

Ephesians

Ephesians 1:3 - Our amazing Father

The sentence we were left with last time was: “What’s needed most of all is an accurate picture of Jesus,” and that’s what we’ve got coming up in the next few verses in Ephesians 1.

But where Paul begins in creating that picture of Jesus is not with Jesus himself. He starts with the Father, as we see in **verse 3**, when Paul comes bursting out of the starting blocks with “Praise be to **the God and Father** of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

But why such praise for the Father first? Because, same verse, he (the Father) “has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.” So, this is all **the Father’s doing**. It was his idea. He was the one who initiated this entire set up so that we could be blessed.

No wonder, then, Jesus directed us to pray to “Our Father” in Matthew 6:9 - so we recognize who got this whole thing started. It was our amazing Father, who wanted us, his children, to be mightily blessed. And now we get a peek in Ephesians at **how** our amazing Father made that possible, and how he set things up so that the “spiritual blessings” he had in mind for his children are somehow transferred and translated down to us as physical beings on this physical planet. And that’s what came to Paul’s mind first when thinking about what we’ve been given in Jesus, because none of it would have happened if it wasn’t for the Father, the great innovator and instigator - the great “ideas man” in our terms - dreaming all this up for our benefit, and coming up with a way of making it work.

And in **Ephesians 1:3** we find out our Father’s primary means of making it work too; it’s in the last two words of the verse - “**in Christ**.” So the first stage, so to speak, in our Father’s set up for transferring his spiritual blessings to us, is **in his Son**. And how did that work? Well, Jesus himself answered that for us in **John 16:15**, when he told his disciples, “**All that belongs to the Father is mine**.” So the transfer of the Father’s spiritual blessings down to us began with our Father passing on everything that he is to his Son. Jesus got the lot. That’s why Jesus could say in **John 14:9**, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.” We can rest assured that “in Christ” exists everything the Father is.

This explains why Jesus is so important to us - because according to the Father's master plan, there's only one way his spiritual blessings can be transferred to us, and that's in Christ. But why do it that way?

Because "in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in BODILY form," **Colossians 2:9**. So Jesus isn't just a spirit Deity like his Father, he's also in a human body just like ours. So all these spiritual blessings that the Father had given to Jesus were now contained in Jesus' HUMAN body. So when Paul says all these spiritual blessings are "in Christ" it includes in Christ as a human.

Jesus also being spirit, though, meant the Father could pass on all his **spiritual** blessings to him. But how could Jesus then pass them on to us when we aren't spirit beings like he and the Father are? Well, the Father sorted that one out too by having Jesus become a human being. So now we have a human who can contain spiritual blessings in himself. And that's good to know, because if **spiritual** blessings can exist in Christ as a human, then they can exist in us as humans too, right?

So again it points out the importance of Jesus, because the Father set him up as the channel for his spiritual blessings to flow through to us. And that was necessary because we can't receive spiritual blessings from the Father direct since he's spirit and we are human. But Jesus being spirit meant the Father could give his spiritual blessings directly to him (which he did). And then, because Jesus is both spirit and human, the spiritual blessings can be passed on down through Jesus to us. It's all done in him.

The analogy that helped me was a converter that switches an Alternating electrical current to a Direct current. In Jesus the AC current of spiritual blessings flowing from the Father is converted into a DC current suitable for us. But, again, how does that help us? We know our Father is transferring his spiritual blessings to us in Christ, but how does that work when Jesus is "up there," so to speak, and we're still "down here"?

Well, let's take a look at **verse 3** again, because there's a clue in the two words, "**heavenly realms**." Whatever these heavenly realms are we know that it's in that realm where the spiritual blessings are transferred to us in Christ. As a brief aside, but hopefully connected, Paul talked about being "caught up to the third heaven," in **2 Corinthians 12:2**, where he "heard inexpressible things, things no man is permitted to tell," **verse 4**. This third heaven was clearly extraordinary. No words, or human analogies, could describe it. And Paul was only allowed to see it in a **vision** too (verse 1). So we assume this is the realm God exists in, that no human can enter except in a vision.

Jesus also said that “No one has ever seen God” (John 1:18), so it’s not within our capacity as humans to even see God, let alone enter the realm he resides in. The heavenly realms in **Ephesians 1:3**, however, CAN be entered by humans, as we see in **verse 20** when the Father “raised Jesus from the dead” and “seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.” So in his resurrected **human** state this is where Jesus now resides. Can we assume, then, that this must be the “second” heaven - since there are three heavens - the “first” heaven being the physical universe, or the “heavens and the earth” that will be made new one day (Revelation 21:1).

Did our Father then create this second heaven, or the heavenly realms, so that as humans we can enter a spiritual realm? No way could we enter the third heaven, so did God ‘scale down’ to a heaven that was still spiritual but could accommodate us as humans too?

An analogy in human terms would be a ‘step down converter’ that in our world converts high voltage to low voltage, enabling a twelve volt tool, for instance, to be powered by a 120 volt household circuit. In creating the heavenly realms, then, did the Father scale down the high voltage of the third heaven to create a lower voltage second heaven so that limited physical humans like us can experience the spiritual and enter the heavenly?

I don’t know if that’s what he did, but how else can our Father share all that he is in his immense spiritual glory with us lowly physical humans? There has to be a sort of grading down to our human level but still managing to keep things spiritual too. Which can all be handily explained by these heavenly realms which are very much “heavenly” still, but can be entered and experienced by humans, because that’s what happened to Jesus; he entered the heavenly realms **as a human**.

This is all quite intriguing stuff, but how does it help us? Well, shock upon shock, Paul tells us in **Ephesians 2:6** that “God raised us up with Christ and seated US WITH HIM in the heavenly realms.” So even in our present state as humans we now reside in the same heavenly realm Jesus resides in. We’re even pictured sitting right beside him too, as though we could reach out and touch him. We are that close to him, but perhaps more important, he’s that close to us, because he can now bless us in person when we’re right there with him.

Doesn’t this happen at some future date, though, or right after we die, when, as some believe, we are released from our physical bodies and off we go to heaven to live forever with Jesus in some of sort of ethereal, disembodied existence?

But Paul uses the past tense when he describes us being “raised up” and “seated” with Jesus. It’s **already** happened to us in this lifetime, therefore, There’s no waiting until a future date, or even waiting until we die. We’re right there in the heavenly realms at this very moment with Jesus.

And this was Jesus’ wish too, which he expressed to his Father in **John 17:24** - “Father, I want those you have given me **to be with me where I am**, and to see my glory.” Well, according to Paul, we’re already with Jesus where he is, so that means we can experience his glory now too.

But how can we limited physical humans experience Jesus’ incredible spiritual glory? Well, Jesus himself told us how in **John 16:15**, when he said, “the Spirit will take from what is mine, and make it known to you.” So now **the Holy Spirit comes into play** to make the spiritual glory of Jesus real to us. But for us to understand and experience the spiritual we obviously need Spirit help, which is why Jesus prayed to his Father to give us the Holy Spirit (John 14:16). So here we are now seated with Jesus in the heavenly realms able to receive spiritual blessings and experience a taste of Jesus’ glory, thanks to the Holy Spirit living with and in us (John 14:17).

And all this was thought out by our Father for us, so that his spiritual blessings could be passed on down to his human children, and in a way that they would be real to us. I mean, why would he go to all this trouble, so to speak, if we had no idea what a spiritual blessing is, or if we’re experiencing it?

What we’re seeing in Ephesians 1:3, then, is how amazing our Father is, which is also something the Holy Spirit helps us with, so we come to love our Father (Romans 8:15). But how can we love a Father we can’t see, who’s far off in some distant third heaven we can’t enter?

Well, our Father dealt with that too, because when Jesus entered the heavenly realms he was “seated at God’s right hand” (Ephesians 1:20). So that means our Father is in the “heavenly realms” where Jesus and we are too. Did the Father “create” this second heaven or heavenly realm, then, so that he could be with us in it too?

Who knows? But what we do know for certain is **John 1:18**, that “No one has ever seen God, but God the only Son - who is at the Father’s side - has made him known.” It was Jesus’ great goal in his human lifetime, therefore, to make his Father known, having known personally and forever how amazing his Father is. Whatever we need to know about our Father for now, then, has been made abundantly plain by Jesus, because he would love us to know the Father like he does (John 17:24-26).