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| |  | | --- | | SUMMARY: Ethnicity is an important part of our human identity. Most people are proud of who they are and where they have come from. Few groups though, cling to their ethnic identify like the people of Jewish origin.  Biblically speaking it is completely understandable, they are the descendants of Abraham after all. He was the one to whom God promised the great blessings of the covenant. To them alone God said, “I will be your God and you will be my people” (Jer. 30:22)  Add to this, a history of war, distrust and distain for the surrounding nations and you begin to get a picture of why the church found the issues of ethnicity and religious practice so important.  Paul picks up on this issue in the second half of Ephesians 2. Having already spoken about being reunited to God (2:1-10), he now speaks about how and why unity in Jesus is beyond ethnic and historical barriers. That long-standing diving wall and barrier has been destroyed (v.14).  The church in Ephesus was by its own existence proof of this divide being bridged. They were a largely gentile community, who did not follow the ceremonial practices of Israel. Yet these people were now part of the people of God, members of his household (v.19) and built on the history of Israel’s prophets and apostles.  How? Jesus. He is the cornerstone of this building project, the church. It is by his blood that we are forgiven and it is by his blood that the church is united in its purpose and mission. This building didn’t stop with the Ephesian church it’s a project that continues to this day in us as his present-day community. |  Ephesians 2:11-22 |  | |  | | --- | | But Now…God has made us one  1. Why has race and ethnicity always been a source of division and struggle? 2. What made the Jewish people particularly patriotic and ethnically divisive? Was this right or wrong? 3. Why was welcoming gentiles into the people of God such a big hurdle for the early church? 4. Paul makes clear that circumcision is done by human hands (v.11), why? 5. How does verse 12 describe the gentile world pre-Jesus? 6. What does it mean to say Jesus ‘is’ our peace? (v.14) 7. How did Jesus set aside the law in his flesh? (v.15) 8. What was the purpose of Jesus doing this? (v.15b-16) 9. Why were some near to God and others far? (v.17) 10. What do the images of citizenship and the household point to in verse 19? 11. How is the church built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets? (v. 20) 12. What is it that unites the church across all divides that we can imagine? (v.21) 13. When will this building be complete? | |