

One in Jesus Christ

Key Verse: ***"In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."***
—Ephesians 2:21

Selected Scripture:
Ephesians 2:11-22

God. Jesus' death as a ransom for Adam and his race, however, not only redeemed the Israelites, but all mankind, since all were "in Adam."—I Cor. 15:22

Jesus' life, death, and subsequent resurrection, also opened up a new arrangement—"a new and living way." (Heb. 10:20) By this, not only Jews, but also Gentiles, would now have the opportunity to come into a relationship with the Heavenly Father. Jews and Gentiles could be considered, as our title states, "One in Jesus Christ." This was because Jesus died a "ransom for all." (I Tim. 2:6) This is the focus of our lesson as found in the words of the Apostle Paul to the Ephesians.

The Ephesian brethren in time past, Paul points out, were "Gentiles in the flesh," "aliens from . . . Israel," "strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope," and therefore "without God." (Eph. 2:11,12) Paul continues, "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he

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Advent, God's dealings for nearly two thousand years were primarily with the nation of Israel. They were in covenant relationship to him through the Mosaic Law arrangement, while other nations and peoples—Gentiles—were not in any direct relationship to

is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross.”—vss. 13-16

Paul’s words tell us that prior to Jesus’ redemptive work, the Gentiles were considered “far off.” A “middle wall of partition” separated them from the Jews, and both groups considered themselves at “enmity” one with the other. The blood of Christ, however, did away with these divisions, reconciling both groups to God “by the cross.” Faith in Jesus’ blood was the requirement for both Jews and Gentiles to become reconciled to God, and thus be “one” with him and with one another. This same faith continues, even today, to be the means by which any who desire to gain a relationship with God must come. “Being justified [made righteous in God’s sight] by faith, we have peace [oneness] with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”—Rom. 5:1

Continuing our lesson, Paul told the Ephesian brethren that through Jesus both Jewish and Gentile believers had access to the Heavenly Father through the power and influence of his Holy Spirit. Gentiles who entered would no longer be considered “strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God.” (Eph. 2:18,19) The verity of Paul’s statement is emphasized by his assurance that this new Gospel Age arrangement was built upon a sure foundation—the words of the prophets, the apostles, and Jesus Christ himself as “the chief corner stone.” (vs. 20) Our Key Verse states that this symbolic spiritual temple, composed of both Jew and Gentile, would be “fitly framed together” as “an habitation of God through the Spirit.”—vss. 21,22 ■