

God's Eternal Purpose for the Body of Christ

By David A. DePra

The entire purpose of God could be summed up as follows: SONSHIP and INHERITANCE. There are two sides to this inheritance. First, there is the inheritance of the saints that is given in Jesus Christ. Second, there is the inheritance of God in the saints through this same Jesus Christ. More specifically, the inheritance of the saints in Christ is that believers might experience all that Jesus Christ is, and all that He has done. God's inheritance in the saints is that the Body of Christ might fully manifest and express Jesus Christ to God's glory.

Clearly, inheritance centers upon the Person of Jesus Christ – upon the reality of, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Col. 1:27) That Jesus Christ in believers is the means of inheritance should not be surprising since Jesus Christ is THE only begotten Son of God – He is THE SON who has been given all that God has to give as an inheritance. But believers are sons and daughters IN the Son; believers are joint-heirs in Christ.

Indeed, if we wanted to wrap up God's inheritance plan in a single phrase, we could simply state it this way:

The Father...
The only begotten Son...
The sons and daughters who are in the Son.

Everything that God has to give to humanity is given IN, and only IN, Jesus Christ. To be clear,

God has wrapped up everything He has to give in Christ. There is nothing God has to give to any of us which is outside of the Person of Christ.

It is vital that we see the distinction between being given THINGS from God, “because of Christ,” and being given Christ Himself IN WHOM are all things. In other words, God does not give us THINGS in addition to Christ -- merely, “because of what Christ has done.” No, the truth is, God has given us Christ Himself – IN WHOM is our inheritance – and IN WHOM God has given and all things that He has to give. In short, if you have Jesus, you have ALL that God has to give.

Three verses prove this Truth. First, Paul states, “He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him.” (I Cor. 6:17) Second, Paul states, “God has given us all things freely in His Son.” (Rom. 8:32) Third, “All the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hid in Christ.” (Col. 2:3) From these and other verses it is clear that we are ONE with Christ, and therefore one with all that Christ has inherited as the Son of God. In Christ, we have ALL because Christ has all. The Christian life, therefore, is not a matter of obtaining MORE from God. No. Rather, it is a matter of discovering and experiencing Christ Himself – a matter of discovering the Christ whom we have received in fullness, and in Whom God has given all things freely.

This is why Paul was so adamant in saying that Christianity is, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Col. 1:27) He also proclaimed that he desired, as a woman about to give birth, that believers would come to have Christ FORMED in them – which is an inward realization of Jesus Christ. (Gal. 4:19) The word, “formed,” means

exactly that: To come into an inward realization and expression of Jesus Christ. So again – we are made one with Christ at salvation in resurrection union; joined to Him in spirit. But the Christian life is a matter of coming to inwardly realize Christ and express Him.

Therein we see inheritance. Christ dwells in the believer through spiritual oneness. And it is the purpose of God to bring the believer into an inward realization of Christ. This is the inheritance of the saints in Christ. But along side of that it is the desire of God to bring believers to where they express Christ. This is the inheritance of God in the saints.

God's Inheritance Plan

In chapter one of Ephesians 1, Paul makes some incredible statements with regard to the eternal purpose of God -- and the involvement of believers in that purpose. The apprehension of believers for God's purpose in His Son is something which is central to the plan of God.

I am going to begin with Ephesians 1:3. Paul writes:

***Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord,
Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all
spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ.***

Everything God has given humanity has been given in the Person of Jesus Christ Himself. In Christ are ALL spiritual blessings. God will never have anything to give outside of Jesus Christ. This is an absolute certainty -- and when we begin to stray from this, we get into error.

Paul continues:

Accordingly, He has chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world.

Included in this purpose for which God has chosen believer is that they, “be holy and without blame, in love.”

Then, in verse 5, it says:

God has predestined (those who are in Christ) unto the adoption as children by Jesus Christ -- unto Himself -- according to the good pleasure of His will.

Here we see that SONSHIP is fundamental to the eternal purpose of God. And of course, once we speak of SONSHIP, we are really speaking about the eternal INHERITANCE of God.

As noted, everything that God is doing, in this age and in the next, can be gathered up in sonship/inheritance – can be gathered up in the fact that believers are coheirs with Christ; under Him as Lord of all. God has called us out of the Adam race and into His Son, that we may be coheirs with Christ -- and have Jesus as our Lord personally. But that is unto the purpose that we might reign and rule with Him. This purpose has already begun NOW – but will be fully released only in the eternal ages.

Beginning with Ephesians 1:9, Paul begins to make some incredible statements. He says:

God has made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He has purposed in Himself.

Note the phrase, "which He has purposed in HIMSELF." In other words, this is God's plan alone -- no-one else had any input whatsoever. But because this is a plan that is solely of God, we can be sure that it is of love and Truth -- fully to His glory and to the benefit of all.

God's Ultimate Purpose in Christ

Now we come to 10. In verse 10, Paul states, in perhaps the most general terms possible, what is the eternal purpose of God in Christ. He says:

That in the dispensation of the fullness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and are in earth, even in Him.

Paul is saying that, "in the fullness of times," everything God is allowing and doing will be brought to a conclusion that fully satisfies Himself. And what will that conclusion to His satisfaction be? Just this: God intends to gather together in one all things in Christ -- both which are in heaven and are in earth -- even in Him.

This is a tremendous declaration of Jesus as Lord -- and of the full redemption of all who will accept Christ. It is the declaration of the purpose for which He has apprehended the people who come to Christ.

In verse 11, Paul expands upon God's purpose for which He has apprehended, called, and revealed His Son in believers. He says, in verse 11:

In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, being predestined (purposed beforehand) according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His own will.

Again, we see that we do not get to decide what the purpose of God is for us. Rather, we get to discover that purpose and yield to God in it.

Over the next few verses, Paul talks about salvation. He says in verse 12 that God wants us to be, “to the praise of His glory,” because we are, “those who first trusted in Christ.” Then he looks forward, in verse 14, to, “the redemption of the purchased position; the resurrection of the body.” That really is the point at which the fullness of God’s purpose will begin to be fully released, as stated in verse 10. It will be FULL redemption unto all who are in Christ -- both spiritually and physically.

A Living Experiencing of Christ

Through Ephesians 1:1-14, Paul has laid a foundation – it is the foundation of God’s eternal purpose in Christ. It is SONSHIP, inheritance, and full Redemption under Jesus Christ as Lord. These are included in the purpose of God that He began before the foundation of the world – summarized by the fact that God intends to gather all in His Son.

Now, we MUST clearly understand that Paul is not exhorting us to merely develop a theological construct, or an academic understanding. This is NOT about mere intellectual understanding. No. That is certainly included – but goes far beyond that. Rather, Christianity is,

“Christ in us,” – we are to live in and out from the Living Son of God. We are to know HIM. In short, the inheritance of the saints is to fully experience all that Jesus Christ is, and all that He has done.

There is a huge difference between theological knowledge and the knowledge of Jesus Christ. The knowledge of Jesus Christ is really an inward realization and revelation of the Living Son of God. In short, it is good to know teaching and doctrine. But only if we realize Christ Himself can we truly grasp what it all means.

An example of this is when Israel was told to enter the Promised Land. God did not give them a travel brochure or a map etc. They could have had all of that and more, but it doesn't come anywhere near actually being IN that land. Likewise, we could know all Christian doctrine, and even agree that Christianity is Christ in us. We could read Ephesians 1:1-14 and even rejoice over it. But, the question is this: Have we begun to experience Jesus Christ? -- in a way that opens this chapter up to us in a living way -- so that we can begin to live in and out from Christ within this eternal purpose of God?

Starting in verse 15, Paul tells us that this is exactly what he prays for the saints. His prayer for the saints is that we might grasp God's purpose in the light of an inward realization of Jesus Christ.

Can we grasp the significance of this prayer of Paul? Thus far in this epistle, Paul has given much teaching. It is great teaching. He has, if you will, given much written revelation. But he

knew that this was not enough. Rather, now that Paul has written much revelation, his prayer is that we might SEE the Truth in the light of a personal realization of Jesus Christ.

Paul prays, starting in verse fifteen:

Wherefore, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.

We are going to read a prayer of the apostle Paul for believers -- which we can be sure is God's desire. He goes on:

I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and understanding in the knowledge of Himself.

Notice what is at the forefront of Paul's prayer for the saints: That we receive from God a revelation, indeed, if you will, a realization, of God the Father, and His Son, Jesus Christ. This is right at the top of the list. This alone will open up our understanding of everything else in the plan and purpose of God. For, as noted, doctrine and academia will not get us far -- we have to see Jesus, and come into an inward realization of Him.

In 2 Corinthians 3, it says that the mind of God's chosen people were blinded unto that day - - and that there was a veil which was NOT taken away even in their reading of the Old Testament. But the veil IS taken away in Christ. Likewise, it also says that when the people of God

turned to the Lord, the veil was taken away. So, it is not acceptable to just know what the Bible says -- you have to know what it means in Christ. You can memorize Truth academically, but you have to see Truth who is a Person. Indeed, Jesus said that the spirit was given that believers would be guided into all Truth. He was talking about God bringing us into an inward revelation of Himself, Jesus Christ.

Along that same line, in Galatians 4:19, Paul writes, "I travail as a woman about to give birth that Christ may be formed (inwardly realized and expressed) in you." Paul prayed for this. Paul travailed for this. But he was merely reflecting the mind of God Himself. That is how vital and central to God's purpose the inward revelation of Jesus Christ IS. Yet I don't think most people even know that this is God's desire, they are blinded to it. Many have never heard about it. But Paul is saying, "I don't want you to be blinded to this. I don't want you to live your Christian life blinded to the very purpose for which God has called you. Rather, I want God to give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Himself. That is my prayer. That is my travail.

Now, that God would give to His people a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Himself is the core of Paul's prayer. But then he goes on to say what will happen IF WE DO receive a spirit of wisdom of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. He says, "The eyes of your understanding will be enlightened." In other words, "If you see Jesus, your eyes are going to be opened to all of the purpose of God IN CHRIST. Of course, this is progressive. It does not happen in five

minutes. But Jesus Christ is the Light -- and He is the Truth. All discernment in the Christian life is the outcome of seeing and knowing Jesus Christ.

God's Inheritance in the Saints

Paul goes on to say, "That once the eyes of your understanding are enlightened -- it is then that you will know, "what is the hope of His calling, and the riches of His glory in his inheritance in the saints."

A lot of people say, "If the Bible is so clear, then why do so many people disagree about the meaning of verses? The answer is right here: "Revelation in the knowledge of Him....that you may KNOW..." People don't know the Person who constitutes Christianity: Jesus Christ. Thus, lacking this true knowledge of Him, we are left to our own brains, our own study, our own bias, our own self righteousness -- and our own unbrokenness. Therefore, you have emerging hundreds of denominations, theories, and errors. There are many who call themselves by the name of Christ who have come up with every cockamamie theory about everything -- one fad after another -- one incredibly stupid idea after another as to how to cure what ails you. But Paul's prayer reflects the fact that God wants to bring us back to the reality of Jesus Christ -- and to the fact that Christ is in us -- and to the purpose of God that Christ be formed in us. If we are not starting there and beginning to experience Him, we are getting nowhere and never will. We will NOT be able to KNOW what is only possible to know through an inward realization of Christ. Paul, in this passage, is praying that believers be brought back to that great reality.

It is through a personal, inward knowledge of Jesus Christ that our eyes are opened and we can SEE the hope of our calling. And what IS that hope. Paul tells us in Colossians: "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col. 1:27) His very presence in the believer is the hope of glory. Of course, this, "hope of glory," is not some hope for OUR glory. No. It is the hope, i.e., the expectation that we will fully experience HIS glory.

Paul wants believers to SEE and EXPECT that we will fully experience the glory of Christ. But he says that, "Christ in us," is not only OUR inheritance, and OUR hope of glory, but he says that Christ in us is likewise, "God's inheritance in the saints." God has an inheritance in us -- which is available to us -- because Christ lives in us.

It is solely through Christ in us that God is going to bring humanity into His full purpose -- to be those in whom He can live and move -- and through whom He can accomplish His eternal purposes. Those purposes are beginning NOW, yes, but will be fully realized and released in the eternal ages.

The Power of Resurrection Life

Paul goes on to say that he also wants us to discover and to personally know, "the exceeding greatness of His power to us who believe." He says, "This is the same power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead." This is the power which raised Christ and is resurrection life.

It is easy to think of POWER as some sort of, "force." Or an ability. But Jesus Christ Himself is

the power of God. (I Cor. 1:24) As He said, "I AM the resurrection and the life." (John 11:25) This means that wherever Jesus is present – resurrection power is present. But it also means that wherever Jesus is NOT present, resurrection power is NOT present.

Resurrection life in Christ is victory over the ultimate enemy, death. That covers all. Thus, to the degree that we abide in Him by faith, and live from out of Him, that power operates – according to the will of God. But if you think about this, it means that if we operate in Christ that there is no possibility that God will fail to get His will.

God has apprehended those in His Body for exactly that purpose – to be those through whom Christ can live and move – to be those through whom God can get His will. Obviously, God does not need to use anyone. But He has chosen to do so – it is a foretaste of His purpose that will be worked throughout the eternal ages. Jesus Christ is the Head and intends to work through the members.

Now, this picture of the body of Christ and Christ as the Head is all through the Bible. The body of Christ is to be an, "extension," of the Head, that is, just as a human head directs all, so does Christ over His church. This applies to the power in Christ. The power of Christ is not a, "thing given," for the body to use. The power is in the Head, and only flows through the body for the will of the Head. If the body departs from the will of the Head, there will be no power. Only in the will of Christ will the power Who IS Christ operate.

It is also a fact that Christ cannot operate THROUGH any member of His body unless He is able to operate IN that member. Unless a person is BROKEN under the work of the Cross, and is fully committed to the will, purpose, and glory of Christ – to the disregard of His own – Jesus Christ will not be able to do much through them. Christ doesn't bypass believers to use them or live through them – He doesn't "take us over." No. He must have our minds and our wills. But He cannot have them unless we know Him and we are unconditionally committed to Him.

This is why Paul says that God is able to raise believers, "out from the dead ones." God has, "an exceeding [all else] power," which is UNTO us -- according to the working of that power, resurrection life -- which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead. This resurrection is given to us because Christ is given to us – we are joined to Him in spirit. Resurrection life in Christ has victory over all else. There is no greater power as regards humanity and this creation.

This power was worked in Christ when God raised Him from the dead -- and set Christ at His own right hand in the heavenliness. What you see here is a picture wherein God has gathered up all power, all victory, all triumph in a total and complete victory in the Person of His Son.

The Fullness of Christ

Paul goes on to expand on his statements about all the power of God in Christ:

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 heavenly [places], Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all [things] under his feet, and gave him [to be] the head over all [things] to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all. (Eph. 1:19-23)

We have discussed the inheritance of God's people in Jesus Christ: That the body of Christ might fully experience all that Jesus Christ IS, and all that He has done. But here we see the other side of things – we see God's inheritance in His people. Clearly, both the inheritance of believers in Christ and God's inheritance in His people is in and out from Jesus Christ. But more specifically, God's inheritance in His people is that the body of Christ might be a full expression of Christ unto God's will and glory.

Paul says, "His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all." That shows that it is God's will – it is God's inheritance – that the body of Christ be a full expression of Christ Himself. But although this statement is believed to be a FACT by most, the question that needs to be asked is this: Does it MEAN anything NOW? As to a practical, PRESENT outworking? Or is all of this, at best, to be pushed off into the eternal ages?

Well, obviously, this is not speaking of anything we will see much of with our eyes NOW. We do not see a church NOW that is an FULL EXPRESSION of Jesus Christ. But does that mean that God is defeated? No. For even though we will not, in this age, see the church operating as a full expression of Jesus Christ,

God is going to have that come to pass in His people.

If we would understand the Truth on this matter it would answer a great number of questions. We do not NOW see the church as a full expression of Jesus Christ. No. For even with regards to the individual members we are told by John, "It does not yet appear what we shall be." (I John 3:2) Certainly if that is the case with individual members, it is the case with the entire body. Individuals will only realize full redemption in Christ at the resurrection of the body at the return of Christ. And since the church is comprised of those individual members it is clear that the realization of the Body of Christ as the full expression of Christ can only begin at that point as well. Thus, is it NOW that God is bringing individuals into an inward realization of Jesus Christ, and in doing so, building the people who constitute His church – but this is all UNTO the full release of His purpose when Christ returns.

We must grasp this: God is NOW building the people who constitute the church – by bringing those individuals into an inward realization of Jesus Christ. But even though there is to be an impact of that in the here and now – it is unto the greater purposes of God in the eternal ages.

The Body of Christ is to be a full and complete expression of the Person, the life, and the power of Jesus Christ. This is what we saw functioning in the early church. The preliminary work and expression of this purpose is supposed to be in this age. But we are not going to see a lot of the fruit of this work in this age – we are not going to

see the fullness of Christ through His Body in this age -- because of limitations.

In the eyes of God, every person who has ever been in Christ is presently a member of His Body – whether presently physically alive or dead. We are all one in Christ -- howbeit scattered geographically and separated by thousands of years over time. Regardless, God is going to gather all of His Body up in Christ. All will be part of the fullness of the expression of Christ. Even though, yes, we, as individuals, can be an individual expression of Christ, it takes the Body to have a full orb'd expression of Him. Just as God gives gifts to one that He may not give to another, and just as we have different functions as part of the body, when Christ comes back, all believers gathered together will be the fullness of expression of the Person of Jesus Christ.

Now, none of us have ever seen much of this. We may have a revelation of what it will be like; we may even see bits and pieces worked out in various groups or churches from time to time. But we will not see the church as the full expression of Christ in this age. Yet rather than mean God has failed, it really means that God is, right now, bringing His will to pass. Jesus Christ said, "I will build my church." It is just that we will not see the fullness of what He is building until Christ returns.

Now, lest anyone misunderstand, let it be clear that Jesus Christ is NOT going to incorporate into His Body that which is contrary to Himself. Likewise, He is NOT going to use what we build FOR HIM. There is no possibility that Jesus is going to incorporate into His Body all of the religion and efforts of people. No. For if He

was to incorporate any of that into His body it would be equal to incorporating it into HIMSELF. No. He said, "I will build MY church." And the Bible makes it perfectly clear that all that is NOT built by Him, and all that is NOT of His will, is going to be shaken to the ground and burnt out of existence.

Jesus Christ is going to have only that which He can join to Himself – which is another way of saying that He will have only that which can be an expression or extension of HIS fullness and glory. How many understand that you and I can never be part of the full expression of Him – as a member of His body or as an individual -- unless we are NOW an expression of His will? Despite our flaws, we have to be an expression of HIS will – which begins if we have faith that is NOT in ourselves, but which is solely in Christ. Isn't THAT an expression of His will? To be brought to utter weakness so that Christ can be our only strength is an expression of His will. How different is the mind of God from the mind of humanity!

In this age we are joined to the Lord and made one SPIRIT with Him. (I Cor. 6:17) We are NOT joined to the Lord and made one physical body or soul (psychic) man with Him. No, but those dimensions do have to come under Jesus as Lord in this age – as God gives us grace; as we grow to know Christ. Obedience will be included, but the core issue here faith in Christ -- before it works. As long as we remain in this physical body and have a body and soul, God wants those dimensions which are not united with Christ, to come under the government of Christ -- but it is all unto the end that once this body is glorified

that even these dimensions might be an expression of Jesus.

Inheritance and Dominion in Christ

It is the purpose of God in Christ that His Body would be a full expression of His Son – individuals within that Body, and the Body as a whole. What made this purpose possible was Jesus Christ in His finished work – which resulted in Christ being seated at the right hand of God in heavenly places. This is representative of a complete victory. There are no victories left to win. And then because of the finished Redemption in Christ, those who are joined to Him in spirit are likewise seated IN HIM. Believers are PARTAKERS of Christ – but because we are partakers of Christ – we are partakers of what it means to be seated at the right hand of God in the heavenlies.

This is God's purpose -- that, "He has purposed in Himself." It is the purpose for which He sent Jesus to captain and author. It is why He sent the Son of God to become a man – so that man could be joined to God. That is eternal inheritance – it is our inheritance in God, and it is God's inheritance in the saints.

In Ephesians, Paul lays down the fact that Christ is seated at the right hand of God – but he prays that God would give to us a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Himself -- so that we may understand what that really MEANS. Ephesians 2:6 tells us what it means:

We are raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

If Christ is seated at the right hand of God in heavenly places, then because we are joined to Him, we are seated IN HIM in heavenly places. Again, what is true for Him is true for us. We are seated IN CHRIST far above all principality, might and dominion.

That word, "dominion," is very important with regard to God's purpose for humanity. God created humanity to, "have dominion," under Himself over God's creation. His purpose for humanity has never been changed. It is now to be undertaken and fulfilled in and through Christ – Christ as THE SON OF MAN -- and then, by extension -- through humanity that is joined to, i.e., in Christ.

All of this speaks of SONSHIP and INHERITANCE. Again -- we can summarize sonship and God's inheritance plan in this way:

The Father

The Only or Uniquely Begotten Son

and

All who are IN the Son.

That is inheritance. But it is also dominion as well because a part of inheritance is to have dominion. If you go all the way back into the Book of Genesis, you see that God created man to have dominion. If we read, for example, Genesis 1:26, God says, "Let us make man in our image and let him have dominion over all of the creatures of the earth..." It says later on in that chapter that God blessed them and said to them,

“Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it and have dominion over...”

We can turn to the NT and see this same purpose that God had for humanity clearly stated. In Hebrews 2:5:

For unto the angels God has not put into subjection the world to come whereof we speak. But one, in a certain place, testified saying, “What is man that Thou art mindful of him or the son of man that Thou visit him? You made him a little lower than the angels. You crowned him with glory and honor and did set him over the works of your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet. In that He put all under subjection to him, he left nothing which is not under subjection to him. But now we see not all things yet put under him -- BUT we see Jesus.

We have here, from out of Psalm 8, the purpose of God stated for which He created humanity: To put all of God’s creation in subjection under humanity. This passage clearly states that presently, in this age, we don’t see much of this – certainly not the way God intended. In fact, we see much the opposite. BUT -- what we do see is THE MAN through Whom this purpose of God will come to pass – and through Whom the rest of humanity – those who accept Christ -- will be able to realize it: WE SEE JESUS.

Yes. “We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, through the suffering of death was crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God should taste death for every man.” What we are seeing here is that Adam’s

sin caused him to lose dominion. But God sent His Son as THE MAN who would win back all things under the lordship of His Father. We SEE JESUS – and once we have Him revealed in us we can begin to see this great purpose of God through Him.

So we see Jesus as THE MAN – the Son of God become a man. We see Him as the One through Whom God would accomplish all. There was no salvation for humanity unless Jesus became a member of the human race. God had to become man so that man could be joined to God. Therefore, there could not be the fulfillment of God's purpose for humanity unless Jesus became a member of the human race.

Gather all of this up and you discover that IN CHRIST humanity has dominion restored. But it is vital to understand that we are not given dominion or anything else of God, "in addition to Christ," or, "tacked onto Christ," or even as a separate thing because of what Christ did for us. No. We are given CHRIST HIMSELF. And because we are given Christ Himself, then we have been given ALL that is IN HIM – which includes dominion.

Note Revelation 3:21, where Jesus says, "He that overcomes will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame and sat down with My Father in His throne." There is no picture there of the believer being given a throne of his own in addition to the throne of Christ. No. We do not possess a little throne -- as compared to Jesus' big throne. Rather, Christ sits in His throne and we are given the opportunity to sit IN HIM in His throne. In other words, there is ONE throne. We are coheirs with Christ. We reign and

rule only IN Him. We are given Christ, in whom God has given all else. It is only by living in Him and being in subjection to Him that we have dominion over what He has dominion over. This is God's purpose.

This takes us back to what we saw in Ephesians 1. God is calling people out of this world to His Son. By coming to Jesus, we can be adopted as sons and daughters IN the Son. But in the Bible, adoption did not mean what it means today. In that day, to be adopted as a child meant that you had to FIRST be born into the family – and then later you could be adopted. You could be adopted -- made a child in that family – made an heir -- only if you proved yourself able to be responsible for the inheritance. God has called us to Christ that we should come to the point where they we can be adopted as sons and daughters in Jesus Christ – and thus become coheirs with Him; reign and rule with Him.

Paul uses other terms to explain the same Truth in Galatians. He declares that there is only ONE seed of Abraham: Jesus Christ. But because we are in Him and have become one with Him, we are also collectively in Him the seed of Abraham. And the seed of Abraham is the one to whom all the inheritance and dominion is given. Again, God's plan of inheritance is: The Father, the Son, and all who are in the Son.

God's Working in this Age

Earlier we read Paul's immense declaration of the purpose of God: That in the fullness of time, God was going to gather up all things in Christ -- and that He would be the head over all things to

the church, which is His Body, “the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” What we see is that God, in this age, is calling a people to Himself, in His Son -- so that those people in Christ might be an expression of Himself. And -- that Christ might live and work through them to do His will.

The full realization of this purpose will be in the next age. But there will be impacts, workings, and manifestations of this purpose in this age. For Christ does dwell in His people. And wherever the presence of Christ is allowed to be manifested through those people there is going to be an impact. We see this in the book of Acts. And if Christ had freedom in His people we would see more of it today.

In this age, God is working from the inside out. Christ must first be formed and realized IN God’s people before He can be manifested through them. This is a foundational Truth that applies to all that God has given in Christ, and to all that God wants to do through Christ. It applies to all ministry, all dominion, all power, and to all of life in Christ. For Christ IS the Life, the Truth, and the Power of God. He is that in Himself – and wants to be that both IN and THROUGH His people.

So, God has called a Body now -- to give themselves over to His Son -- so that He is able to live through them. In short, the Body ought to live and express Christ – ought to do things that He would do if He were here. That is what a body does! Again, we do not see much of this today; we don’t see a lot of public demonstration of these things. (We do see a lot of fake things!) But the real begins with Christ in us working from the inside out to the point where He

can live through people, and through a Body somewhere.

Many of us have blinded by tradition and human thinking on these matters. One of the biggest mistakes we make is to assume that the plan of God is going to be fully realized in THIS age. It is NOT. This age is the age of planting seeds. It is the age of laying foundations. It is the age of preparation. It is the age of separating the wheat from the tares. And of course, it is the age of suffering and adversity. It is only in the NEXT AGE after Christ returns that the actual FRUITAGE of what God is doing in this age is going to be seen and expressed fully. And God wants to express that fruitage through the Body of Christ.

Because we do not grasp the purpose of God for the next age, we easily assume that the fruitage is supposed to be fully realized in THIS age. For example, we think that if Christ were really ministering through us that we would see multitudes upon multitudes coming to Christ. There would be revival, churches raised up, and that everywhere that our shadow touched the glory of God would be unleashed and people would come to Christ. We have this idea that if we are really in the will of God, and He is blessing us, or if our Christianity is REALLY true and real, that we will be used of God and will be able to see tremendous results with people in the world.

Some of us have no other frame of reference – to us, this kind of impact MUST be the case or else something is wrong. We must have big success in ministry or we are failures. We must be used of God or we are out of His will. But that is not necessarily the case at all. If you read

scripture and look at the ministry of Jesus, or the ministry of Paul as our example, you can only conclude that if anyone is actually preaching the truth of God in Jesus Christ, they are going to have more people reject what they are teaching than accept it. That is simple what history has proven. When Jesus Himself ascended, how many people did He have? Seventy, or maybe 120? Paul, at the end of his ministry, said that everyone had forsaken him. John was marooned on the isle of Patmos. So, if you get into the numbers game, or insist that you have to see the life of another person changed -- or insist that you must see great impacts -- before you will believe that your Christianity is real -- I think we are in error. All that God ever tells us to do in ministry is to speak the Truth; speak the Truth in love, share Christ. Open yourself so that Christ can minister His life through you. Then leave the consequences to Him.

If you walked into most churches today, if you have the freedom to do so, and got up and preached for a couple of months the truth of God; the truth of Christ in us -- I can almost guarantee that in the majority of churches, you would have more people leave than would join. Even Jesus spent most of His time, during His last two and one half years of ministry, "weeding the garden," so to speak. Remember John 6:66, where it says that many who followed Jesus no longer did? It eventually happens that way. So we need to take our eyes off of our failures and off of what seem to be successes. This age is not the end of the story, and there are many impacts of ministry that are in the spiritual realm only. The fact of the matter is, faithfulness to God is simply a matter of speaking the truth and letting Jesus Christ have you.

Read II Cor. 4. Paul says, “We have this ministry.” The later in the chapter he describes both the means and the definition of true ministry. The means of ministry is to, “bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, so that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest.” In other words, true ministry is not something I DO – true ministry is HIS LIFE being manifested. And this can only happen in one way, “Death in us, but life in you.”

This means that if you never talked to even one person about Jesus Christ, and were never given to attend church, that if you are giving yourself to Jesus Christ that His life can be manifested IN YOU – and if that is the case – then you are contributing to the life of the body of Christ. The body is ONE. We are both individually joined to the Lord and collectively joined to each other. Let Christ have YOU and let Him manifest His life in YOU – and you absolutely are contributing to the body of Christ. You may never teach or preach. But you are ministering.

As noted earlier, the body of Christ consists of every person who is IN CHRIST – whether presently dead or alive physically. We are one spirit in Christ with ALL. And the only thing that ministers is HIS LIFE. Thus, to the extent that HIS LIFE has freedom and release in one member, all benefit. And it will contribute to the full expression of Christ yet to be seen when the entire body is gathered up to Christ at His coming.

The Unseen Realm

We have dominion, in Christ, over the power of the enemy, and we are one with the resurrection life of Christ. But there are going to be many seasons where it does not seem like it. It may seem as if nothing ever happens, and there will come a temptation of doubt.

Now, of course, it is possible that we want to BE someone – and that we are upset because God is not using us. If that is the case then we need to get rid of that before the Lord. It is also possible that we think MUCH is happening – but in reality it is not of God. There are lots of people who brag about all that God is doing through them, as if it is because of something about THEM, but it is all religion, emotionalism, and sometimes even spiritually corrupt. But all of that aside, it is possible for a believer do be fully in the will of God, to know the Truth, to be apt to teach, and yet not be used of God – at least not in any way they can see.

We need to realize that most of the spiritual impact of Jesus Christ is in the spiritual realm. Indeed, if there is no impact of Christ THERE – then there isn't going to be any lasting impact at all. As we have seen, God works from the inside out – He works through the spiritual first. We are blessed in Christ with all spiritual blessings in the HEAVENLIES. We are seated with Christ in the HEAVENLIES. That is where things begin and are the most important. And we cannot see with our eyes, nor feel with our emotions, the HEAVENLIES.

Two verses elsewhere in Ephesians will suffice to emphasize that it is in the unseen spiritual

realm that the greatest impact of Christ is realized:

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [places]. (Eph. 6:10)

That I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all [men] see what [is] the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly [places] might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God. (Eph. 3:8-10)

We wrestle not against flesh and blood – things we can see. But we wrestle against forces we cannot see. In addition, through the church God is judging these same evil forces. We cannot gain access through natural senses or emotions to any of this. But nevertheless in Christ there is a great impact. That impact is negative to the evil one. But it is positive in Christ.

We do not know, for instance, when we intercede for someone who God puts on our hearts, or when we stand with God and intercede for another person, or ask God on behalf of another – we do not know many of the unseen issues, or the forces behind various problems, or the spiritual needs that are involved. Often all we know is to stand in Christ. Jesus even tells us we have the authority to bind and loose in His name – which means authority to act as an extension of Him as His Body. Do we need to see something

happening? Are we to believe that because we don't see something happening -- that nothing is taking place? Are we to believe that unless we see something happening that God is not interested? No. I don't believe you can pray in the will of God without something happening.

There are times when you can discern that something happened spiritually. There are other times when you cannot. But this is NOT about your ability to discern. It is about being those who are seated with Christ and given the responsibility to live in Him. Indeed, I would submit that if we saw what happened when we prayed or ministered that it would do us more harm than good. Some would grow prideful. Others would be overwhelmed. Most of it would be beyond us. The book of Revelation is a good example. Much of it is of the spiritual realm -- using physical pictures. Look at the crazy interpretations people have come up with. God knows what He is doing by hiding much from us.

If you are walking with Jesus and letting Him have you, then you may not see outward evidence of any impact -- but there is one because you are living from the throne. You are seated with Christ in the heavenlies and you are praying according to the will of God. That moves things and things do happen in the spirit. You may never see them but it does not change the fact.

If we would realize this it would clear up much frustration and doubt. Jesus clearly promised that if we prayed according to His will He would answer. Yet if we were to go by what we see the conclusion would have to be that He usually does not answer.

Job faced this issue. In his trial he could not see. He could not know. It seemed as if God was doing NOTHING. But there was something going on in the realm of the spirit that he knew nothing about – between God and Satan. Job was completely blind to all of that. He was also blind to God's great purpose in the trial – that Job might see God Himself. What was the proof of God's faithfulness? Not something Job could physically see. But seeing God Himself -- in a way that cannot be accounted for by natural senses.

Jesus Christ never saw with His eyes the fruit of His redemptive work. Sure, He knew what the impact would be. But to those who followed Him it all seemed like a huge failure; a huge deception. Yet the fruitage continues two thousand years later. The seeds that He planted are still growing. And with Paul -- I don't think that he necessarily knew when he was writing his letters that they would become part of scripture. He wrote letters to the churches -- and we received fourteen of those in our present day. Indeed, the church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. This means that to the end, there is going to be an impact of what Christ was in them.

So never think that the fact that we do not see outward evidence of the fact that we are seated in Christ means that we are not. God says we are. Do we believe Him? Never think that because outward evidence of reality in Christ is lacking that the inward is not there -- or that nothing is happening in the spirit.

I am thinking now of Hebrews 11:13, which speaks of all the saints listed there in the, "faith chapter." It says,

These all died not having received the promises but having seen them from afar off were persuaded of them and embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims upon the earth.

This is, in fact, repeated twice in that chapter. We, as they were, are simply called to belong to Jesus Christ -- and if we do and God is forming Christ in us -- then we may not see a whole lot here, but we will, nonetheless, be a member of the Body which is to be the fullness of Him who fills all in all. God, in this age, is preparing a people for something eternally beyond what we could ever see or experience here.

Faith is Believing God

We talk about reigning and ruling in Christ -- but are we able to reign and rule with Christ, in victory, in faith, even when it seems as if our life is boring and without purpose? If we cannot live in Christ, and reign and rule with Christ, when life is boring and nothing is happening, I question whether we can at all. Anyone can glory in the fact that they are being used of God -- but what do you do when it doesn't seem like you are?

How many understand that at some point in life, we are going to face situations wherein we have nothing to go on except the fact that we have God's word and promise? How do we know that we are seated with Christ in heavenly places? Is it because we see great evidence? No, the reason we know that we are seated in Christ; the

reason we know that it is finished, ultimately is because God has said that it is. He said so! So again, the question is, do we believe that? At some point, we have to decide, don't we, if we are going to believe what God said, despite the lack of any evidence if necessary?

In I John 5:4, it says, "Whosoever is born of God overcomes the world." Why? Because Christ is in them. It also says, "This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith." So, we have to apprehend everything that Christ is, and has done in this age, by faith. "By faith we understand." (Heb. 11:3) This faith is not something that is mindless or unreal. Rather, it is our response to what God has said to us in His Son. It is really our response to God's revelation of Christ in us. Despite not seeing with our eyes, or sensing with our natural man, we believe God.

We can be sure that God has not departed from His great purpose. He has not abandoned those in and through whom He desires to work that purpose. God intends to gather in one all things in Christ – that believers may fully experience Christ. He intends the church to be the full expression of His Son. See it or not – it is going to happen.

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