

## 4.27.25 Transcribe - A Picture of the Church

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Ephesians chapter 2. Following creation, God formed some institutions or groups. First thing he did was he made man and woman, put them together, and called it marriage. Later he gathered a group of people that were offspring of Abraham, formed them, and called them Israel, his chosen people, the Jews.

After the cross he took the Jewish believers and he formed them into what he called the church. But here's the good news. The church just wasn't for Jewish believers.

The church was for all believers, Jews and Gentiles alike. So we're going to notice some of the characteristics or a picture of the church here in this section. Sometimes people get the church and Israel confused.

They want to combine the two or do away with one of them. That wasn't God's plan. Is Israel still important to God? Yes, it is.

In fact, if you read Revelation all of the tribulation time is God's plan to bring Israel back to Him. So what do you mean, why not the church? Because the church has already left at the rapture before the tribulation starts. So let's look at verse 19 and we'll go through these four verses and see what God has for us this morning.

Verse 19, "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God." So here he's telling the Jewish, not the Jewish, the Gentile believers, you are no more strangers and foreigners. Because in the beginning there were two groups, there were Jews and there were Gentiles. And everything centered around Israel, around the Jews as far as God was concerned.

A couple weeks ago or last week we looked at this verse 12, if you go back up you'll see what he means by strangers and foreigners. At that time you were without Christ, that means Christ is the Messiah. What he's meaning is at the time before Christ came you had no hope of a Savior coming, you had no Messiah, you had no Christ, you were without Christ.

You were aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, you were strangers from the covenants of promise. What were the covenants of promise? Well Galatians 3.14 says, "The blessings of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Abraham had been given many promises, many promises, but that's just for the Israel, that was just for the Jews. And so they were strangers to these promises, they had no hope.

Prior to Christ coming Gentiles had no hope. How sad is that? Unless they converted to Judaism and they were without God in the world. That just means that God had one chosen people prior

to Christ and that was Israel.

So they came up with their own gods, they didn't have God. So they were strangers and foreigners, but that has to do with the Gentiles relationship to Israel, but Christ changed all of that. Amen? Now it says, but now you're fellow citizens with the saints.

That doesn't mean just any saint. These are the saints that accepted Christ, these are the Jewish followers of Jesus. Saints, you know what saints are? Saint means holy ones, those that are set apart for God's purpose.

Are you a saint? Are you holy? You should be. God says, be holy for I'm holy. You know my little saying, we're to be holy but not holier than now.

Okay, there's a difference. Holy means pure, complete. Holy means to be set apart.

Holy means that we are set apart to serve God and we don't become saints by living holy. We live holy because we're saints. Don't get it backwards because you become a saint the moment you say, Lord I accept the forgiveness of sins.

I believe that you died on that cross, shed your blood, were buried and rose again the third day. Now you are set apart for God. You're born again.

You're spirit-filled. You're fellow citizens with the saints, the others that have done the same thing. Now that fellow citizens, does that mean suddenly you become a Jew? No.

When it's talking about fellow citizens, it don't mean anything about being a citizen on earth. It's about being a citizen of heaven. And isn't that the great news that we need to remember all the time? You are a citizen of heaven.

You don't become one in the future when you die and go to heaven. You're already a fellow citizen in heaven. You're already a part of heaven, even though you've never been there.

But we should live like we are there, amen? A fellow citizen. Because this life is short. Yeah, you may be an American citizen, but the moment you die, you're not anymore.

You're dead. But the moment you accept Christ and you die to your sins, you become a citizen of heaven. You know when that ends? Never.

Never. You're always a citizen of heaven. And we should live that way.

But that means, because he's talking about the Jews and the Gentiles, that means that when a Jew accepted Christ and what He did on the cross, he became a saint and he became a citizen of heaven. The Gentiles, what changed? Nothing. When they accepted Christ and what He did on the cross, they become saints, they become citizens of heaven.

There aren't compartments in heaven saying, the Jews are over here and the Gentiles are over

there. It's just, I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there you may be also. And that's what he's trying to teach us here.

The church is not Israel reborn. The church is not something new just for the Gentiles. The church in general is a new entity created for those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Now we believe that physically it's a local church and everyone within the local church should be saved, should accept Christ, they're a saint serving God. But it doesn't matter, we could have red and yellow, black and white, we are precious in His sight, it don't matter what color you are, doesn't matter if you're a Jew or Gentile, if you trusted Christ you're a saint and you're part of His body, the body of Christ called the church. Shown physically as local churches.

But also that, look, not only fellow citizens, we are of the household of God. Isn't it interesting to think that we are part of God's family? And that's what it's saying. You know if I went to any one of your houses and go, who lives in your house? Well my household is the people that live here.

Normally it's just families, amen? And so what he's saying when he says if you're the household of God, what he's saying is the same as you are the family of God. It don't matter what color you are, it don't matter man, woman, child of age, Israel or Gentile, you trusted Christ, you're part of God's family, part of God's family. Isn't that good? Galatians 3, 26 and 28 says this, for ye are all the children of God.

You know some people stop right there. Everybody in the world's a child of God. They don't read the rest of it.

You're a children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. For as many as you have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ, there's neither Jew or Greek, there's neither bond nor free, there's neither male or female, for you're all one in Christ Jesus. The church, this body of believers, this body of Christ is made up of so many different people, yet in God's eyes we are the same if you have trusted Christ by faith.

You're saying, well what about the Catholic Church? What about the Congregationalist? What about this group, that group, other group? If they follow God's Word and they have trusted Christ and done what God says and they are a saint, they're still part of the family of God. But unfortunately many of those groups have come up with different ideas that pushed him away from the family of God. We've been going through some soul winning things the last couple weeks.

One week we looked at questions people might have. Last week we looked at, huh? Two weeks? That's right. Thank you.

My mind I'm going, we didn't do this last week, what did we do? Oh I forgot about Easter. Two weeks ago we looked at how to lead somebody to Christ different ways. This week we're going

to spend just a little time, I've got a chart of some of the major denominations and what they believe on different issues.

The Bible, salvation, whether you can lose your salvation, who talks for God in the world, those kind of things. And the reason we're going to go over those briefly is just so you understand. When you go to witness to somebody and they say I'm from this group, you'll have a general idea of what they believe.

Because no matter what group there is, they all believe there's a God. And that's when the paths start separating after that part. But the truth he's telling us here, if you've trusted Jesus Christ by faith, if you've had your sins forgiven, you are part of the family of God, period.

But how's this household built? Verse 20, and built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone. So the church has a foundation. What's the one foundation like we sing in a song? Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now here it says that Jesus is the chief cornerstone. In 1 Corinthians 3 11, he calls him the foundation, for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Many times when they build a building, the cornerstone was the start.

The cornerstone, the way I understand it, was the first stone they put back down and they used that to square off the rest of the building. The way the rest of the building is built determines on how good that cornerstone is. Sometimes that cornerstone is part of the foundation, and that's what Jesus Christ is.

Jesus Christ is not only the cornerstone, he's the foundation. But how do we know all about this foundation? Well it tells us right here, the foundation of the Apostles and the Prophets. It doesn't mean the Apostles and Prophets are the foundation, it means they set the foundation on the cornerstone.

Now we'll Sunday school this morning there's one verse that just, we all have our own ideas what it means, and we're probably all wrong. And sometimes when you're studying Scripture you look at these things and you're going, what are they saying? When it says that the foundation is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, which Apostles? There's some groups say the only Apostles built on is Paul. If that's true there wouldn't be an S on the end of Apostle here, built on all the Apostles.

But notice it doesn't say the Apostles and the Prophets. Apostles and Prophets go together like one big group. If you skipped over in Ephesians, well before we get there, sometimes we look at this and we ask ourselves when it comes to the Prophets, are they talking about the Old Testament Prophets? Or are they talking about New Testament Prophets? You're saying there are New Testament Prophets? Yeah, there was at the beginning and in a sense there still are.

The Old Testament Prophets they've laid part of the foundation, why? Because they looked and they said, Jesus is coming and this is how you'll know it's Him. You know at Sunday school we

quoted that verse from Ezekiel I think it was about Jesus is going to come healing people and doing this and doing that. The Old Testament Prophets pointed to Jesus and laid the foundation of who He was going to be.

And the Apostles they all were with Jesus and so they built that part of the foundation based on what they learned from the Lord. But there are also some New Testament Prophets and we know this because we turn to Ephesians chapter 4 verse 11. Well verse 8 says, He gave gifts to men, then skip down to verse 11, He gave some Apostles and some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers.

To the body of believers there were groups of people sent out. Now we know what the Apostles are, they're ones chosen by God to represent Him. What are prophets? Well in the Old Testament sense the prophets were those that foretold events that were going to come.

In the New Testament they are those that take the Word of God and are able to explain it in such a way that we understand what God is trying to tell us. So like preachers do sometimes. But see many times the Apostles would teach things and then they would leave and the people would want to learn more and the Apostles couldn't come back.

But there were prophets sent there or there were pastors and teachers sent there. Pastors are more those that shepherd the flock and teach. Prophets are more the ones that preached what God said so that people would understand.

And they laid the foundation of all what we call doctrine of the Church and it's all built on Jesus Christ. If a church has any doctrine, any beliefs, any rules that they follow that are not built on Jesus Christ they are not a Church of God. I know that's a bold statement but it's biblical.

They have to be built on Jesus Christ and what He taught and what He teach it's all in His Word and we follow it. And so we have this foundation that is built on what the Apostles and the prophets taught, the doctrines that we follow today and the chief cornerstone is Jesus Christ. I'm glad that we have a basis for our building.

You know Jesus had told a parable in I think it was Matthew about the man who built his house on a rock. The rains and the winds came what happened to the house? It stayed. But what about the one who built him on sandy ground? Winds and the rain came and the house fell.

That's why it's important for your individual life and for the life of the Church our foundation, our rock has to be Jesus Christ and nothing else. Brings new meaning to that old term, what would Jesus do? But look at verse 21 it says, In whom, in whom means in Jesus, all the building fitly framed together groweth into a holy temple in the Lord. So Jesus Christ is a cornerstone, foundation of doctrines and beliefs was laid by the Apostles and the prophets, and now every believer is part of that building being built into a holy temple, fitly framed together.

And that's what the key is. I gotta put this down. Have you ever seen the pictures of some of those buildings like built down in Mexico and South America, some of these buildings where

they build these things out of rock or walls out of rock and there is no mortar? Each piece, no matter what shape it is, the next piece is shaped to fit perfectly so it looks like almost one solid piece, but when you look close you see it's individual, different shapes, they're all fitted together to hold the whole building up, no mortar is needed to hold them together.

They're held together because of the friction of one being next to the other, they're held together because of the closeness. You are built, you are fitted together within the church, the body of Christ, so that you're part of the building. Not only is it important to understand, not only do you fill up that space the way God planned for you to fill that space with who you are, and we're all different shapes and sizes and that's what it means, but you help hold up all of those that are put on above you because what happens is if you pull out one or two of them rocks out of that building, what's going to happen to the, it's going to be weakened.

It may or may not fall, but it'd be weakened. So not only are we fitted together into a holy temple of God, we're fitted together so that every succeeding generation is built on what we've done. That's why it's also important that as we're fitted together that we remain strong in the Lord.

My mom had a brick house and one summer I was there and she wanted me to paint it. Well I don't know where they got the bricks for this addition that she had on her house, but they had just over time weathered to where there was hardly any left in that hole. I had to repair it because if I hadn't repaired it, all those above would fall out and she'd lose the whole wall.

And that's what, as believers, I think because we're fitted together into this building which is the temple of God, it's our responsibility to be strong. It's our responsibility to remain holy. It's our responsibility to keep following the Lord because the rest of the building is built on us and the succeeding generations.

It's also understandable that because we're fitted together that means God uses who you are and who you can be to fit in that perfect spot. You ever see anybody build a brick wall? I'm sorry, a rock wall? I watched a guy do it once, it's just fascinating. He'd have this hole and he would look in this whole pile and that's the perfect one.

Every rock fit in the perfect spot. And I know you don't want to think about it this way, but you're all rocks for the Lord. You're all part of the building, a building up.

And if you fail, you could cause the building to have problems. Now, you're saying, well that's a lot to think about. It is.

But also, because we're all fitted together, we're all different, that's why God gives each of us a different gift of the Spirit. So you fit in that hole and you do what you're supposed to do perfectly. And as time goes on, as we age or health problems or whatever, he may change what our gift is, but he still has something for you to do.

You're still helping to hold up that wall. But it says that you're fitly framed together, growth

into a holy temple. That word grow doesn't mean completion, it means progress.

The stronger we are, the more holy we are, the more pure we are, the more we realize our place as a child of God and then share that with the world and they accept Christ, we help the building to continue to grow until one day God says, it's done. We don't know what day that is, do we? So we just keep building, witnessing, telling other people because it grows into a holy temple in the Lord. Verse 22, "...in whom," once again talking about Jesus, "...you are also built together for habitation of God through the Spirit." Not only, and this is talking about you as an individual and as the church, not only are you part of the building, but the building that you're building is for God to live in.

Now individually, we are also a temple of God. 2 Corinthians 6.16, "...what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God." God said, I will dwell in them and walk in them and will be their God and they shall be my people. So individually, we build a temple because understanding God dwells within you.

You start to feel like you want to do something wrong, like eat carrot cake or something when you're on a diet, the Holy Spirit should be screaming out, don't! Or he could just be saying, well just one piece won't matter. But we are expected this temple to build on it too, by what we do. 1 Corinthians 3.12-13, "...now if any man build upon this foundation, the foundation of the temple of God which you are, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble.

Every man's work shall be made manifest where the day shall declare it, because it is revealed by fire and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is." So we are individual temples, but also part of the overall temple of God, a temple where God dwells. When Jesus said, where two or three are gathered, my name there, I'm in the midst, you know what that tells me? Jesus is here. If we got two or three here that are saved, and I think there's a whole lot more of us, you have the Holy Spirit dwelling within you, God is here.

That's why it's so important that when we come to worship, we worship understanding God is here. And when we sing songs, it should be singing songs to God, not to make us feel good, but to give Him glory and honor. Everything we do is for God, because He's here.

So as we look at this section here, what He's saying, He wants all of us to understand, there is, after Christ died, there is no more Israel as God's favored people for now. There is no more Gentiles as God's unfavored people. What there are just people, for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

And so the church signified in different spots as the local church. Here we have a fellowship one with another, we have a responsibility to look out for each other, to help each other grow in the Lord, and realize we're growing into a temple of God, to understand that as a group we are the children of God, and God dwells within us. Isn't it, as old Southern people said, man if I don't bless you, your blesser's broken.

Knowing God had a plan. And today it's the body of Christ called the church. And if you're a believer, you're part of that.

So as we finish, we are the household of God, the family of God, we are the habitation of God. So you as part of the church, part of the body of Christ, are you as holy as you should be? Well as a saint you're already set apart to be holy, but sometimes the flesh tends to fight against that. Are you living a holy life? You, as part of the body of Christ, are you staying away from anything that's worldly, that God rejects? You, as the body of Christ, do you do anything that dishonors your Lord? Remember if the Lord dwells within you, any place you go or anything you do that's a sin against God, you've taken God into the presence of that.

Do you, as a child of God, do all for the glory of God? Only you can answer these questions. Let's go to the Lord right now. Talk to God.

Maybe there's something in your life that's keeping you from being as holy as you need to be, keeping you from helping the church to grow, keeping you from feeling like you're part of the family of God. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, Lord we thank you for your Word.

We thank you Lord for making it clear that there is a cornerstone, Jesus Christ, that we build your church on. You said upon this rock you will build your church and the gates of hell should not prevail against it. Help us, Lord, to understand our position, our place within your assembly.

Help us, Lord, to understand that individually we have temples that we need to take care of. Help us, Lord, to understand the hope we have of eternal life with you. Thank you, Lord, for everything.

In Jesus' name, amen.

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