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## **Research of Ephesians 2:11-22 and its Relevance to the Issue of Racism in the Church**

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### **Abstract:**

This paper aims to draw out the contribution of the biblical research of Ephesians 2:11-22 to the issue of racism in the church that still exists today. This paper utilizes the biblical method by directly exegeting the biblical text by including the flow of thought of Ephesians 2:11-22 as well as including historical context analysis and key word analysis. I find that Ephesians 2:11-22 explains its argument in three main parts: 1) the condition of Gentiles and Jewish Christians before in Christ; 2) while in Christ; 3) after in Christ. From this research, several findings are relevant to the issue of racism in the church.

### **Keywords:**

Ephesians, Feud, Racism,  
Church, Unity

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Racism is a stigmatized belief that one's race is superior to another, leading to discriminatory actions against the other race.<sup>1</sup> This social issue is felt in many parts of the world, including the church. For example, the issue of racism is the racist actions of white people towards black people in America. As written by Hendra Winarjo by quoting several authors, white people in America have more rights than black people, and apparently there is a white supremacist ideology that states that they are superior to black people.<sup>2</sup> This does not only happen in American society or churches in America, but also in Indonesian society and even in various churches in Indonesia that are multiethnic. As stated by Markus, one of the victims of the Indonesian nation's helplessness in managing multicultural matters is the ethnic Chinese.<sup>3</sup> Evangelical Chinese churches in Indonesia are part of the real victims of ethnic violence and racial discrimination.<sup>4</sup> The act of discrimination occurred from outside the church to inside the church. However, in its journey based on the wounds that have been experienced by ethnic Chinese in the church, what have happened then is discrimination by ethnic Chinese inside the church against natives. Acts of racial discrimination are not only active, but also passive. Vasko in his book *Beyond Apathy* discusses white racism against blacks in America and Christian apathy. He said that apathy is an attitude that distances itself and chooses not to care about those who are suffering (in this case, people who suffer from racism).<sup>5</sup> Whether actively practiced or apathetic, racism is a matter of sin.

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<sup>1</sup> "Oxford Language Dictionary"; Woolf, *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, 571.

<sup>2</sup> Hendra Winarjo, "(Re)imagining the Problem of Racism: An Evangelical Response to Racism," *Veritas: Jurnal Teologi dan Pelayanan* 21, no. No. 2 (2022): 284.

<sup>3</sup> Markus Dominggus Lere Dawa, "Menjadi Jemaat Multikultural: Suatu Visi untuk Gereja-gereja Tionghoa Injili Indonesia yang Hidup di Tengah Konflik Etnis dan Diskriminasi Rasial," *Veritas: Jurnal Teologi dan Pelayanan* 7, no. No.1 (2006): 129.

<sup>4</sup> Dawa, 146.

<sup>5</sup> Elizabeth T. Vasko, *Beyond Apathy: A Theology for Bystanders* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), 70-71.

Agreeing with Hendra Winarjo's statement, racism is not just an individual sin, but a structural sin.<sup>6</sup> As quoted by Winarjo, the problem of racism is not limited to the hatred of a person of a different race but is a systematic and structured problem from the beginning.<sup>7</sup> Whether it is racism that is actively practiced, or racism that is passively maintained due to negligence and ignorance of the issue, it has its roots structurally within the community and even the culture of the community. Precisely because racism in the church is a structural sin, the church cannot only emphasize programs that uphold opposition to racism in the church, but there needs to be racial reconciliation and real transformation in the church.

## **METHODS**

The author writes a research of Ephesians 2:11-22 as one of the biblical bases whose principles can be used as a solution to the problem of racialism in the church. This research is conducted using the biblical method by directly exegeting a section of biblical text based on the original meaning/concept of the text as it was originally written.<sup>8</sup> In outlining this thesis, the author explains the flow of thought in Ephesians 2:11-22 and includes historical context analysis as well as significant word analysis. The body of the paper is divided into three main sections relating to the condition of Gentiles and Jewish Christians before Christ with regard to the prejudice/stigma of each party; followed by an explanation of the changes when both parties are in Christ; and the united life of community that they should have after being in Christ. Moving on from this, there is an interpretation and application to the present context which is linked to the issue of racism in the church.

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<sup>6</sup> Winarjo, "(Re)imagining the Problem of Racism: An Evangelical Response to Racism," 285.

<sup>7</sup> Winarjo, 290.

<sup>8</sup> Amos Winarto, *Penelitian Ilmu Teologi* (Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta: PT Kanisius, 2021), 12-13.

## DISCUSSION

### The Position of Gentiles and Jews Before Christ

William Barclay as quoted by John Stott states how complicated the alienation that occurred between the two communities was, especially on the part of the Jews:<sup>9</sup>

*“The Jew had an immense contempt for the Gentile. The Gentiles, said the Jews, were created by God to be fuel for the fires of hell. God, they said, loves only Israel of all the nations that he had made ... It was not even lawful to render help to a Gentile mother in her hour of sorest need, for that would simply be to bring another Gentile into the world. Until Christ came, the Gentiles were an object of contempt to the Jews. The barrier between them was absolute. If a Jewish boy married a Gentile girl, or if a Jewish girl married a Gentile boy, the funeral of that Jewish boy or girl was carried out. Such contact with a Gentile was the equivalent of death.”*

This alienation and hostility are caused by the prejudice/stigma that each party believes in the other.

From the Jewish side, the Law guards the Jews against the Gentiles from their impure way of life. This has resulted in the Jewish way of life taking those of the non-Jewish race for granted and causing hostility on the part of the non-Jews. The Torah that forbids Jews to eat and marry non-Jews places non-Jews as non-human and inferior to humans.<sup>10</sup> Non-Jewish races were considered pagans and had no access to God at all. In fact, according to Josephus quoted by Thielman, the temple built during Herod's time had a stone wall or ledge separating the outside and inside of the temple.<sup>11</sup> The inner area is the more sacred area and is

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<sup>9</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians* (Westmont, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), 91.

<sup>10</sup> Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 42, Ephesians*, 142.

<sup>11</sup> Frank S. Thielman, *Ephesians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [BECNT]* (Ada, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2010), 165.

reserved for the Jews, while the outer area is the area for the Gentiles.<sup>12</sup> According to Josephus quoted by Arnold, there were 13 stone inscriptions standing at several points around the balustrade warning Gentiles not to go near the inside of the Temple; if they did, they would be punished with death.<sup>13</sup>

Verse 11 states that the readers (who are Gentiles) are Gentiles according to the flesh, and are called uncircumcised. Gentiles are called uncircumcised because physically, they have never undergone circumcision. In fact, in the Roman-Greek understanding, the act of cutting the foreskin was horrible and ridiculous.<sup>14</sup> This is in contrast to the Jewish view. For Jews, the act of cutting the foreskin is a symbol of the covenant between God and the Israelites that represents salvation for the Israelites and their racial identity as Jews.<sup>15</sup> This relates to verse 12 which explains that those who are 'uncircumcised' have no hope of salvation.

Paul listed five conditions of the Gentiles (Romans, Greeks, Egyptians, etc.). First, the Gentiles before becoming part of God's people had no knowledge of the Messiah/Deliverer promised in the days of the prophets or of the awaited King to bring restoration and had no access to the Torah or prophecy.<sup>16</sup> Furthermore, Gentiles were not included in Israel's citizenship and did not share in the promised provisions (Israel's status as the people of God referring to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; who based their lives on the Law and received spiritual blessings from the God of Israel).<sup>17</sup> They were hostile to God in their thinking and alienated themselves from God's zone and missed out on the covenant provisions (to Abraham, Moses, David, as well as Christ).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 91.

<sup>13</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians (10) (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Academic, 2010), 159.

<sup>14</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians (10) (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)*, 153.

<sup>15</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians (10) (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)*, 153.

<sup>16</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians (10) (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)*, 154.

<sup>17</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians (10) (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)*, 155.

<sup>18</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians (10) (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)*, 155.

Fourth and fifth, the Gentiles are hopeless and without God in this world. The statement without God refers to the Gentiles who, although they worship many gods, do not worship the one true God, the LORD God of Israel.<sup>19</sup> They have all sorts of hopes for the future, but not true hopes either. These five conditions actually show that the condition and position of the Gentiles before Christ was helpless and hopeless to be saved. These conditions are the very difference between the Jewish people having access to God, salvation, restoration and hope; and the Gentiles not. Nonetheless, this seems to have led the Jews to have an understanding that emphasizes the exclusivity of their race; to view their nation as superior to other nations; and to underestimate and negatively stigmatize Gentile Christians.

On the other hand, Gentiles Christians also have prejudices against the Jews. The demands of religious rituals (such as living apart from the non-Jewish way of life) made them, in the eyes of Gentiles, a solitary community.<sup>20</sup> This makes Jews stand out from the crowd and prevents them from fully socializing within the wider community.<sup>21</sup> Jews in the cities of the Roman world were often found unable to meet the standards of behavior required by the state (such as military service, payment of taxes, etc.).<sup>22</sup> They can't do the things that the state wants them to do because they have to follow the Sabbath rules, the dietary regulations, the prohibition of participating in events from idol-worshipping religions.<sup>23</sup> They could not participate in festivals that served various trade foods that had previously been offered to idols. Later, they had the privilege of being able to enjoy the Sabbath and were even allowed to pay a tax of half a shekel a year to Jerusalem for the repair of the temple.<sup>24</sup> Through this explanation, it can

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<sup>19</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 42, Ephesians* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1990), 138.

<sup>20</sup> James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of The New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 215.

<sup>21</sup> Jeffers, 215.

<sup>22</sup> Jeffers, 215.

<sup>23</sup> Jeffers, 215.

<sup>24</sup> Jeffers, 215.

be understood that the Jews at that time received less respect from the Gentiles and were even seen as lazy people on the Sabbath. Both sides were actually fighting for their own arrogance because they felt they were superior to the other.

### **Point of Change: In Christ**

In light of verses 1-10, in verse 11 the statement Διὸ μνημονεύετε (*dio menmoneuete*) tells the reader to keep in mind the poor condition of the reader (Gentile Christian) before entering into Christ's Christian community.<sup>25</sup> The term "remember" seems to be used frequently in the context of the command for the Israelites to remember God's deliverance of Israel from the Egyptian occupation.<sup>26</sup> This relates to the importance of remembering the contrast of life before and after in Christ, where life before in Christ is a life contrary to God's will and there is no way to salvation.

This is further explained through the changed condition of the Gentiles in verse 13. The phrase νυνὶ δὲ (*nuni de*) meaning "but now" indicates a dramatic change in condition from the period before the Gentiles were in Christ and after in Christ.<sup>27</sup> Then, verse 13 apparently explains that those who were outside of Christ (as the fundamental problem) have received God's solution through their placement "in Christ Jesus" and "through the blood of Jesus".<sup>28</sup> In the context of the Old Testament, Jews are often described as those who are 'close' to God, while Gentiles are 'far' from God. Therefore, when it says in verse 13, 'those who were far off have become near in Christ', then in fact the Gentiles who were far from God as described in the 'Before in Christ' section of this paper have become near because of their placement 'in Christ'. The use of the word ἦτε (*ete* - you were) in verse 12 which is imperfect is contrasted with the word ἐγενήθητε

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<sup>25</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 42, Ephesians* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1990), 135.

<sup>26</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians (10) (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)*, 153.

<sup>27</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [BECNT]*, 158.

<sup>28</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [BECNT]*, 158.

(*egenetete* - have become) in verse 13 which is aorist. The imperfect ἦτε emphasizes that the unfortunate state of the Gentiles happened continuously in the past while the aorist ἐγενήθητε emphasizes that the change of position from misfortune to being in Christ happened once and completely. It was Christ who brought the Gentiles into the community of God. It was Christ who broke down the dividing wall between Jews and Gentiles with regard to the theological matters of the law and circumcision.

### **Christ as Peace**

There is a change in the second person plural 'you' (Verses 11-13 and 19-22) to the first person plural 'we' (Verses 14-18, except verse 17). This is significant in explaining the state of 'you' i.e. the Gentiles before in Christ; the state of 'us' (Jews and Gentiles) in Christ; and the reaffirmation of the state of 'you' after in Christ. In verses 14-18, several things can be understood about Christ as the Peace for both Jews and Gentiles.<sup>29</sup>

Christ is God's solution to the problem of the enmity between God and man and the conflict between Jews and Gentiles. In the context of Ephesians 2, the proclamation of Christ as the Prince of Peace is directly intended to stop the feud between Jews and Gentiles and to unify both parties.<sup>30</sup> Jesus Christ is not just a peacemaker to mankind but is the Peace itself that appears in human form that unites God with mankind as well as the two hostile parties.<sup>31</sup> In this case, it can be found that because in Christ, Jews and Gentiles cannot only be friends in relationship, but more than that, become one in Christ.<sup>32</sup> The proclamation of Christ as Peace is followed by the explanation that the wall of separation between Gentiles and Jews has been torn down. The wall that Christ broke down was the dividing wall of heaven and earth (which was a strong Jewish-Roman

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<sup>29</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians (10) (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament)*, 158.

<sup>30</sup> Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 42, Ephesians*, 140.

<sup>31</sup> Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 42, Ephesians*, 140.

<sup>32</sup> Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 42, Ephesians*, 140-41.



way of thinking at that time; cosmically) as well as the law of Moses (verse 15) that separated Jews and Gentiles.<sup>33</sup> These are the things that Christ destroys, so that both parties can be united in Christ.

The two main purposes for why Christ broke down the dividing wall of hostility are explained through the two main verbs in verses 15-16: κτίση (*ktise*, to create) and ἀποκαταλλάξη (*apokatallaxe*, to reconcile).<sup>34</sup> First, Christ through His death has set aside the law from the time of Moses, so that He can create a new man that includes the unity of Jew and Gentile in Christ, becoming one body (verses 15-16).<sup>35</sup> The term new man in the book of Ephesians always relates to the Christian life that is freed from the world, evil, demonic powers, and the flesh.<sup>36</sup> In the one communal new human body, there is no longer any feud. Through unity in Christ, believers are united with one another across social, economic, ethnic, background, and so on.<sup>37</sup>

Secondly, verse 16 explains that the purpose of Christ setting aside the Law of Moses was for the reconciliation of all mankind to God. The reconciliation provided in the one new man in Christ is not only horizontal, which includes fellow human beings, but vertical, which is the reconciliation of the relationship of Jews and Gentiles to God.<sup>38</sup> This passage harmonizes the concept of man's reconciliation with God and the concept of the unification of Jews and Gentiles in Christ.<sup>39</sup> What Christ has done has reconciled people of different ethnicities and races with God Himself.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, even different and initially separate groups of people - because they are in Christ - will also experience a reconciled relationship.

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<sup>33</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [BECNT]*, 162.

<sup>34</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [BECNT]*, 170-71.

<sup>35</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [BECNT]*, 170.

<sup>36</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [BECNT]*, 170.

<sup>37</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [BECNT]*, 171.

<sup>38</sup> Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 42, Ephesians*, 144.

<sup>39</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [BECNT]*, 161.

<sup>40</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [BECNT]*, 163.

### **Christ as the Peacemaker**

Christ has become the Reconciler and the Peace itself for both Jews and Gentiles. In verse 17 then, it is explained that Christ is the herald of peace. He now proclaims the good news of the peace that He has created because of His death on the cross.<sup>41</sup> In the beginning, peace existed because of Christ's death, therefore Christ preaching peace does not refer to Christ's work before the event of Christ's death but to Christ's appearance after His resurrection declaring "peace be with you" to His disciples and followers.<sup>42</sup> The message of Christ's peace continued to be proclaimed through the mouths of the disciples and apostles.

This message of peace has brought not only the Gentiles to experience reconciliation with God, but also with the Jews. Apparently, the Law of Moses that had separated the Gentiles from the Jews, had separated the Jews from God as well.<sup>43</sup> Both parties have peace or access to the Father in the Spirit through Christ. The statement of being united in the Spirit in verse 18 parallels the 'one body' in verse 16. The union in the body by one Spirit emphasizes that this is the privilege of both parties in Christ and the evidence of peace between the two.<sup>44</sup>

### **The Position of Gentiles in God's Church After in Christ**

The position of the Gentiles once in Christ is no longer that of strangers (ξένοι - *xenoi*) and aliens (πάροικοι - *paroikoi*), but fellow citizens of the saints (συμπολίται τῶν ἁγίων - *sumpolitai ton agion*) and members of the household of God (οἰκεῖοι τοῦ Θεοῦ - *oikeioi tou teou*). In use, the terms ξένοι - πάροικοι and συμπολίται - οἰκεῖοι are usually socially political and are always contrasted with each other. The term foreigner (πάροικοι - *paroikoi*) refers to a foreigner settling in a territory, as distinguished from a citizen. Citizens live in tolerance and under

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<sup>41</sup> John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Ephesians* (Westmont, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1984), 103.

<sup>42</sup> Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 103.

<sup>43</sup> Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 42, Ephesians*, 146.

<sup>44</sup> Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 42, Ephesians*, 150.

the protection of the state, while foreigners do not.<sup>45</sup> Foreigners have no permanent residence or ownership.<sup>46</sup> Ancient lists of state dwellers also show that those who were πολῖται (citizens of a state) had the privilege of dwelling more than sedentary foreigners (πάροικοι - *paroikoi*), and even more so than sedentary foreigners (ξένοι - *xenoi*).<sup>47</sup> Both resident and non-resident aliens do not have legal rights as full citizens, and the problem is that they do not get social acceptance from the community they live in (also referred to as 'doomed'). This political and social term is then used by Paul to illustrate that Gentiles were originally like foreigners who settled/not settled, but then in Christ were made citizens of the saints and members of the family of God.

Being οἰκεῖοι (*oikeioi* - family) emphasizes a family-like way of relating. Philo as cited by Thielman states that people at that time adopted a different way of speaking, which was based on the social status of the person being spoken to (close or distant relations, to parents or children, to family members or to strangers).<sup>48</sup> It is understandable that the term family of God itself has to do with accepting one another as family. Throughout this passage, the social politics of the region still used the terms stranger (ξένοι - *xenoi*) and foreigner (πάροικοι - *paroikoi*), but these terms no longer exist within the sphere of God's united community.

In Christ the building of God is built. Bratcher and Nida quoted by Liefeld say that the statement of Christ Jesus as the cornerstone has the definite meaning that Christ is the most important stone in God's building, the only one that provides cohesion and can support the entire structure.<sup>49</sup> Then, Paul states that this union between the two parties is actually similar to a building that is neatly arranged into a holy temple of God in the Lord, namely Christ (verse 21). The

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<sup>45</sup> Theodor Zahn et al., *Introduction to the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1909), 139.

<sup>46</sup> Zahn et al., 140.

<sup>47</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [BECNT]*, 178.

<sup>48</sup> Thielman, 178–79.

<sup>49</sup> Walter L. Liefeld, *Ephesians (Volume 10) (IVP New Testament Commentary Series)* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2010), 76.

function of the temple is to serve as God's holy dwelling place (verse 22). Both Gentiles and Jews have been united stone by stone, into one building, the temple of God to the Lord who has reconciled them. This building grows in the Lord and is not a dead building, but a living building that continues to grow in the Lord; making the church of God that includes both Jews and Gentiles at that time a living body of Christ.<sup>50</sup> Christ Himself sustains and unites the Jews and Gentiles so that they can grow as members of the body of Christ, the holy and ever-growing temple of God. The statement 'continue to grow' indicates that as long as the Lord has not returned, the work of growth as the temple of the living God has not yet complete. This unified community will be led to continue growing towards God's purpose for them.<sup>51</sup>

### **The Relevance of Ephesians 2:11-22 for the Issue of Racism in the Church**

From the past to the present, the issue of racism still exists in the church. In the church, it is still common for racism to uphold a certain race and ignore or underestimate people of other races. In this case, Ephesians 2:11-22 can contribute some understanding for Christians regarding the issue of racism in the church.

Firstly, Christians need to realize that God saves every believer beyond racial, background, economic, and social boundaries. Every soul who has been predestined to know God has the access to the Father because of the work of Jesus Christ.<sup>52</sup> God Himself took the initiative to relate to people of different races in order to reveal His glorious purpose and His righteousness among the unity of people.<sup>53</sup> If God Himself takes the initiative to save people of different races, then Christians who have abided in the Lord should also live a life that honors God's initiative. In this regard, while the tribal church is good for

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<sup>50</sup> Liefeld, 77.

<sup>51</sup> Liefeld, 95.

<sup>52</sup> Bryan Chapell, *Ephesians (Reformed Expository Commentary)* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing, 2009), 117.

<sup>53</sup> Chapell, *Ephesians (Reformed Expository Commentary)*, 116.

outreach programs to people who haven't known God yet, it needs to be mindful of its potential tendency to become a barrier to fellow human beings of other races. Agreeing with Yakub Tri Handoko's statement, tribal churches need to continue to remember God's Great Commission that calls for outreach to people from other racial backgrounds.<sup>54</sup>

Secondly, because believers have been united in Christ, then as part of the body of Christ - who is The Peacemaker - Christians also need to be peacemakers as well. Christ through the members of His body can convey and preach the gospel of peace. Christ has risen, and this preaching of peace is then continued by the disciples who are also the body of Christ itself. When peace is preached by Christ's followers, it is actually Christ Himself who is preaching peace in and through them. Likewise for Jews and Gentiles alike, whoever preaches peace, Christ is actually preaching His peace in and through them.<sup>55</sup> Just like them, if Christians are willing to proclaim peace through their peaceful way of life today, Christ is actually proclaiming peace in and through those Christians.

Thirdly, celebrating differences and diversity in Christ is one way of coming to know Christ Himself. Christians cannot truly know God unless they are united in differences with brothers and sisters who have different races, cultures, ethnicities, backgrounds. If a Christian wants to learn more about God and His character, then one must learn to be open and accept one's brothers and sisters who have different backgrounds; and to live in unity with them through their differences.<sup>56</sup>

Fourthly, Christianity means not changing one's background, but making oneself in the cultural context into one's best and more Christ-like self. In the first century, people were attracted to Christianity precisely because in Christianity, people could become Christians without changing their identity and

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<sup>54</sup> Yakub Tri Handoko, "Apakah Keberadaan Gereja Suku Menyiratkan Rasisme?," *Reformed Exodus Community*, 2021.

<sup>55</sup> Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 103.

<sup>56</sup> Chapell, *Ephesians (Reformed Expository Commentary)*, 115.

background.<sup>57</sup> Their bond is unity in love and on the basis of what Christ has done for them; thus they do not need to change themselves culturally or racially, but rather be who they are as long as they are conformed to Christ.

Fifth, racism is a community problem that demands change within the community and not just transformation of hearts and minds. The most important effect of the atonement in Christ is that there are no longer terms like foreigner (ξένοι - *xenoi*) and alien (πάροικοι - *paroikoi*). In Christ, these labels have disappeared, and there are no longer second-class citizens, aliens, or strangers; rather, all are one family of God who accept one another. This means that in ecclesiastical practice there needs to be a real transformation of community by striving for justice for every race in the church by not allowing one race to be considered more than the other. Being a member of the family of God is about accepting the uniqueness of each member of the family. In doing this community transformation, the people of God should not be apathetic and passive to fight for racial justice and complete acceptance in the church.

## **CONCLUSION**

Racism is a social issue that is felt everywhere, including in the church. This act of racism in the church can be done actively through discriminatory actions or through self-ignorance. Racism is not just an individual sin, but a communal sin, so it needs to undergo transformation in the community. This paper explains the biblical research of Ephesians 2:11-22. Between Jews and Gentiles there is prejudice and stigma against one another. This causes each race to feel superior to the other. The position before in Christ was hostility between the two parties, but after in Christ, Christ became the peace and the peacemaker in the community so that there was reconciliation between the two parties. The life of believers in Christ is no longer limited by certain ethnic and racial differences. There are several relevances of the passages that have been investigated,

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<sup>57</sup> John Piper, *Bloodlines: Race, Cross, and The Christian* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway, 2011), 123.

namely: 1) Christians need to realize that God saves people beyond racial boundaries; 2) Every believer needs to be a peacemaker as a member of the body of Christ which is peace itself; 3) Christians need to learn to celebrate differences and diversity in Christ; 4) Christianity does not change one's background, but brings it to God to be brought into the image of Christ; 5) Racism is a community problem that needs communal transformation.

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