

Ephesians

Ephesians 1:20-21 - The risen Jesus

In **Ephesians 1:17**, Paul writes: “I keep asking that God may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation” - and specifically for three “knows.” The first, to “know the Father better” (verse 17), the second, to “know the hope to which he has called you” (18), and the third, to know “his incomparably great power for us who believe” (19).

What Paul meant by “know” - the Greek word *epignōsis* - he expands in **Colossians 2:2** as “the full riches of complete understanding.” Paul doesn’t go in for half measures; he wants those Ephesians well and truly grounded in full wisdom and full revelation of what God the Father planned for his creation and how he’s bringing it about in his Son. And why was that so important to Paul? Because he wanted to make sure, **Colossians 2:4**, that “no one deceives you by fine sounding arguments,” and **verse 8**, that “no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”

And what Paul meant by that he expands back in Ephesians, as to why it’s a bad idea to look to **anything but Christ** as the Father’s means of fulfilling his plan for us and all creation. It’s because “the working of his mighty strength,” **Ephesians 1:19**, by which the Father is fulfilling his plan, was first “**exerted in Christ** when the Father raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,” **verse 20**.

That’s when the Father released the power to bring about the fulfillment of his plan. It was when he raised Jesus from the dead. Because up to that point, all those things Paul mentioned in Colossians - “fine sounding arguments,” “philosophy,” “human tradition,” and “the basic principles of this world” - none of them all through the centuries, including ours, has enabled us humans to fulfill our God given calling in Genesis.

This entire creation is still left hanging, then, stuck in limbo, waiting “in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed” (Romans 8:19). Because for all our human ingenuity, brilliant minds, and lofty goals we have never yet grasped what would make life on this planet a joy for every creature. Which is tragic, because the Father set us up as “rulers over the works of his hands, and crowned us with glory and honour” (Psalm 8:6).

That was God's purpose for making us in his image, to be his government on the Earth, establishing his world, the kingdom of Heaven, the very expression of God's mind and character, all over the planet. What a shame then, that people wonder, "What is the purpose of my life?" - or "Why are humans so amazing?" Or, more pitifully, people not wondering at all, because no one in their lives ever got them to think about it, or stirred their imagination as to what God made us humans for. But who, in our own experience growing up, knew that we humans exist as God's ruling government, and what hugely beneficial impact God meant us to have on his creation?

So where on earth would you begin to explain this to people? Well, why not begin with **Ephesians 1:20**, since everything we believe as Christians hinges on what this verse says? It's that Christ was raised from the dead. That's the foundation that holds up the rest of the building. Do away with that and the whole reason for Christianity collapses. But if it's true, that there really was this human being in history who was killed - and killed by people very skilled at killing too - who came back to life again, and the proofs of it are undeniable historically, culturally, logically, scientifically, personally and daily...

Well, if it's true, it raises another question, because WHY was this one human in history raised back to life again? Such an extraordinary event cannot be swept under the carpet. Something as dramatic as being raised from the dead must have a sizeable reason behind it, right? Well, the reason Paul gives in **verse 20** is that Jesus was "seated at God's right hand in the heavenly realms." Meaning that, right now there is a human being who was lifted off this planet into the world where God resides. Which is amazing, because we still haven't got as far as residing on the Moon yet.

But here's a human that God has at his right hand, who - according to **verse 21** - 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." So there's no human in existence right now who is greater than him. And he's not only sovereign over everything on this planet, he's also sovereign over all other authorities and dominions too.

But why is that so important for us to know? Because **that's our future too**. He was "the **firstborn** among many brothers" (Romans 8:29), the first human, therefore, to become what God created all us humans for, to become sovereign over all his creation (Genesis 1:26). In raising Jesus to that position, then, we have the most important piece of knowledge we humans could have in this life of ours now: that God has the same future for us.

The writer of Hebrews puts it this way, that it's "not to angels," **Hebrews 2:5**, "that God has subjected the world to come" or has given sovereignty to. It's to humans. But, the Hebrews writer asks, quoting Psalm 8:4-6, "What's so great about us humans that God cares about us so much?" Answer? **Hebrews 2:7**, it's because "God made us humans a little lower than the angels" - a tad "lower than GOD" as Psalm 8 phrases it - because he intends to "crown us with glory and honour."

It pulls Genesis 1:26 right up to the present: that, just as it was in the beginning, God made humans just a tad lower than himself, thoroughly capable, therefore, of having sovereignty over his creation to make his plans for it work out wonderfully. And God meant **total** sovereignty over every bit of it too, **Hebrews 2:8**. "God left nothing that is not subject to humans."

But we shattered that all to pieces, by being seduced into thinking we could be sovereign God too. We were conned into believing, as people still are today, that we are God and quite capable of ruling the creation on our own wisdom and skill. But being just a tad lower than God, it's not surprising we're tempted to think "I am a god" (Ezekiel 28:2), or "I will make myself like the Most High" (Isaiah 14:14), because we really do have amazing skills. But instead of focusing those skills **on what God meant by us being sovereign**, we got all wrapped up in sovereignty itself, as we see in politicians and power-hungry tyrants throughout our history all seeking and hanging onto power as the most sought after goal on this planet.

Which explains **Hebrews 2:8**, that "at present we do not see everything subject to us humans." And it's obvious **why we don't**, because as yet we still don't understand what sovereignty is about. We've had centuries to figure it out, but not one human has emerged with a solution to us humans being mesmerized by power and misusing it for our own ends.

So in asking the question: "WHY was this one human in history raised back to life again?" It's because **he became that one human** who "did not consider equality with God something to be grasped," **Philippians 2:6**. At last, someone who wasn't mesmerized by power. He already had enormous power, but he deliberately and willingly gave it up and "made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant," **verse 7**. Unlike so many in power nowadays, he wasn't driven by "selfish ambition or vain deceit," **verse 3**. And that's why "God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name," **verse 9** - and why he was "crowned with glory and honour," **Hebrews 2:9** - "because," **verse 14**, he was willing to "share in our humanity" to serve us.

But now that he's got his power back, and his Father has given him supreme authority over all his creation, what is Jesus' purpose now? According to **Hebrews 2:10**, it's to "bring many sons to glory" - to share with many other humans the same sovereign glory he has. But how on earth does he do that when he's been raised from the dead and he's with God now?

Paul's amazing answer in **Colossians 3:1**, is that "we've been raised with Christ," and like him we too are "seated at the right hand of God." "Our lives are now hidden with Christ," **verse 3**, so that, **verse 4**, "When Christ appears, we will also will appear with him in glory."

So this is pretty sneaky stuff on Jesus' part, because right under the noses of those in power today, he's preparing the future sovereigns of the planet. And what a double surprise it will be, because it's also the day the whole "creation has been waiting in eager expectation for, when the sons of God are revealed," **Romans 8:19**. It's finding out, at last, what Jesus has been up to behind the scenes, that never made the National News. Here displayed for all to see, at last, is the real reason for all of our human history: it's the creation of a new race of humans, fully grounded and prepared to do what God created us humans for in the first place.

To quote one writer's response to this: "The exciting news today is not what is recorded in our newspaper headlines. The events that are reported today will all be buried in some dusty old history book, or buried in a trash can, in another ten years, and none if it will have much significance to anyone at that time. The exciting thing today is the new humanity that the risen Jesus is creating through the trials and difficulties we are going through now, because these troubles are transforming you and me into sons of God."

In asking, then, "What is the purpose of life? And why spend most of it making money to buy food and other things year after year?" - the answer is in the risen Christ who is our life, because with our life now being his it means that whatever struggles we're going through he's fitting us for the day when he pulls aside the curtain and the whole world will suddenly see in us what he's been working on all the time - a new humanity.

And what will people learn as this new humanity takes over sovereignty of the planet? It's what sovereignty is really all about, and was always meant to be. It's "to bring all things in heaven and on earth together," **Ephesians 1:10**, so that how things are done in heaven will, at last, be done on earth too. Adam blew that and so did Israel, but Jesus got us back on course, first through his own example, but also re-living his example through those raised with him - as we're about to see in verses 22-23...