

High Above the Heavens: The Ascension  
Ephesians 1:15–23

In Paul's prayer, the ascension of Christ is assumed; but the meaning, significance, and benefits of His ascension are revealed.

Paul's praise of God (vv. 3-14) turns into a prayer report for the saints (vv. 15-23). The report Paul received about the Ephesians has convinced him these are authentic converts to Christ; so Paul's heart is moved to continue to give thanks and remember them in his prayers (vv. 15-16).

The first petition is in vv. 17-18a — that the saints will know God better. He prays for enlightenment for them to know God better and the eyes of their hearts opened and enlightened to know the finished work of Christ. This is what the people we serve need the most. This is what we need the most. We need to know God better.

The intended results of this petition are in vv. 18b-19 — Paul prayed that the saints would experience the power of God that he described as immeasurably great — God's power defies description and is beyond our comprehension. And that power is at work on our behalf — it is *toward us who believe!* Our people need to experience the power of the sovereign grace of God. Our pastoral call requires devotion *and* the ministry of the Word. Which is more important? If you are in a plane 30,000 ft. in the sky, which wing is more important? You need them both!

Paul wants us to experience the life-changing power of God (cf. 3:20).

You cannot experience the power of God by focusing on yourself or your circumstances; you finish the race of faith by looking to Jesus (Heb. 12:1-3). We are prone to skip from the crucifixion and resurrection to Pentecost, but here Paul lingers on the thought of the power of God on behalf of believers, which is revealed in the ascended Christ!

Our strength to obey His commands and suffer joyfully is found as we behold Him, seated in sovereign authority in the Heavens.

Four ways the power of God is on display in the ascended Christ.

### **1. He Raised Christ from the Dead**

Jesus, who died at the cross and was buried, rose from the dead, and after He was raised and seen by many friends. This is the epicenter of the Christian faith. Followers of Christ are the only "religion" where the followers go to His grave to affirm that He is not there! Jesus is alive and well today!

Christianity also stands on the dynamic power of the resurrection. One of the great benefits of

knowing God better is that we know His power at work in Christ. God raised Him from the dead. Cf. Rom. 6:3-4. The glorious power of God the Father that raised Him from the dead is at work in those who believe so they might live in newness of life. Cf. also Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:58.

## 2. God Seated Jesus Christ at His Right Hand

God *seated* Him. The power of God that raised Him up, sat Him down! The greatness of the power of God is seen in where God seated Christ — at His right hand in the heavenly places.

He is not standing at the right hand of the Father as a servant or kneeling as a slave, but seated next to Him as a Son co-equal in power and authority. Cf. Jn. 17:5.

This great truth is fleshed out further in v. 20 — where He is in relation to creation: He is above every name now and in the age to come. This is the sovereign authority of Christ: it is universal (above all spiritual beings, v. 21). The key term in v. 21 is *all* — whatever the spirit beings are, Christ rules over them *all*! He is seated next the Father ruling infinitely higher over anything that is named — if you can name it, the seated sovereign Christ is in charge of everything.

And sovereign authority of Christ is universal. “He’s got the whole world in His hands...” And it is unending. He is the exalted Lord of the universe and He cannot be impeached and He is never up for re-election. His authority is universal and unending. He rules everywhere and at all times. He reigns unceasingly. Cf. Heb. 13:8. Jesus shall reign from shore to shore...

If this is not mind-blowing, soul-enriching enough, then look at chapter 2 — *but God* (v. 4)...raised us up in Christ! God has seated us *with Christ* in the Heavenly places. This is the work of God at work on our behalf.

## 3. God Placed all Things Under the Feet of Jesus Christ (v. 22)

This is different from v. 20. Verse 20 is a statement about Christ; v. 22 is a statement about creation. Christ is not just seated at God’s right hand, but God has sovereignly placed everything in the created world under the feet of Christ. Queen Elizabeth sits on the throne of England, but the Prime Minister runs the government; her authority is ceremonial. Not so with Jesus!

Jesus Christ rules and reigns over everything. Cf. Phil. 2 — God has highly exalted Him...

There will be universal submission to Christ — even in Hell. Cf. 1 Cor. 15:25-28 — *He must reign...* God has placed all things in subjection under His feet...

#### **4. God Gave Jesus Christ as Head of All Things to the Church (vv. 22-23)**

Christ is the Head of the Church. Cf. Col. 1:18. Christ is the head of the church. He is the beginning and the first born from the dead so that in everything He might be preeminent.

Notice the language of v. 22 — He is head over all things, *to the church*. Here we are reminded again of the intimate union between the resurrected and exalted Savior to His people. People seem to be attracted to Jesus Christ but reject His church — either they don't know about Christ or the church, or both. You can't have a high view of Christ and a low view of the church.

All of the NT doxologies are addressed to the church, but the one in Eph. 3 is the only one that *includes the church*. And we are *His body*. This (v. 23) is Christ's love for us and union to Him and empowering strength He has given to us.

We serve and preach and suffer and minister and as we behold this exalted Christ...