

LIVING WITH OUR FEET IN TWO WORLDS

EPHESIANS PART III; 1:15-23

Please turn in your bibles to Ephesians 1.

In the first week of our series in Ephesians, we talked about Apocalypse Now. That is, Paul had an apocalypse and he wrote this letter wanting others to have it also. Last week we dealt with something that has been very divisive over the years – that is the subject of predestination and election. In that message we tried to allow Paul to define those terms and saw that he did so from the point of view of the OT and the biblical story from the beginning.

This week we will take on what is the second paragraph of Paul's letter, which returns to Paul's theme of apocalypse, where Paul begins to use spatial and time imagery as he explains some of the deeper aspects of his apocalypse and the plan of God from the beginning. This second paragraph is actually a prayer. And, as Paul often does, this, like the first paragraph, is one run-on sentence in the Greek.

In verses 3-14, Paul uses phrases like, "in him, in Christ, through him, etc., 11 times. He then incorporated that language into what he said about predestination and election. In Christ you/we are the chosen and beloved because Jesus is the chosen and Beloved, chosen and predestined from the beginning. And now, Paul declares that Israel's and the rest of humanity's stories come together in Jesus. We are now all part of the same family.

The phrase, "In Him," means that we have taken His identity. We are now identified as His and are to live and walk accordingly. When Paul uses the terms salvation or redemption, the core idea of what he is trying to convey is:

- **Jesus was the one who was saved from evil and death in His resurrection.**
- **He was a victim of sin and death and was vindicated through His resurrection into life and the new creation.**
- **Those who trust in Him find themselves in Him.**
- **We are now identified with Him, having taken on His identity.**
- **His death becomes our death. His resurrection becomes ours. And His rule over Heaven and Earth becomes our true calling as the imagers of God.**

This unifies Israelite and Gentile alike. There is no more status differential between the two.

Let's take a look at this prayer of Paul's.

Eph. 1:15 For this reason, ^mbecause I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love⁶ toward all the saints, ¹⁶ I ⁿdo not cease to give thanks for you, ^oremembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that ^pthe God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, ^qmay give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ ^rhaving the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is ^sthe hope to which he has called you, what are ^tthe riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, ^uaccording to the working of ^vhis great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ ^wwhen he raised him from the dead and ^xseated him at his right hand ^yin the heavenly places, ²¹ ^zfar above ^aall rule and authority and power and dominion, and above ^bevery name that is named, not only in ^cthis age but also in the one to come. ²² And ^dhe put all things under his feet and gave him as ^ehead over all things to the church, ²³ ^fwhich is his body, ^gthe fullness of him ^hwho fills ⁱall in all.

We see a verbal cue in the beginning of verse 15; “For this reason...”. This is a cue that Paul is transitioning to something of an explanation.

For what reason? The reason for what Paul is about to say is all what he has already said in verses 3-14. We talked about that last week. Those first verses have set up what Paul is about to say. We need to pay attention to cues like this. We will see them throughout the letter and they tell us that Paul is making a logical, linear argument.

‘For this reason, because I have heard of your faith... I do not cease praying for you.’ And why does he pray for them? He answers in the next line verse.

¹⁷ that ^pthe God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, ^qmay give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, but look at how this revelation, (apocalypse) is the gift that keeps on giving.

¹⁸ ^rhaving the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is ^sthe hope to which he has called you, what are ^tthe riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, ^uaccording to the working of ^vhis great might²⁰ that he worked in Christ ^wwhen he raised him from the dead and ^xseated him at his right hand ^yin the heavenly places,

“having the eyes of your heart enlightened...” this is that our hearts can see/ understand more/ better. Paul wants the apocalypse to continue. He wants our knowledge of Jesus and all He has done to continue to grow and deepen. About? He wants us to delve into the hope, (anticipatory confidence) of the riches of his inheritance in the saints. Where else do we see this language? In the OT, the Promised Land is Israel’s inheritance. Paul will play off of this when he speaks of the new creation. This language of flourishing and abundance goes on to speak of the immeasurable, unending greatness of His power toward us who believe. That will be more important a little later. Paul is articulating on the power of God. We tend to take all this in

stride, but for Paul, what he wants to convey is just how powerful what he got in his apocalypse is. For Paul, that power is in accordance with the resurrection, as we see in verse 20.

This power is not just theatrical, theological, pie in the sky language. It takes real power to raise someone from the dead! Paul moves even further, alluding to something we may miss if we're not paying attention. Jesus' resurrection doesn't stop there. Jesus was then seated at the right hand of God. Have you ever heard the phrase, "right hand man?" This is an allusion to Jesus being elevated to a throne of His own. Paul will later say that for a time, right now, even in Paul's day, things were handed over to Jesus to run, as it were. Where is this throne? It is in the heavenly places.

, ²¹ ^zfar above ^aall rule and authority and power and dominion, and above ^bevery name that is named, not only in ^cthis age but also in the one to come. ²² And ^dhe put all things under his feet and gave him as ^ehead over all things to the church, ²³ ^fwhich is his body, ^gthe fullness of him ^hwho fills ⁱall in all.

If we follow Paul's line of thinking, (the inheritance) and what that means in the OT, the promised land, that takes us to the exodus. Paul is riffing on a new exodus. We will see that in chapter two. In Romans and Galatians, the 'new' promised land is likened to the new creation, (cosmos). So, when Paul speaks of power, he is speaking of:

- 1. The power of God to bring about a new humanity.**
- 2. To bring about a new creation that is that new inheritance.**
- 3. God's power to take dead, enslaved people and make them into new kinds of humans.**

The resurrection is the basis for all this. Jesus' resurrection leads to our resurrection. Jesus' resurrection leads to His enthronement. And all this eventually leads to new creation. It is a linear argument that Paul will make as we go through the letter.

When Paul focuses on the resurrection, he speaks of what we'd refer to as two different dimensions.

- 1. God raised Jesus from among the dead, (literally plural, dead ones).**
- 2. Jesus has been enthroned where? The heavenly realm, above all rule and authority, power, dominion and every name that is named.**

You can't be any clearer than that. This language of dominion will pop up again later. The point is that no one is above Jesus – not here on earth, (Caesar, etc.) or in the heavenly realm, (malevolent powers).

Does this mean that Jesus' rule is ONLY in the heavenly realm? NO! Jesus is above all and Paul emphasizes that. But we tend to separate the heavenly, (spiritual) from the earthly, (natural). Well, the truth that often eludes us, but didn't escape Paul's hearers was that the two realms

overlap. Remember, that is what an apocalypse, revelation does. It shows us the overlap. This is called, spatial language.

Spatial – relating to or occupying space

Paul then moves on from spatial language to that of time.

²¹ ^zfar above ^aall rule and authority and power and dominion, and above ^bevery name that is named, not only in ^cthis age but also in the one to come. ²² And ^dhe put all things under his feet and gave him as ^ehead over all things to the church, ²³ ^fwhich is his body, ^gthe fullness of him ^hwho fills ⁱall in all.

What I mean by the language of time is the phrase, “not only in this age but also the age to come.” Paul has now identified two time periods. This is not new at all. We can find it throughout the prophets. The first is, ‘this age.’ It is characterized by evil, sin, death, exile, slavery, violence and curse.

This age: evil, sin, death, exile, slavery, violence and curse.

There is also the age to come, which is characterized by love, justice, life, freedom, peace, blessing and abundance.

The Age to Come: love, justice, life, freedom, peace, blessing and abundance.

We find that there is a moment of transition between these two ages known as, “The Day of the LORD.”

The Present Age – Day of the LORD – The Age to Come

In the prophets, the Day of the Lord is a day of divine justice. It is a moment when the faithful and those who have suffered will be resurrected to new life and vindication in the new creation. In the prophets, all of the negatives of this age are reversed. This would have been Paul’s framework even before his apocalypse on the road to Damascus.

Remember how Paul is praying for the Gentile believers:

¹⁷ that ^pthe God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, ^qmay give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ¹⁸ ^rhaving the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is ^sthe hope to which he has called you...

And the prayer goes on of course, but Paul wants them to have an ongoing revelation as to whom Jesus is and what He has done. We shouldn’t think that when Paul had his apocalypse on the road to Damascus that he was all of a sudden zapped and had his theology reprogrammed. No. He then had what scholars refer to as the “silent years.” This was a time when he went to

Arabia for some a while. Some believe this to be at least three years or as many as nine years. Paul got the initial revelation from Jesus, but then he had to re-work this revelation through his existing framework. It is then that we get Paul trying to get this across to his hearers and readers. The risen Jesus was a wrench that was thrown into Paul's theology. It also upset his timeline. You see, the resurrection was something that was to happen at the end of the age that transitioned Israel into the Age to Come. But then he met Jesus, who resurrected, and in that sense, the resurrection was now in the present age. Remember, since we are identified with Jesus, His resurrection is ours. Paul is so enamored by the resurrection that he speaks of it as a preview of the age to come.

What was seen as two ages that were separated by the Day of the Lord, Paul is now seeing as two ages that overlap. That is the language of apocalypse. Remember how Jesus said that the kingdom was at hand. Paul knows that also. The new creation has been birthed/ inaugurated/ launched in the death and resurrection of Jesus. It will be consummated at His return. This is what is referred to as the now/ not yet, or the then and now. This is what I mean in the title of this message as us having our feet in two worlds. We can do that because of the overlap.

Look at the tense of what Paul has said in his prayer.

¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, ^uaccording to the working of ^vhis great might ²⁰ that he worked in Christ ^wwhen he raised him from the dead and ^xseated him at his right hand ^yin the heavenly places, ²¹ ^zfar above ^aall rule and authority and power and dominion, and above ^bevery name that is named, not only in ^cthis age but also in the one to come. ²² And ^dhe put all things under his feet and gave him as ^ehead over all things to the church, ²³ ^fwhich is his body, ^gthe fullness of him ^hwho fills ⁱall in all.

What is the tense? It past – and therefore also present. But, look at what Paul says using the same language to the church at Corinth.

1 Cor. 15:22-27

²² For ^jas in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then ^kat his coming ^lthose who belong to Christ. ²⁴ Then comes the end, when he delivers ^mthe kingdom to God the Father after destroying ⁿevery rule and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign ^ountil he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be ^pdestroyed is death. ²⁷ For ^q“God³ has put all things in subjection under his feet.”

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²⁸ When ^rall things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that ^sGod may be all in all.

Note the familiar language used here and in Ephesians.

What is the tense here? It is future, except verse 27, which is past, but then Paul goes back into the future tense in verse 28, speaking of the same thing of which he spoke in verse 27. What's up with that?

It is the language of the now/ not yet. It is what sometimes happens when one has an apocalypse like the one Paul had. The two ages have overlapped. The transition was the resurrection, not the Day of the LORD which is still yet to come.

That isn't the only overlap though. There is the overlap/ inclusion of Israel and Gentile into the same family that has also happened. This is what he is saying in his prayer when he uses spatial and time/ chronological language.

Paul wants us to see that the risen Jesus is now reigning as king and this is a divine foretaste of the divine power that will be demonstrated when God re-makes all of creation. He wants us to meditate on the word of God in order that we continue to peel the layers off the onion in order to have a continual, growing, relationship with God in the knowledge of Jesus Christ and His resurrection.

And when we have an apocalypse like that, if we have it, then it will change our lives just as it did Paul's. And what did it drive Paul to do? It drove him to devouring the word. It drove him to change his way of thinking and it changed how he lived his life. It should do the same to/ for us.