

### Preamble

When we last looked at [Ephesians 1](#) we gave some thought to the second half of the chapter which contains Paul's amazing prayer of petition. In that prayer he asked God for enlightenment for the Ephesian believers so that they would know and understand three things: the hope of their calling, the incredible riches of their inheritance and God's amazing power. It's a lengthy prayer and so we finished by thinking about God using His great power to raise Jesus Christ from the grave.

### Introduction

This morning I want to focus on three particular two word phrases found in [1:20](#) and [1:22](#); that is, "*raised Him*", "*seated Him*" and "*appointed Him*" with the Him in all three instances being our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. We need to understand that God didn't do this for the sake of it or simply to show off His great power but for other, far more important, reasons.

In [1:19](#) Paul has spoken about God's "*incomparably great power*" and we gave some thought to that last time we looked at these verses. The power that Paul is talking about is the power that defeated death and raised Christ from the grave. It is after exercising that great power that God raised Him; seated Him and appointed Him and we'll consider each of those shortly.

The great power that God demonstrated in raising Jesus from the dead is also at work in our lives if only we would realise it and take hold of it. Through all that happens in our lives and all that is happening in this country right now it is far too easy for us to lose sight of the fact that we are never alone; God is with us 24/7 and as a result we can call on His power in our times of need. This is not a different power or reduced level of power; it is exactly the same power that He used in raising Christ. When talking about this power, the Pastor and Commentator John MacArthur suggests, "*The point here is that the power of Christ applied on the believer's behalf cannot be overthrown or negated or defeated, because it far surpasses that of the hosts of Satan who design to defeat it.*"<sup>1</sup> That thought reminds me very much of Paul's words in [Romans 8:31b](#), "*If God is for us, who can be against us?*" If we have God's power with us then no one can be against us.

### Raised Him

We'll start with the thought that God "*raised Him*" ([1:20](#)). Our starting point is quite simple: Jesus was dead! The Pharisees had connived with the Romans to have Him crucified until He died. However, even then they weren't satisfied as they were very worried that followers of Jesus would steal His body from the grave before claiming that He had risen. Consequently the Pharisees went to Pilate to ask for guards to be posted at the mouth of the tomb after it had been sealed. Matthew recorded the exchange between the Pharisees and Pilate when he wrote, "*'Sir,' they said, 'we remember that while he was still alive that*

---

<sup>1</sup> MacArthur, John, *MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Ephesians*, Moody Publishers: Chicago, 1986, page 49

## Christ & the Church

*deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first.'* " (Matthew 27:63-64) What the Pharisees didn't reckon with was the power of God! Posting guards was absolutely pointless since God demonstrated His power by bypassing such obstacles and raising Jesus from the grave; Jesus was alive. If anyone doubted that then it was confirmed by multiple appearances by the Lord in different places. Firstly, He appeared to two disciples on the Emmaus Road as they walked along looking very sad and despondent. Jesus followed that up by appearing to ten of His disciples in the locked Upper Room. Thomas was absent and upon hearing the news that Jesus had appeared to the others in the group he had severe doubts as John describes the scene; "*Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it.'*" (John 20:24-25). The next time Jesus appeared in the Upper Room Thomas was present. Jesus knew what Thomas had said and so when He saw Thomas Jesus said to him "*Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.'* Thomas said to him, '*My Lord and my God!*' Then Jesus told him, '*Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.'*" (John 20:27-29) Thomas believed that Jesus was alive because he saw Jesus in the flesh and realised that He was indeed alive. Where do you stand? No one today has seen Jesus in the flesh but they still believe that He is alive and He is Lord. Are you amongst them? At the end of John we read that while the disciples were out fishing they saw a stranger on beach. This Man asked if they'd caught any fish and when they said they hadn't the stranger told them to cast their nets on the other side at which they hauled in a record catch. As they approached the beach "*Jesus said to them, 'Come and have breakfast.'* None of the disciples dared ask him, '*Who are you?*' They knew it was the Lord." (John 21:12) Dead men can't cook and so there can be no doubt that Jesus was very much alive.

### Seated Him

Having raised Jesus from the grave God then "*seated Him*" (1:20) at His right hand in the heavenly places or realms. The Amplified Bible translates the verse as saying that God "*seated Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.*" Sitting at the right hand of power of someone usually means being endowed with that person's power, and acting as their right hand man. It is a position of great honour and privilege and in this instance was a unique position given only to Christ. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that the angels could only stand behind the throne of God since they did not "*sit at God's right hand*" (Hebrews 1:13).

As with so many of God's plans, the sitting of Jesus at His right hand was not a last minute decision by God. There are numerous references throughout both Testaments to Jesus sitting at God's right hand, possibly the best of those coming in Psalm 110:1 where David wrote, "*The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'*" This thought of His enemies becoming Christ's footstool also appears in Matthew 22:44 where the Apostle paraphrases this verse when he says, "*The*

## Christ & the Church

Lord [that is, God] said to my Lord: *'Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.'*" The writer to the Hebrews also refers to this verse in **Hebrews 1:13**.

Throughout the Bible we see reference to the "*right hand*" as a place of honour and status. When the Bible tells us that Jesus is sitting at the right hand of His Father, it is confirming that He has equal status with God the Father within the Trinity. The writer to the Hebrews tells us, "*The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.*" (**Hebrews 1:3**). Later in **Hebrews 12** we are given the advice to, "... *fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*" (**Hebrews 12:2**). What a transition to make; from being executed by man to sitting at God's right hand. Lest there be any doubt about this we can read in **Acts** that as Stephen was about to be stoned "*full of the Holy Spirit, [he] looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.*" (**Acts 7:55**).

Sitting at God's right hand is not a short term appointment since Paul tells us in **1 Corinthians 15:24-26** that Jesus will remain there until all His enemies have been put under His feet when he tells us, "*Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.*" As Paul goes on to tell the Ephesians, this arrangement and this exalted place is "*far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.*" (**1:21**). The end of that verse confirms that Jesus will remain at God's right hand both now and in the age to come.

### Appointed Him

The third phrase I want us to think about comes in **1:22** where we read that God "*appointed Him*". In the modern world in which we find ourselves, leaders come and go with monotonous regularity; in fact just recently of course we have seen a massive upheaval in our own government with three different Prime Ministers in less than four months along with the related changes at the top of the various government departments. Each of these political leaders view themselves as being the head of the government and of course over the entire structure of power. Sadly this year we have also had a change in the Head of State with the passing of HM Queen Elizabeth II and the ascension to the throne of HM King Charles III. In our constitution that makes him the Head of State and therefore the power over the government.

However, the power and position of all these people, whether they are elected to a position or ascend to one, pales into insignificance when compared to Jesus Christ given that simple statement that God "*appointed Him*". As part of that being appointed by God, Paul tells us at the beginning of **1:21** that Jesus is "*far above all rule and authority*". That means that no matter what they may think; even the King and the Prime Minister are subject to a higher power. That is quite amazing and may be difficult for us to grasp even though that statement in **1:21** is the full and absolute truth.

## Christ & the Church

Paul expands on Jesus' new position in the second half of **1:21** and on into **1:22**. Not only is Christ above all rule and authority as we may understand it but He is also over every "power and dominion" and has "every title that can be given". Let me give you an example of titles. The late Queen was described as being the "Most High, Most Mighty, and Most Excellent Monarch, Elizabeth the Second, by the Grace of God of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and of Her other Realms and Territories Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, Defender of the Faith, and Sovereign of the Most Noble Order of the Garter". That is quite some set of titles but even they count for nothing when compared to the name and title of Jesus that **Isaiah** prophesied in **9:6b-7a** when he said that Jesus would be "... called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end."

When we think about time, I realise that we all have different ideas although whatever we think it is important to understand that Jesus' power and position exist "*not only in the present age but also in the one to come*"; that is, for all eternity. Notice too those words in **Isaiah 9:7** where the prophet says "*there will be no end*" to His government. That certainly suggests permanence to me! Whilst that time began with the ascension of Jesus we have no idea of when Jesus will return although until then we can be assured that Jesus is sitting at God's right hand in the position of power to which God appointed Him.

Those words "*appointed him*" in **1:22** are followed by the words "*to be head over everything for the church*". This is the crux of the matter; God appointed His Son to be Head of His Church. Let me remind you that the Church is Jesus Christ and not the bricks and mortar in which we meet regularly. Week by week many people make their way to a building that they call church; this is the place in which they gather with others to join with others in bringing their worship to God. However, not every church building is made of bricks and mortar. Some of you may be old enough to remember the tin tabernacles; places of worship made of corrugated iron. They first appeared in about 1860 and continued to be built up to and beyond World War 1. I suspect that they were intended to be temporary structures built to cope with the influx of people wanting to join in worship. Having said that, I have found at least one such church on the Internet that is still in use as a place of worship. Today there are many fellowships which meet in school halls and other hired premises. For instance, Chris Thomas, who we pray for regularly; was Pastor at a church that met in the Dame Elizabeth Cadbury Hall in Bourneville. All of these places are fine as far as they go but they are not the "*church*". The real church is the body of Christ and each believer who has placed their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour is a part of that church. Writing to the Corinthian believers Paul said to them, "*Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*" (**1 Corinthians 12:27**). It is in **1:23** that Paul says again that the church is the body of Christ with Him as the Head. This is God's structure rather than a man made hierarchy with levels of command. Unlike too many churches today the church Paul is talking of consists of believers with Christ as the Head. Later in this Epistle Paul tells us that, "*It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up*" (**4:11-12**). Whilst there are those who serve the Lord in His church it is important for us to remember that He remains at the Head.

## Christ & the Church

In this God appointed position as Head of the Church Jesus is over all things and, as Paul tells us, He is “*far above all rule and authority, power and dominion*” (1:21) and in that position “*God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church*” (1:22). This was not a new idea from God or something that He belatedly came up with. For instance, the phrase “*God placed all things under His feet*” in 1:22 neatly fulfils the words of David in **Psalm 110:1** where we read, “*I will make your enemies a footstool for your feet*”. Similarly David writes in **Psalm 8:6-8** that God “... *made him [that is mankind] ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.*”

Notice too those words in 1:21, “*far above*”. Those words carry a strong meaning given that they make it clear that Jesus is very definitely far above all things. These include Satan and the world that he is trying to build; the angels, both holy and fallen; saved people and unsaved people as well as all ranks and powers and jurisdictions. Not only is Jesus above all of them but He will be so for all eternity. That takes some thinking about but is made very clear in these verses to the Ephesian believers.

Paul also reminds us that the church is Christ’s body and is “... *made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.*” (1:23 - NLT). When considering this John MacArthur quotes the Swiss theologian John Calvin when Calvin says, “*This is the highest honour of the church that until He is united to us, the Son of God reckons Himself in some measure incomplete. What consolation it is for us to learn that not until we are in His presence does He possess all His parts, nor does He wish to be regarded as complete.*”<sup>2</sup> I would suggest that the real church of Christ is still being built as new believers around the world come to faith every day. I regularly receive an e-mail from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and in their latest e-mail they talked of the huge growth of people coming to faith in New Zealand and Milan, Italy. They may be places that are thousands of miles apart but those new believers in Christ are now happily linked together by their new life in the church that is Jesus Christ. This wonderful church will continue to grow and will only be complete when Christ returns and all believers can then join in worship together.

### The Church

Despite all that, the church today faces many problems. Many of you may have seen or heard about reports relating to the Census data that was published recently (30 Nov 2022) which confirmed that the number identifying as Christians has fallen below 50% of the population of England and Wales for the first time. More than 50% of the population declared that they had no religious connection. However, it’s not all bad news since additional information shows that Black Majority and Pentecostal churches are flourishing and you may recall that I quoted someone recently who pointed out that those churches that preach the gospel of Jesus Christ continue to grow. That point echoes the experience of the early church which began after Jesus ascended into heaven to take His seat at God’s right hand. Luke tells us in **Acts** that “... *many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.*” (**Acts 4:4**) – in the next chapter the same

---

<sup>2</sup> MacArthur, page 49

## Christ & the Church

theme emerges when Luke tells us “*Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.*” (Acts 5:14) The well known Anglican evangelist Rev Canon J John wrote to *The Times* recently and made it very clear about what was needed for the church to continue to grow. Canon John wrote: “*What will bring them in and see them committed to the church is the full-blooded, confident preaching of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Paradoxically the way to change the census figures is to ignore them, and instead focus on producing changed lives through Jesus Christ.*”<sup>3</sup>

If we follow the example of the early church as described in Acts and advocated by Canon J John then the church will continue to grow until Jesus returns to claim His kingdom.

### Conclusion

What a wonderful few verses with which to end the chapter. Paul has given us a very clear picture of the role and position of Jesus. Following His crucifixion and resurrection God raised Jesus from the grave before seating Him at His own right hand of God. That wasn't all since God then appointed Jesus as Head of the Church far above anything else in creation. What an amazing picture that brings to our minds and hearts.

Those closing verses in Ephesians lead up to that wonderful closing statement at the end of 1:22 and beginning of 1:23 that God has appointed Christ as the head of the church which is His body. As Head of His church Christ will defeat the enemies such as Satan and the secularists who want nothing to do with “*religion*”. We need to remember that thought as we consider the downbeat news from the Census. That news could be disheartening even though for those who know and love Christ it should be anything but; it should in fact be a call to arms to loudly and proudly preach the gospel of Jesus Christ just as the Apostles did in the first century church.

---

<sup>3</sup> John, Canon J, *Letter to the Editor - The Times*, 01 Dec 2022