

**PP Ghost Sightings: Seeing the Holy Spirit in Action Today**

**Ephesians 2:11-22 The God Who Builds His Dwelling Place**

**8/22-23, 2015**

**PP** Someone sent to me a story about New Zealand's Brian Cox, who built a tree church. He began building what you see in this picture in 2011, and completed it in 4 years

**PP** It is an amazing work providing an immersive and surreal worship environment But dwarfing Mr. Cox is another Builder, the Holy Spirit, and the church He is building is massive, beautiful, and provides a glimpse into what God the Spirit is doing today Welcome again to our summer series called Ghost Sightings: Seeing the Holy Spirit in Action

Turn with me to **Ephesians 2:11**, and let's work through this passage then focus on verses **19-22** And as you turn there, let me give you an important key to understanding all the pronoun changes the Apostle Paul uses

He vacillates between '**we**', '**you**' and '**us**' and it can be confusing at first, but here's the key

**PP** When Paul writes '**we**', he refers to his fellows Jew; '**you**' refers to Gentile believers, and '**us**' refers to the church, made up of both Jewish and Gentile believers

This key helps immediately as in **verse 11** we read, "***Therefore remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision***"

**PP** Jews viewed Gentiles as the '**uncircumcised**' (11), meaning those cut off and separated from the favor and promises of God

Listen to how Paul referred to the unique blessings and favor that Israel enjoyed from God

**PP** "***They are Israelites, and to them belong the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.***"

**Romans 9:4-5**

Gentiles were outside of these blessings, and it bred a great deal of Jewish contempt toward them Many Jewish leaders taught that Gentiles were created by God to be fuel for the fires of hell One saying was: *The best of the serpents crush, the best of the Gentiles kill*<sup>1</sup>

It was not lawful to help a Gentile mother give birth, for to do so would be responsible for bringing another Gentile into the world

If a Jew married a Gentile, the family would hold a funeral the same day as the wedding

Touching a Gentile was equivalent to death, going into a Gentile home made a Jew spiritually unclean, morally defiled before God

But the Gentiles have historically hated and loathed the Jews as well, trying repeatedly, energized by demonic hatred, to eradicate the Jews from the earth

This friction between Jew and Gentile found its way into this church and Paul is reminding them that the Gospel has made all believing Jews and believing Gentiles one body

So he reminds the Gentiles that '***you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.***' **2:12**

This is the bad news of the gospel, and it sweeps every sinner into it, for this is the condition of every human being, all of us separated from God through our rebellion in sin

So how beautiful is the first word of verse 13, "***But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.***" **Ephesians 2:13**

<sup>1</sup> Barclay, Ephesians, p. 123

Our sin has separated us from God and left us hopeless in our own efforts, **but**, Jesus rescued us  
There is significance in the phrase, *'been brought near'*

**PP** Isaiah 57:19 reads, *"Peace, peace, to the far and to the near," says the LORD"*

**PP** Again, the *'near'* are the Jews, the *'far'* are the Gentiles

A Gentile that converted to Judaism was said to have been brought near by the Rabbis

Gentiles, Paul says, you have been brought near by the shed blood of Christ, *"For He Himself is our peace, Who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility"* 2:14

How shocking to hear that Jew and Gentile are made one, no more dividing wall of hostility

If you were alive at the time of Christ and visited the temple of God in Jerusalem, you would first go up the temple mount to a massive court called the Court of Gentiles

If you weren't a Jew, that is as far as you could go because separating that court from the next one inward, was a 4-5 foot high partition made of stone with placards spaced apart on it written in both Greek and Latin

**PP** It read, *"Let no one of any other nation come within the fence and barrier around the Holy Place. Whosoever will be taken doing so will himself be responsible for the fact that his death will ensue."*

They would stone to death a Gentile who went past this wall, and it almost happened to Paul, who was falsely accused of taking a Gentile beyond the dividing wall of hostility

**PP** (Triangle 1) You can picture a simple triangle where Jew is divided from Gentile and both are divided from God

**PP** (Triangle 2) But through the cross, Christ can *'reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.'* 2:16

He has destroyed this dividing wall making believing Jews and believing Gentiles into one people, reconciled to God, and called them the church

*"For through Him we both [Jew and Gentile] have access in one Spirit to the Father"* 18

How did He do that?

*"He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near."* 17

To the Gentiles who were far off, and to Jews who were near

Believing Gentiles together with believing Jews both part of God's family

*"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God"* 19

It's been His mission since He expelled sinful Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden

Their sin had ruptured the blessing of dwelling with God, breaking their fellowship with Him

The entire rest of the biblical story is about God building a dwelling place called the church

So Paul uses building language... *'built on the foundation...Cornerstone...structure...built together into a dwelling place'* 2:20-22

It rests on the Jesus, the Cornerstone, and the whole building rests on and is plumbed to Him

The bible is not merely a collection of 66 books thrown together into one volume

It is the telling of one story, and it has what is called a story or narrative arc

Think the TV show '24' which each season but its last had 24 episodes unfolding the plot

The Bible's story arc is in this passage and here it is

God is saving and rescuing people from eternal death, building His church to dwell with us  
We keep saying in this series, *'the work of God is Trinitarian in every dimension.'*

All of what God does is done by the Father, Son and Spirit working together

God the Father planned this rescue mission: ***"the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ chose us in him before the foundation of the world...he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will"*** Ephesians 1:3-5

God the Son provided the means for sinners to be rescued by dying in their place: ***"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace"*** Ephesians 1:7

And God the Spirit is the Master Builder and we see that in **verse 22**

***"In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit."***

The Spirit of God is building a dwelling place for the Father, resting on the redemptive work of Jesus Christ

**PP** And there are potentially Life-Changing thoughts we can glean from this passage

### **PP 1-We are the dwelling place for God**

***"So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord."*** Ephesians 2:19-21

Pretend I call you and ask to drop by your home and I'm 5 minutes away?

What would you do as soon as that phone call is over?

Most would fly through the house and pick it up as much as possible, despising me for the stress  
Of course we would want people to be at ease in our clean and ordered homes, but it's also true  
that that many feel that the condition of their home reflects on them personally

Do you understand that this is how God thinks and feels?

God wants His home to be ***'a holy temple'***, to be orderly, so that it reflects well on him

**PP** Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**, ***"do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."***

Glorify God, live like God, let your life make God look good, make Him famous

Now grab your soul and force it to ponder this thought...God is living in you as you have those conversations with your family; as you surf the Internet, as you travel for work, as you watch tv, as you drive, as you pay your taxes, as you interact with your neighbor, as you entertain yourself, in your private moments and public

Are there any rooms in the home of your heart that you would be embarrassed for people to see, or for God to enter?

Any areas of your life that reflect poorly on God, the Lord of your life?

He's not up in heaven watching you through a portal or some divine screen as Hollywood depicts

He is with you, inside you, looking through your eyes, hearing through your ears, privy to your thoughts and feelings, living through your actions

Christian, are you a temple in which God delights to dwell?

Yes God dwells in each Christian, but He dwells in the community of believers, the church

**PP** This is what Paul had in mind in **I Corinthians 3:16**, ***“Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you?”***

‘You’ here is the church at Corinth

God is dwelling in each Christ-centered church

He is hear right now as I preach, helping me to say what He wants me to say, helping you to hear, and apply, and grow

He is here as we sing and lift our voices in worship to Him

He is here moving us to use the spiritual gifts He has given each of Christian

He is here moving you to give generously and cheerfully to the work of His mission

He is here by the Spirit convicting us, encouraging us, teaching us, helping this church be a light to the Lehigh Valley and the world

He gathers with us as we serve in our ministries, guides us as we counsel one another

He fills us with love for each other, genuinely caring how each others’ weeks have gong, ready to pray for the week to come, talking rather than leaving in a hurry

So imagine for a moment, what God sees and feels when we slander one another, gossip about one another, withhold love for one another??

It’s interesting that in Revelation 2, Christ addressed this same church at Ephesus, threatening to no longer dwell among them because they lost their love they once had

**PP** ***“you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.”*** **Revelation 2:4-5**

He could no longer dwell in their loveless church, and was on the cusp of leaving them

How do we each do when someone hurts us, or is very different from us?

Do we move toward them in love and forgiveness or pull away in selfishness?

**PP** Notice we are not a dwelling place of God, but a ***‘dwelling place for God’*** **2:22**

He has saved us for Himself; we have been bought with a price for His pleasure

And He is preparing us to be a dwelling for Himself, He is doing this ***‘by the Spirit’***

## **PP 2-The Holy Spirit is preparing God’s home now**

***“In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”*** **2:22**

There is an amazing little verse tucked away in **1 kings 6:7** that is so encouraging to us

In this Old Testament chapter, Solomon is building a house for God to dwell, and he had given very explicit instructions to the builders

He sent more than 100,000 workers into the hills to get the stone needed for the massive temple

**PP** ***“When the house was built, it was with stone prepared at the quarry, so that neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron was heard in the house while it was being built.”***

**1 Kings 6:7**

The stones were measured, cut, chiseled in the quarry, and then put into their place

Solomon’s temple was a type, pointing to the eternal dwelling place of God

**PP** *“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.” Revelation 21:3*

That dwelling place is on earth, called the church, and Peter wrote that all Christians are *“like*

**PP** *living stones are being built up as a spiritual house” 1 Peter 2:5*

Christian, you are right now in the quarry being measured, cut, chiseled and being made ready  
The hammer and chisel of trials, difficulties, and discipline are happening now, all under the  
hand and wisdom of the Holy Spirit

He is the foreman, He knows where to strike with that hammer, and He knows precisely how far  
to cut with the axe

He shapes through His Word, fits us through our prayers, encourages us to endure through our  
fellowship to one day set us into His eternal dwelling place

And there, in eternity, we will never again feel the blow of hammer and chisel

No more cancer, death, injustice, and no more difficult marriages, or straying children

These all belong in the quarry and they will be found in our eternal home

Can you begin to view the difficulties of this life as shaping moments that will enable you later  
to be seamlessly fit as a living stone in God’s dwelling place

Get your mind around that now, ahead of the difficulties, and *“Count it all joy, my brothers,*

**PP** *when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.” James 1:2-4*

You and I are being dressed by the Holy Spirit and will one day be set upon that great  
Cornerstone Jesus Christ to be part of God’s eternal dwelling

*“In Him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.” 2:22*  
Amen?

Pray