

NEW versus OLD
Ephesians Part 13

*11Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)—
12remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.
14For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.
17He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*

19Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

- Ephesians 2:11-22

Last week we looked at Paul's picture of a person before and after he or she came to know and believe in Jesus. What a great testimony of the grace of God we are! This week we will look at another picture Paul gives us. He shows the difference between the old and the new covenants. Please read the above verses carefully before reading on.

The news is filled with concern for our nation. The United States is a nation that was established by those who knew and appreciated the Word of God. Today, as our nation gets more and more secularized, many Americans are confused as to why Christians are so upset by our nation's departure from biblical values. But think back to Jesus' day. Jesus confused the Jews even more. From the time of Moses, God the Father established a nation on the earth that was different from all others. It was not a democracy. No one had even heard of that. It was not the common Aristocracy or Autocracy of the day. It was a Theocracy. This nation called Israel was a nation established by God. Their King was God. Their governor was God and they got all their laws from God. It was truly "One Nation under God." Don't you love it? Even our Constitution has that in it. But Jesus came to abolish that covenant that the Father made with His people! Ya think they were confused???

Why did Jesus do this? He did it because the Gentiles were excluded (see verses 11-12). There was a barrier, a dividing wall (v 14). That is what Jesus is all about. He puts an end to barriers that confine and walls that prohibit relationship (v 18). Even the Temple that Solomon built had barriers and walls and laws that prohibited the people from access to God. So what does the Father do? He sends His Son to destroy the exclusive nation by destroying their laws, commands, regulations and even the Temple itself. Unheard of!

The Father still wants a holy nation (I Peter 2:9) but He wants that nation to be accessible to all (v 19-20). The Father still wants a holy Temple but He wants the focus on the people, not the building (v 21). So how does the Father create this new nation and new temple over which He governs? He does this by sending an Ambassador to make peace (v 14 & 17). It cost the Ambassador His life but the Father was willing to pay the price. So was the Ambassador.

Suppose two people have a legal conflict. They both get lawyers and go to court; they have rights. The judge decides that one of the parties is wrong and grants the other favor. Case closed. Except that both of the people involved walk away with hostility toward each other. The experts have made a legal decision but a heart issue remains unresolved. But suppose a man who loves both of these people who are in conflict, sits down with them and helps them talk it through until both are no longer at odds with each other. Peace has a chance! That's what Jesus did and more! Through His great love, He lays down His life, dies on a cross; taking on the penalty of our conflict with God and removes the dividing wall of hostility. He then lays down a new law. All men have the same access to God at the foot of the cross. At the cross comes One Holy Nation. At the cross comes One Holy Temple a dwelling place in which God lives by His Spirit. How awesome! Are you a citizen? Are you a member of the new temple? If not, meet Him at the cross today. Read John 11:25 & 26 and believe!