

Ephesians 2:19-20 Commentary

PREVIOUS

EPHESIANS - CHRIST AND THE CHURCH
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NEXT

Ephesians 2:19 [So then](#) you are [no longer strangers](#) and [aliens](#), but you are [fellow citizens](#) with the [saints](#), and are of [God's household](#), ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [ara oun ouketi este](#) (2PPAI) xenoi [kai paroikoi. alla este](#) (2PPAI) [sumpolitai ton hagion kai oikeioi tou theou](#)

BGT ρα ο υ ο κ τ ι σ τ ξ ν ο ι κ α ι π ρ ο ι κ ο ι λ λ σ τ σ υ μ π ο λ ι τ α ι τ ν γ ω ν κ α ι ο κ ε ι ο ι τ ο θ ε ο ,

Amplified: Therefore you are no longer outsiders (exiles, migrants, and aliens, excluded from the rights of citizens), but you now share citizenship with the saints (God's own people, consecrated and set apart for Himself); and you belong to God's [own] household. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family. (NLT - Tyndale House)

NLT (revised) So now you Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. You are citizens along with all of God's holy people. You are members of God's family.

Phillips: So you are no longer outsiders or aliens, but fellow-citizens with every other Christian - you belong now to the household of God. (Phillips: Touchstone)

Wuest: Now then, no longer are you aliens and foreign sojourners, but you are fellow citizens of the saints and householders of God, ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

Young's Literal: Then, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God

KJV Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

NKJ Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

ESV So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

NET So then you are no longer foreigners and noncitizens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household,

NIV Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,

CSB So then you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with the saints, and members of God's household,

NRS So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God,

NAB So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the holy ones and members of the household of God,

NJB So you are no longer aliens or foreign visitors; you are fellow-citizens with the holy people of God and part of God's household.

GWN That is why you are no longer foreigners and outsiders but citizens together with God's people and members of God's family.

BBE So then you are no longer as those who have no part or place in the kingdom of God, but you are numbered among the saints, and of the family of God,

Weymouth - You are therefore no longer mere foreigners or persons excluded from civil rights. On the contrary you share citizenship with God's people and are members of His family.

SO THEN YOU ARE NO LONGER STRANGERS AND ALIENS: ara oun ouketi este (2PPAI) xenoi kai paroikoi

- [Ephesians 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Ephesians 2:19-22 The Church: Why Marry It?](#) - Steven Cole
- [Ephesians 2:16-22 The Unity of the Body, Part 3](#) - John MacArthur

A REVERSAL OF THEIR DISMAL PAST CONDITION

Dear believing Gentile, who was once so far off from God and without hope, take a moment to read these last 4 verses and make a simple list of the overwhelming new privileges that are ours by virtue of Christ's work on the Cross and our eternal position in Christ! Then perhaps you might consider falling fall to your knees to offer a "sacrifice of praise" to God, that is, the fruit of your lips that give thanks to His name for so great a salvation. (Heb 13:15)

So then - So (686) and **then (oun)** are **terms of conclusion**. In light of all this, because all hostility and enmity (between believing Jew and Gentile and between them both and God) are eradicated. Having explained how they got from far to near, Paul sums this section up in the last four verses using 5 metaphors to remind the Gentiles of what they were and now what they have become in Christ.

You are no longer strangers (xenos) and aliens (paroikos) - This is a striking contrast with the dismal state of the Gentiles described in Ephesians 2:12+, where they were **strangers to the covenants of promise** and in completely alienated from God and God's people Israel! The word **no longer (ouketi)** is a negative adverb of time indicating a complete and permanent change - the believing Gentiles are absolutely **no longer** what they were before.

As **Johnson** puts it "They have come from strangers to fellow citizens. In other words, they have the civil franchise in the Kingdom of God. They have come from being foreigners, they have come to be members of the household. They have the domestic franchise. No more strangers and sojourners but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God... In **Romans 11** (Ro 11:17ff-noteff) that the Apostle gives the parable of the olive tree, in which he describes the olive tree as the Abrahamic promises, essentially, he describes the cutting off of the natural branches (the children of Israel, the Nation Israel), the grafting in of the unnatural branches into the olive tree – contrary to nature, he says. And he says that when they are grafted in, these Gentiles, they are partakers of the root and fatness of the olive tree, so that they are grafted in among those Jewish believers and partake of the Abrahamic promises. That's so plain, that it's amazing to me that some believe that the church does not inherit Abrahamic promises. Well, the church does inherit Abrahamic promises. The Apostle puts it as plainly as it possibly can be put. They do inherit those promises, as Gentiles. That's what he means here when he says "now therefore, you are no longer strangers and sojourners but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God." ([pdf](#))

Strangers (3581) (**xenos** source of English words like "xenophobia" = fear of strangers) describes one who is not a member of a state or city, is used here in a general sense of foreign to a thing, having no share in it. They are without full rights and privileges of citizenship. In the present context **xenos** speaks of that which is of a different quality or nature than something else, thus, a stranger to it. Sinners are strangers to the kingdom of God, having a totally-depraved nature that makes them different, and different in a hostile sense. **Gentiles** who were once spiritually "homeless" and "country-less", without any share in or access to the Messianic promises in the Covenants, now are in Christ.

Barnes gives some background on **strangers** - Strangers, and such as proposed to reside for a short time in Athens, were permitted to reside in the city, and to pursue their business undisturbed, but they could perform no public duty; they had no voice in the public deliberations, and they had no part in the management of the state. They could only look on as spectators, without mingling in the scenes of state, or interfering in any way in the affairs of the government. They were bound humbly to submit to all the enactments of the citizens, and observe all the laws and usages of the republic. It was not even allowed them to transact any business in their own name, but they were bound to choose from among the citizens one to whose care they committed themselves as a patron, and whose duty it was to guard them against all injustice and wrong. Potter's Gr. Ant. 1, 55. Proselytes, who united themselves to the Jews, were also called, in the Jewish writings, strangers. All foreigners were regarded as "strangers," and Jews only were supposed to have near access to God. But now, says the apostle, this distinction is taken away, and the believing heathen, as well as the Jew, has the right of citizenship in the New Jerusalem, and one, as well as another, is a member of the family of God. (Albert Barnes. Barnes NT Commentary)

Aliens (3941) (**paroikos** from **para** = beside + **oikeo** = to make one's home) means literally to have a home near or dwelling near (neighboring). **Paroikos** in the Biblical uses speaks of one who has a home alongside of someone else or who is living alongside. A resident foreigner. A stranger. The **paroikos** was "a licensed sojourner in a town whose protection and status were secured by the payment of a small tax" (MM, p. 496; cf. TDNT, 5:583). He had no intrinsic rights, however. Such had been the position of the Gentiles in relation to the kingdom of God before the coming of Christ. Metaphorically of a believer whose home is not this present evil world (2Pe 2:11) **Paroikos** is used of one who comes from another country or city and settles in another, but does not rank as a citizen. Before Christ came into their life the Gentiles were "sojourners" who were "dwelling nearby," (so to speak) but still were "far off." This previous alien existence is no longer their state, for they are now in Christ.

Paroikos - 4x in 4v - Acts 7:6, 29; Eph 2:19; 1Pe 2:11

Paroikos - 24x in the **Septuagint (LXX)** - Ge 15:13; 23:4; Ex 2:22; 12:45; 18:3; Lv 22:10; 25:6, 23, 35, 40, 45, 47; Nu 35:15; Dt 14:21; 23:7; 2Sa 1:13; 1Chr 5:10; 29:15; Ps 39:12; 105:12; 119:19; Jer 14:8; 49:18; Zeph 2:5

BUT YOU ARE FELLOW CITIZENS WITH THE SAINTS AND ARE OF GOD'S HOUSEHOLD: alla este (2PPAI) sumpolitai ton hagion kai oikeioi tou theou:

- **But you are fellow citizens** - Eph 3:6; Galatians 3:26-28; 4:26-31; Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 12:22-24; Revelation 21:12-26
- **God's household** - Eph 3:15; Matthew 10:25; Galatians 6:10; 1John 3:1
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GENTILES GRANTED DIVINE CITIZENSHIP AND FAMILY STATUS

but you are fellow citizens (sumpolites) with the saints (hagios) and are of God's household (oikeios) - **But** is a strong term of contrast. worth pausing to ponder. It marks a 180 degree change in the lives of Gentiles who once were unbelieving, but now have believed in Christ. Never again will the Gentile believers be aliens, dogs, uncircumcision, outsiders and with no spiritual disadvantages compared to Jewish believers. All now meet at the same place - the foot of the almighty Cross of Christ - the place where grace now flows freely and bountifully to all who believe! Gentiles have been supernaturally granted "naturalization" as citizens in the Kingdom of Heaven! Does your life and lifestyle reflect your true eternal citizenship in heaven or are you living like you belong to this present evil age which is opposed to the true and living God? (read James 4:4)

MacArthur and **Hoehner** both think the saints here refer to believers of all time.

In Ephesians 2:19 **oikeios** is used of one belonging to the Church which is the household of God and speaks of the fellowship enjoyed by God's family. It is a picture of one who has been adopted into His family (His "household").

Fellow citizens (4847) (**sumpolites** from **sun/syn** = together with, intimacy + **polites** = a citizen from **polis** = city) means a "compatriot." Note the preposition **sun/syn** speaks of intimacy (in other words they are relegated to the "slums" so to speak) which is in striking contrast to the previous condition of "far off." In the Greek culture a **polites** was an inhabitant of a city, who had the right of citizenship and could act as a freeman. The **politēs** had all the rights and privileges of a citizen, for example, participating in the **ekklesia** "the assembly," when called. This is the only NT use ([Hapax legomenon](#)) and there are no uses in the Septuagint.

In Philippians **Paul** explains that believers' "**citizenship (politeuma** derived from **polites** = citizen) is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait (wait in great anticipation but with patience, awaiting expectantly for some future event) for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ who will transform (outward change of one's external form or appearance) the body of our humble state into conformity (denotes inward, not merely superficial conformity) with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself." (Phil 3:20,21+) This figure would have been particularly appreciated by the Philippians who were colonists living away from Rome, though citizens of Rome. Similarly, Christians live away from the place of their citizenship, heaven.

Household (3609) (**oikeios** from **oikos** = a house or household) means literally belonging to or standing in relation to a household (1Ti 5:8). The idea is of the household or belonging to a certain household. When used of persons it means "of one's family," thus strictly of kinsmen. It refers to all members regardless of social or personal position. **Oikeios** is used figuratively of believers belonging to the Church, the household of God (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19) **BDAG** adds it speaks of "persons who are related by kinship

or circumstances and form a closely knit group, members of a household."

Gilbrant - The adjective (used substantively in the New Testament) *oikeios* is derived from *oikos* (3486) and means "what is in or of a house, what belongs or is related to a house or household." Thus in 1 Timothy 5:8 the word denotes one's immediate family ("those of his own house" in specific contrast to someone else's), specifying that one should be certain they are provided for. In the Early Church the believing community was spoken of as "a house" (*oikos*; e.g., Hebrews 3:1-6). Due to this understanding, *oikeios* is used in Ephesians 2:19 where the "household of God" signifies the same thing as the "household of faith" found in Galatians 6:10; i.e., the company of those reconciled to God through faith in Christ. The former assures the Gentiles that they are no longer foreigners but full-fledged members of the household of God. The latter reminds the believers of their Christian duty to fellow believers. ([Complete Biblical Library - Incredible Resource](#))

Oikeios - 3x - Gal. 6:10 = "**household** of faith"; Eph. 2:19; 1Ti 5:8 "for those of his **household**"

Blaikie writes that **God's household** refers to "A nearer relation to God and a higher privilege is denoted here. You are not guests or occasional visitors, but permanent dwellers in the house and members of the family. Compare the Queen of Sheba's words to Solomon (1 Kings 10:8 "*How blessed are your men, how blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually and hear your wisdom.*"). ([Pulpit Commentary: Ephesians](#))

MacArthur draws a practical conclusion "If believers have no distinctions before God, they should have no distinctions among themselves. We are fellow citizens and fellow family members, equal in every spiritual way before God. If God accepts each one of us, how can we not accept each other? (See [Ephesians MacArthur New Testament Commentary](#))

Wayne Barber writes that "The word **household** can be translated **family**. Isn't that wonderful? Think of our country and how the family system and structure has been totally ripped apart. A person grows up with step-parents or whatever else. Usually the people who are most effected are the children. They desperately need to hear that somebody loves them. God is screaming at them through the Scriptures and saying, "I love you. I love you. I love you. I want you to be a part of My family." As a matter of fact, He not only **births** us into the family, as we know from John, but He also **adopts** us into His family. Both give us a picture of what He has done for us. By adoption He made us secure. Roman law says that if you adopted someone, you could never disown them. If you are worried about your eternal security, folks, you have been birthed into the family. You are eternally secure in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are a part of His family. Now, as **citizens** we have new responsibilities. As **family members**, we have a brand new relationship. Wherever you go, you find brothers and sisters in Christ. The third metaphor he uses here is that we are stones in His **Temple**. Now he doesn't use the word "stones," we borrowed that from Simon Peter in his first epistle (see **notes** on "living stones" 1Pe 2:5-note). He implies stones, because you don't have a Temple without stones. He says we are in the Temple of God; we are the Holy Temple of God in which He dwells on this earth. That is where we stopped last time, looking at this Holy Temple that we are becoming, that God is making us. The foundation to this Temple in verse 20 is the doctrine given to us by the apostles and prophets. Of course, 1Cor 3:11 says that Jesus is the **foundation**. When he names the apostles and prophets as the foundation, certainly he is pointing to their doctrine (**Ed note**: Their writings that compose the NT). They laid the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have it in written form today as the New Testament. He said in verse 20, "having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." Then we saw the **cornerstone**, which is Jesus. In their culture, the cornerstone was more important than the foundation. Now that is interesting. In our culture, it is a little bit different. We don't always have a cornerstone in every building. In their culture, the cornerstone moves it up a notch, pointing to how important Jesus Christ is to all that is going on in our life. The whole structure rests upon the cornerstone, the whole structure depends upon the cornerstone. He is our cornerstone. We would not even be in the building if it weren't for Him. He was the first stone that was laid, and everything that happens depends upon Him. Now that is the key. (Ephesians 2:19-22 We Are the Temple of God - 1)

Part Of The Family - Every few years my family holds a reunion at a park near Lake Michigan. We don't see one another very often, so we're always amazed at how much the grandchildren have grown or how much the children look like their parents. I look forward to the picnic because I'm reminded that I'm part of a family.

Everyone who has trusted Jesus Christ as Savior belongs to God's family. The apostle Paul said that we are all "members of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19). We are part of a family that is made up of all believers in Christ.

Members of a loving family should be honest about their concerns for one another. They can ask about how specific problems or struggles are being handled, and they can confront difficult issues.

As believers in Christ, we are to be concerned about other members in the family of God. Sometimes the path to spiritual growth can get pretty rough. So we need to encourage fellow Christians to turn from their sin and live for the Lord. The purpose is always to produce a harmonious family of believers who are doing the work of God and building one another up.

We show our love for God when we love His family.

In **Morning and Evening Spurgeon** writes...**Fellow citizens with the saints.**” — Ephesians 2:19 What is meant by our being citizens in heaven? It means that we are under heaven’s government. Christ the king of heaven reigns in our hearts; our daily prayer is, “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” The proclamations issued from the throne of glory are freely received by us: the decrees of the Great King we cheerfully obey. Then as citizens of the New Jerusalem, we share heaven’s honours. The glory which belongs to beatified saints belongs to us, for we are already sons of God, already princes of the blood imperial; already we wear the spotless robe of Jesus’ righteousness; already we have angels for our servitors, saints for our companions, Christ for our Brother, God for our Father, and a crown of immortality for our reward. We share the honours of citizenship, for we have come to the general assembly and Church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven. As citizens, we have common rights to all the property of heaven. Ours are its gates of pearl and walls of chrysolite; ours the azure light of the city that needs no candle nor light of the sun; ours the river of the water of life, and the twelve manner of fruits which grow on the trees planted on the banks thereof; there is nought in heaven that belongeth not to us. “Things present, or things to come,” all are ours. Also as citizens of heaven we enjoy its delights. Do they there rejoice over sinners that repent—prodigals that have returned? So do we. Do they chant the glories of triumphant grace? We do the same. Do they cast their crowns at Jesus’ feet? Such honours as we have we cast there too. Are they charmed with his smile? It is not less sweet to us who dwell below. Do they look forward, waiting for his second advent? We also look and long for his appearing. If, then, we are thus citizens of heaven, let our walk and actions be consistent with our high dignity.

Sam Stone - Sermon Outline - Bring Us Together Ephesians 2:11–22

Introduction

We live in a world divided—black/white, Arab/Jew, male/female, rich/poor. In the first century, the world was no less divided. Then the basic distinction was Jew/Gentile. For that reason some Jewish Christians had trouble accepting Gentile converts. Some even insisted they must first become Jews (see Acts 15; Galatians 1–2). Paul shows the Ephesians how God answered the world’s plea for oneness—it was in Christ.

I. The Former State (11–12)

A. The Greeks despised those outside their cities; they called them the *ethne*—pagans. The Jews hated those not of their race; they called them *Goi*—Gentiles. Neither group had any use for the other. Spiritually speaking, the Jews had the edge. Salvation was of the Jews. God had revealed himself through their prophets.

B. The Gentiles were not so blessed. Paul lists five dramatic aspects of their condition: Christless, stateless, friendless, hopeless, and godless. Many today are just like them. Do we care about them? Are we concerned about those different from us, separated from us? It took Christ to bring unity out of division in that day and He is the one who alone can do it in our time.

II. The Broken Wall (13–18)

A. The barrier between Jew and Gentile was both figurative and literal. An unseen wall of hatred stood between them. But at the temple in Jerusalem stood a real wall, one that kept Gentiles from the temple proper. On it were these words: “No foreigner may enter within the barricade which surrounds this sanctuary and enclosure. Anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death.” Those who set brother against brother today are doing nothing new. It took the blood of Christ to destroy the dividing wall (vv. 13–15).

B. All people—Jew or Gentile—can come to God through Jesus. In His death He not only brought harmony between man and God, but also between man and his fellowman. Only Christ’s blood can save us. Only He can break down every wall that exists today—ethnic, social, political, whatever it may be. He calls us all—wearied, despondent, fearful, troubled, bereaved, disappointed—to himself. There He offers reconciliation, peace, and access to the Father (vv. 15–18).

III. The New Structure (19–22)

A. In Christ the whole building grows into a holy sanctuary in the Lord. William Hendriksen notes that Christ is not only the principle of the church’s stability and direction, but also of its growth. The Lord brings us all together and builds us up in Him. The apostle compares our new relationship to a house, a building. While we

are built on the foundation of apostles and prophets, it is Christ himself who is the chief cornerstone.

B. In Christ, we are given a new outlook, a new relationship, a new hope. In a Florida church paper a woman wrote this note after her husband's death: "Thank you for grieving for George with us. I urge you to not grieve more for him than you do for God's Son, whose death made eternal life possible for us." We are a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit. Jesus has brought us together.

Illustration **Those We Don't Care About** Lil Dickson was a missionary to the mountain people of Formosa. She told of going across miles of mountain trail, only to come to a long, high, swinging bridge, badly in need of repair. A villager was directing her. He would point out the loose boards, and the gaps where a board was missing. Finally she asked fearfully, "Have people been drowned here?" "Oh, yes," was his careless reply. "But it didn't matter. They were from another village." If our Lord were to ask us about the lost in the world what would we tell Him? "Yes, but it doesn't matter. They are of another social class, another skin color, another religious faith. It really doesn't matter." It does matter. It mattered to God. That's why He sent Jesus.

Sermon Outline - Archie Edwards - "Of Twain One New Man" Ephesians 2:19-22

- I. The Platform Used (v. 20, cf. 1 Cor. 3:11; 1 Pet. 2:5).
- II. The Plan of Its Design—"fitly framed" (v. 21).
- III. The Purpose of Its Design—"an habitation of God" (v. 22).

Brotherhood Of The Sea

Now, therefore, you are . . . fellow citizens with the saints. — Ephesians 2:19

Today's Scripture: Ephesians 2:14-22

On August 8, 2005, the world learned of the dramatic rescue of seven Russian sailors trapped in a small sub entangled in a fishing net. The men had survived 3 cold, dark days on the bottom of the ocean and had less than 6 hours of oxygen left. Meanwhile, up above, a frantic, unified rescue effort by Russian, Japanese, British, and American personnel was underway. Finally, the sub was freed. The Russian Defense Minister praised the operation, saying, "We have seen in deeds, not in words, what the brotherhood of the sea means."

The book of Ephesians talks about the unity of believers in Jesus by referring to the oneness of "the household of God" (2:19). The Gentiles, who were once "aliens" and "strangers" (v.12), had now been "brought near by the blood of Christ" (v.13), uniting them with their Jewish brothers and sisters. This unity is to permeate the efforts of the Christian community today.

Believers in Jesus are commissioned to undertake the most important rescue effort. People are dying without Christ. Praise God that united mission efforts are bringing hope, salvation, education, and relief to desperate people around the world. That's what the brotherhood of Christ is all about. By: David C. Egner

In Christ there is no East or West,

In Him no South or North,
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth.
—Oxenham

A healthy church is the best witness to a hurting world.

Part Of The Family

You are...members of the household of God. — Ephesians 2:19

Today's Scripture: Ephesians 2:14-22

Every few years my family holds a reunion at a park near Lake Michigan. We don't see one another very often, so we're always amazed at how much the grandchildren have grown or how much the children look like their parents. I look forward to the picnic because I'm reminded that I'm part of a family.

Everyone who has trusted Jesus Christ as Savior belongs to God's family. The apostle Paul said that we are all "members of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19). We are part of a family that is made up of all believers in Christ.

Members of a loving family should be honest about their concerns for one another. They can ask about how specific problems or struggles are being handled, and they can confront difficult issues.

As believers in Christ, we are to be concerned about other members in the family of God. Sometimes the path to spiritual growth can get pretty rough. So we need to encourage fellow Christians to turn from their sin and live for the Lord. The purpose is always to produce a harmonious family of believers who are doing the work of God and building one another up.

What a privilege to be a part of the family of God! — David C. Egener [Our Daily Bread, Copyright RBC Ministries, Grand Rapids, MI. — Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved](#))

For Further Study

How can members of God's family help one another?

See Romans 12:10,16; Galatians 5:13,26;

Ephesians 4:1-3,32; Hebrews 10:24-25; James 5:16.

We show our love for God when we love His family.

Ephesians 2:20 [having been built](#) on the [foundation](#) of the [apostles](#) and [prophets](#), [Christ Jesus Himself being](#) the [corner stone](#), ([NASB: Lockman](#))

Greek: [epoikodomēntes](#) ([AAPMPN](#)) [epi to themelio ton apostolon kai propheton, ontos](#) ([PAPMSG](#)) [akrogoniaiou autou Christou Iesou.](#)

BGT ποικοδομηθέντες π τ θεμελ τ ν ποστ λων κα προφητ ν, ντος κρογωνια ου α το Χριστο ησο ,

Amplified: You are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself the chief Cornerstone. ([Amplified Bible - Lockman](#))

NLT: We are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself. (NLT - Tyndale House)

NLT (revised) Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself.

Phillips: Firmly beneath you in the foundation, God's messengers and prophets, the actual foundation-stone being Jesus Christ himself. (Phillips: Touchstone)

Wuest: having been built up upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, there being a chief cornerstone, Jesus Christ himself, ([Eerdmans Publishing](#) - used [by permission](#))

Young's Literal: being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being chief corner -stone,

KJV And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

ESV built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone,

NET because you have been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.

NIV built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.

CSB built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone.

NKJ having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone,

NRS built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone.

NAB built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the capstone.

NJB You are built upon the foundations of the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone.

GWN You are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets. Christ Jesus himself is the cornerstone.

BBE Resting on the base of the Apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief keystone,

Weymouth - You are a building which has been reared on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, the cornerstone being Christ Jesus Himself,

HAVING BEEN BUILT ON THE FOUNDATION OF THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS: epoikodomethentes (AAPMPN) epi to themelio ton apostolon kai propheton:

- Ep 4:12; 1Peter 2:4,5
- Ep 4:11, 12, 13; Isaiah 28:16; Matthew 16:18; 1Corinthians 3:9, 10, 11; 12:28; Galatians 2:9; Revelation 21:14
- [Ephesians 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
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- [Ephesians 2:16-22 The Unity of the Body, Part 3](#) - John MacArthur

Having been built (2026) (epoikodomeo [word study] from epí = upon + oikodoméo = build) means to build upon or erect a superstructure. Paul changes the metaphor from a household (or family) to a spiritual temple as he explains the unifying character of the church.

The **orist tense** speaks of a past completed action. However note in the next two verses **being fitted together**" (Ep 2:21-note) and **"being built together"** (Ep 2:22-note) are both in the present tense indicating that although the foundation has been laid securely and irrevocably, God is still in the process of fitting and building believers into His holy Temple, His dwelling place. The **passive voice** indicates that God's Spirit is the One Who is active, His power being the force that enables the building of the household.

Illustration - There is a famous story from Sparta. A Spartan king boasted to a visiting monarch about the walls of Sparta. The visiting monarch looked around and could see no walls. He said to the Spartan king, "Where are these walls about which you boast so much?" His host pointed at his bodyguard of magnificent troops. "These," he said, "are the walls of Sparta, every man a brick." The point is clear. So long as a brick lies by itself it is useless; it becomes of use only when it is incorporated into a building. So it is with the individual Christian. To realize his destiny he must not remain alone, but must be built into the fabric of the Church.

Foundation (2310) (themelios from théma = that which is laid down in turn from tithemi = to place [see study of related word themeloo]) means something laid or put down, that on which a structure is built or a stone used in the construction of a foundation. It was used literally of buildings foundation (foundation stone Rev 21:14).

Gilbrant - In classical Greek themelios literally refers to the "foundation" of a house, a town, etc., and in a figurative sense themelios may denote the "ground" (basis) of legal decision or the "foundations" of a philosophical system (cf. Moulton-Milligan). Themelios is equivalent to many Hebrew words in the Septuagint; for example 'armôn, "fortress," or yāśadh, "to lay a foundation." Usually themelios is employed in a concrete sense of a house's foundation or that of a city. Or, in a figurative sense, themelios may be used of the "foundations" of the earth or heaven. Moreover, righteousness is the foundation of the throne of God (Hebrew mākôm; Psalm 97:2). "If the foundations (Hebrew shath) be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3). The foundations of the earth are laid by the Lord (Proverbs 8:29), and He has the power to shake the earth (Job 9:6; Psalm 18:7). Thus a concept that there is a foundational, self-sufficient philosophical understanding of reality to which God is obligated is totally alien to Biblical revelation. The devout Israelite reminded himself that the Lord was his rock and fortress (Genesis 49:24; Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 18:31,32; Isaiah 26:4 [themelios not used here]). Messianic texts foreshadowed the arrival of the stone (i.e., Messiah) which would be rejected by the builders, despite the fact that this stone is the chief cornerstone (Psalm 118:22). In Zion the Lord has laid a chief stone, a solid cornerstone; the one believing in this precious stone will be assured of salvation (cf. Isaiah 28:16). (Complete Biblical Library Greek-English Dictionary,)

BDAG...

1 the supporting base for a structure, foundation -

(a) of a stone that constitutes a foundation Rev 21:14; 19

(b) of the structural base for a building Lk 6:49, 14:29; on something Lk 6:48. The foundations of the heavenly city built by God He 11:10 [contrast 'tents of Abraham' with the city]].

2 the basis for something taking place or coming into being, foundation, fig. extension of meaning.

(a) of the elementary beginnings of a thing; of the founding of a congregation Ro 15:20; 1Co 3:10; 1Co 3:12. Of elementary teachings He 6:1.

(b) of the indispensable prerequisites for something to come into being: God's will is the foundation of an orderly creation. The foundation of the Christian church or congregation: Christ 1Co 3:11 became its foundation; the apostles and prophets Eph 2:20; cp. 2 Ti 2:19-note.

(c) a foundation provides stability, therefore treasure, reserve 1 Ti 6:19 = 'something fine to build on for the future'.—([Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., & Bauer, W. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature](#))

Thayer - metaphorically, the foundations, beginnings, first principles, of an institution or system of truth (as what is necessary for belief or practice): 1Co 3:11, 12; the rudiments, first principles, of Christian life and knowledge, He 6:1; a course of instruction begun by a teacher, Ro 15:20... the Septuagint several times also for a palace (Isa 25:2, Je 6:5, Amos 1:4, etc).

Themelios - 12x in 11v- Ro 15:20-note; 1Cor 3:10, 11, 12; Eph 2:20; 1Ti 6:19; 2Ti 2:19-note; Heb 6:1-note; He 11:10-note; Rev 21:14-note, Re 21:19-note **NAS** - foundation(11), foundation stone(1), foundation stones(2), foundations(2).

Romans 15:20-note And thus I aspired to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, so that I would not build on another man's foundation;

1 Corinthians 3:10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid **a foundation**, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. 11 For no man can lay a **foundation** other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if any man builds on the **foundation** with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,

Ephesians 2:20 having been built on the **foundation** of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,

1 Timothy 6:19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good **foundation** for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

2 Timothy 2:19-note Nevertheless, the firm **foundation** of God stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Everyone who names the name of the Lord is to abstain from wickedness."

Hebrews 6:1-note Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a **foundation** of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God,

Hebrews 11:10-note for he was looking for the city which has **foundations**, whose architect and builder is God.

Revelation 21:14-note And the wall of the city had twelve **foundation** stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Revelation 21:19-note The **foundation** stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first **foundation** stone was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald;

Themelios - 8x in the Septuagint - Deut 32:22; 1Ki 5:17; 2Ki 16:18; Ezra 4:12; 5:16; Job 22:16; Ps 87:1 (His foundation is in the holy mountains); 137:7

The foundation of the apostles and prophets - describes those of the NT era, first century AD. He does not mean the OT prophets for they knew nothing of the NT Church, the building that Paul is describing in this passage. Note carefully that although apostles and prophets are "foundational", they are not the ultimate foundation, which is Christ Himself.

John MacArthur explains **foundation of the apostles and prophets** writing that "Because the Greek genitive case appears to be used in the subjective sense, signifying the originating agency, the meaning is not that the apostles and prophets were themselves the foundation—though in a certain sense they were—but that they laid the foundation. Paul spoke of himself as "a wise master builder" who "laid a foundation" and went on to say, "For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1Cor. 3:10, 11; cf. Ro 15:20-note). ([MacArthur, J: Ephesians. Chicago: Moody Press](#))

Apostles (652) (**apostolos** from **apo** = from + **stello** = send forth) means one sent forth from by another, often with a special commission to represent another and to accomplish his work. It can be a delegate, commissioner, ambassador sent out on a mission or orders or commission and with the authority of the one who sent him.

Apostolos referred to someone who was officially commissioned to a position or task, such as an envoy. Cargo ships were sometimes called *apostolic*, because they were dispatched with a specific shipment for a specific destination. In secular Greek **apostolos** was used of an admiral of a fleet sent out by the king on special assignment.

In the ancient world a **apostle** was the personal representatives of the king, functioning as an ambassador with the king's authority

and provided with credentials to prove he was the king's envoy.

Prophets (4396) ([prophetes](#) from **pró** = before or forth + **phemí** = tell) refers in the present context to those who speak under divine influence and inspiration foretelling future events or exhorting, reproving, and admonishing individuals or nations as the ambassador of God and the interpreter of His will to men. The **prophets** speak not their own thought but what they received from God, retaining, however, their own consciousness and self-possession (cf **notes** 2 Peter 1:21)

Paul helps us understand that he is not referring to **Old Testament prophets** explaining in Ephesians 4 that Christ...

gave some as **apostles**, and some as **prophets**, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ (See **notes** Ephesians 4:11; 4:12)

Vincent has a note on NT **prophets** writing that this refers not so much to the "foretelling of the future. Quite probably very little of this element is contemplated; but utterance under immediate divine inspiration: delivering inspired exhortations, instructions, or warnings."

CHRIST JESUS HIMSELF BEING THE CORNER STONE: ontos (PAPMSG) akrogoniaiou autou Christou Iesou:

- Ps 118:22; Isaiah 28:16; Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10,11; Luke 20:17,18; Acts 4:11,12; 1Peter 2:7,8
- [Ephesians 2 Resources](#) - Multiple Sermons and Commentaries
- [Ephesians 2:19-22 The Church: Why Marry It?](#) - Steven Cole
- [Ephesians 2:16-22 The Unity of the Body, Part 3](#) - John MacArthur

CHRIST THE CORNERSTONE

Christ Jesus Himself being the Corner Stone a **metaphor** which Paul states clearly symbolizes Christ.

This picture of Christ as a **Stone** or **Rock** is intimately woven by the Spirit throughout both the Old and New Testaments and makes for a fascinating and encouraging study

Here is an old song by Leo Patillo - you may begin clapping or get out your tambourine! [Cornerstone](#) - Wonderful! Counselor! The Mighty God! The Everlasting Father! The Prince of peace! Take a moment to praise His holy Name, our Cornerstone!

Suggestion: This study would make an edifying series in a Sunday School class and would be very enlightening to those who are not that familiar with the Old Testament. Remember to carefully **observe** the **context** to arrive at the most accurate **interpretation**, interrogating each each "base" verse with questions such as... **When** does this take place? **Where** does this take place? **What** are the circumstances surrounding the use of this **metaphor**? **Who** are the "cast of characters"? **Who** used the name Rock? **What** attributes do you discover about the Rock or Stone? **How** should we **apply** this truth to our life today -- not **Can we?** - it is God's Word of Truth and it is **ALWAYS applicable** to our life. The more relevant question is **"Will we allow the Spirit to speak the Word of Truth to our innermost being and respond with unhesitating obedience"?**)... here are the Scriptures...

Genesis 49:24 > Exodus 17:6 > Exodus 33:21 > Numbers 20:11 > Deut 32:4 > 2Samuel 23:3 > Psalm 18:2 > Psalm 18:31 > Psalm 18:46 > Psalm 19:14 > Psalm 27:5 > Psalm 28:1 > Psalm 31:2-3 > Psalm 40:2 > Psalm 42:9 > Psalm 61:2 > Psalm 62:2 > Psalm 62:6-7 > Psalm 71:3 > Psalm 78:16 > Psalm 78:20 > Psalm 78:35 > Psalm 81:16 > Psalm 89:26 > Psalm 92:15 > Psalm 94:22 > Psalm 95:1 > Psalm 105:41 > Psalm 114:8 > Psalm 118:22 > Psalm 144:1 > Isaiah 8:14 > Isaiah 17:10 > Isaiah 26:4 > Isaiah 28:16 > Isaiah 30:29 > Isaiah 32:2 > Isaiah 33:16 > Isaiah 44:8 > Isaiah 48:21 > Isaiah 51:1 > Da 2:34 > Da 2:35, 44-46 > Hab 1:12 > Zech 4:7 > Mt 7:24,25 > Mt 16:18 > Mt 21:42 > Mk 12:10 > Luke 20:17 > Acts 4:11 > Ro 9:32-33 > Acts 4:11 > 1Cor 1:23 > 1Cor 10:4 > Ephesians 2:20 > 1Pe 2:4-8 (Which book of the Bible has the most allusions to Rock? Why might that be the case?)

CHRIST THE ROCK THE CORNERSTONE

1) To God Jesus is...

Smitten Stone

Exodus 17:6, 1Cor 10:4, cp John 4:13, John 4:14

(2) To Israel Messiah is...

Stumbling Stone

1Pe 2:8 (note), Ro 9:32 (note)

Ro 9:33 (note); 1Cor 1:23

(3) To the Church the Lord Jesus is...

Cornerstone

1Pe 2:6 (note), Ep 2:20 (note),

1Cor 3:10, 11, 12 (foundation)

(4) To all the Gentile world powers Jesus the King of kings is the...

Stone cut without hands

Da 2:34-note

Stone that grows and fills the earth

Da 2:35, cf Da 2:44, 45-note

(5) To Israel at Second coming Messiah is...

Capstone of the corner

Zech 4:7

(6) To unbelievers the Lord Jesus Christ is the...

Crushing Stone of judgment

Mt 21:44

Being ([1510](#)) (**eimi**) means being or existence. Present tense speaks of His continuity.

Corner stone ([204](#)) (**akrogoniaios** from **ákron** = extreme + **gonía** = corner) refers to the stone that supports the main weight of a structure and figuratively is Christ Who unites Jews and Gentiles into one body and Who sustains whole structure of the church.

The corner stone of a building had to be strong enough to support what was built on it, and it had to be precisely laid, because every other part of the structure was oriented to it. The cornerstone thus functioned as the supporting stone, the stone that oriented all other stone, and the stone that unified of the entire building. Jesus Christ perfectly fulfills each of these roles in God's building, the new man, the body of Christ, the Church.

Related Resource:

- [CHRIST THE STONE](#)

Expositor's Bible Commentary adds that...

The word **akrogoniaios** ("cornerstone") literally means "at the tip of the angle." It refers to the capstone or binding stone that holds the whole structure together (TDNT, 1:792). It covered a right angle joining two walls, as Sir Henry Layard found, for example, when excavating Nineveh. Often the royal name was inscribed on it. In the East it was considered to be even more important than the foundation. ([Gaebelein, F. Editor: Expositor's Bible Commentary 6-Volume New Testament. Zondervan Publishing](#))

Blaikie has this note on the corner stone writing that...

the stone which, being placed in the corner, determined the lines of the whole building. The idea of foundation is that of support; the idea of the chief corner-stone is that of regulation, pattern-hood, producing assimilation. Jesus is not only the Origin, Foundation, Support of the Church, but he gives it its shape and form, he determines the place and the office of each stone, he gives life and character to each member. ([The Pulpit Commentary: Ephesians](#))

Barnes has the following note on cornerstone writing that...

The corner-stone is the most important in the building. (1.) Because the edifice rests mainly on the corner-stones. If they are small, and unstable, and settle down, the whole building is insecure; and hence care is taken to place a large stone firmly at each corner of an edifice. (2.) Because it occupies a conspicuous and honourable place. If documents or valuable articles are deposited at the foundation of a building it is within the corner-stone. The Lord Jesus is called the "corner-stone," because the whole edifice rests on him, or he occupies a place relatively as important as the corner-stone of an edifice. Were it not for him the edifice could not be sustained for a moment. Neither prophets nor apostles alone could sustain it. See [1Co 3:11]. ([Barnes Notes](#))

Christ Jesus, the Messiah, is the **Corner Stone** about which the Old Testament repeatedly prophesied...

Psalms 118:22 The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief corner stone.

Comment: The question is whether the cornerstone of Scripture is a foundation stone or a stone which crowns the building. Isaiah 28:16 seems to refer to the former and Ps 118:22 [rosh pinnah - rosh means head, top, uppermost height of an object] to the latter. It is somewhat ironic that verses from Psalm 118 were sung by the Jewish multitude as Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey on "Psalm Sunday", see Mt 21:9! This psalm clearly predicts the "Jewish builders" rejection of their "Stone", the Messiah, this rejection culminating in their cries "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Luke 23:21

Isaiah 8:13-note "It is the LORD of hosts Whom you should regard as holy. And He shall be your fear, and He shall be your dread. **14** "Then He shall become a sanctuary; But to both the houses of Israel, **a stone to strike** and a **rock to stumble over** (Paul wrote "we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block [skandalon - see note] " 1Co 1:23), and a **snare** and a **trap** for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

Isaiah 28:16 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Behold, I am laying in Zion **a stone**, a tested **stone**, A costly **cornerstone** (pinnah) for the foundation, firmly placed. He who **believes** (aman - basic root idea is firmness or certainty. Faith is not a blind leap into the dark but a confident commitment to the One about Whom abundant evidence bears ample testimony of His eternal, immutable trustworthiness) in it will not be **disturbed** (agitated, **LXX** = kataischuno = caused to be much ashamed, disgraced, dishonored, also conveys the sense of disappointed).

Jesus after telling the Jewish chief priests and elders of the Jewish people the parable of the Vineyard, then quoted from Psalm 118:22-23 explaining that the Stone rejected by the Jewish builders was chosen of God as the Head of the corner. Matthew records our Lord's words...

Jesus said to them, "Did you never read in the Scriptures, 'THE **STONE** WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED (speaks of His rejection by the Jews and His crucifixion fulfilling the OT prophecy), THIS BECAME THE CHIEF **CORNER stone** (anticipates His resurrection and exaltation); THIS CAME ABOUT FROM THE LORD, AND IT IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES'? (Matthew 21:42 quoting **Psalm 118:22-23**)

Comment: In the context of the preceding parable Jesus' quotation might seem irrelevant at first glance. However if one remembers that it is taken from a Messianic psalm, it becomes clear that Jesus cited it to suggest to the Jewish chief priests and elders that the Son who was killed and thrown out of the vineyard was also "the chief cornerstone" in God's redemptive plan! It is also interesting to ponder that although in modern parlance the CORNERSTONE is placed at the foundation of a building, in ancient Israel the CAPSTONE was

placed at the very top - a true "HEAD" STONE. Jesus is the STONE that serves as both the alignment and the completion of our lives, the Author and Perfecter, the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and the Omega!

Paul in explaining God's sovereign plan for salvation of the Gentiles quotes in part from **Isaiah 8:13-14** and **Isaiah 28:16** writing...

What shall we say then? That Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, attained righteousness, even the righteousness which is by faith; 31 but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. 32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, 33 just as it is written, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." (See notes Romans 9:30; 9:31; 9:32; 9:33)

Comment: Israel's rejection of their Messiah resulted in God setting Israel aside for a time and turning to the Gentiles.

Peter filled with (controlled by) the Holy Spirit when asked by the Jewish priests, rulers and elders by what power or in what name was he preaching unabashedly, boldly declared...

"He (Christ the Messiah) is the **STONE** WHICH WAS REJECTED by you (the Jewish priests and leader), THE BUILDERS, but WHICH BECAME THE VERY **CORNER stone**. And there is salvation in no one else (absolute negation); for there is no other Name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:11,12)

Peter reiterated this important truth about **Christ Jesus the Corner Stone** in his first epistle explaining to his readers...

And coming to Him (Christ) as to a **Living Stone**, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD I LAY IN ZION A **CHOICE STONE**, A **PRECIOUS CORNER stone**, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." (quoting Isaiah 28:16) 7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, "THE **STONE** WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY **CORNER stone**," 8 and, "A **STONE** OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed. 9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION (KJV = "a peculiar people" = a people for possession), that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE (In Hosea it is Israel who is not God's people; in Romans 9:25; 9:26 it is the Gentiles to whom Paul applies Hosea's words. Thus in 1 Peter the words could apply to both Jews before they met their Messiah & pagan Gentiles before the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit), but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY. (See **notes** 1 Peter 2:4; 2:5; 2:6; 2:7; 2:8; 2:9; 2:10)

Jesus Christ is not only the **Chief Corner Stone**, but He is also the **foundation**, that on which the whole structure is built, Paul writing that

we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God which was given to me (Observe that the effectiveness of our Christian work is due to God's work through us not to our own efforts!), as a wise master builder (architekton = spiritual "structural engineer") I laid a **foundation** (themelios), and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it. For no man can lay a **foundation** (themelios) other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1Cor 3:9-11).

Wayne Barber writes that...

We have been talking about the brand new identity we have in Jesus Christ. As we have studied in chapter 2, Christ did not make the Jew a Gentile. He did not make the Gentile a Jew. He took both of them as they became believers and made them into one brand new body, one that has never before been seen. Christians are unique. It is a brand new identity that Christ gives to those who believe in Him.

Look in Ephesians 2:14-15. Paul says,

"For He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man."

That new man is a body of believers. I have a brand new identity when I receive the Lord Jesus Christ. I am birthed into something that is qualitatively brand new, originating only from Christ Himself.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:17,

"Therefore, if any man is in Christ, he a new creature,"

He is a new creation. That's what I think Paul is bringing out here in Ephesians. He wants these Gentile believers to understand the brand new identity they have in Jesus Christ. He uses three word pictures of this new identity we have in Jesus Christ. We looked at two of them in the last study in 19:

"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household."

First of all, we are **citizens** of a heavenly kingdom. He does not mention the kingdom, but he mentions the fact that we are citizens with responsibilities. We are of a brand new nation. We are fellow citizens. The word "citizen" always refers to responsibility. Yes, privilege is involved, but much more is responsibility. So implicit in that verse is that we are part of a holy nation, a kingdom that is Christ's and Christ's alone. That is part of our new identity.

The other picture he gives us is that we are **children of a heavenly household**. We have been brought into the **family**. I love where he says we "are of God's household." The word "household" means "family." Actually you can translate it either way. We are a part of God's family. I am a child of a heavenly household.

We said it last time, but I want to say it again. The family of God is not a hotel which you can pay a price to get into. Oh, no. It is a family, and you have to be birthed into the family. You either are or you aren't. Paul wants to give the Ephesians this picture of this brand new identity.

The third picture Paul shows us is that we are His **Holy Temple**. That's incredible. Verses 20-22 give the whole picture of our being His Holy Temple in which He dwells on this earth. We need to know WHOSE we are, and we need to know WHO we are when it comes to living in this world. We are brand new creatures. We are His Kingdom. We are His family, but we also are His Holy Temple in which He dwells.

Well, let's begin to look at it. In verse 20, we are going to look at three things. First of all we are going to look at the foundation of this Holy Temple. Secondly, we are going to look at the cornerstone of this Holy Temple. And thirdly, we are going to look at the stones that are in this Holy Temple.

Verse 20 says,

"having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom 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."

What is the foundation of this holy temple of God? Each one of us who are believers are a part of that holy temple of God. Something is happening to us as God is constructing that temple.

First of all, what is the foundation: "having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets"? When you first read this it appears to contradict another verse that ought to be familiar. It appears to say that the apostles and the prophets are the foundation of this holy temple. Go back to 1 Corinthians 3:11:

"For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ."
So we know that the foundation is Jesus Christ."

Well then, what is he doing telling us that the apostles and the prophets are the foundation of this holy temple? Paul is not talking about the same thing in Ephesians that he is talking about in 1 Corinthians. He is talking about part of it, but he is not focused the same way. When he says that Jesus is the cornerstone, in a few moments, that is his focus in Ephesians. When he says the foundation, he is talking about the revelation the apostles and the prophets were given which they gave to us in its written form. That is called the New Testament. He speaks of the fact that they were not really the foundation, but they were the ones given the command to lay the foundation.

If you will look at 1 Corinthians 3:10 where Paul says,

"According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds

upon it."

Paul is an apostle. They laid the foundation by transferring to us the divine revelation of truth that God gave to them as apostles and as prophets. I believe what he talks about here as the foundation is the doctrine that we hold to of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the foundation, and the apostles and prophets laid that foundation. He refers to our doctrinal inheritance.

Jesus Himself said that the seed that falls into a person's heart has got to be the Word of God. You get saved when the Word of God falls into your heart and reveals to you that Jesus died for you and that you are a sinner. Once you see that, understand that, open the door and let Jesus come into your life, that is salvation. Therefore, we all go back to what the doctrine of the New Testament says to us about the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. In that sense, the apostles and prophets were the foundation of the holy temple. They were the ones who were given the divine revelation of Christ who is the one that saves

each of us.

Well, if the foundation he is referring to is the doctrine of the apostles and prophets, who are these apostles and prophets? We know for a fact that they were a specific group mentioned together three different times in the book of Ephesians. In 2:20, they are the doctrinal foundation. They are laying the foundation of the Lord Jesus Christ. In 3:5 it says,

"which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit."

It appears to be a specific group that is being referred to. In 4:11 he still continues to be specific. He says,

"And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets."

They were the two groups that he is talking about, or the one group made up of apostles and prophets, to whom the divine revelation of the gospel of Jesus Christ was given. We are founded upon that divine revelation. This leads us to another question. We can figure out who the apostles are; can we figure out who the prophets were? Are they the Old Testament prophets? Some people say that, but I don't believe this is a reference to the Old Testament prophets. There are three reasons why I don't. First of all, there is the order in which he puts them. He says, "Apostles and prophets." If he were talking about the Old Testament prophets, he would put the prophets first and then the apostles.

Secondly the statement that the apostles and the prophets are the foundation of the church. The fact that they are the foundation of the church disqualifies the Old Testament prophets. Why? Because in this foundation we are talking about here in Ephesians, it is not just Israel, it is including the Gentiles. That was not a part of the message of the Old Testament prophets. As a matter of fact, they didn't even understand this body that we are now in. They didn't understand the church.

Thirdly in 3:5, the fact that it says, "it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets," shows me that they are not the Old Testament prophets. This was a fresh, brand new revelation given to those prophets who stood before the others and proclaimed that which God gave them.

So who are the apostles and the prophets? Let's see if we can get a better understanding. Both groups were Christian teachers, but they were not identical. There were many prophets who were not apostles. The apostles are distinctly different than the prophets in the fact that they were the immediate messengers of Christ, invested with infallible authority as teachers and supreme power as rulers of the church. That makes the difference between the apostle and the prophet. The prophets were a class of teachers who spoke by inspiration from time to time as God directed.

What was the role of the apostles and prophets at the time that the New Testament era began, when the New Covenant became in effect? Their function was to authoritatively speak the Word of God to the church during the years before the New Testament canon came to be complete. They had a definite role. They didn't have the New Testament like we have today. They were the ones God used to put together the New Testament. The fact that they are mentioned with the foundation relates them to that era of Christianity. They are the ones who laid the foundation by the divine revelation given to them by the Lord Jesus who is, in fact, the foundation.

So the foundation of the church, the holy temple of God, is the doctrine of Christ which was given to us by the apostles and prophets. In that light, they are a part of the foundation. Jesus is the substance of the foundation, and the apostles and prophets laid the foundation and told us about Him through the divine revelation God had given to them.

Christ Jesus the Cornerstone

Secondly, I want you to see the cornerstone of this temple of God. In my study of the New Testament every time Jesus is called the foundation, the cornerstone is not even mentioned. Every time He is called the cornerstone, He is not referred to as the foundation. I think it is because both of them complement one another. All the way through they add a little dimension to what the other leaves out. Each one of them speaks of the fact that the church rests upon and depends upon the Lord Jesus Christ, whether you talk about Him as our foundation or you talk about Him as our cornerstone. Oddly enough in my study, I found that in ancient times, the cornerstone was actually more important than the foundation. The cornerstone was the major structural part of ancient buildings and was the first stone that was laid. So really, when you talk about Him as the cornerstone, you move it up just a notch. Not only is He that which the building rests upon, but He is the first stone of the building that was laid. He is the chief cornerstone. It had to be strong enough to support what was built on it, so it had to be precisely laid. Every part of the structure was oriented to the cornerstone.

There appears to be two functions of the cornerstone of the ancient times. First of all, for support as the whole building would rest upon it. Secondly, and much more so, it was for structure. That is the most important part of it. The whole building depended upon the cornerstone for measurement and for unity.

So you see, you begin to get a picture of Christ being the cornerstone of the holy temple. The doctrine of Christ is our foundation in this passage, but Christ, much more so, is the cornerstone. We rest upon Him, but we totally depend upon Him. We are measured by Him, not by men. Every dimension we have as a believer has to resort back to Christ. We are being conformed into the image of Christ Jesus. He sets the standard. He is the first stone that was laid. He is the one who gives us this brand new identity. Everything about the Temple of God is governed by the cornerstone, who in this passage is Christ Himself. All the growth, all the unity, everything depends upon the cornerstone.

You may be Jewish, but you say, "The Messiah has not yet come. I don't believe in the New Testament." Well, friend, go back to the Old Testament and Isaiah 28:16. Isaiah, hundreds of years before Jesus ever came to this earth, prophesied by the Spirit of God that there was going to be a cornerstone.

"Therefore, thus says the Lord God, 'Behold I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed.'"

Isaiah didn't even understand what he was prophesying. We know that from Hebrews. They prophesied in part and in portion. They never fully got the picture of what they were talking about. They knew a Messiah was coming, but they didn't understand all the ramifications of what He would do and the deliverance He would bring.

Jesus uses Psalm 118 to speak to the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew. **Psalm 118:22** says,

"The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief corner stone."

That is in the Old Testament. We are not in the book of Ephesians. This was prophesied way back in the Old Testament.

Jesus, in talking to those old skeptical Scribes and Pharisees said to them in **Matthew 21:42-43**:

"Did you ever read in the Scriptures, 'The stone which the builders rejected, this became the chief corner stone'"

This came about from the Lord, and it is marvelous in our eyes? Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation producing the fruit of it." Jesus is beginning to speak already of that holy nation that He is going to effect after His death and resurrection on the cross. Well, the apostle Peter puts them all together. In 1 Peter, he puts Isaiah 28:16, Psalm 118:22 and another one, **Isaiah 8:14**, together in one passage. Isaiah 8:14 says,

"Then He shall become a sanctuary; But to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over, and a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem."

In other words, he is saying Christ is going to be a stumbling block to the Jew. They thought Jesus would come and set up an earthly kingdom. They couldn't understand that it was by His stripes and His death upon the cross that we would be healed, spiritually. They missed all of that. Therefore, they were looking for something else. He became a stumbling block to them, especially when He went to the cross. They could not fit that into

their theology.

Peter says in **1 Peter 2:6-8**,

"For this is contained in Scripture: "BEHOLD I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." 7 This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, "THE STONE WHICH THE BUILDERS REJECTED, THIS BECAME THE VERY CORNER stone," 8 and, "A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed."

Jesus is the cornerstone. You can't have a building that fits or stands up without a cornerstone. He is the foundation, yes, but even more importantly, He is the cornerstone, the first stone that is laid, the stone that determines the measurement of all the other stones.

See how this fits in Ephesians 1 and 2? He talks about how we are saved by grace, not of works lest any man should boast. Everything that we are hooks right back into the doctrine of Jesus and the person of Christ. We can boast in nothing else. We can only boast in the Lord Jesus Himself. He birthed us into His kingdom. He birthed us into His family, and He is building us into His holy temple on this earth.

Do you remember back in the Old Testament when God came to dwell with the people? He dwelt in a Tabernacle. It was a tent of meeting. They folded it up and carried it. There were certain responsibilities about that. Then later on, they moved to a permanent structure called the Temple. In Malachi, God was so mad at the people He withdrew His presence. For four hundred years there was not a word from God. It was called the four hundred years of darkness. Then Hebrews said, "He broke the silence and has spoken to us in this day through His Son, Jesus Christ."

Jesus, while He was here on this earth, never went beyond the Court of the Gentiles in the Temple of Herod. Why? Because God didn't dwell in that building anymore. He was there in human flesh. Jesus walked on this earth as the Holy Temple of God, His flesh being the house that God lived in while He was on this earth. We put Him to death on the cross. Jesus said, "When you believe in Me, I will come to live in you. You now are the Temple of God upon this earth." Individually and collectively, we are the Holy Temple of God, and Jesus is the cornerstone of that Temple. We would not be what we are except for Him who determines the measurement, the unity, and the support. Everything we are, or are going to be, is determined by the cornerstone, who is the Lord Jesus Christ.

So the foundation, as I understand it, is the doctrine of the holy apostles and prophets who gave forth the divine revelation, which when put together in written form is the New Testament. We are grounded and founded doctrinally by what God said, not by what man said. Not only that, the cornerstone is Jesus Himself. We are governed, grown, and united because of Him, the first stone that was laid.

Well, thirdly we are going to begin to look at the stone of this holy Temple of God. Now, Paul does not use the word "stone." Simon Peter does, but Paul doesn't. He implies it, because in their culture, you didn't have a temple made out of wood. You had a temple made out of stone. It was the stones that built the temple. It is implied that we are living stones, if you please, who are being built into this Holy Temple.

Let's go over to 1 Peter and see how Peter talks about it. He's saying the same thing, but he says it in a way that is a little clearer. He wants us to know that we are living stones. By the way, have you ever thought about the fact that if you are dead in sin, you are a stumbling block to somebody? You are a stone, but you are not the living stone. If you are a Christian, you are a living stone, and you can still cause people to stumble. I would rather cause them to stumble because I know Christ than because I am leading them astray from Him. **1Peter 2:5** says,

"you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

We are living stones, and we are being fitted into this spiritual edifice which is called the Holy Temple of God.

Let's talk about that for a second. **Ephesians 2:21** says,

"in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord."

What does it mean to be fitted together? In construction terms, in that day and time, that word meant the

whole process that stones go through in order to be fitted together. Something is going on in our life. God is fitting us.

Now wait a minute, what do you mean? If you will look at the Old Testament temple, something comes to your mind. In the Old Testament, when they fitted those stones in place, there were no sounds of a hammer or chisel. Why? Does that mean a hammer and chisel had never been used? Oh, no. They were used back in the quarry, but when they came to putting the stones in, the stones were absolutely perfect. They fit into where they needed to fit. The construction term means "the cutting, the rubbing, the testing of the surfaces until they are completely made smooth." It is the using of the chisel and the hammer and the sandpaper to rub off all the rough edges so that when they are fitted in, they fit in exactly like they are supposed to fit. This includes preparing the little dowel holes that they would use. Then they would put dowels in it and seal it with molten lead. All of this was a part of being fitted, a preparation, so that everything is exactly to order as it is being fitted into the building.

As a living stone, I've got no choice but to be sandpapered and chiseled, because you see, right now, I am in the quarry of life. As a living stone, I am still in the quarry. That is what life is all about down here. We call it sanctification. It means the same thing. While I am down here, God knows exactly the vacuum to create in my life that will rub off the rough edges and will sandpaper off all of the things that don't fit in what He wants me to fit into eternally. Therefore, He creates that vacuum so I have to come to Him and confess sin in my life. I have to see the ugliness of my pride. God tests me and proves me and rubs me and scrapes me and chisels me in the quarry so that I am being fitted. It didn't say you have already been fitted, it says "you are being fitted." We are being fitted into this holy temple of God. There is a process going on.

If you are a living stone and you are going through something right now that you don't understand, relax, friend. Just rest a while. The cornerstone is busy fitting you into the temple, which is the holy, spiritual, eternal, temple of God (Ephesians 2:19-22 We Are the Temple of God - 1)

Illustration - Even They - Jack Nicklaus was a Kodiak bear on the golf course, impervious to pressure while huge galleries and television audiences watched his every shot. But put him in the maternity waiting room and he became weak as a newborn cub. Four of five times he fainted on hearing of his children's births. The first time he hit his head on the floor. The second time he was fortunate enough not to hit his head. The third time they caught him going down. The fourth time he sniffed smelling salts—and fainted anyway. The fifth time he narrowly escaped fainting. Individual weakness can be compensated by corporate strength. That is the mystery of all the members forming the body of Christ. With God mercifully ignoring our personal liabilities to magnify our assets, each Christian contributes essential cells to each bodily function. Incompetence in one area offers no reason for guilt; what one member can't, another can do—each one is essential to the whole. If all serve, no one's disability disables the body! ([Hurley, V. Speaker's Sourcebook of New Illustrations Dallas: Word Publishers](#))