

## THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST

### EPHESIANS 2:19-22

#### INTRODUCTION

In our study of Ephesians we have seen how God has taken the Jew and Gentile and formed a new man. The Church. The Gentiles had been, far off, excluded, a wall of cultural and spiritual exclusion that made the Gentiles wanderers in the Kingdom of God.

But now they have been brought near. Paul never took freshman English. He did not know you aren't supposed to mix metaphors. The Apostle gives three beautiful images to describe the new relationships we have in Christ as the church.

In the first century citizenship was a very important thing. A person's identity was largely drawn from the community in which he or she grew up. That is why Jesus is called Jesus of Nazareth. Saul was from Tarsus. Paul will use the metaphor of a nation, and a family and a temple to communicate the new relationships that we have in Christ as a church.

When people are stripped of their nation, families are torn apart and homes destroyed it cuts right into who we are. In the early church many people suffered the loss national identity, family and property. Paul stated that he counted as loss all things for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

In Paul's description of the church, it is not some organization that you join, rather it is a nation you are birthed into by reason of Jesus Christ. We don't "join" the family, we are members of the household of God. We don't establish membership in a church. We are the church, living stones, joined by the head and chief cornerstone Jesus Christ. I remember reading a story that illustrated the powerful reality that we are the church.

A new minister in a small mid-western town spent the first four days calling on members, begging them to attend services. He failed. He placed a notice in the local newspaper stating that the church was dead, and the least he could do was give it a decent burial. So he announced there would be a funeral service that would be held the following Sunday afternoon. Morbidly curious the whole town turned out for the service. In front of the pulpit they saw high coffin smothered in flowers. The minister read the obituary and gave the eulogy; he then invited the congregation to step forward and pay their last respects to the dearly beloved who had departed. The long line filed by. Each mourner peeped

into  
the coffin, and turned away with a surprised and sheepish grin. For in the coffin,  
tilted at  
just the right angle, was a large mirror. Everyone saw himself.

The church today has many problems. Most are the same as the early church. The  
danger  
of losing its first love. (Rev.2:4) Fear of suffering. Doctrinal defection. Moral  
departure.  
Spiritual deadness. Not holding fast. Lukewarmness. Here Paul will reveal which  
church  
is the real church, the true church. (here illustrate The Pope's phone call from Salt  
Lake  
City). Being in a church doesn't make you in the Body of Christ, no more than  
being in a  
McDonald's makes you a chicken nugget. You can go to church and not be a  
Christian.  
But if you are a Christian you are in the Church.