

Gentiles and Jews

Julius was sad. As a Gentile living in Jerusalem in the First Century, he could never completely fit in with the Jews.

His family had moved to Jerusalem long before he was born, so as he grew up he learned more and more about the Jewish religion. As a young man he completely renounced the false religions of his ancestors and adopted Judaism as his religion. Even though he went to the Jewish Temple every day for prayer, he could never join his Jewish friends in the inner courts. Since he was a Gentile by birth, Julius was restricted to the Court of the Gentiles. He worshiped the God of the Jews, but had to do it from afar.

Have you ever felt left out or excluded? Have you ever been around a group of people, but knew that you would never be fully accepted? That's a bad feeling and that's the way it was for ancient Gentiles who wanted to follow Israel's God. Religious rules and prejudices kept Jews and Gentiles separate, but when Jesus Christ died on the cross to save sinners, He broke down that barrier. Read the following verses to learn more.

Eph. 2:11 Remember that verses 1-3 of this chapter described the condition of lost people and verses 4-10 told about how and why God saves lost sinners. "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past _____ in the flesh, who are called _____ by that which is called the _____ in the flesh made by hands."

Circumcision was the outward (fleshly) symbol of participation in the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 17:10-14; Lev. 12:3; Acts 7:8). The Jews mistakenly thought that fleshly sign **alone** made them right with God.

Eph. 2:12 This verse says five things that describe the Gentiles before they were saved. List them on the next page.
 "That at that time ye were:
 1. without _____,
 2. being _____ from the commonwealth of _____, and
 3. _____ from the _____ of promise,
 4. having no _____,
 5. without _____ in the world."

Eph. 2:13 The first two words of this verse ("*But now*") turn the whole picture around, just like the first two words of verse 4. Look what happened to the Gentiles when they got saved: "in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were _____ are made _____." What brought the Gentiles near?

Eph. 2:14 What is Jesus Christ called?

What did He break down?

The ancient Temple had walls that separated Jews from Gentiles. Jesus removes all barriers between genuinely saved persons.

Great hatred (enmity) existed between the Jews and the Gentiles. The Jews who obeyed the Old Testament rules and dietary restrictions often became proud and looked down upon the Gentiles. How could Jesus Christ do away with this hatred?

Eph. 2:15 How did Jesus abolish the enmity?

What did He make out of the two (Jews and Gentiles)?

Eph. 2:16 The word **reconcile** means to bring two disputing or warring parties to a place of agreement and peace. Who did Jesus reconcile the Jews and Gentiles unto?

How did He do this?

The Jewish Law was based upon sacrificing animals. Jesus was the perfect and final sacrifice. When He died on the cross, Jesus abolished the Old Testament sacrificial system, making it possible for both Jews and Gentiles to get right with God. What else did Jesus do? Read the next verse.

Eph. 2:17 “And came and preached _____ to _____ which were _____ off, and to them that were _____.” Jesus preached to any who would listen to Him; through His followers the message of salvation has spread all over the world.

Concluding Thoughts: Jesus Christ took two and made “*one new man*” (**Eph. 2:15**) and “*one body*” (**Eph. 2:16**). That one new man and one body is the church.

Rather than reworking the Jewish religion and Temple worship, the Lord Jesus Christ created an entirely new entity – His **church**. Gentiles were never permitted to fully participate in Temple worship, but **anyone** who genuinely knows Jesus Christ as his or her personal Lord and Savior can be a full-fledged part of His church. Jesus abolished the enmity and broke down the dividing wall.

If you are genuinely saved, you have a unique place of service in the Lord’s church (**Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12**). Whether your ethnic background is Jewish or Gentile, **if you belong to Jesus then you belong in His church**.

Are you actively involved in a local New Testament church? If not, you are disobedient and are telling the Lord by your actions that you don’t care what He did on the cross.

Project: If you’re not involved in church, get into a good one this week. If you’re already in a church, show how much you care about Jesus’ sacrifice by attending church each week.