

## PEACE AND UNITY IN CHRIST, PT. 5; EPH. 2:20-22 (Ed O'Leary)

### INTRODUCTION. ~~

TODAY, ~ BRING OUR EXAMINATION OF EPH. 2:11-22 TO A CLOSE.

IN VERSE 19, ~ WHICH WE LOOKED AT LAST TIME, ~ PAUL DREW OUT THREE LOGICAL implications of all that he taught in verses 11-18.

▶▶I.e., ~ briefly put, ~ because of all that Jesus alone has accomplished, ~ those who receive Jesus as their Savior and Lord, ~ are "no longer strangers and aliens," ~ we are now "fellow citizens with the saints," ~ and we are also now "members of the household of God."

IN VERSES 20-22, ~ WHICH WE'LL LOOK AT TODAY, ~ PAUL BUILDS ON THE THIRD implication, ~ that we are "members of the household of God."

▶▶In [verse 19c](#), ~ Paul uses the metaphor of the church as a family, ~ as discussed last time, ~ members of God's family.

▷▷In [verses 20-22](#), ~ he changes the metaphor slightly to the metaphor of the church as a building.

▶▶Now, ~ I say that he changes the metaphor slightly, ~ because the Greek word translated as "members of the household," ~ ¶¶

▷▷in addition to meaning "member of a family, ~ relative," ~ as we noted last time, ~ also means "house," ~ as in the place in which someone lives.

▶▶So, ~ believers are members of God's family ~ as well as members, ~ or more precisely the building blocks as we'll see, ~ of God's house.

▷▷Can use house and church interchangeably as we talk about these verses.

▶▶Perhaps we can paraphrase [verse 19c](#) and add it to [verses 20-22](#) and read it this way, ~ "19c believers are now members of God's family and the building blocks of His house, ~ [that's our paraphrase, ~ and then verses 20-22]

▷▷<sup>20a</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, ~ <sup>20b</sup> Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ~ <sup>21</sup> in whom the whole structure, ~ being joined together, ~ grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ~~ ¶¶

↳↳<sup>22</sup> In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. ¶¶ 1/9

▶▶ In these verses, ~ Paul tells us four things about God's house, ~ or the church, ~ of which we, ~ believers, ~ are the building blocks.

*(VERSE 20a) ~ THE 1<sup>st</sup> THING PAUL TELLS US ABOUT GOD'S HOUSE, ~ OF WHICH we are the building blocks, ~ is that it is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets."*

WE ARE BUILT, ~ PAUL SAYS. ~ AND LATER, ~ IN VERSES 21-22 AS WE'LL SEE, ~ HE says that we are "being joined together" and growing "into a holy temple," ~ "into a dwelling place."

▶▶ The wording in the context indicates that believers are the building blocks of God's house.

▷▷ Everyone who confesses with their mouth that Jesus is Lord ~ and believes their heart that God raised Him from the dead, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ becomes a component that fits with other believers to form God's house, ~ God's church.

▶▶ Again, ~ we see that we do not become spiritual "lone rangers" when we are saved. ~ We become part of something. ~~ Something huge. ~~ Something wonderful.

PETER TALKS ABOUT THIS AS WELL, ~ THAT WE'RE THE BUILDING blocks of God's house.

▶▶ In 1 Pet. 2:5, ~ speaking to believers he writes, ~ "you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house."

▷▷ All believers of all generations are "like living stones," ~ i.e., ~ each and every believer is a building block of the church, ~ God's "spiritual house."

▷▷ Notice that the church is a spiritual ~ and not a physical ~ structure. ~ This building we meet in every Sunday is not the church.

↳↳ All of us who are Christians who meet here are the church. ~ Each one of us a building block. ~ Each one of us a "living stone."

NOTICE THE PASSIVE VERBS USED BY BOTH PETER AND PAUL, ~ WE "ARE BEING BUILT up." ~ we are "built."

▶▶ We do not add ourselves to the building, ~ we are added. ~ Once again we are reminded that neither we ~ nor our works ~ are the source of our salvation.

▶▶ And the implied builder in both passages is Jesus ~ I.e., ~ it is Jesus who is constructing the building. ¶¶ 2/9

▷▷ That is why this is one building project that will not fail ~ and will be brought to completion.

▷▷ And that's why the church can never be destroyed, ~ because it's construction does not depend on us ~ but on God.

↪↪ In Matt. 16:18b, ~ Jesus said, ~ "I will build my church, ~ and the gates ~ [or forces] ~ of hell shall not prevail against it.

→→ Jesus promises us that the church will not be destroyed by the evil powers arrayed against it.

↪↪ Satan's and unbelievers' efforts to destroy the church no doubt receive the same reaction from God, ~ that we've referred to a couple of times in the past regarding the rebellious who want to throw God off of His throne.

→→ Ps. 2:4a, ~ "He who sits in the heavens laughs."

↪↪ God laughs at the puny efforts of Satan and sinful humans to overthrow Him, ~ to stop the gospel from spreading, ~ and to destroy the church.

AND CONSIDER THIS: ~~ PHYSICAL BUILDINGS ARE NOT PERMANENT. ~~ THEY AGE, ~ deteriorate, ~ and waste away.

▶▶ But not God's "spiritual house." ~~ because the church is being built by Jesus and belongs to the spiritual world, ~ the church and every "living stone" within ~ it is permanent and eternal.

▷▷ Points to the eternal security of genuine Christians.

↪↪ Speaking of believers in Jn. 10:28a, ~ Jesus said, ~ "I give them eternal life, ~ and they will never perish." ~~ Double negative . . . .

NOW AS WE NOTED, ~ GETTING BACK TO EPH. 2:20a, ~ THE FIRST THING PAUL TELLS us about God's house, ~ of which we are the building blocks is that ~ ¶¶

▶▶ we are "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets."

▷▷ "prophets" here refers to the NT ~ and not the OT ~ prophets.

↪↪ For one thing, ~ that's seen in the order of the words ~ "apostles and prophets" . . .  
↵↵ 3/9

↪↪It is also seen in what Paul says in Eph. 3:4-5. ~ "When you read this, ~ you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, ~ which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."

↪↪And in Eph. 4:11, ~ Paul says that Jesus gave prophets to the church.

▶▶We are "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets."

WHILE THERE ARE OTHER WAYS OF LOOKING AT THIS, ~ ¶¶

▶▶it seems best to take "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets" as "built on the foundation put down by the apostles and prophets."

▶▶To look at the foundation as consisting of "the apostles and prophets," ~ which is possible ~ but not advisable in my opinion, ~ ¶¶

▷▷... would make Jesus, ~ as the cornerstone, ~ first among equals, ~ which He's not. ~ There is no one equal to Jesus.

▶▶Also, ~ in speaking of the foundation of the church, ~ Paul never conceives of himself as being part of the foundation, ~ but only as laying it.

▷▷In 1 Cor. 3:10a, ~ he says, ~ "According to the grace of God given to me, ~ like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation."

▶▶Furthermore, ~ consider what Paul says in 1 Cor. 3:11. ~ "For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, ~ which is Jesus Christ."

▶▶In both 1 Cor. 3:10a-11, ~ Paul is referring specifically to the gospel, ~ with its basic content of salvation through Jesus Christ.

▶▶So, ~ here in Eph. 2:20a, ~ Paul is saying that the "living stones" that are being added ~ are being "built on the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets."

▷▷And that foundation is the gospel of Jesus Christ, ~ which the apostles and NT prophets first proclaimed, ~ and by which they established the first local congregations.

↪↪To put it simply, ~ as someone has said, ~ we could say that Christ preached is the foundation ~ and Christ in His person is the cornerstone.

▶▶TPID, ~ the church universal is being built upon two ~ absolutely 100% ~ unshakable and solid elements: ~ God's word ~ and God's Son. ¶¶ 4/9

▷▷ And by way of application, ~ each local congregation, ~ in order to be truly effective for God and to be a stable, ~ right-on fellowship, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ must be established upon ~ and adhere to ~ these two absolutely 100% unshakable and solid elements: ~ God's word ~ and God's Son. ~ Praise . . . our church . . . .

(VERSE 20b) ~ The 2<sup>nd</sup> THING PAUL TELLS US ABOUT GOD'S HOUSE, ~ OF WHICH we are the building blocks, ~ is that Jesus is the cornerstone.

IN ANCIENT TIMES ~ THE CORNERSTONE WAS THE FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT stone of the foundation of a building.

▶▶ It was carefully placed; ~ because the builders would line up the rest of the building from that one stone.

▷▷ So we see here the centrality and preeminence of a building's cornerstone.

AND THIS, ~ I BELIEVE, ~ IS THE POINT OF COMPARISON PAUL IS MAKING BETWEEN a physical cornerstone and Jesus.

▶▶ Up until now, ~ Paul has, ~ over and over, ~ stressed the centrality of Jesus in our salvation.

▷▷ Now, ~ in calling Jesus "the cornerstone" of God's house, ~ of which we are the building blocks, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ Paul is pointing out the centrality and preeminence of Jesus in the church.

▶▶ If you'll recall, ~ Paul touched on this earlier in 1:22b. ~ There Paul wrote, ~ NET ~ "and he gave him to the church as head over all things."

▷▷ Paul's point being that God the Father has made Jesus the supreme head of the church.

↳↳ And now in 2:20b, ~ Paul returns to the centrality and preeminence of Jesus in the church.

▶▶ And in saying "Christ Jesus himself," ~ here in 2:20b, ~ Paul is emphasizing the centrality and preeminence of Jesus.

▷▷ Jesus, ~ and Jesus alone, ~ is central and preeminent in the church. ¶¶ 5/9

IN COL. 1:18a, ~ PAUL GIVES US A FULLER AND VIVID PICTURE OF WHAT HE'S SAYING here in Eph. 2:20b.

▶▶ Paul writes, ~ "And he is the head of the body, ~ the church ~ [explains "body"]. ~ He is the beginning, ~ the firstborn from the dead."

▶▶ "he" in "he is the head of the body, ~ the church" is emphatic ~ and the clause could be paraphrased as "Jesus ~ and no other, ~ or, ~ Jesus and Jesus alone, ~ is the head of the body, ~ i.e., ~ the church."

▷▷ The one who is the creator and sustainer of the universe, ~ and He alone, ~ is the head of the church.

▶▶ The word "head" means one who is supreme over. ~ It also means that the head directs the body and gives life, ~ power, ~ and growth to the body.

▷▷ Jesus, ~ and no other, ~ is supreme over the church. ~ And He, ~ and He alone, ~ gives life, ~ power, ~ and growth to, ~ and directs ~ the church.

▶▶ Next, ~ Paul says that Jesus "is the beginning." ~ The word "beginning" points to source or origin.

▷▷ Paul is saying that Jesus is the one who brought the church into existence.

▶▶ And then Paul says that Jesus is "the firstborn from the dead."

▷▷ A twofold aspect of priority is to be understood here. ~ And i.e., ~ priority in time ~ and priority in rank.

▷▷ 1<sup>st</sup>, ~ He has priority in time. ~ I.e., ~ Jesus was the first in time to rise from the dead with a glorified resurrection body, ~ never to die again. ~ And being the first implies that more resurrections will follow.

↳↳ In 1 Cor. 15:20, ~ Paul writes, ~ "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, ~ the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."

→→ "firstfruits" is a promise that more will follow. ~ The first of a great harvest, ~ also known as "firstfruits," ~ was the first part of the harvest that faithful Jews would bring to the temple as an offering.

↪↪ Jesus has become the first of a great harvest of those who will be raised to life again, ~ referring of course to believers. ↵↵ 6/9

▷▷ The facts that Jesus is "the firstborn from the dead" and "the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep," ~ absolutely guarantee that our resurrection will definitely follow.

▷▷ 2<sup>nd</sup>, ~ as we said, ~ "firstborn" is also to be understood as priority in rank.

↳↳ Believers will rise to live eternally with Him; ~ but Jesus is first in rank, ~ first in importance. ~ He has, ~ and always will have, ~ supreme authority over all the church.

→→ He will always hold the central and preeminent position in the church.

JESUS, ~ AND JESUS ALONE, ~ IS THE CORNERSTONE OF THE CHURCH.

*(Verse 21) ~ THE THIRD THING PAUL TELLS US ABOUT GOD'S HOUSE, ~ OF WHICH we are the building blocks, ~ is that it is growing "into a holy temple in the Lord." ~ ~ ¶¶*

HERE PAUL TELLS US WHAT, ~ WE, ~ THE "LIVING STONES," ~ ARE BECOMING. ~ PAUL further identifies the church as "a holy temple."

▶▶ Like living stones, ~ being joined together and growing "into a holy temple in the Lord."

▶▶ The wording indicates a continuous present activity.

▷▷ IOW, ~ Jesus is still building His church, ~ it is not finished yet. ~ It will be completed when Jesus returns to establish His kingdom ~ and usher in "new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells."

"BEING JOINED TOGETHER, ~ BELIEVERS ARE GROWING "INTO A HOLY TEMPLE IN THE Lord."

▶▶ The question is, ~ what does Paul mean by the phrase "a holy temple in the Lord"?

▶▶ Well, ~ I suggest that [verse 22](#), ~ which we'll cover in a little bit, ~ when compared to [verse 21](#), ~ can be looked at as a general parallel to [verse 21](#).

▷▷ The only difference, ~ as we'll see, ~ is that [verse 22](#) is an application of [verse 21](#).

▶▶ So, ~ the phrase "a dwelling place for God by the Spirit" in [verse 22](#) defines the phrase "a holy temple in the Lord" in [verse 21](#).

▶▶ So, ~ Paul is saying in [verse 21](#), ~ "being joined together, ~ believers are growing into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."

▷▷ "by the Spirit" tells how God will dwell in the temple He's building. ¶¶ 7/9

▶▶ Paul characterizes the church as the dwelling place of God, ~ which is being formed as believing Jews and believing Gentiles unite together in Christ.

▷▷ As the Old Testament Temple was the dwelling place of God by his visible glory, ~ so now the body of believers will be the dwelling place of God by the Spirit.

▶▶ It is true that the Holy Spirit indwells each individual believer, ~ making each believer a "temple." ~ But in the context here in Eph. 2:21, ~ Paul is not referring to this.

▷▷ Rather, ~ he is speaking of the Spirit's dwelling in the new temple of the corporate body of believers, ~ the church.

▶▶ In Rev. 21:1-5, ~ I believe that John gives us the picture of the fulfillment of Paul's words, ~ that the church is growing "into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."

▷▷ "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, ~ for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, ~ and the sea was no more. ~ And I saw the holy city, ~ new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, ~ prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. ¶¶

↳↳ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ~ 'Behold, ~ the dwelling place of God is with man. ~ He will dwell with them, ~ and they will be his people, ~ and God himself will be with them as their God. ~ [3x . . .] ~ ¶¶

→→ He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, ~ and death shall be no more, ~ neither shall there be mourning, ~ nor crying, ~ nor pain anymore, ~ for the former things have passed away.' ~ ¶¶

↳↳ And he who was seated on the throne said, ~ 'Behold, ~ I am making all things new.' ~ Also he said, ~ 'Write this down, ~ for these words are trustworthy and true.'"

*(VERSE 22) ~ THE FOURTH THING PAUL TELLS US ABOUT GOD'S HOUSE, ~ OF which we are the building blocks, ~ is that all believers are included, ~ all believers are the building blocks.*

PAUL SAYS, ~ "IN HIM YOU ALSO ARE BEING BUILT TOGETHER INTO A DWELLING place for God by the Spirit."

▶▶ As said, ~ verse 22 can be looked at as a general parallel to verse 21.

▷▷ More specifically, ~ it is an application of verse 21 to the local congregation of Christians at Ephesus. ¶¶ 8/9



↪↪ Simply put, ~ Paul is saying to the believers at Ephesus, ~ "you too are included in this temple." ~ It was a message of encouragement.

▶▶ And the application and message of encouragement extends to all local Christian congregations.

▷▷ So, ~ we could say that Paul is saying to us, ~ believers at NHCC, ~ "you too are a part of this awesome temple that God is building as His eternal home."

↪↪ "You too . . . are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."

### CONCLUSION.

IN CLOSING, ~ I WOULD LIKE TO CALL YOUR ATTENTION TO THE PHRASE "BEING joined together" from verse 21.

▶▶ The NASB has a better picture of what Paul's saying. ~ It reads, ~ "being fitted together."

▶▶ Today ~ the process of fitting stones together is simple because mortar is used.

▷▷ In Paul's day ~ without the use of mortar ~ stones had to be cut so that they properly fit with one another in order to be perfectly joined together.

↪↪ So the stones of a building were not all identical or had the same function. ~ And every stone of the building was special and important.

▶▶ So too the "living stones" that make up the church. ~ We are not all identical ~ or have the same gifts or functions. ~ And every individual "living stone" is special and important.

▷▷ Let's not ever forget that.

LET'S PRAY . . . . 9/9