

REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE: SIX PICTURES OF THE CHURCH

Ephesians 02:19–22

Introduction: The Church

This is an excellent description of the church. Six pictures are given in these four short verses.

- I. Picture 1: a new nation (v. 19).
- II. Picture 2: God’s family (v. 19).
- III. Picture 3: God’s building (v. 20).
- IV. Picture 4: a growing organism (v. 21).
- V. Picture 5: a world-wide temple – the universal church (v. 21).
- VI. Picture 6: a local temple – the local church (v. 22).

I. Ephesians 02:19 Church, Believers – A New Nation

First, the church is pictured as a new nation or society. Note the words “fellow citizens.” We, the Gentiles, are no longer strangers and foreigners to God: we are now fellow citizens with all the saints of God.

1. We were foreigners and aliens. The word *aliens* (xenoi) means an outsider, an unknown person, a person who does not belong. The word *foreigner* (paroikoi) means sojourner, alien, a migrant, an exile. There was a time when we...
 - were outside God and His kingdom.
 - were unknown to God and His kingdom.
 - did not belong to God and His kingdom.
 - were sojourners, living outside God and outside His kingdom.
 - were alien to God and to His kingdom.
 - were migrants, not belonging to God nor to His kingdom.
 - were exiles to God and to His kingdom.

There was a time when we were as a foreigner and an alien to God, when we were not citizens of God’s kingdom. We had no relationship and no fellowship with God. We had no home and no rights to citizenship in His kingdom.

But note the glorious news: we are no longer foreigners and aliens to God. Jesus Christ has brought us to God (see notes, Eph. 2:13-18). We are now *fellow citizens* with all of God’s people. We now have a home and all the rights of citizenship in God’s kingdom.

2. Note the words “God’s people.” It means those who are set apart or separated to God. The picture is that of a people who are *fellow citizens* in a nation being created by God. The people are called...

- *God’s people*: a people set apart to God.
- *Fellow citizens*: a people being built into a new nation under God.

Phil 3:20 *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Heb 11:9-10 *By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God.*

Heb 11:13-16 *All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country — a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

2 Pet 3:13 *But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*

Rev 21:1 *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.*

Rev 21:27 *Nothing impure will ever enter it [God’s city, God’s nation], nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.*

II. Ephesians 02:19 Church, The Family of God

Second, the church is pictured as the family of God. Note the phrase “members of God’s household.” Jesus Christ has brought us into the family of God. This involves two glorious privileges.

1. The privilege of adoption. We have been adopted as children of God, sons and daughters of His (see *Adoption*, Gal. 4:5-6). We now live in the same house with God and His family, and all the experiences of God’s family are now ours:

- love
- clothing
- care
- food
- interest
- training
- discipline
- concern

- help
- provision
- protection
- shelter
- direction
- fellowship
- companionship
- intimacy

Rom 8:15-17 *For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs — heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

Gal 3:4-6 *Have you suffered so much for nothing — if it really was for nothing? Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard? Consider Abraham: “He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”*

Heb 2:11 *Both the one who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers.*

1 John 3:1 *How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.*

2. The privilege of responsibility and service. Again, note the term household. Every person of the household has duties to perform, some service to render for the sake of the family. We are responsible to love, care, provide for, and teach each other — do all the things mentioned in the previous point and everything else that will build up and strengthen the family of God.

Mat 12:50 *“For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.”*

Mat 20:28 *“Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

Mark 10:43-44 *“Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.”*

Luke 22:27 *“For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.”*

John 13:14 *“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet.”*

John 21:16 *Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”*

Rom 12:10-11 *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord.*

Gal 5:13 *You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.*

Gal 6:2 *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ.*

Gal 6:10 *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

Eph 6:7 *Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men.*

Titus 2:7 *In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness.*

Heb 10:24 *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.*

Heb 12:28 *Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.*

GALATIANS 04:05-06 ADOPTION

*To redeem those under the law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." **Galatians 04:05-06***

The word *rights* or *adoption* (huiothesia) means *to place as a son*. The picture of adoption is a beautiful picture of what God does for the Christian. In the ancient world the family was based on a Roman law called "patria potestas," the father's power. The law gave the father absolute authority over his children so long as the father lived. He could work, enslave, sell, and if he wished, he could pronounce the death penalty. Regardless of the child's adult age, the father held all power over personal and property rights.

Therefore, adoption was a serious matter. Yet, it was a common practice to ensure that a family would not become extinct – by having no male children. And when a child was adopted, three legal steps were taken.

1. The adopted son was adopted permanently. He could not be adopted today and disinherited tomorrow. He became a son of the father – forever. He was eternally secure as a son.
2. The adopted son immediately had all the rights of a legitimate son in the new family.

3. The adopted son completely lost all rights in his old family. The adopted son was looked upon as a new person – so new that old debts and obligations connected with his former family were cancelled out and abolished as if they never existed.

The Bible says several things about the believer's adoption as a son of God.

1. The believer's adoption establishes a new relationship with God – forever. He is eternally secure as a child of God. But the new relationship is established only when a person comes to Christ through faith (Gal. 3:26; 4:4-5).
2. The believer's adoption establishes a new relationship with God as father. The believer has all the rights and privileges of a genuine son of God (Rom. 8:16-17; 1 Jn. 3:1-2).
3. The believer's adoption establishes a new dynamic experience with God as father, a moment by moment access into His very presence (Rom. 8:14, 16; Gal. 4:6).
4. The believer's adoption gives him a very special relationship with other children of God - a family relationship that binds him with others in an unparalleled spiritual union (notes, Eph. 2:11-18; 2:19-22; 3:6; 4:4-6; 4:17-19. See Acts 2:42. See Mt. 12:46-50.)
5. The believer's adoption makes him a new person. The believer has been taken out from under the authority and power of the world and its sin. The believer is *placed as a son* into the family and authority of God. The old life with all of its debts and obligations are cancelled and wiped out (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 3:23-27; 2 Pet. 1:4.)
6. The believer's adoption is to be fully realized in the future at the return of Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:19; Eph. 1:14; 1 Th. 4:14-17; 1 Jn. 3:2).
7. The believer's adoption and its joy will be shared by all creation on a cosmic scale (Rom. 8:21). There is to be a new heavens and earth (2 Pet. 3:12-14; Rev. 21:1-7). □

III. *Ephesians 02:20 Church, God's Building*

Third, the church is pictured as God's building. Believers are pictured as being the building stones which are being used to construct a building for God. Note two significant points.

1. Jesus Christ Himself is the *Chief Cornerstone*. The symbolism of the chief cornerstone says three significant things to us.

- a. The cornerstone is the first stone laid. All other stones are placed after it. It is the preeminent stone in time. So it is with Christ. He is *the first* of God's new movement.

=> Christ is the author of our salvation. All others are crew members who follow Him.

Heb 2:10 *In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering.*

=> Christ is the author and source of eternal salvation and of our faith. All others are the readers of the story.

Heb 5:9 *And, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him.*

Heb 12:2 *Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

=> Christ is the alpha and the omega – the beginning and the end. All others come after Him.

Rev 1:8 *“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.” (see 21:6; 22:13)*

=> Christ is the forerunner, the one who went before us into the very presence of God. All others enter God’s presence after Him.

Heb 6:19-20 *We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.*

b. The cornerstone is the supportive stone. All other stones are placed upon it and held up by it. They all rest upon it. The cornerstone is the preeminent stone in position and power. So it is with Christ. He is the support and power, the Foundation of God’s new movement.

=> Christ is *the Head Cornerstone*, the only true foundation upon which man can build. All crumble who are not laid upon Him.

1 Cor 3:11 *For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

=> Christ is *the Chief Cornerstone* upon which all others are fitly formed together. All who wish to be fitly formed together have to be laid upon Him.

Eph 2:20-22 *Built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

c. The cornerstone is the directional stone. It is used to line up the whole building and all the other stones. It can be called the *instructional stone* – upon it all the lines and

instructions of the building are based. So it is with Christ. He is the Person who gave and gives the directions and instructions to God's people. We — the church — are to build our lives upon His instructions and His instructions only. If we follow any other instructions or directions, we will be out of line; and when we are noticed, we will have to be removed, cast aside and replaced with a stone that can be set in line. Jesus Christ is the chief cornerstone. God used Him to give direction to all the other stones.

1 Pet 2:6-8 *For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone," and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message — which is also what they were destined for.*

Thought 1. Jesus Christ is the Chief Cornerstone. If He is removed, the church will collapse: no Christ, no church. Christ holds everything within the church together. Therefore, it is an absolute necessity that He and He alone be preached, taught, and lived.

Mat 7:24-27 *"Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."*

2 Tim 2:19 *Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his," and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness."*

2. We, the church, are built upon the foundation laid by the testimonies of the apostles and prophets. They surrounded the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Their record and testimony of the Word of God itself is the foundation upon which the church is to be laid.

John 17:17 *"Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth."*

Rom 10:7-9 *I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Rom 10:10 *For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

Eph 4:11-12 *It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.*

Eph 4:14-15 *Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.*

1 Th 2:13 *And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.*

IV. Ephesians 02:21 Church, A Growing Organism

Fourth, the church is pictured as a growing organism. The word “rises” is actually the word “grows” or “growing,” a biological word, the idea of a living organism. The church is pictured as a living organism — the union of various parts of a living being, of a dynamic body. This may seem strange to speak of a building in biological terms — a building that rises or grows. The point is that more and more parts, more and more believers are brought and fitted into the building as each day passes. The building rises and grows and continues to rise and grow until the Lord Jesus Christ returns.

Note another fact as well. Peter calls Jesus Christ the *living stone*. Christ is the *living stone* upon which all others are built up a spiritual house. All others have to be built upon Him if they wish to live and have their spiritual sacrifice accepted by God.

1 Pet 2:4-5 *As you come to him, the living Stone — rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him — you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

Note that it is all of God: it is all due to God's work. He is the One who raises up the Saviour. Note also that the Saviour is the object of marvel and wonder.

Thought 1. The church and its believers have two dynamic challenges in this point.

- 1) The church must grow. It must be bringing new stones (believers) and fitting them into the building of God. The church must be adding on to the building. Its structure is not yet finished.
- 2) Every believer within the building is a part of the building and expected to fulfil its function within the building; that is, every believer is a labourer, a labourer who is expected to be busy adding on to the building of the church. We are all to be bringing new stones and joining them into the great building of God, the church.

Mat 28:19-20 “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Acts 4:20 “For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

Acts 5:20 “Go, stand in the temple courts,” he said, “and tell the people the full message of this new life.”

2 Cor 4:13 It is written: “I believed; therefore I have spoken.” With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak.

2 Tim 2:2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

1 Pet 3:15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

Psa 66:16 Come and listen, all you who fear God; let me tell you what he has done for me.

Isa 43:10 “You are my witnesses,” declares the LORD, “and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.”

Isa 63:7 I will tell of the kindnesses of the LORD, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the LORD has done for us — yes, the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses.

V. Ephesians 02:21 Church, A Universal Temple

Fifth the church is pictured as a worldwide temple, as the universal church. Note the word “whole” — believers as a whole make up the holy temple of God. All believers — the whole body of believers — are pictured as a building, a universal church being structured for God’s presence. Each new believer and each generation of believers is seen as being placed and fitted into God’s universal structure. As the little chorus says, “Red and yellow, black and white — they are precious in His sight.” All believers of every generation who are being called from all across the world are being fitted into God’s universal building which will literally be the new heavens and earth. We, the church — the believers of the earth from all generations — shall be a part, a building stone, of the new universe when

God makes the new heavens and earth (see verses above; note 1, Eph. 2:19). However, note that each person is placed into the structure *only by Christ*. Only the person and the body of people who come to Christ as the Chief Cornerstone are fitted into the building. A man must build upon the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets, which is the foundation of Christ Himself. Any other cornerstone or any other foundation constructs some other kind of building, not God's building. People may follow their own thought structure or some man's profound philosophy or even their own lifestyle, but it is not God's building that they structure. In Christ and in Christ alone and upon the foundation laid by the apostles is God's building being structured.

Thought 1. The gospel of Jesus Christ is open to all people everywhere. There is no place for division and prejudice, privilege, partiality, classes and caste systems in the temple or church of God. Every nation, even the uttermost part of the earth, is to be brought into the universal temple or church of God.

Mat 16:18 *“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.”*

Mat 28:19 *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”*

Mark 13:10 *“And the gospel must first be preached to all nations.”*

Mark 16:15 *He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation.”*

Luke 24:47 *“And repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”*

Acts 1:8 *“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

Rom 10:12 *For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile — the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him.*

Gal 3:28 *There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Eph 3:6 *This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.*

Rev 14:06 *Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth — to every nation, tribe, language and people.*

VI. Ephesians 02:22 Indwelling Presence of the Holy Spirit

Sixth, the church is pictured as a local temple, as the local church. Note that Paul now uses the word “you,” referring to the Ephesian church in particular. Each local church is pictured as a building structured for God’s presence (v. 22). And each member is seen as an integral and essential stone being placed and joined into the building (Eph. 4:16: 1 Pet. 2:5). The church’s stability lies in each stone being placed, joined and cemented by the same Lord, and by each stone holding up its load, fulfilling its purpose in the structure. Note that the local church exists for the purpose of providing a dwelling, a home for the presence of God – through His Spirit. The church is to allow the Spirit of God to live out His life through the church. The Holy Spirit dwells within the church to help its believers when they are...

- troubled, distressed or confused
- discouraged or dispirited
- suffering or dying
- joyful and excited
- slothful and inactive
- witnessing and teaching
- preaching and ministering

The Spirit of God dwells within the church to conform the church to the image of God’s will. The effectiveness of any local church depends upon how much it allows the Holy Spirit to dwell within and to control its body of members.

John 14:17 *“The Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.”*

Rom 8:9 *You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.*

1 Cor 3:16 *Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you?*

1 Cor 6:19 *Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own.*

2 Tim 1:14 *Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you – guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.*

1 John 2:27 *As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit – just as it has taught you, remain in him. ■*