

# Expository Jottings - What is it to be seated in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus?

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It may not be too much to say that the whole of the epistle to the Ephesians is but the development of Eph. 1: 3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." In this ascription of praise there are three things. First, that all the blessings into which we are brought flow to us from God as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; to us as brought now into the same relationship to God, on the ground of redemption, as Christ Himself enjoys; that is to say, God is now our God and Father, because the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (John 20:17.) Secondly, that all these spiritual blessings are made ours as being in Christ. And lastly, that the place in which they are possessed and enjoyed is in the heavenlies. Let the reader prayerfully seek to understand these several points, if he would intelligently read this portion of the word of God.

To answer the specific question at the head of this paper, we must first enquire what is meant by Christ being in the heavenlies. This is fully explained to us at the end of chapter 1. The apostle prays "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding (heart) being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, *and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies,*" etc. (Eph. 1: 17-20.) We are here taught that the mighty power of God was displayed in the resurrection of Christ, that God came in and took Him out of the grave wherein He lay, raised Him up, and set Him down at His own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named; and then, more wonderful still — more wonderful because of those who were the objects of this perfection of His grace — that His power to us-ward was "according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ." And if Ephesians 1 gives us the effect of this mighty power in relation to Christ, Ephesians 2 shows us the effect on His people. The chapter thus commences: "And you, who were dead in trespasses and sins." And the apostle then points out that the exceeding greatness of God's power met us in the place where we lay dead in sins (for Christ indeed in grace had come down to us — down to the very depths of our condition of death); and that God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us — quickened us together with Christ, and raised us (both Jew and Gentile) up together, and made us (Jew and Gentile) sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Christ, for the glory of God, in the accomplishment of His purposes, having identified Himself with His people, God, in response to the One who thus endured all for His glory, came in and wrought, and the effect is seen in a twofold way — in the place Christ occupies, and in the place we occupy in Him — seated in Him in the heavenlies.

But it is objected that we are only in Christ Jesus in the heavenlies in the sense of being seen in Him as the head of the new race. In the first place, Christ is never spoken of as the Head of a race in this epistle: as the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all, He is; and we are also told that all things, whether in heaven or in earth, will be "headed up" in the Christ; but this is a very different thing. Secondly, this would imply that we are blessed with all spiritual blessings *through*, rather than *in*, Christ. Of course He is the only medium through which blessings flow to us, as indeed He is God's only vessel of blessing for us; but, as united to Him, members of His body — and this is the teaching of Ephesians — we are blessed as in Him. This statement, however, is met by the allegation that the members of the body of Christ are on earth, not in heaven. This is not true in the teaching of Ephesians 2. There everything, being on God's side, or, as we often say, on the side of purpose, is complete. The counsels of God are accomplished, and He has before Him, in Christ, His whole Church, Jew and Gentile alike, all distinctions abolished, seated in Christ. He reveals this to us to show us our true place, the character of our blessings, and the scene in which in spirit He would have us live and move. It may be furthermore objected that Christ is seated at God's right hand, and that, as this place belongs only to Him, we could not be said to be seated in Him where He is. True, most blessedly true, is it that the right hand of God is the pre-eminent place of our blessed Lord, the place which God delighted to give Him, and the place which the saints rejoice to recognize as His alone. But this in nowise militates against the fact that believers are in Christ where He is. His place at the right of God is positional — the token of His supreme exaltation; and it would indeed be unholy presumption to intrude a claim to this. But while asserting this, is not Christ before God? And is He not there as the head of His body? And are not saints actually united to Him? And is it not true, therefore, that God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, has quickened us together with Christ, raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus? There is the whole Church now before the eye of God, and He has it there, "that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness towards us through (in) Christ Jesus."

The effect of this new doctrine is to confound the distinctive teachings of the several epistles, to obscure the heavenly character and calling of the Church, as well as to undermine the truth of the believer's position. E. D.