



# God's New Humanity

(Note to leaders - when a question in the study is followed by possible answers, these are for your benefit, try to encourage your group to come up with answers for themselves)

## **Ephesians 2:11-18**

<sup>11</sup> Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called

“uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)– <sup>12</sup> remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, <sup>15</sup> by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup> and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. <sup>17</sup> He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

In this passage Paul addresses the major problem in the world, division:

1. **Humanity is divided on every level:** Personal relationships - tribes - all the way through to nation states.
2. We divide over land, over politics, over cultural norms and expectations, over beliefs, preferences, race, colour.
3. Our division has been the cause of the bloodshed that has marred human history, from the beginning to now.

*Q* What are the two main groups that the world was divided into in Paul's day?

- The Jews and the Gentiles (non-Jews)

*Q* How did a Jew feel towards a Gentile? Can you think of any story or parable that demonstrates this?

*Q* Looking at v 12 what 5 things described a Gentile?

- Separate from Christ,
- Excluded from citizenship in Israel
- Foreigners to the covenants of the promise
- Without hope and

- Without God in the world

### **Acts 10:28**

And he (Peter) said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit anyone of another nation, but God has shown me that I should not call any person common or unclean.

A big cause of the deep division and the separation was the law. The law and circumcision, had become a source of hostility - enmity - hate.

*Q When God gave the law to the Israelites in the wilderness was it a good thing?*

- The law was a good gift to the Jews and was to be a blessing to the nations
- If Israel lived according to the law, lived as a holy people set apart for God, they would be a light to the nations and a blessing to the nations around them.

*Q How do you think that a good thing became a problem?*

- Pride - they looked down on other nations
- The Gentile nations hated them because of their attitude towards them

*Q Is this a unique experience - or do we see this same pattern in the world? Discuss.*

- There is something deep within all mankind that takes something good and uses it to look down on others.
- In pride we exaggerate our positives and make them our **identities**

*Q Can you give some examples?*

- Educated looked down upon the un-educated
- Wealthy and poor

### **Read v 14-15**

*Q What has God done?*

- Destroyed the wall of hostility by making the two groups one
- Made one new humanity
- Brought peace

### **New Humanity - What is it?**

*The Church is something absolutely new that has been brought into being, something that was not there before. It is comparable to what happened at the very beginning when God created the heavens and the earth. There was nothing there before God created it...The old is entirely done away with. The Jew has been done away with as such, even the Gentile has been done away with, in Christ. 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, for you are all one in Christ Jesus'. In Christ Jesus neither circumcision avails anything nor uncircumcision but a new creature. Jew has gone, Gentile have gone; all that belonged to the Jew, all that belonged to Gentile, is irrelevant hence-forward. It is the new creature that matters...the*

unity of this new body is an absolute unity. There is no such thing as a Jewish section of the Christian Church. There is no such thing as a Gentile section of the Christian Church. And there never will be. As we enter the Christian Church we do so as new creations...The Church must not be conceived of as a coalition of a number of parties. No, it is the abolition of the old and the creation of something entirely new. **D.**

**Martyn Lloyd-Jones**

*Q What do you think this mean to us?*

- What gave us our identities in the past no longer matters as they once did
- The things that caused us to look down on others, that became walls of division, that separated, no longer matter

*Q What are some of the things that have defined your identity?*

- Nationality
- Male or female

*Q Is there anything wrong with these things?*

- These things are nothing compared to the greatness of our new identity in Christ.

*Q Has your new identity changed whom you find you have the most in common with?*

Let's consider how this should be impacting how we live:

## **1. View ourselves differently**

*Q Could we have achieved this reconciliation ourselves?*

- Only God's power could

*Q How can it impact our witness to the world?*

- We are a display of God's power at work

*Q How are you living now as though there are still barriers, dividing walls still in place?*

*Q Do you see this unity demonstrated at City Hill? In what areas would you like to see more?*

We need to see ourselves differently, God's greatest creation, a display of his power and glory to the world.

## **2. View the city differently**

**Read v17**

*Q Who was near and who was far off?*

*Q Who needed to hear the gospel?*

*Q How does this radically reveal the truth of the gospel?*

- Both the near and the far are in need of the saving grace of Jesus

Christ

- The gospel totally levels the playing field

### **Read v 12-13**

We were all once far off separate from Christ, without hope, without promises, without God until we were brought near and transformed by the saving work of Christ on the cross.

*Q How should remembering this impact how we look to those in the city around us?*

- Begin to look at the city and not condemn it but love it
- Engage with it, rather than separate from it
- See that this new humanity has been placed in the city, not to condemn it but rather to be the answer to it
- The church is the answer to the division, the hurt, the pain, the segregation, the tribalism, and the exploitation

### **Joel challenged us to make use of our sports day on the 1<sup>st</sup> March:**

- Where the broken city can come into contact with this new city
- This is not an exclusive family event but a demonstration of the power of God to the city
- It's a means of healing to the city

## **3. View the nations differently**

The Jews and Gentiles represent the whole human race. God's work of reconciliation has always been directed at the whole of mankind, not just one or two nations.

### **Revelation 5:9-10**

*And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation."*

Israel was to be a light to the nations, so that the nations, all nations would come to him. But because of pride, what God gave them became a source of division and they hated the nations.

*Q Has God's intentions toward the nations changed?*

*Q How will understanding what Christ came to accomplish on the cross cause us to view the nations differently?*

- Missions will not be a bonus but essential to who we are

### **Revelation 7:9**

*After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.*

One day this new humanity will inherit the heavens and the earth.

- Our picture of the new heavens and the new earth is not complete unless it includes a multitude from every tribe and every tongue!

God's mission, and therefore our mission, is not complete until Christ has his inheritance, a great multitude from all nations.

Joel ended with a challenge to each of us:

- Nothing will transform your view of the church, this new humanity like joining a team, you will be amazed at how you have this instant connection with people you have never met, from a nation that you have never been to
- Let us give generously towards our work to the nations
- Consider joining one of our mission trips this year

In 2019 God is going to giving us further access into this city and into the nations. He is going to be giving us new ground for Christ Jesus.

It is only possible for us to embrace this city, to embrace the nations if we understand that we are a new humanity and if we understand what Christ did on the cross.

#### **Eph 2:16**

In one body he reconciled both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.

#### **2 Cor 5:21**

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

On the cross, he became all that separates us, and God put it to death.