

NO LONGER STRANGERS

Passage for study and prayer: **Ephesians 2:11-22**

“...at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” (Ephesians 2:12)

Paul’s marvellous letter to the Ephesians is all about the church. In these key verses he reminds Gentile believers – that is, most of us – who we once were and what we now are, ‘in Messiah Jesus’. (Did you know that the word ‘Christ’ simply means Messiah? ‘Christos’ is the Greek translation of the Hebrew ‘Moshiach’ – Messiah in English - meaning ‘Anointed One’.) Until Jesus died and rose again, we Gentiles were outside God’s covenants. We could only enter the outer courts in the Temple, where the trading went on. We could not offer sacrifices to cover our sin, or be part of Temple worship. We were separated, aliens and foreigners. We were not part of God’s people, could not claim God’s promises, and had no hope of knowing Him.

But now, it’s a different story! The blood of Messiah has brought us near. Jesus’ sacrifice for sin bought us both access to God and reconciliation with men. The dividing wall of the Temple that separated Gentiles from the benefits of God’s covenant has been broken down in Jesus, making us one people in Him. Together we form the new Temple, built on the foundation of apostolic and prophetic testimony, with Messiah Himself the chief cornerstone. We are no longer enemies as the Temple laws required, but part of the same family. In fact, we have together a new identity as One New Mankind, made up of Jewish and Gentile believers united in Jesus. We have been recreated, so that we can be a dwelling place of God by the Spirit and a witness to the whole world of true peace and unity, as foretold by Isaiah (57:19 – cf v 13). In Israel, the One New Mankind made up of Jews, Arabs and other Gentiles from the nations is proving that peace and reconciliation is possible in the Messiah.

Praise God for the incredible privilege of sharing in the covenants and being part of God’s people, able to know Him and show forth His glory to the world! ***“you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,” (v 19)*** Pray that as part of the One New Mankind you may be a testimony to Jews and Gentiles alike of God’s grace, mercy and truth.

Rejoice that Jesus has made the way for true reconciliation and pray earnestly for a powerful work of the Holy Spirit to unite Jewish and Arab believers in His love and peace, as a testimony to their divided brethren. ***“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity,” (vv 14,15a)***

Give thanks that the One New Man is growing in size, strength and maturity in Israel, and proving a real witness to God’s love and power. ***“...in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” (v22)*** Ask God to raise up more shepherds after His own heart to lead the various different flocks in Israel’s diverse society. Pray earnestly for unity, provision of needed resources and protection in the spiritual battle, especially for those who suffer persecution for their faith.