, 123; Bruce, 294; O'Brien, 192]. ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ might modify λύσας [ESV; NLT], καταργήσας [NET; NASB; TNIV; Hoehner, 366-374; Lincoln, 123; Bruce, 294; O'Brien, 192], or τὴν ἔχθραν [Best, 234; Hoehner, 371-372, interprets the NA[27] punctuation thus].

In English, it looks good to make τὴν ἔχθραν an accusative of simple apposition to τὸ μεσότοιχον, but it is questionable whether this can be so with the participle λύσας between the two terms. An accusative of simple apposition construction involves two adjacent substantives, though it is clear from other scriptural examples that genitive modifiers may come between them [Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 198]. I am not aware of any examples in which a participle comes between them, nor any in which a genitive of apposition comes between them. On the other hand, it is possible that τὸ νόμον could be an accusative of simple apposition to τὴν ἔχθραν. In this case there would be a prepositional phrase between the two substantives, which seems less obstructive than a participle and a genitive of apposition, but there are no biblical examples of this construction either.

The end of 2.16 could be supporting evidence for having ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ modify λύσας or τὴν ἔχθραν, but if we assume an appositional relationship between τὴν ἔχθραν and τὸ νόμον, then ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ must modify τὴν ἔχθραν. If ἔχθραν is in simple apposition with μεσότοιχον, then ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ modifies λύσας [A]; if ἔχθραν is in simple apposition with νόμον, then ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ modifies τὴν ἔχθραν [B]. [A] would be rendered, "…the one who in his flesh destroyed the dividing wall, the fence, which is the enmity, by invalidating the Law…" [B] would be rendered "…the one who destroyed the dividing wall, the fence, by invalidating the enmity in his flesh, which is the Law…" If [A] is the solution, contextually the subject phrase would be a picture of the enmity between the two groups, which was removed by invalidating the Law. If [B] is the solution, Christ still destroyed the barrier by invalidating the Law [now equated with the arcane phrase "enmity in his flesh"], but there would not be a contextual pointer to the referent of the subject phrase. Contextually, the subject phrase represents either the enmity between the two groups [A] or a general barrier between the two groups [B].

The Law is a possible referent in [A] or [B] if the invalidating clause is the explanation of the destroying clause. This has the advantages of being directly linked in the context [Christ destroyed τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ when/by invalidating τὸ νόμον] and of fitting theologically with what Paul is saying [the Law was a known barrier between Jews and Gentiles, one causing hostility and separation between them]. That nobody previously referred to the Law as μεσότοιχον is not a strong argument against, because Paul could be using a simple visual for vividness, not referring to a known metaphor. It is reasonable that if the separation between the two groups was known to the Gentile readers, then they

also would have observed that this separation was caused by the Law. This would not force Paul to insult the Law as being hostile, but rather have him acknowledge the hostility that existed between Jews and Gentiles as essentially being the Law. It is unlikely that the Temple wall alone could be the referent, because it was neither the enmity nor a real barrier between the groups. However, it is possible Paul had in mind the Temple wall as a visual representation of the Law to which he was primarily referring as either the enmity or general barrier. It is hard to connect Christ to that wall's destruction, however, so it is better to keep it simple and say Paul was referring to the Law which was a barrier between Jews and Gentiles or to the enmity between them itself.

2.20 τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν: Many references to the apostles are to the eleven who were in the core group of Jesus' ministry, plus Matthias who replaced Judas Iscariot, with the criteria for Matthias being he had been with Jesus from his baptism through his ascension, with the purpose of being a witness of the resurrection [Acts 1.21-26], suggesting a witnessing distinction. However, there were others unambiguously called apostles in the New Testament: Paul himself [1 Cor 9.1; 15.9], Barnabas [Acts 14.4, 14; 1 Cor 9.5-6], James [Galatians 1.19], Apollos [1 Cor 4.6-9], Silvanus and Timothy [1 Thes 1.1 with 2.7], not all of whom witnessed the resurrection. Some think Paul has only the twelve and himself in view in this passage [O'Brien, 214], but there is nothing to indicate that in the context. The twelve could be seen as foundational because they launched the church through their evangelism and teaching, but others, such as Paul and Barnabas, played as big a role in the church's spread and were more directly involved in welcoming Gentiles, as is our context [Best, 282]. Some argue the distinction of apostles was having authority for oral and written teaching, establishing local churches, and spreading the gospel [Hoehner, 399-400; O'Brien, 214]; but – since many others were involved in evangelism and the spread of the church – the key distinction was they had doctrinal authority. Not all of them issued new decrees, as far as we can tell, but they had the role of doctrinal oversight for the church.

The prophets in view here cannot be the Old Testament prophets, for reference to them here would be counterintuitive in the context of talking about invalidating the Law and building a new entity in the church [Hoehner, 402-403]. There are well over twenty references to post-Pentecost prophecy in other letters by Paul, including Romans, 1 Corinthians, 1 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, and Ephesians. These prophets existed to edify, exhort, and console individuals and the church as a whole [1 Cor 14.3-4]. In this scriptural description of their role, there is no visible element of prediction, nor a strong hint of doctrinal direction, and even the Old Testament prophets spoke more for edification, exhortation, and consolation than in prediction or declaration of new doctrine. There were many people [including women] with prophetic spiritual gifts in Paul's day [Rom 12.6; 1 Cor 11.4-5; 14.5, 29-32, 39]. They had individual revelation from God, but obviously they did not have doctrinal authority, which rested with the apostles [1 Cor 14.37-38]. They had revelation, but not scriptural revelation, just as in the Old Testament much of what God spoke through prophets was not written down into scripture. Obviously from our context, Paul considered these post-Pentecost prophets as crucial in establishing the meaning of what God accomplished through Christ, particularly the inclusion of Gentiles in God's household [Lincoln, 153]. There is a similar syntactical construction in Eph 3.5, in which Paul says that Gentile equality with the Jews has now been revealed to the apostles and prophets; clearly in that verse, the referent is post-Pentecost prophets, and the close connection with the present context leads one to conclude the same is true here [Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 286; Hoehner, 402-403]. As well, the prophets mentioned along with apostles in Eph 4.11 clearly are post-Pentacost prophets, as their work is to build up the church [Hoehner, 403].

While this is in the article-substantive-καὶ-substantive construction, the Granville Sharp Rule does not apply, because the substantives are plural, in which case there are five semantic possibilities: distinct groups somehow united; overlapping groups; the first group as a subset of the second group; the second group as a subset of the first group; or both groups identical [Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 271-272, 278]. Elsewhere in the New Testament, when plural nouns are the substantives, there are eleven unambiguous instances where the two groups are distinct and two in which the first is a subset of the second [Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 282-283]. In Eph 1.1, Paul did intend identity using plural

substantival adjectives in this construction. Given Paul was referring to New Testament prophets, it seems most likely the first group is a subset of the second, partly because this is so in the other instances that include apostles [Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 286; see Acts 15.2; 16.4; and even Eph 3.5, contra Best, 281]. Paul's letters reveal the groups of apostles and prophets are not identical [1 Cor 12.28-29; Eph 3.5; 4.11], and there were many people [including women] with prophetic spiritual gifts at that time [e.g. Rom 12.6; 1 Cor 11.4-5; 14.5, 29-32, 39], more than those who were apostles. Thus, since we know apostles too were prophetic, this is a case of the first group being a subset of the second: apostles and other prophets.

The subject phrase is in a genitive relationship to τῷ θεμελίῳ. This cannot be possessive, because that would result in the apostles and prophets owning Christ, since he is the cornerstone of the foundation [Hoehner, 398]. More frequently, people consider this might be subjective: "built upon what the apostles and prophets founded," in a sense, "built upon the doctrinal foundation the apostles and prophets laid." However, in this case Paul either mixed impersonal doctrine with personal Christ or we have to see Christ here as reference to teachings about Christ and thus redundant with the foundational doctrines [Hoehner, 398; Lincoln, 153]. The best option for this genitive is apposition [Hoehner, 399; O'Brien, 214; Lincoln, 153]: Christ himself is the cornerstone and the apostles and prophets are themselves the foundation. The aorist participle, ἐποικοδομηθέντες, appears to signify this was a one-time completed action, whereas we would expect a present or perfect tense if dealing with doctrine [Hoehner, 399; Lincoln, 152]. Eph 4.11 supports this view, as there the apostles and prophets were given by God to build up the body of the church [Hoehner, 399]. That the genitives are personal and the head noun impersonal does not exclude this from being an appositional construction [Wallace, *Exegetical Syntax*, 100, fn75].