

Fact Sheet for **“A Living Temple”**  
**Ephesians 2:11-22**

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If you were to read through your Bible at a constant pace from Genesis to Revelation in one year you wouldn't get into the NT until after the middle of November. The OT, the bulk of our Bible, centers on Abraham and his descendants. Abraham is first called in Genesis 12. The book of Exodus begins with Moses leading Israel out of Egypt. The Law is then given on Mt. Sinai. And the rest of the OT contains the history of the Jewish people.

Jesus was the son of a Jewish carpenter. He bore the title “Christ”, the Greek designation for the Jewish Messiah.

The four gospels, even though they are in the NT, are essentially OT in nature. Take John the Baptist for instance. His baptism was not the Christian baptism we are familiar with. It was instead a Jewish ceremonial cleansing.

The apostle John wrote, “He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.” (John 1:11) That the Father sent Jesus first to the Jewish people can be seen in the following account. On that occasion a Gentile woman approached Jesus with a request. Pause and read Matthew 15:21-28<sup>1</sup>

On the day of Pentecost when 3,000 were saved, they were mostly Jews who had come to Jerusalem for that Jewish feast. It wasn't until Acts 10 with Peter and a Gentile centurion Cornelius that the Gospel was officially opened to Gentiles. Then when Peter returned to Jerusalem in Acts 11 he had to defend before the Jewish believers his bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles. Eventually the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 met to consider whether or not Gentile believers had to become Jewish to be saved. It was decided that they didn't.

This is why the apostle John didn't stop writing with verse 11 in the first chapter of his gospel. Pause and read John 1:11-13.

But there were still those who taught that the Gentiles needed to obey all the commandments of the written Law of Moses, as well as the oral law that had become part of Jewish culture. And the Gentile believers were getting drawn in. Paul often wrote about this. One example of this can be found in Galatians 3:1-3.

The church at Ephesus was mostly made up of Gentile believers. In the first three chapters of Ephesians Paul wrote to them about their great salvation in Christ. By the time we get to 2:11 he has already written about God's choice (1:4), his predestination (1:5, 11), his adoption of them (1:5), his redemption and forgiveness (1:7), his sealing (1:13), and the Holy Spirit he sent as the guarantee of their inheritance of salvation (1:14). There is also a hint that Paul gives in those two famous verses that our salvation is not obtained by following the commandments of the Jewish Law (2:8-9).

But where do Gentile believers stand with Christ, are we sort of second class citizens of the kingdom? Far from it!

**<sup>11</sup> ¶ Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision, which is made in the flesh by hands-- <sup>12</sup> remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.**

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<sup>1</sup> Parallel passage: Mark 7:24-30.

**<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.**

The terms “far off” and “near” have nothing to do with geography. The Jews, God’s chosen people in the OT were near. The Gentiles, who were not God’s chosen people in the OT were far off.

**<sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility <sup>15</sup> by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, <sup>16</sup> and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.**

When Paul spoke about “the dividing wall of hostility” some have thought that this was a reference to the wall that existed on the Temple Mound in Jerusalem that separated the Court of the Gentiles from the Court of the Jews. Whether Paul is referencing this physical wall or not is unclear. What is clear is that it still illustrates the cultural and religious hostility that the Jews felt toward the Gentiles.

Verses 14-15 show that Christians, both Jewish and Gentile, are *not* under the Law of Moses! *Both* Jews and Gentiles can only find reconciliation with God through the cross of Jesus Christ!

**<sup>17</sup> And he came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.**

Now Paul wrote of the church, the living temple of God.

**<sup>19</sup> So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.**

In verse 20 Paul refers to Christ Jesus as the cornerstone of this living temple, and its foundation as the apostles and prophets.

Literally new theology was being written with every book of the NT. This letter to the Ephesians was part of that. The apostles and prophets had direct revelation from God and guided the church during the first century A.D. The NT was complete after that time. Later in this book Paul would write of four gifted types of individuals given to the church (Ephesians 4:11-12). *In that passage Greek grammar indicates that “shepherds and teachers” refer to the same office.* Apostles and prophets were foundational for the church. We now have a completed NT. Evangelists and pastors/teachers are two ongoing offices.

The whole structure of this living temple is made up of both Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians.

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But here’s a closing question. If the Jewish Law of commandments has been abolished then why study the OT at all? Is it just so that we know the history of our faith? Not at all! Consider for a moment the structure of Ephesians. The first three chapters are theology, the last three are application. In those last three chapters Paul will reference multiple OT passages and bring them to bear on what the Ephesians should be doing. For instance Paul references one of the Ten Commandments in 6:1-3.

We learn so much about God, his character, his desires, and his salvation by grace in the OT. But so many of the 613 laws of the OT were cultural. The Mosaic Law was never intended to be a way of salvation. Salvation is now and has always been from the beginning of human history by grace.

In your application of that very Jewish portion of our Bible, the OT, look for what was the same there, in the NT, and now as you seek to apply the Bible. You will find this sameness in God’s character, man’s character, what is true, the nature of sin and righteousness, God’s promises, grace, wisdom, etc.