

—{1}. **Ephesians 2:11-22.** **Embraced by the Family**

A. Questions about the Church

B. What Do People Think It Is?

1. there are many ideas, opinions, attitudes about the church, both among Christians and those who are not Christians
 - a. commonly it refers to a building, particularly a place of worship or religious services – and this may be Christian or otherwise
 - b. some use it as a derogatory term in reference to it as a symbol of organised religion, of superstition, of fanaticism
2. both in the church and outside, many consider it in mere terms as an organization, particularly along denominational lines
 - a. in some countries the term frequently refers to the established church, that denomination having special, national privileges – so that a person is related to a church by living within its parish
 - b. or to the body of expressed opinion by the hierarchy of major denominations who purport to speak for the church as a whole – as “it is the opinion of the church that such and such ...”
3. and some, quite frankly, regard the church as kind of a Santa Claus, to supply them with some of their needs

C. What Does the Bible Say the Church Is?

1. while it doesn't specifically use the word “church” this verse gives a list of the characteristics that comprise the church: “**But you are a chosen race, A royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light;**” (1 Peter 2:9)
2. in describing the husband's responsibility within marriage, Paul makes reference to another facet of what is the church,
 - a. “**Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her,**” (Ephesians 5:25)
 - b. as he did also when warning the elders of the Ephesian church, “**Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock,**

among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." (Acts 20:28)

c. from which we can define the church as those people whom Christ purchased to be His own by His death on the cross

3. and it is interesting to note that in the first case the references is all those in every place that make up the church of God, while in the second the reference is specifically to the local Ephesian church

D. What Does the Word "Church" Itself Mean?

1. the English word "church", like the Scottish "kirk" and the German "kirche" all are descended from a Greek word, *κυριακός* which means "of (or, belonging to) the Lord" and so includes all that belongs to the Lord, whether lands, buildings or people and is used in the Bible specifically in the phrase "the Lord's day" (Revelation 1:10)

a. used of houses of Christian worship it dates to the 3rd century

2. now, this word "church" is used to translate the Greek *ἐκκλησία (καλέω)* – the church as called out to an assembly or congregation

a. of course you recognise the English words such as ecclesiastical

b. perhaps the French word, *église*; or Spanish *iglesia / eclesiástico*

c. 'assembly' is perhaps then, the most suitable translation of the Bible word, describing Christians gathered together in His Name

d. it is also consistent with the Hebrew word used in the OT that refers to God's people: His assembly or congregation

E. What Is the Church to Be Like?

1. in our Scripture passage today, as well as elsewhere in the Bible, there are clear pictures drawn as to what the church should appear to both believers and unbelievers

a. the church is described as a unity

(A) Satan's frequent tactic in attacking the church is to divide it

(B) that was the first issue that faced the church when in Acts 6 there arose a dispute between the two major groups in the church: those speaking Greek, and those speaking Hebrew

- (C) church history repeats this story of division over and over
- (D) it continues today, frequently on the most self-righteous basis: we have the truth, and you do not
- (E) but God's eternal purpose in Christ, "abolishing ... the enmity ... make the two into one new man ... and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross" (2:15-16) that from the cross forward there be no distinction between the Jewish church and the Gentile church: His church is one
- (F) and for this Jesus prayed in John 17:22, "that they may be one, even as we are one."

2. the church is described as a body

- a. is found not only here in 2:16, but elsewhere
- b. and notably in 1 Corinthians 12:14ff, that every participant in that body – and this applies equally whether we speak of the local church or that throughout the world – is a necessary member
- c. as the universe was created with interdependence among its constituent parts, so the members of Christ's body are dependent the one upon the other

3. the church is described as a building

- a. this is not a bricks and mortar, physical building – with offices for the pastors and church officials; various rooms for Bible classes, meetings, Awana clubs; a wonderful gymnasium for programs and a sanctuary with all the latest electronics for worship ... not that
- b. 1 Peter 2:5 tells us that this church is made of living stones – it is built up of believers as a spiritual house that offers up spiritual sacrifices by Jesus Christ that are acceptable to God
- c. the same truth, in other words, is told here in Ephesians 2:21-22, "... the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit." (Ephesians 2:21-22)

4. and the church is described as God's household – "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household," (Ephesians 2:19) to this we'll return

5. terms for those who comprise the church

- a. nearly all these terms apply to both the local and universal church
 - (A) no one term is right to the exclusion to all others
 - (B) but some tend to be used more frequently in Scripture
 - (C) each of these terms reflect a particular view about the church

- b. communicants
 - (A) a term generally applying to a denomination or local church
 - (B) those who are accepted to participate in communion
 - (C) reflects an attitude that the church is a disciplinary body that governs its participants according to a set of rules
 - (D) while there is an element of truth, it is a distorted emphasis
- c. members
 - (A) is taken from the picture of the church as Christ's body, with Christ as the Head
 - (B) has a certain stress on our dependence upon each other, as well as our duty towards each other
 - (C) emphasises that the church is an organism, not organization
- d. those in fellowship
 - (A) when a person is saved, they are immediately in fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3)
 - (B) the recognition of this fact brings a person into the fellowship of a group of Christians forming a local church
 - (C) fellowship in this sense is not a social relationship, but one of participation with others in the extension of Christ's kingdom
- e. added to their number
 - (A) this is the first term used in the NT (Acts 2:47)
 - (B) but it dates back to the OT, and particularly to the books of Numbers and Chronicles, where the various families of Israel were listed and numbered
 - (1) when your family was in those lists, it meant you belonged
 - (2) it could mark you for special privileges and responsibilities, as those who were part of the Levitical and priestly families
- f. the brethren
 - (A) is the most frequent term used in the NT for the believers
 - (1) contextually, this term clearly included females, notable among whom were such names as Lydia, Priscilla and Phoebe with those listed in the closing chapter of Romans
 - (2) for "... there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28)
 - (B) this is a precious term for it reminds us that as God's children, we are part of a wonderful family – a family that on one hand is spread around the world – a family that on the other hand meets together to worship and to learn about their heavenly Father

- (C) this is the term that assures us we belong, that we have those who love us and care for us – that we are embraced by God’s family
- g. let us return for a moment to ...

F. The Church as God’s Household

1. Did you note those wonderful words describing the church in verse 19? Here is how the NIV puts it: **Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow-citizens with God's people and members of God's household**
 - a. when you become a believer in Christ, you take on a new citizenship; you become citizens of heaven – with the saints: God’s people
 - b. the fact that we are citizens of a new country is not to be lightly dismissed – citizenship means your country, ruler stands up for you
 - c. but it is the second part I want to leave with you – and the reason for the sermon title – it is related to citizenship but much more intimate
 - d. being of God’s household means that each of us are family members
 - e. and family counts; family matters
 - f. God made families to be the basic building blocks of secular society: **“For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”** Genesis 2:24
 - g. in a similar sense, the local church as part of the family of God is the basic building block of the people of God
 - h. all that is best in family life; and much, much more, should be found in the brothers and sisters who form a local church; this local church
2. our church covenant
 - a. it is not original: a number of other churches have adopted it and it originated, I believe, with Jarvis Street Baptist Church in Toronto
 - b. we have not read it for a long time, but I think it is worth the time to read it this morning as a reminder to members and others
 - c. as we read it, let us consider in our hearts just how well we live up to these words:

IV. Covenant:

We have been brought by the grace of God the Father, through the work of the Holy Spirit, to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to give ourselves to Him as Lord. Therefore, we now solemnly and joyfully covenant with each other to walk together in Him, with brotherly love, to His glory. In His strength, as a church and as individuals,

1. we will worship the Lord our God in our public meetings, in our families, and in private, seeking to exalt His Name as we approach Him in prayer, sing hymns of praise, read His Word, and obey His ordinances;
2. we will care for each another: remembering each other in prayer, aiding each other in sickness and distress by showing true Christian compassion, brotherly love, and comfort;
3. we will exercise a Christian watchfulness over each other, and faithfully warn, exhort, and admonish each other as occasion may require;
4. we will aspire to be a fellowship of the concerned, proclaiming the gospel according to Christ's commission, so that the lost may find Jesus Christ, sinners may find pardon, seekers may find meaning for their lives, and all who come may find welcome;
5. we will contribute cheerfully and regularly, according as God has prospered us, to the support of a faithful and evangelical ministry among us, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel throughout all nations; and,
6. we will seek to obey and to glorify Christ in our daily living; within our homes, in our labour, and while at leisure, we will strive for attitudes and actions which reflect God's Spirit working through us; and, believing that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit, we will endeavour to avoid experiences and habits which defile the body and hinder our witness;

and now may the God of peace, who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that Great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting Covenant, make us perfect in every good work, to do His will, working in us that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory, forever and ever. Amen.

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