

International Bible Lessons Commentary

Ephesians 2:11-22

International Bible Lessons

Sunday, December 9, 2012

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The **International Bible Lesson** (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, December 9, 2012**, is from **Ephesians 2:11-22**. **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lessons Commentary* (also known as the *Bible Lesson Forum*) below. **Study Hints for Thinking Further** give possible hints to answer the five questions below to help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion; these hints are available on the **International Bible Lessons Commentary** website and below. For additional **International Bible Lesson Commentaries**, see the complete and comprehensive **International Bible Lessons Commentary Index**. The weekly **International Bible Lesson** is posted each Saturday before the lesson is scheduled to be taught at <http://InternationalBibleLessons.org> and in **The Oklahoman** newspaper.

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(Ephesians 2:11) So then, remember that at one time you Gentiles by birth, called “the uncircumcision” by those who are called “the circumcision”—a physical circumcision made in the flesh by human hands—

Paul addressed the Gentile Christians (all who are not Jews are Gentiles) directly. These Gentiles had become Christians. They had been born Gentiles, but some of them may have converted to Judaism before accepting Jesus the Messiah as their Lord and Savior. Paul showed in his *Letter to the Galatians* that it was not necessary to convert to Judaism and keep the Jewish laws in order to become a Christian. The Jews called Gentiles “the uncircumcision,” because Jewish males were distinguished from Gentiles by being circumcised eight days after birth to show that they were Jews, members of God’s chosen people.

(Ephesians 2:12) remember that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

Paul told these believing Gentiles to think about what they lacked before they became Christians and what they had gained. As Christians, they no longer lived outside the circle of God’s people. Now, they lived in the Kingdom of God as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, they knew what God promised through Abraham, Moses, and the prophets, and they knew these promises now applied to them too. Now, they had reasons for hope in this life and for the life beyond. Now, they knew God and they knew that God loved them and cared for them.

(Ephesians 2:13) But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

To be “in Christ” is to be in such a close relationship with Jesus Christ spiritually that it is similar to living in a house or in a church building; it is to live totally influenced by Him as He surrounds us with His love, guidance, and presence. The Holy Spirit indwells believing Christians to influence and help them. Believing Christians indwell Jesus Christ, and He influences and helps them. Because Jesus, the Son of God, died on the cross for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews, through their faith in Him they could now draw near to God and live “in Christ.” Jesus Christ had forgiven them and cleansed them from sin by the shedding of His blood as a sacrifice for them as well as for the Jews. By dying and living for believers, Jesus has cleansed and prepared us spiritually to live close to Him, His Father, and the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote that Jesus had brought the believing Gentiles near to God along with all of the Jews who came to believe in Him too.

(Ephesians 2:14) For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.

Jesus Christ personally is our peace, because believers in Jesus Christ are now “in Christ” (see verse 13). By His teaching and by His dying in human flesh, Jesus brought both believing Jews and believing Gentiles together. After Jesus rose from the dead, He created His Church to make Jews and Gentiles into one family and fellowship in the Kingdom of God. Since Jesus Christ is our peace, He breaks down the walls of hostility and separateness between Jews and Gentiles who trust in Him for salvation.

(Ephesians 2:15) He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace,

Jesus did not abolish God’s commands to love God and neighbor. He did abolish the ceremonial laws and commands that separated Jews and Gentiles, because He fulfilled the laws that pointed to Him and what He would do when He came. In Christ, God created one new people, the Church. Through faith in Jesus Christ, believers are born again into a new life, and they become new people. In Christ, the Church is one new humanity, and we now focus on God in Jesus Christ and in following Jesus daily. Believers in Christ should live in peace with one another.

(Ephesians 2:16) and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it.

Their sins separated Jews and Gentiles from God and each other. Both groups needed to be reconciled to God and find peace with God, Jesus accomplished this by dying on the cross for both Jews and the Gentiles; therefore, there should be no hostility between believing Jews and Gentiles – especially in the Church.

(Ephesians 2:17) So he came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near;

Jesus proclaimed peace to the Samaritan woman (a Gentile who was “far off”) at the well when He said that true worshipers of the true God worship God “in spirit and in truth.” Jesus proclaimed peace when He appeared to His disciples after His resurrection from the dead. As the resurrected Lord of all, Jesus brought peace to those near Him and to those who were far off in time and distance, to all in future generations around the world who believe in Him.

(Ephesians 2:18) for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Both Jewish and Gentile Christians have access to God the Father through Jesus Christ. By grace through faith in Jesus Christ, He brings both groups of believers into one group. Both groups have access to God, because the same Holy Spirit indwells all believers. Both groups can come to God the Father as His children. His children have the same Spirit of Truth within them.

(Ephesians 2:19) So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God,

In the Church of Jesus Christ, the Gentile Christians are no longer strangers to the true God, to Jesus Christ, to the Jewish Christians in the Church, or to one another in Christ. They now know that they belong to God and are members of the family of God. They now live as citizens in the Kingdom of God, as citizens that God has set apart for His holy service.

(Ephesians 2:20) built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.

The Church of Jesus Christ unites Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus Christ on the foundation of the Bible (especially the teachings of the apostles and prophets, for these truly reveal Jesus Christ and the will of God). The Church of Jesus Christ keeps the focus on Jesus Christ, who is the great architect of salvation and builder of the Church. Every stone (believer) in the Church should choose to line up their way of living with Jesus Christ, who is the chief cornerstone (the Revealer of the true of God).

(Ephesians 2:21) In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord;

Jesus Christ is not only the measure and standard for the other stones (believers) way to live. Jesus also serves as the mortar or cement that joins the stones together and keeps them from falling away from the structure, from falling down, from falling away from Jesus Christ. The Church is alive, with believers growing in faith and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ; therefore, believers live a holy life where God can live in their midst, where the Father can draw people to worship God in Christ Jesus, where the Holy Spirit can lead people to live God’s way.

(Ephesians 2:22) in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.

Believers in Jesus Christ may dwell far apart physically all around the world and throughout the centuries, but spiritually Jesus Christ is building all who trust in Him into a dwelling place for God. God indwells His Church, a holy temple fit for His service and worship (not simply a physical building). The Holy Spirit indwells each believer, and Jesus Christ the Lord builds all who love Him into a Church that enjoys the fellowship and peace of God. Together, the true followers of Jesus show forth His grace, loving kindness, truth, wisdom, and way of salvation.

Five Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What are some of the differences it makes for someone to live each day without Christ?
2. What are some of the differences it makes for someone to live each day with Christ?
3. What are some of the ways Christ brings peace to those who love and trust Him?
4. How do people have access to God the Father?
5. What difference does it make when a follower of Jesus Christ learns that he or she is growing with others into a holy temple in the Lord?

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