

Ephesians 2:11-22:
Unification of the Jew and Gentile Based upon the Work of
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Interpretative Translation of Ephesians 2:11-22

¹¹ Therefore I implore you to remember that at one point your physical features made it obvious that you were a Gentile, the Jewish people recognized you were not a partner of God like them who marked themselves accordingly, ¹² remember also that you used to be apart from Christ, because you did not experience fellowship with the people of Israel and because you were not included in the promises of God; you had neither hope nor God. ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far from God came near to him because of the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ Christ is the source of our peace, he has made both the Jew and Gentile experience unity and he shattered then tension between the two through his death.¹⁵ He accomplished peace by means of invalidating the Mosaic Law which resulted in unification of the Jew and Gentile, thus making harmony.¹⁶ The invalidation of the law also resulted in reconciliation between the two by means of making them one unit to God through the means of the work of the cross; reconciliation was made possible by Christ killing the hostility between the two.¹⁷ When Christ came he preached peace to you who were considered far away from God and peace to those considered close;¹⁸ that through him we both have the same access to the Father by the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ All that has been stated means you are no longer considered different than believing Jews but you can now be associated with them and God ²⁰ because you evidence the same faith as the apostles and prophets who came before you with Christ being the basis of that faith.²¹ In Christ all believers are being joined together and he joins them according to his plan.²² It is also in Christ you are continually being refined into a more suitable dwelling place of the Holy Spirit.

Exegetical Central Idea

Unity between the Gentiles and Jews is experienced because former barriers of separation were invalidated through the work of Christ resulting in a new source of identification that seeks him.

Exegetical Sentence Outline

I. The goal of calling the Gentiles to remember their previous separation with the Jews and God is to help them realize how it incorporated every aspect of their being. (2:11-13)

A. The manner in which the Gentiles are called to remember their previous separation with the Jews and God is to recall the physical elements that characterized their exclusion. (2:11-12a)

1. The means by which the Gentiles remember their exclusion is reflection upon their lack of circumcision. (2:11)
2. The means by which the Gentiles remember their exclusion is reflection upon their past separation from Christ. (2:12a)
3. The means by which the Gentiles remember their exclusion is reflection upon their alienation from Israel. (2:12a)

B. The manner in which the Gentiles are called to remember their previous separation with the Jews and God is to recall the spiritual elements that characterized their exclusion. (2:12b)

1. The manner by which the Gentiles remember their exclusion is reflection upon their past unfamiliarity to the Covenant promise. (2:12b)
2. The means by which the Gentiles remember their exclusion is reflection upon their former hopeless position. (2:12b)
3. The means by which the Gentiles remember their exclusion is reflection upon the work of Christ to overcome the separation. (2:13)

II. The result of the work of Christ was the unification of the Gentile with the Jew and God which was and is accomplished through the constant pursuit of Christ. (2:14-18)

A. The reason peace can form the basis of Jewish and Gentile relationships is because Christ purposely worked to join the two parties by means of the removal of divisive elements. (2:14-15a)

1. The condition of peace with the Jew and Gentile results from the work of Christ. (2:14a)
2. The condition of peace is accomplished because Christ unifies the Jew and Gentile. (2:14a)
3. The condition of peace is accomplished because Christ destroyed the dividing wall of partition. (2:14b)

4. The means by which Christ broke down the dividing wall of partition was the invalidation of the law. (2:15a)

B. The result of the work of Christ was the invalidation of the law and unification of the Jew and Gentile. (2:15b-16)

1. The purpose for invalidating the law of was for unity and peace. (2:15b)

2. The result of unity was peace. (2:15c)

3. The means by which Christ broke down the dividing wall of partition was the reconciliation of the two through his work on the cross. (2:16a)

4. The means by which Christ reconciled Jew and Gentile to God was by killing the enmity at the cross. (2:16b)

C. When Christ came he unified the Jew and Gentile by providing access to the Father through the same spirit. (2:17-18)

1. The timing of the destruction of the diving wall occurred after Christ came. (2:17a)

2. The content of the message preached by Christ was peace. (2:17b)

3. The purpose of the message preached was that Gentiles and Jews would have access to the Father through the same spirit. (2:18)

III. The purpose of complete Jewish and Gentile unification was to function in harmony while seeking Christ. (2:19-22)

A. The result of new identification was experienced physically and spiritually by the Gentiles. (2:19)

1. The condition of the Gentiles changed so that they are no longer considered outsiders. (2:19a)

2. The reason the Gentiles are no longer considered outsiders is because of their new identification with God. (2:19b)

B. The purpose of Gentile identification with God is to trust Christ and recognize the work of other. (2:20)

1. The means of alignment with God is caused by Gentile recognition of others work in the ministry that builds upon the work of Christ. (2:20a)

2. The condition on which Gentiles are aligned with God is that Jesus Christ is the foundation of their belief. (2:20b)

C. The experience of new identification is centered upon Christ. (2:21-22)

1. The means by which Jesus is the foundation of their belief is that he brings the Jew and Gentile together in him. (2:21)
2. The means by which Jesus is the foundation of their belief is that he sanctifies them. (2:22)

Commentary on Ephesians 2:11-22

Paul uses the book of Ephesians to address a number of subjects relating to the church. As he writes concerning the body of the church he reaches a point where he focuses upon God's expectations for it. Within this context he reminds the Ephesian Church how the work of Christ has dramatically altered their spiritual situation. In light of this reality Paul emphasizes that even though they are Gentiles, their new spiritual identity invalidates the old barriers that previously defined them. Rather than revert to the old segregating elements, their new identity should be characterized by the unity they can now experience with the Jew and God. In order to properly communicate the rationale for this unity, Paul highlights the following points: (I) The past separation experienced by the Gentiles; (II) the work of Christ and the Spirit in unification; (III) the goal of the new union experienced by the Gentile.

I. The past separation experienced by the Gentiles (2:11-13)

In order to help the Gentile believers at Ephesus better appreciate the unity in which they can now experience, Paul calls them to remember the previous segregation with the Jew and God that once dominated their identity. This reminder of separation can be seen spanning from physical differences to those of a deep spiritual nature.

A) A lack of circumcision (2:11)

Paul introduces the content of his discussion with the inferential conjunction $\Delta\iota\omicron$ ("therefore"), which is used to provide a deduction from the previous conversation found in Eph.

2:1-10.¹ Immediately following this conjunction he uses the present imperative μνημονεύετε (“remember”). The function of this word provides a command to the Gentile readers to remember the elements of their past separation with the Jew in order that their appreciation for the sacrifice made by Christ might be intensified.²

One of the constant reminders of Gentile separation with the Jew was that of their uncircumcised nature. Paul communicates this physical marker with the prepositional phrase, ἐν σαρκὶ (“in the flesh”). Paul further communicates the physical nature of this separation by stating that circumcision was performed “by human hands.” The adjective used to communicate this idea is χειροποιήτου. Nearly every usage of this word in the LXX relates to the creation of idols by human hand. In light of its usage in the LXX and other historical sources, this word should be understood to infer that circumcision was merely a human act which could easily serve as a point of idolatry.³ The emphasis of the physical nature of this action indicates that Gentiles could not solve this point of separation by merely undergoing circumcision but rather a deeper spiritual emphasis undergirded the symbolism of the act. The circumcision of the Jews pointed toward their particular relationship with God by way of the covenant, prior to the arrival of Christ the Gentile had no such position for relationship.⁴

B) Separation from Christ and alienation from Israel (2:12a)

The conjunction which introduces verse 12, ὅτι, functions as the direct object of the command to remember found in the previous verse. Paul’s use of the imperfect verb ἦτε followed by two datives of time, τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ (“at that time”), indicate that this discussion is

¹ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament with Scripture, Subject, and Greek Word Indexes* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 673-674. See reference for discussion regarding inferential conjunctions along with some Scriptural examples of their uses found outside the book of Ephesians.

² Ibid, 485-486. See reference for discussion regarding the function of the command with the imperative.

³ Reference the listed title in the appendix for more information regarding the historical and cultural use of the word χειροποιήτου. Ephesians 2:11: Word Study on “χειροποίητος.”

⁴ Peter O’Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. 1999), 186. See reference for further discussion of the significance of circumcision to the Jew.

not dealing with present spiritual realities.⁵ The previous separation from Christ experienced by the Gentiles separated them from him spiritually. This separation also reminded them of how their national background did not share the same promises from God as those experienced by the Jews.⁶

The separation from the Jews and God that the Gentiles experienced is further emphasized with the use of the adverbial participle ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι (“having been alienated”). This participle modifies ἡτε from the previous verse by describing the means by which the Gentiles were separated from Christ, and as a result, the Jewish people. The Gentiles could not claim a common nationality with the Israelites and therefore they could neither claim the promises specifically given to them. The use of such a statement emphasizes the physical and spiritual separation encountered by the Gentiles.

C) Unfamiliarity of the covenant promise and former hopeless position (2:12b)

In addition to reminding the Gentiles to remember the separation they once experienced with the Jews, Paul also points out the separation they once experienced with God. Different elements are called upon to remind the Gentiles of how they were previously separated from God. One of the elements of separation in which they are reminded of is their lack of connection to the covenant relationship shared between the Jew and God. The word covenant is used in the plural (τῶν διαθηκῶν) but the singular use of promise (τῆς ἐπαγγελίας) is attributed to them. The covenants in view could possibly be the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic; either combination of which constitute a unifying promise of the presence of God.⁷ The Gentiles previously had no such direct promise and the lack of which served as an additional element of separation.

⁵ Wallace, 155-156. See reference for information regarding datives of time. The use of these datives answer the question, “when?” In this context their use points back to a time when the Gentiles did not have Christ.

⁶ Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker House Book Company, 2002), 355. This perspective can also be seen and communicated by Hoehner.

⁷ Gen 15:7-21; 17:1-21 (NET); Exod 24:1-8 (NET); 1 Sam. 7 (NET); Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, 42 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers), 137. Listed are the Scriptural passages which speak about the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants. Lincoln speaks about how either combination of these covenants communicates the singular promise of the presence of God for the Jewish people.

Linked by the connective conjunction *καί*, the context of these final points indicate that all the elements of separation left the Gentiles without hope and ultimately aware of their separation from God.⁸ The Jews expressed hope in God because they had the covenant promise made to their nation and they expressed this hope through outward signs such as circumcision. The Gentiles had none of these items to claim and therefore they understandably felt separate.

D) Sacrifice needed to overcome separation (2:13)

The contrastive conjunction *δε* (“but”) is used to suggest an opposing thought to the idea which preceded it.⁹ The opposing thought introduced is Christ, the one through whom separation can be abolished; it was he who brought the Gentiles near to God and the Jews. The passive implications of *ἐγενήθητε* (“have been brought”) indicate that the Gentiles had no part in making this change occur but rather they are recipients who benefit from the act.¹⁰ The use of the passive in this context suggests that it functions as a “divine” or “theological passive” where it is assumed that God is one performing the action.¹¹ The prepositional phrase *ἐν τῷ αἵματι* (“by the blood”) is used to communicate the sacrificial means by which such action was accomplished. The sacrifice made by Christ enabled the Gentiles to overcome the former elements of the physical, spiritual, national, legal, and emotional separation that distanced them from the Jew and God.

As Paul sought to emphasize the unity in which the Gentiles could now experience, he used verses 11-13 to provide an accurate frame of reference for his audience. In order for the Gentiles to appreciate how truly blessed they are with their new position, they must first realize how deep their deep their separation was. An accurate picture of the isolation they experienced should give them a greater perspective of how much work needed to be done for unification to be experienced.

⁸ Wallace, 671. See reference for Wallace’s discussion of the connective conjunction.

⁹ Ibid, 671-672. See reference for Wallace’s discussion of the contrastive conjunction.

¹⁰ Hoehner, 362-363. This particular grammatical perspective is advocated by Hoehner.

¹¹ Wallace, 437-438. See reference for Wallace’s discussion on the divine passive.

II. The Work of Christ and the Spirit in Unification (2:14-18)

Paul uses verses 14-18 to explain how the previously mentioned obstacles of unification were overcome. Throughout this explanation Paul is careful to communicate the role of Christ who initiated the process. As this process is evaluated a progression can be seen which continually points back to Christ which indicates that he is the originator and sustainer of the unification.

A) The Removal of Divisive Elements (2:14-15a)

Verse 13 introduced the work of Christ in the process of unification and verse 14 is introduced with the explanatory conjunction γάρ (“for”). The choice to use this grammar indicates that Paul wished to provide further information about the previous verse.¹² This information regards the very essence of Christ. As Paul states that, “He is our peace,” he makes use of the Declarative Indicative ἐστίν (“He is”) and the predicate nominative ἡ εἰρήνη (“Peace”) to make it clear that peace is attributed to the being of Christ.¹³ An understanding of the usage of peace in this passage indicates that it should be understood as, “harmony in personal relationships.”¹⁴ A further clarification of the term indicates that peace is, “not merely a concept nor even a new state of affairs, it is bound up in a person.”¹⁵ The use of attributing peace to Christ points toward the role he has in encouraging the harmony between the Jew and Gentile. If both parties possess faith in Christ then he should be seen as the common denominator between the two. This common faith should instigate the growth of mutual peace because Christ is the essence of such harmony.

Once Paul established that Christ was the basis of peace for Gentile believers he then proceeds to provide two examples of why he can be given this particular label. The first example

¹² Wallace, 673. See reference for Wallace’s discussion on the Explanatory Conjunction.

¹³ Ibid, 449; 40-41; See reference for Wallace’s discussion on the Declarative Indicative and the Predicate Nominative.

¹⁴ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed., revised and edited by Frederick William Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 287. Logos Bible Software.

¹⁵ Lincoln, 140.

is introduced by the substantival participle ὁ ποιήσας (“The one who made”) which points back to the person of Christ. The direct object and object complement which follow the participle communicate that Christ joined the Jew and Gentile together. These two accusatives are neuter and it is believed that this choice in gender was initially used to emphasize that the Jew and Gentiles previously existed as two distinct groups.¹⁶ This understanding of two distinct groups is important to recognize as Paul begins to further tie the two together.

The second substantival participle λύσας (“the one who destroyed”) is used to reference Christ as the one who broke down the dividing wall of partition. The difficulty of knowing how breaking down a wall relates to Christ being peace can only be comprehended once the nature of the dividing wall is understood. Context communicates that Christ invalidated the Mosaic Law using the word καταργήσας (“invalidated”)(v. 15).¹⁷ The word καταργήσας (v.15) functions as a participle of means which indicates how λύσας (“the one who destroyed”) (v.14) was carried out.¹⁸ This grammatical arrangement means that Christ destroyed the wall of partition by invalidating the law. Τὴν ἔχθραν (“The enmity”) (v.14) functions as an accusative in simple apposition to τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ (“the dividing wall of partition”) (v.14). This grammatical arrangement means that the, “two adjacent substantives refer to the same person or thing and have the same syntactical relation to the rest of the clause.”¹⁹ Since these items stand closely related then the understanding of one will reveal the other. The wall of partition should be understood as cultural hostility, a divisive element between the Jew and Gentile. To adopt this view means that Christ encouraged peace among the two parties by destroying cultural hostility through the invalidation of the law. If this phrase in verse 14 was referencing the law it would seem redundant to repeat the idea again in verse 15a. Other good perspectives exist regarding the

¹⁶ Hoehner, 368; Clinton Arnold, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 158.

¹⁷ The study of the word καταργήσας has only been referenced so that the flow of the conversation regarding the nature of the dividing wall is not interrupted, further information about the word will be referenced again later. For more information regarding the background of the word καταργήσας see appendix and reference the following title: Ephesians 2:15: Word Study on καταργέω.

¹⁸ Wallace, 628-630. See reference for more information regarding the use of the participle of means.

¹⁹ Wallace, 198-199.

nature of the wall but the grammatical structure does not discount the argument and neither do logical conclusions gathered from the text.²⁰

Verse 15 uses the participle καταργέω to communicate the means by which the ordinances of the law are removed. The specific use of this word indicates what exactly it was done by Christ. As previously mentioned, this word should be understood as meaning “invalidated.” Within the LXX the word is used exclusively in Ezra four different times and each use indicates the delay of stopping of the building of the temple; in this particular situation it is referencing the use and implementation of the Mosaic Law. Various lexical tools render the understanding of this word as to “make powerless” or “render inactive.”²¹ Christ personally stated that he did not come to destroy the law but rather he came to fulfill it.²² The specific use of καταργέω articulates a complement to Christ’s statement, Christ didn’t destroy the law but rather his work invalidated the need for it.²³

B) The Result the Invalidation of the Law (2:15b-16)

Paul uses ἵνα (“In order that”) as a purpose conjunction to introduce the goal of the invalidation of the law.²⁴ Associated with this purpose conjunction are two purpose- result clauses which are used to indicate, “both the intention and its sure accomplishment.”²⁵ The first subjunctive purpose-result clause is κτίση (“That he might create”) which is used to communicate not only God’s intention of joining the Gentile and Jew together in unity but it also communicates how he intends for it to occur. This result is articulated with the statement εἰς ἕνα

²⁰ A more complete study and evaluation of the phrase τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ (v.14) has been completed; reference the following title in the appendix for more detailed information: Ephesians 2:14: Validation of the phrase “τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ.”

²¹ BDAG, 529.; Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), 436. Listed are the lexical tools which were consulted.

²² Matt. 5:17.

²³ For more information regarding the background of the word καταργήσας see appendix and reference the following title: Ephesians 2:15: Word Study on καταργέω.

²⁴ Wallace, 676. See reference for a formal definition of purpose conjunctions.

²⁵ Ibid, 473. This quotation is taken from Wallace’s definition of a Purpose- ἵνα clause, not his evaluation of this particular verse.

καινὸν ἄνθρωπον (“into one new man”). The picture created by this statement clearly indicates that Paul wants his audience to understand that the Gentile and Jew may have once existed as two different units but that state of being no longer exists, they have now merged to create a single man.

The result of this merger between the two parties is expressed through the use of the adverbial participle ποιῶν (“making”).²⁶ The direct object of the participle is the word εἰρήνην (“peace”). The placement of these two words which modify the previous clause (“κτίσῃ”) indicate that the creation of a new man also created peace among the Gentile and Jew. A careful understanding of the term peace must be applied when dealing with this particular passage. The picture of peace is intended to only apply to redeemed believers, in this particular situation the Gentiles and the Jews; the greater picture of peace experienced by all followers of Christ must also not be lost here as it also applies in the present day.²⁷

The second purpose- result clause associated with the purpose conjunction ἵνα (“In order that”) is ἀποκαταλλάξῃ (“that he might reconcile”). This verb relates back to the invalidation of the law in verse 15 and is seeks to further communicate God’s intention of joining the Gentile and Jew together in unity along with how he intends for it to occur. The objects of reconciliation associated with this word are the Jews and Gentiles who are represented by the direct object ἀμφοτέρους (“both”). Their reconciliation is associated with their relationship to God and not between themselves.²⁸ This reconciliation occurs evenly to the two parties in one body, which can be seen as a reference back to the new man mentioned previously (v.15b). The invalidation of the law applied to both the Jew and Gentile as it also applies to believers today!

The adverbial participle ἀποκτείνας (“killing”) serves to explain the means by which this reconciliation occurred.²⁹ This particular usage of the terminology can also mean, “to do

²⁶ Ibid, 639-40. See reference for a formal summary of adverbial participles and their use.

²⁷ Arnold, 165; Hoehner, 380-381. See references for further discussion regarding the implications of the peace discussed here.

²⁸ Arnold, 165; Hoehner, 383; Lincoln, 146. Each reference discusses the ruptured relationship of the Gentile and Jew to God; they articulate that this reconciliation relates to their relationship to God and not themselves.

²⁹ Wallace, 628-630. See reference for more information regarding the use of the participle of means.

away with, put to death, eliminate.”³⁰ The method of this reconciliation was that of the death of Christ. Christ eliminated hostility between the two parties and God which thus served to reconcile the two. The hostility being referred to must be separated from its previous mention in verse 14. The structural flow of the conversation makes it apparent that that focus is no longer on the relationship between the Jew and Gentile but in this immediate context it is more concerned with their relationship to God.³¹

C) Unification and the Work of the Spirit (2:17-18)

The temporal participle ἐλθὼν (“after coming”) is used to answer the question “when?” as it refers to the timing of the preaching of peace by Christ.³² The context of the passage makes it difficult to grasp the point in time this preaching occurred but several theories exist concerning this topic. A few popular views regarding the timing of Christ’s preaching include: prior to his incarnation; after his incarnation to his crucifixion; after his crucifixion and resurrection; and through those who preach the same message after his resurrection.³³ The verse goes on to claim that this preaching of peace occurred to those who were far away and those who were near. Up to this point in the passage Paul has designed his discussion to first talk about Jewish and Gentile relationships and then he transitioned into a discussion of their relationship to Christ. The context and flow of this discussion would therefore seem to imply that Paul is pointing back to the earthly ministry of Christ where he actively preached the message of peace to the Jew and then eventually to the Gentile. In light of this understanding it would seem

³⁰ BDAG, 114.

³¹ Hoehner, 383-384; Lincoln, 146; O’Brien 205. The referenced sources all agree that the hostility being referred to in v.16 is different than that mentioned in v.14 due to the obvious structural division that occurs between its two uses.

³² Wallace, 623-625. See reference for more information regarding the definition of the temporal participle.

³³ Arnold, 166; Ernest Best, *Ephesians* (Edinburgh, Sco: T&T Clark, 1998), 271-273; Hoehner, 385. Best lays out several different popular views but does not dogmatically claim any. Hoehner and Arnold hold the perspective that this participle indicates that the preaching occurred after the crucifixion of Christ through his apostles.

appropriate to understand the Jew as “being near” and the Gentile as “being far.”³⁴ A textual variation within the verse 17 suggests that the second use of εἰρήνην (“peace”) should be omitted. The omission of this word has the potential to indicate that two different kinds of peace were preached or peace was only preached to one particular group. Internal evidence does not provide strong evidence for either perspective but external evidence strongly favors the text reading of the two uses of εἰρήνην (“peace”).³⁵

Paul begins verse 18 with the conjunction ὅτι (“so that”) in order to communicate the result of the peace which has been preached to the Jews and Gentiles.³⁶ He then proceeds to proclaim with the declarative indicative ἔχομεν (“we have”) that this peace resulted in unified access to the Father by means of the Spirit. This equal access can be seen grammatically as ἀμφότεροι (“both”) functions as a nominative in simple apposition which is used to clarify who specifically has this access.³⁷ In this context προσαγωγήν (“access”) must be understood as, “a way of approach.”³⁸ Usage of the word is nonexistent in the LXX but a few historical examples support such an understanding of the term.³⁹

Through Paul’s discussion of verses 14-18 a common theme can be seen as it relates to the unification of the Jew and Gentile and the work of Christ in the process. This connection is made evident as the result a continual connection of unification is made to the work of Christ. It was Christ who invalidated the law, joined the two parties into one man, and provided mutual access to the Father through the Holy Spirit.

³⁴ Arnold, 166; Lincoln, 148. For further discussion on the use of “near” and “far” in the passage see attached references; both have a similar view as that established in the brief discussion above. A deeper discussion of this topic is avoided because the outcome does change the fact that peace was preached and the Gentile and Jew were eventually recipients of it.

³⁵ For more information regarding the textual variant in v.17 which relates to εἰρήνην see appendix and reference the following title: “Ephesians 2:17 – εἰρήνην (2nd use) vs omission of the word.”

³⁶ Wallace, 677. See reference for Wallace’s discussion on Result Conjunctions.

³⁷ Ibid, 48. See reference for a more complete definition of a Nominative in Simple Apposition.

³⁸ BDAG, 876.

³⁹ Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, Henry Stuart Jones, and Roderick McKenzie, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, 9th ed., rev. and aug. Sir Henry Stuart Jones. (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1996), 1550. LSJ lists a few historical examples of this word applied in context and it has a similar definition to that of BDAG with the nuance that προσαγωγήν can be understood as approaching a person, especially that of the presence of a king.

III The Goal of the New Union Experienced by the Gentile

Now that Paul has recognized the former position of Gentiles in relation to the Jews and God he then proceeds to articulate how this unification should be applied. The remaining verses of this chapter are used to communicate that complete Jewish and Gentile unification should function in harmony while seeking Christ and doing his work.

A) Physical and Spiritual Unification (2:19)

Paul begins verse 19 with the two inferential conjunctions ὥστε οὖν which should be translated as “So then.” These conjunctions function to provide a deduction to the discussion which preceded it.⁴⁰ As Paul moves to conclude this passage he declares that the Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners which are titles that are recognized as describing their previous status before becoming believers. Both of these terms can be seen relating to previous physical and spiritual separation bore by the Gentiles.

The discussion is further progressed as Paul uses a contrastive conjunction, ἀλλ’ (“but”), to suggest an opposing view to the one previously established.⁴¹ This particular opposing view is that the Gentiles are no longer outsiders but rather they are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. The use of ἁγίων (“saints”) by Paul, “refers to Jewish Christians in general, but all refer to the Jerusalem church in particular.”⁴² This contrastive statement is helpful as it emphasizes that the unification between the Jew and Gentile is no longer hindered by these elements. This unification is not experienced because one party absorbed the other but rather a whole new group was created. To help his audience understand this concept Paul uses the metaphor of a building own by God which emphasizes this concept of unity under the authority and leadership of God.

B) Trust Christ and Acknowledge the Work of Others (2:20)

⁴⁰ Wallace, 673. See reference for a complete definition of an inferential conjunction.

⁴¹ Wallace, 671-672. See reference for a complete definition of a contrastive conjunction.

⁴² Hoehner 393; Lincoln, 151; O’Brien, 211. The quote is taken directly from Lincoln but Hoehner and O’Brien both agree.

In the previous verse Paul used an architectural metaphor to help his audience understand how they are unified under God. In verse 20 Paul continues to build upon this imagery by modifying it to further explain the cause of such unity. This causal explanation is initiated through his use of the participle ἐποικοδομηθέντες (“Because you have been built”) which communicates that their union is the result of the past work of the apostles and prophets who built a foundation for them. The phrase “τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν” (the apostles and prophets) has the potential to create uncertainty regarding who is actually being referenced. As this phrase is considered it is important that it is understood that Paul considers these two roles distinct; good evidence and logical arguments exist which supports such conclusions.⁴³ The building analogy is furthered by this particular group of apostles and prophets as they are recognized as being the foundation and Christ is later recognized in the verse as being the cornerstone of such building. As the Gentile were reflecting on the work of those who came before them they would have understood this imagery which communicated that Christ being the focal point of the building and the necessity of the foundation to properly align and complement the cornerstone.⁴⁴

C) Identification Centered Upon Christ (2:21-22)

Paul has now established the fundamentals which comprise the building and he finishes up this passage by further expounding upon this building metaphor by bringing the audience into the imagery. Verses 21 and 22 are both introduced with the relative pronouns ὅς (“who”) whose purpose is to refer back to person of Christ in verse 20.⁴⁵ As it refers to Christ, verse 21 communicates that the whole building is being joined together in him. Despite the textual variant which exists in verse 21, even if one were to interpret the passage as “every

⁴³ For more information regarding the use of the phrase “τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν” in v.20 see appendix and reference the following title: “Ephesians2:20: Validation of the phrase “τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν.””

⁴⁴ Arnold, 170-171; Hoehner, 404-407. See references for further discussion on the implications of Christ being the capstone and the apostles and prophets serving as the foundation.

⁴⁵ Wallace, 335-337. See reference for a complete definition and summary of relative pronouns.

building,” it does not ruin the symbolism of the unity seeking to be depicted as even the buildings are said to be “joined together.”⁴⁶

Verse 22 of this passage provides a fitting end to Paul’s discussion of the unity now experienced by the Gentiles and Jews. Just as in verse 21, the content of verse 22 also point back to Christ through the use of the relative pronoun. The building analogy cumulates as Paul declares that the Jews and Gentiles are being built into a dwelling place of God in Spirit. The word πνεύματι (“spirit”) can be seen functioning as a dative of means which communicates that the building is only accomplished through the work of the Spirit.⁴⁷ This statement should be seen serving as a reminder that maintaining unification will be impossible without the continual work of the Spirit and therefore everything done needs to be centered upon Christ.

As Paul completes this chapter of his letter it is obvious that he clearly built his discussion to make his audience keenly aware of their new position. The three points of emphasis eventually culminate in a manner that is designed to make readers walk away with the knowledge and associated imagery that their new spiritual position is unique. Their faith in the work of Christ has dramatically altered their identity and therefore they must now act accordingly.

Application of the Passage

Differences and tensions between believers will and have always existed. This passage serves as a gentle reminder that nothing should be able to separate believers because they share the greatest thing in common, faith in Christ. Any type of argument or difference I might experience with a fellow believer needs to be evaluated in light of this truth. The more we focus on Christ and his work, the more likely the intensity of the dispute will diminish in a manner which honors him.

⁴⁶ For more information regarding the textual variant in v.21 see appendix and reference the following title: “Ephesians 2:21: πᾶσα οἰκοδομή vs πᾶσα ἡ οἰκοδομή.”

⁴⁷ Wallace, 162-163. See reference for a complete definition and summary of the grammatical use of the Dative of Means/Instrument.

APPENDIX

Textual Criticism Problems

Ephesians 2:17 – εἰρήνην (2nd use) vs omission of the word

External Evidence:

NA²⁸ provides the second use of εἰρήνην in the text. This reading has strong support from multiple Alexandrian and Western, witnesses such as: P⁴⁶ (3rd Cen.); Aleph (4th Cen.); A (5th Cen.); B (4th Cen.); D (6th Cen.); and F (9th Cen.). Even though the majority text does not provide support for this reading, the date and character of its witnesses must be highly considered. The early dating of the two text families allow this reading to be considered well distributed geographically. Genealogical solidarity in exists in the Alexandrian and Western text type and they allow this reading to be dated back as far as a 2nd century archetype.

The variant reading omits the second use of εἰρήνην in the text. Support for its omission is found in within the majority readings of Byzantine witnesses and secondary Alexandrian documents [K (9th Cen.); L (9th Cen.); 81(11th Cen.); 104 (11th Cen.)]. The lack of diverse manuscript support means that good geographical distribution cannot be claimed. Genealogical solidarity in exists in the Byzantine text type which allows this reading to be dated to a 4th century archetype.

Internal Evidence:

The textual issue regarding the second use of εἰρήνην appears to have possibly occurred due to copyist error; the scribe could have seen its first use in the verse and accidentally omitted or inserted it. The omission could have been intentional as the scribe might have perceived its usage as redundant or it could have been inserted for further clarification. Paul speaks about peace in the preceding context of this passage but this fact does not aid the clarification of the issue.

Summary and Conclusion:

The internal evidence for this passage can be interpreted in either direction as no particular perspective is overwhelming favored. The external evidence strongly affirms the text reading. The text or variant reading does not change the overall emphasis Paul is attempting to communicate but rather the text reading serves to clarify the subject of discussion. Based upon all available evidence, the decision that the text reading is original has been given a grade of “B.”

Ephesians 2:21: πᾶσα οἰκοδομὴ vs πᾶσα ἡ οἰκοδομὴ

External Evidence:

NA²⁸ provides “πᾶσα οἰκοδομὴ” as the text reading. This reading has support from the Alexandrian uncials Aleph (4th Cen.) and B (4th Cen.); both these manuscripts date to the 4th century. This reading also contains the support of good Western witnesses along with the whole of manuscripts from the Byzantine family. The early dating of these manuscripts enable one to claim that this reading of the text is well geographically distributed as being representative of the Alexandrian text type. Aleph and B provide evidence for genealogical solidarity in the Alexandrian text type and they allow this reading to be dated back to a 2nd century archetype.

The variant reading, “πᾶσα ἡ οἰκοδομὴ,” has support which can be found in the Alexandrian uncials A and C; both of these ancient manuscripts date to the 5th century. There is no known support for this reading from any Western or Byzantine manuscripts. The oldest manuscripts that support this reading, A and C, cannot be considered well distributed geographically.⁴⁸ These manuscripts do allow the variant reading to date back to a 2nd century archetype.

Internal Evidence:

The inclusion of the article appears to not have occurred due to copyist error; there is a lack of similarities between related lettering. The inclusion could have been an intentional error as the presence of the article clarifies the topic of discussion. To exclude this article from the

⁴⁸ Bart D. Ehrman and Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 280. See reference for conversation regarding the dominating influence the Byzantine text began to exert upon other manuscript families. The date of manuscripts A and C fall within the time period where they could have been influenced by the Byzantine text type.

passage would introduce a shorter and harder reading that provides some flexibility in the interpretation. No solid stylistic argument can be made based upon the rest of the New Testament and Pauline writings.

Summary and Conclusion:

The external and internal evidence appear to affirm the text reading. This shorter and harder reading also indicates originally in that it represents no attempt to clarify perceived ambiguity. The text or variant reading does not change the overall emphasis Paul is attempting to communicate. Based upon all available evidence, the decision that the text reading is original has been given a grade of “B.”

Structural Layout of Greek Clauses in Ephesians 2:11-22

11 Διὸ μνημονεύετε ὅτι ποτὲ ὑμεῖς τὰ ἔθνη ἐν σαρκί, οἱ λεγόμενοι ἀκροβυστία ὑπὸ τῆς λεγομένης περιτομῆς ἐν σαρκὶ χειροποιήτου,

12 ὅτι ἦτε τῷ καιρῷ ἐκείνῳ χωρὶς Χριστοῦ,

ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι τῆς πολιτείας τοῦ Ἰσραὴλ

καὶ [όντες] ξένοι τῶν διαθηκῶν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας,

ἐλπίδα μὴ ἔχοντες

καὶ [όντες] ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ.

13 νυνὶ δὲ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ὑμεῖς οἳ ποτε ὄντες μακρὰν ἐγενήθητε ἐγγὺς ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

14 Αὐτὸς γάρ ἐστιν ἡ εἰρήνη ἡμῶν,

ὁ ποιήσας τὰ ἀμφότερα ἐν

καὶ τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ λύσας, τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ,

15 τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν καταργήσας,

ἵνα τοὺς δύο κτίση ἐν αὐτῷ εἰς ἓνα καινὸν ἄνθρωπον

ποιῶν εἰρήνην

16 καὶ ἀποκαταλλάξη τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους ἐν ἐνὶ σώματι τῷ θεῷ διὰ τοῦ σταυροῦ,

ἀποκτείνας τὴν ἔχθραν ἐν αὐτῷ.

17 καὶ ἐλθὼν⁴⁹

εὐηγγελίσατο εἰρήνην ὑμῖν τοῖς μακρὰν καὶ [εὐηγγελίσατο] εἰρήνην τοῖς ἐγγύς⁵⁰.

18 ὅτι δι' αὐτοῦ ἔχομεν τὴν προσαγωγὴν οἱ ἀμφότεροι ἐν ἐνὶ πνεύματι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα.

⁴⁹ Modifies the clause which follows

⁵⁰ These two independent clauses were combined for simplicity.

19 Ἄρα οὖν οὐκέτι ἐστὲ ξένοι καὶ πάροικοι

ἀλλ' ἐστὲ συμπολίται τῶν ἁγίων καὶ οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ,

20 ἐποικοδομηθέντες ἐπὶ τῷ θεμελίῳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν,

ὄντος ἀκρογωνιαίου αὐτοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ,

21 ἐν ᾧ πᾶσα οἰκοδομὴ συναρμολογουμένη αὖξει εἰς ναὸν ἅγιον ἐν κυρίῳ,

22 ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὑμεῖς συνοικοδομεῖσθε εἰς κατοικητήριον τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν πνεύματι.

Synchronic Word Studies

Ephesians 2:11: Word Study on “χειροποίητος”

The use of χειροποίητος in Ephesians 2:11 introduces a great amount of content that enriches the discussion regarding Paul’s perspective of circumcision. The historical understanding of χειροποίητος is fleshed out through a survey of its use in the New Testament. The term is used at least five other times in the New Testament and each time it is used to describe the manner in which a building was built, by human hands; none of the other uses are Pauline.⁵¹ While all the references are used in this manner, all applications of the word are used to contrast things made by man and those made by God. This specific understanding of the word

⁵¹ Acts 7:47; 17:24; Mark 14:58; Heb 9:11, 24 (NET). The reference includes NT references which include the use of “χειροποίητος.”

is supported by its use in the Classical and Koine periods.⁵² Herodotus uses the word in 5th century BC to describe a carved workmanship.⁵³ This Classical use endorses the idea that this term does not imply something which is created on accident but rather something which has been purposefully and intentionally made by human hands.

Paul specifically used this word in an attempt to communicate that the physical act of circumcision had become an idol in the minds of some. His use of this word was precise in that he knew his audience would be familiar with its manner of use in the LXX. Examples of the use of χειροποίητος in the LXX follow two key patterns, false idols and the human creation of them.⁵⁴ Many of the references appear to be presented in a negative light where impending judgment can be found or is implied.

The word χειροποίητος should be understood as something “made by human hands;” the implication of the term carries the negative connotation of idolatry in reference to circumcision. A survey of the word’s use among multiple English translations confirms this understanding of the term and no real difference in lexical usage is employed.⁵⁵ Major lexical resources also confirm such an understanding of the word.⁵⁶

It appears that Paul wanted to recognize that it was easy for Gentiles to give attention to their lack of circumcision but that their fixation upon the act could easily become an idol to them. One might have been able to undergo the process of circumcision but they were ultimately just building an idol “made by human hands” in attempt to accomplish something that only God

⁵² Flavius Josephus *The Wars of the Jews* 4.10.5; James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* (London, UK: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), 687. Referenced are two sources which provide examples of the use of “χειροποίητος” in the Koine period. MM provides information and the translation for a document which dates to the Koine period, it is known as “P. Lond *Selections* 854.4.”

⁵³ Herodotus *The Histories* 1.195.

⁵⁴ Lev. 26:1,30; Isa. 2:18; 10:11; 19:1; 21:9; 31:7; 46:6; Dan. 5:4, 23; 6:27; Jdt. 8:18; Wis. 14:8. Listed are the passages that support the understanding that the use of χειροποίητος in the LXX followed two key patterns, false idols and the human creation of them.

⁵⁵ RSV; LEB; NASB95; NET; ESV; NIV; KJV; GNB; NCV; ISV. Listed are the referenced English translations.

⁵⁶ BDAG, 1082.; TDNT, vol. 9, 436. Listed are the lexical tools which were consulted.

could achieve. The passage later reveals that Christ needs to be the object of worship as he is the only one who can “build” what human hands cannot, unification among the body of believers. Circumcision is a “man-made” action which will never accomplish the same things as Christ.

Ephesians 2:15: Word Study on καταργέω

The term καταργέω is used in Ephesians 2:15 to communicate the means by which the dividing wall of partition was destroyed; it serves to articulate what exactly Christ did when such action occurred. The term is used twenty-seven times in the New Testament and all but two of the uses are Pauline.⁵⁷ Many of the alternative uses in Scripture communicate the idea of something which is invalidated or abolished.

The Classical usage of the word can be found in the writings of Euripides to describe his hands as being “unemployed or idle.”⁵⁸ The usage of the word during the Koine period also endorses such an understanding.⁵⁹ The LXX uses the word four different times and each use can be found in the book of Ezra in relation to the “delay” or “stopping” of the building of the temple.⁶⁰ Various lexical tools render the understanding of this word as to “make powerless” or “render inactive.”⁶¹ These historical applications of the word can be seen through its use by Paul in this verse. If the dividing wall of partition is understood to be the cultural hostility, then the use of καταργέω articulates that Christ rendered the hostility inactive by stopping it altogether. Any particular perspective regarding the nature of the dividing wall of partition still applies to this scenario.

⁵⁷ Rom. 3:3, 31; 4:14; 6:6; 7:2, 6; 1 Cor. 1:28; 2:6; 6:13; 13:8, 10; Gal. 3:17; 5:4. Listed are examples where Pauline uses of καταργέω can be found. The only places in the NT where the word is not used by Paul can be found in Luke 13:7 and Heb. 2:14.

⁵⁸ Euripides *Phoenissae* 753; MM, 331; LSJ, 908. The exact terminology of “unemployed or idle” as it relates to Euripides was taken from LSJ.

⁵⁹ MM, 331.

⁶⁰ Ezra 4:21, 23; 5:5; 6:8. The listed passages identify where καταργέω can be found in the LXX .

⁶¹ BDAG, 529.; TDNT, vol. 1, 452.

One's particular theological understanding and/or philosophical approach to translation could influence the chosen rendition of the word. It seems clear that its intended meaning is that of something coming to an end and no longer in use. This term should be understood as "invalidate" or "nullify" even though various English translations communicate this word differently.⁶² Common alternative renditions within English translations include: abolish; set aside; and end.⁶³ Each possible term has subtle distinctions which encourage a particular theological application of verses 14 and 15. The idea of "invalidation" or "nullification" encourages the understanding that Christ destroyed the dividing wall of partition by making it irrelevant because of the spiritual implications of his death. The use of "abolish" has the potential to encourage the understanding that Christ simply destroyed cultural hostility, or the law, without the introduction of anything new to fill the void. If the dividing wall of partition is understood to be the law then καταργέω must not be associated with abolishment because Christ promised to not destroy the law.⁶⁴

Problem-Solving and Validation

Ephesians 2:14: Validation of the phrase "τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ"

The phrase "τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ" is located within the passage of Ephesians 2:14 and its presence creates a problem in the interpretation of the passage. The thrust of this passage is focused upon the unity that the Gentiles and Jews can now experience in light of their relationship with Christ. The phrase "τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ" can be translated as "the middle wall of partition."⁶⁵ As this passage is studied in detail one must answer questions regarding the nature of this dividing wall because it is recognized as the item which discouraged unification from occurring.

⁶² The LEB translates this word as invalidated and the NET translates it as nullify.

⁶³ The word καταργέω is translated in the RSV, NASB95, ESV, KJV, GNB as "abolish," NIV as "set aside," and NCV as "ended."

⁶⁴ Matt. 5:17 (NET). This passage communicates that Christ did not come to abolish the law.

⁶⁵ Eph. 2:14 (NET). Translation for the phrase "τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ" taken from the NET Bible.

One view regarding this phrase centers on the cultural hostility that existed between the Jews and Gentiles. The phrase could be used to simply suggest that this hostility no longer exists and the phrase τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ was used as a metaphor with no particular physical or spiritual item in mind. This view shuns any prospective theological or spiritual implications of the word but rather it focuses upon the cultural differences between the parties.⁶⁶ By nature, this view does not have any documented support because it simplifies the conversation with this cultural theory. The strength of this view lies within the grammatical structure of the text which appears to point toward a metaphorical use of the phrase.⁶⁷

Another view regarding this phrase centers upon the wall in the Jerusalem temple.⁶⁸ The wall separated the Jewish and Gentile court was a visible reminder of the tension that existed between the two. The strength of this view lies with the personal experience of its author. Paul experienced this tension when he brought an Ephesian with him into the inner courts and it is possible this experience was on his mind when he wrote the phrase.⁶⁹ Even though the hostility associated with the temple wall was familiar to Paul, the Ephesian audience would have likely missed the connection to the wall in the temple court. In addition to the missed reference, the wall was still standing at the time the Paul wrote these words. The application of such view suggests that separation between the Jew and Gentile was strictly physical.

Another physical barrier that this phrase could be referencing can be directed toward the curtain in the temple.⁷⁰ This curtain was used to separate the holy place and the holy of

⁶⁶ Best, 256-257. This position can be seen advocated by Best as he considers the evidence of other positions. His view seems to suggest that something spurs the end to hostility but he does not point to anything in particular. Any assumption that he is suggesting either a physical or spiritual change encouraged unity between the Jew and Gentile would be an exercise of too much liberty with his particular view. No evidence can be cited for this view as it operates on theory rather than evidence.

⁶⁷ In apposition to τὸ μεσότοιχον (the dividing wall), the accusative τὴν ἐχθρὰν (the enmity) can be seen serving as an additional name for the reference to which it stands related.

⁶⁸ Arnold, 159-160. The argument for temple wall came from the listed source.

⁶⁹ Acts 21:28-29.

⁷⁰ Charles J. Ellicott, *A Critical and Grammatical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians with a Revised Translation* (Andover, UK: Warren F. Daper, 1863), 56. The referenced source is a proponent of this view.

holies.⁷¹ The strength of this view lies with the understanding that Christ removed the barrier of sin between man and God, just as the curtain symbolized such separation. Lexical information does not support the notion that this phrase might be referencing a curtain. Even if the passage were to have been referencing this object, its destruction would not have encouraged unity between the Jews and Gentiles as only the high priest could enter into the area.

There are also some who propose that this barrier relates to something which is cosmic in nature; the separation which exists between Heaven and Earth.⁷² The strength of such a view is derived the neuter use of “τα ἀμφοτερά” in the verse which could indicate that the discussion is not dealing with living beings. The context of discussion surrounding Ephesians 2:14 is centered upon the unification of the Jew and Gentile and therefore a complete swap in focus would be out of place. If this view is embraced then Paul’s call for the unity of the Gentile and Jew would be diminished.

The last popular view regarding this phrase centers upon the ending of the Mosaic Law.⁷³ The implementation of the law created a deep barrier that incited hostility between the Jews and Gentiles as the law was originally designed to protect the Jewish people.⁷⁴ This theory draws strength the immediate context to this passage in verse 15; it communicates that Christ destroyed the law. This theory is further supported when the work of Christ is considered as he ended law.⁷⁵ Unfortunately no word in the phrase τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ relates to the law and therefore to recognize the law relating to either of these words can be seen as ill-founded.

Based on available evidence, it appears that the understanding of τὸ μεσότοιχον τοῦ φραγμοῦ is that of a metaphor referring to the cultural hostility between the Jew and Gentile. Καταργήσας (v.15) can be seen as a participle of means which indicates how λύσας (v.14) was

⁷¹ Exod. 26:33. This passage references the presence of this curtain in the temple.

⁷² Heinrich Schlier, *Christus und die Kirche im Epheserbrief* (Tübingen, DE: J.C.B. Mohr, 1930), 18-26. Schlier is a proponent of this view.

⁷³ Lincoln, 141-142. The argument for Mosaic Law came from the listed source.

⁷⁴ Lev. 26:2. The listed passage speaks about how the law was designed to protect the Jew.

⁷⁵ Rom. 10:4; Gal. 3:23-25. The listed passages speak about how Christ ended the law.

carried out.⁷⁶ This particular structure supports the argument that Christ destroyed the wall of partition, understood here as being the cultural hostility, by invalidating the law. If this phrase were referencing the law, it would seem redundant repeat that the idea again in verse 15. A “B” grade has been assigned to the understanding of this phrase in light of the other good possibilities.⁷⁷

Ephesians 2:20: Validation of the phrase “τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν”

The phrase “τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν” (the apostles and prophets) is located within the passage of Ephesians 2:20 and has the potential to create uncertainty regarding who is actually being referenced. Preceding this phrase, in verse 19 Paul communicates that the Gentiles should no longer consider themselves to be outside the household of God. This discussion continues into verse 20 and where it proceeds to explain the cause of this new position; the work of the apostles and prophets laid the groundwork for their faith. One’s conclusion regarding the identity of these apostles and prophets has the potential to influence a specific theological understanding of these positions as being similar or distinct in nature.

One popular view regarding these two parties is seeing them as equal and without distinction.⁷⁸ The “article-noun-καὶ-noun” construction appears to incite the employment of the Granville Sharp rule. If this were to be true, then it could be argued that an apostle and prophet fill the same role.⁷⁹ This argument leads one to assume that apostles prophesy and that the passage is only speaking about these particular individuals. The Apostle Paul functioned in this manner and therefore it could seem reasonable to assume this applies as a rule and not an exception.⁸⁰ As this view is further evaluated it is difficult to substantiate according to grammar

⁷⁶ Wallace, 628-630. See reference for more information regarding the use of the participle of means.

⁷⁷ Best, 256; Hoehner 371. Both listed references share a similar perspective.

⁷⁸ Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in 1 Corinthians* (Landham, MD: University Press of America, 1982), 97. Grudem holds this view regarding the grammatical construction of the phrase. He cites his belief that it should be translated “the apostles who are also prophets” because it properly reflects the force of καί.

⁷⁹ Wallace, 270-274; 278. See reference for more information regarding the Granville Sharp rule. If this rule applies to this verse then unity, equity, or identity could be assigned to these two titles.

⁸⁰ 1 Cor. 13:9; 14:6. Referenced verses speak about Paul’s use of prophecy.

as the rule requires that neither noun be plural.⁸¹ In addition to grammatical considerations, Paul makes a clear distinction between the apostles and prophets further in the context of this passage.⁸² If this view is embraced despite its weaknesses it has the potential to shape an understanding of the apostles and prophets which form no solid distinction between the two.

Another perspective of this passage argues for a recognized distinction between the apostles and prophets. In this view the identification of the apostles are recognized through a post-Christ NT perspective. This particular view distinguishes three potential groups Paul would have recognized as apostles: the twelve disciples who walked with Christ, minus Judas Iscariot; himself having seen Christ; and those who have the gift of apostleship.⁸³ Different commentators who advocate a post-Christ NT perspective of the phrase diverge regarding if the last group should be included.⁸⁴ The theory that this passage referenced prophets from the OT was popular among early church leaders; their understanding appears to be the greatest strength of this particular perspective.⁸⁵ Contemporary understanding regarding the identification of the prophets within this perspective recognizes them as being from the NT era rather than that of the OT.⁸⁶ The strength of this perspective lies within the context of the NT. The book of Acts makes it abundantly clear that the twelve disciples, Paul, and the early Christians gifted by the spirit played a foundational role in the spread of Christianity and the growth of the church. Paul could have had OT prophets in mind when he made this statement but his reference to the role of

⁸¹ Wallace, 270-274; 278.

⁸² Eph. 4:11.

⁸³ Acts 1:21-22; 1 Cor. 15:8-9; Eph. 4:11. Each of these referenced passages indicate an understanding of Pauline theology regarding apostleship and who he might have considered possessing such ability.

⁸⁴ Arnold, 170; Hoehner, 399; Lincoln, 153; O'Brian, 214. Arnold and Hoehner believe that Paul is referencing all the groups while O'Brian, believes that Paul is only referencing the first and second group. Lincoln communicates that the apostles and prophets are distinct but he does not identify "groups" of apostles.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 282. In the listed reference Best identifies a few proponents of this view such as: Origen; Chrysostom; Theodore; Calvin; and Beza.

⁸⁶ Best, 282-283. Best lays out a discussion of previous perceptions that the prophets referenced in the passage are those from the OT but then indicates that this view is no longer widely accepted.

prophets ministering to the Gentiles suggests otherwise.⁸⁷ A weakness in this rationale is that its argument cannot be confirmed outside of theological and Biblical principles; the perspective is not discounted by grammatical and lexical evidence but it does not provide a “concrete” argument for a post-Christ NT understanding. The acceptance of this perspective could encourage an individual to see an apostle as being distinct from a prophet, particularly in NT contexts.⁸⁸

Based on available evidence, it appears that the understanding of τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ προφητῶν refers to two distinct positions which only include those from a NT context. The setting of this passage appears to indicate that Paul considers these two roles different.⁸⁹ The role of the apostles seemed to encompass the disciples, Paul, and those believers gifted by God as they were specially sent as messengers for God.⁹⁰ It does not seem unreasonable to assume that Paul had the OT prophets in mind when he used the term προφητῶν but seems more likely that he is referencing NT prophets, such as those specifically gifted accordingly. The Gentile audience would have been more familiar with the prophets which had directly impacted their spiritual lives as the prophets’ responsibility was to communicate revelation from God to the

⁸⁷ The phrase being discussed functions with the adverbial participle ἐποικοδομηθέντες. This participle works in a causative manner explaining why the Gentiles are no longer strangers and foreigners. The prophets of the OT would have had a difficult time growing the church and encouraging the Jews and Gentiles to experience unification if they were not contemporaries with them. This does not confirm that Paul does not have OT prophets in mind but rather it only suggests otherwise.

⁸⁸ Arnold, 169-170; Best, 280-286; Hoehner, 397-404; Lincoln, 152-154; O’Brien, 212-218. John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1979), 106-108. There are many perspectives within the theory regarding distinct roles of the apostles and prophets, only a summary of a few dominate views are mentioned. See attached reference for more discussion on subject.

⁸⁹ Eph. 4:11. This passage seems to provide the best indication of this belief. If Paul considered the two parties to be the same then it does not make logical sense that the gifts would be distributed individually among believers.

⁹⁰ BDAG, 122. BDAG defines apostles as, “a group of highly honored believers with a special function as God’s envoys.”

church.⁹¹ A “B” grade has been assigned to the understanding of this phrase in light of the other good possibilities.⁹²

⁹¹ Ibid, 891. BDAG defines prophets in this context as, “Christians, who are endowed with the gift of προφητεία.”

⁹² Arnold, 169-170; Hoehner, 397-403; Lincoln, 153; O’Brian, 214-215, Stott, 107. The listed references share a similar perspective.

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