

## God's people, the church. Session 4 Citizens and a building

*In this study we are basically looking at just two passages, both from Paul's letter to the Ephesians. The word 'Ephesus' (1:1) is missing from some early manuscripts, and it's thought it might actually have been a circular letter not addressed to any church in particular. It's a letter that is all about 'church' – in it Paul talks a lot about us as God's people: how we became his people and how we should therefore live.*

The passages are: **Ephesians 2:1–22; 3:14–21** (we omit 3:1–13 because it's a long aside)

**Ephesians 2:1–10** is the preliminary to Paul's argument in the second part of the chapter, we look at it only briefly.

- What does Paul here say we used to be like? How did this change and what are the consequences for us?

### **Ephesians 2:11–22**

The division between Jew (the "circumcised") and Gentile (the "uncircumcised", i.e. pagans) was a fundamental one. We saw in last week's study that there were questions in the early church about how the Gentiles were supposed to fit in (see Acts 15).

What groups might we see today in churches who, like the Jew and Gentile, have different cultures or backgrounds?

- What was the previous situation of the Gentiles (vv11,12,19)? How has this changed (vv11–13)?
- How were these opposing groups reconciled?
- What is the basis of unity in the church then (vv14–18)? (we'll be looking at the question of disagreements in a later study)
- If we are all reconciled like this, what does that say about who we welcome in our churches? How can we help everyone to feel welcome, no matter what background they are from?
- If we have peace with God, what should be the consequence for our relationships with others in our fellowships? How can we practically encourage this?

Paul concludes that the Gentiles are now part of God's kingdom (v.19). He uses two images in particular: citizenship and a building (temple).

- What's the difference between being a foreigner and a citizen? (e.g. in terms of rights and responsibilities)
- What do you think it means to be built on the "foundation of the apostles and prophets"? (think about what we read in Acts 2 last week.) To what would Paul be referring? How then is Jesus "the chief cornerstone"?
- How can we make sure our churches are indeed built on this foundation? What can we do personally to help build this foundation?

In the Old Testament, the temple was the place where God in some way dwelt. Paul picks up this idea in vv21-22.

- Notice Paul's use of "in him" (Christ) twice in these verses. Why do you think it's important that we are being built "in Christ"? What might happen if churches forget this?
- If we in our different fellowships are a building where God lives, what are some ways in which this should show itself?

**Read Ephesians 3:14–21**

- What does Paul ask for these believers in order than they are able to live the Christian life?
- How should this affect our unity?
- What does it means to be filled with the “measure of all the fullness of God”?

And finally we pray: “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.” (3:20–21)