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**C0431 -- August 11, 2004 -- Ephesians 1:20-23 -- Session of Christ**

We have been looking at Paul's prayer in Eph. 1:15-23. In v. 15 he commends them for two things: their faith toward God and their love toward one another. They had the vertical and the horizontal relationships down. The one thing lacking was hope so Paul prays that they might understand the *hope of their calling* in v. 18. In v. 16 Paul says that at his regular prayer time he thanks God for them and remembers them in his prayers. The prayer itself begins in v. 17 as Paul prays that their human spirits might be strengthened in two areas; wisdom and revelation. Wisdom is a piercing knowledge that is able to creatively apply doctrine to resolve issues in the cultural context. Revelation is the ability to comprehend the things of God revealed in the Scriptures. Both wisdom and revelation in their human spirits will lead them to *epignosis*, which is a precise knowledge of God. Then in v. 18 he notes the precondition necessary for coming to *epignosis*, namely, their eyes of their heart had been enlightened. Enlightenment is a one-time act that occurs at the moment you believe. Once you have been enlightened the Holy Spirit can teach you the truths of God. The eyes of our heart have been enlightened for three reasons: 1) that we will know the hope of His calling, 2) the riches of His inheritance in the saints, and 3) what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward those who believe. Paul then begins to elaborate on the kind of power God has for us. To do this Paul gives four words to describe every nuance of power that we can think of to describe God's power. *dunamis* (potential power), *energei* (kinetic power), *ischus* (inherent power), and *kratos* (visible power). This can be understood by the analogy of a bulldozer. Bulldozers have the potential to do work (*dunamis*). Just the sight of the bulldozer reveals its inherent power (*ischus*). However, when we hear the bulldozer roar and see it move, we realize its power in a new way (*kratos*). When the bulldozer knocks over a tree, we see its power put into work (*energeia*). These four words describe God's power or omnipotence. The whole idea is that God is all-powerful. However, this is not enough to simply know so Paul gives us several demonstrations of God's power in history so we can see God's power at work. Just what can God's power accomplish. Well, first of all, v. 20 reveals what God's power did in Christ. First, it raised Christ from the dead, second, it seated Christ at the Father's right hand. In v. 22 we see God's power demonstrated in putting all things in subjection under

Christ's feet (cosmological Lordship) and giving Christ as head over the Church (ecclesiology headship). In Chapter 2 we find that God's power is instrumental in regeneration. So, the power of God toward us is a power ultimately incomprehensible and from Paul's perspective, the only way to get close to describing it was to use four related but nuanced words related to "power". Today let's return to v. 20 and look first at God's power at work in the resurrection and session of Jesus Christ and then in v. 22 at God's power at work in putting all things under Christ's feet and giving Christ as head over the Church, which is His body. We've got a lot of doctrine in Ephesians 1-3 as you might have noticed. And we're about to launch into the specifics of God's power as it relates to the Universal Church and how He calls the Church out via a by grace salvation through faith message coupled with God's work of regeneration. So, soteriology and ecclesiology are on the horizon. It's not enough to simply talk about the intellectual facts of the gospel, Paul wants us to put these truths to work in the Christian life as we'll see in chapters 4-6.

**Greek Text: 1:20 }Hn evnh,rghsen evn tw/| Cristw/| evgei,raj auvto.n evk nekrw/n kai. kaqi,saj evn dexia/| auvtou/ evn toi/j evpourani,oij**

***Translation: 1:20 which worked in the Christ by raising Him from the dead and by seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies***

**}Hn evnh,rghsen evn tw/| Cristw/| evgei,raj auvto.n evk nekrw/n, "which worked in the Christ by raising Him from the dead".** *worked* comes from the Greek verb *energeo*. The noun was used in the previous verse as referring to actual power (kinetic energy; energy in motion). Here it to God's supernatural power at work. Think of this. Christ's body laid in the tomb for three days degenerating, falling apart. All physical and biological processes stopped for three days. Just think that every cell in His body had to be transformed contrary to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Law of Thermodynamics which says that energy goes from order to disorder. We make this observation everywhere in the natural world. Things don't fix themselves; things don't clean themselves up; things always go from order to disorder and it requires work to go from disorder back to order. If you have got kids, I know you know what I'm talking about, just look at their rooms. They can tear the room apart in a matter of minutes. How many of those rooms are picking themselves up? So, for Christ's body, which was degenerating, to regenerate required a massive amount of energy. The verb *worked* is an aorist active indicative verb (AAI), meaning that this is a past completed point action. Paul is summing up in this aorist verb the kinetic energy that God expended in the resurrection, the ascension, and the session of Christ; a 50-day period. During those 50 days God did some work, and He finished the work by the end of those 50 days. This same energy stands back of God's promises to you. You've got to reach out and grasp the promises of God because they're powerful (e.g., Rom. 8:28; Phil. 4:6, 7; 1 Pet. 5:5-7)! Turn

over to Eph. 3:20. Notice that Paul is praying again and that Paul often mentions the power of God in prayer. It's not the power of your prayer that gets things done, it's the power of God. In Lubbock the news channel used to have a short blip called the power of prayer. there's no power in prayer, there's power in God to answer prayer, but the prayer itself doesn't have any power. In Eph. 3:20 this is *dunamis*, potential power. Potential power is power that is just waiting to do work. It has the capacity to do work. And notice that we aren't even able to think about that kind of power. We can't even imagine it. That's how limited we are and how unlimited God is. And God demonstrated that potential power by putting it to work in the resurrection, ascension, and session of Jesus Christ.

**evgei,raj auvto.n evk nekrw/n, "by raising Him from the dead".** The resurrection took place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day... *having raised* is an aorist active participle indicating that the working of His power took place precisely at the time Christ was raised from the dead (also aorist) and is therefore a demonstration of God's power. How does the secular world respond to the resurrection of Christ? There have been lots of attempts to write off the resurrection; Theft Theory (that the body of Jesus was stolen from the tomb), the Hallucination Theory (that the apostles merely thought they saw Jesus), or the Swoon-Plot Theory (that suggests that Jesus' body was removed according to a pre-arranged plan and that a conspiracy was arranged to simulate resurrection appearances). Another possible explanation by unbelievers would be those who might say that we live in a chance universe and that anything can happen. Therefore, a resurrection here and there should not surprise us since anything is possible. It might be a rarity but not unheard of and because it is so rare it might make a great addition to Ripley's Believe it or Not. Why not send it in! Well, this verse is totally against that idea. This verse says it was not pure chance that Christ was resurrected. There is a person behind this universe and it's His power that raised Christ from the dead. So, this verse connects the cause of Christ's resurrection with God's power and not with blind chance. God's power was demonstrated to be at work by raising Christ *from the dead*. *From the dead* is *ek nekron*. The preposition *ek* shows that He was raised "out from" and *nekron* is in the plural so that what this means is that Christ was raised "out from all the others who had died and been buried". Out of all who had ever died and been buried Jesus Christ was the one who God raised by His supernatural power. Notice how precise God's power operates. It's not uncontrolled power, it's controlled. God's power has laser precision. Of all the bodies in the earth in tombs right next to Christ's only Christ was raised from the dead. So, God's power is precise, unlimited, and available to you. But this is not all that God's power accomplished. Paul tells us that God's power was demonstrated when Christ was seated *at His right hand in the heavenlies*.

**kai. kaqi,saj evn dexia/| auvtou/ evn toi/j evpourani,oij, “and by seating Him at His right hand in the heavenlies”**... Not only has he raised Christ from the dead but He also seated Christ at His right hand in the heavenlies. This is what we call the Session of Christ. It began on the Day of Pentecost as evidenced by the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost and it continues today and will continue until His descent at the Second Coming at the end of the Tribulation. Then He will reign on the earth as He sits on the promised Davidic throne. Right now, He sits on the Father’s throne in heaven but at the Millennium He will sit on the Davidic throne on earth (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12ff; Rev. 3:21).

It is noteworthy that Christ has been seated on the Father’s throne at the Father’s right hand. This is not Christ’s throne that Jesus is sitting on nor is this David’s throne. David’s throne is *earthly*, not *heavenly* (2 Sam. 7). The Father’s throne is heavenly and it is the Father’s throne that the Son was seated on. I really hate having to bring this up but it’s an issue in our day. Some theologians from Dallas Theological Seminary are teaching that Jesus is ruling now on the Davidic Throne in heaven and not yet on the Davidic Throne on earth. This is called a now-not yet eschatology. It is the same thing Covenant Premillennialist George Ladd taught and it is directly contrary to the DTS doctrinal statement which states in Article V the following: “We believe that three of these dispensations or rules of life are the subject of extended revelation in the Scriptures, viz., the dispensation of the Mosaic law, the present dispensation of grace, and the future dispensation of the millennial kingdom. We believe that these are distinct and are not to be intermingled or confused, as they are chronologically successive.”<sup>1</sup> The claim is that these dispensations are distinct and are not to be intermingled or confused, as they are chronologically successive. But most (exception Tom Constable) of the professors at DTS actually do intermingle and confuse the dispensation of the millennial kingdom with the dispensation of grace. I hate having to do this because Dallas had such strong Dispensational teaching for years under Chafer, Walvoord, Ryrie, Pentecost, Lightner, Hendricks, etc. However, beginning in 1992 professors at DTS began publishing books that confuse Israel and the Church and confuse David’s throne and the Father’s throne (e.g., *Dispensationalism, Israel and the Church*, Blaising and Bock; *Progressive Dispensationalism*, Blaising and Bock). Now, you can check all this out for yourself. Check me out, because I want you to know the truth. This is all very disheartening but true. Our stalwart seminaries are falling by the wayside in attempts to be more cordial and open to other teachings (others doing the same thing are Moody, Talbot, TEDS). They want to appeal to a larger field of people and so they open up their theology to new ideas. Now, biblically speaking, the Davidic throne is reserved for the dispensation of the millennium kingdom. David’s throne is not in *heaven* during the dispensation of grace like they are teaching. The Davidic throne is *earthly*. You can’t just move David’s throne from earth to

heaven. But this is exactly what they have done so that the dispensations are no longer chronologically successive but overlap. Besides, Jesus is never said to be on the Davidic throne now! In fact, Revelation 3:21 tells us a totally different story. ***“He who overcomes, I will (future and this was written in 96AD, 63 years after Christ sat down) grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”*** Now, what throne is Jesus presently in Session on in the year 96AD? When Christ overcame, he sat down with His Father on His Father’s throne, not on David’s throne. The Father’s throne and David’s throne are two separate thrones. Further, the Davidic throne has to do with Israel not the Church. If Christ is on the Davidic throne now in heaven then it has a relationship to the Church and this is confusing Israel with the Church, a fundamental distinction of Dispensationalism now erased. The Israel/Church distinction is the touchstone of Classic Dispensationalism as taught by Charles Ryrie and what I teach and this Bible church has taught for 28 years. So, progressive dispensationalists have changed two major things about the Davidic Covenant. *First*, they have changed the location of David’s throne from *earth* to *heaven* and second, they have changed the people to whom the Davidic Covenant relates from *Israel* to the *Church*. This is not Dispensationalism at all! The now-not yet scheme of DTS, Talbot, Moody, etc., is merely a denial of grammatical-historical interpretation as historically understood. In fact, what these new teachers are espousing is what is called ‘complementary hermeneutics’, a system of interpretation which allows later revelation to modify and even change earlier revelation. Logically this means that we could never really know what a text meant for sure because there might be more revelation in the future that would change what we originally thought it meant. This would mean God is misleading. This is an example of secular postmodernism infiltrating our seminaries. These authors even blatantly advocate the idea that the starting point of interpreting Scripture is our own pre-understanding/bias. Whereas traditionally the interpreter was to put aside his bias as to what the text meant these authors are telling us we should start with our pre-understanding BEFORE we come to the text. “Its relevant principle advocates the inclusion of one’s preunderstanding in the interpretive process as a starting point. Leaders in the movement pointedly advocate allowing one’s biblical theology, and other elements of preunderstanding, to influence interpretive conclusions.”<sup>ii</sup> What this ultimately means is that their worldview is absolute and infallible and they make the Scriptures fit what they want to believe. This undermines the authority of God and His Scriptures.

So, let’s return to the doctrine of the current Session of Jesus Christ because it is extremely important in our modern Space Age. When people are wondering about the vastness of the universe and whether there is life on other planets, this doctrine of the Session of Christ is what we need to know cold to stand against these ideas. Realize that Christ’s body

ascended. Christ' has a body and forever will have a body and that body is seated at a particular location in space. We don't know where but it is in the heavenlies somewhere, perhaps in another dimension, but regardless Christ's body is at a point location. This Christian teaching ought to guard you against all the modern talk about finding aliens and other life forms in the universe. There's no species out there that has superiority over the human race. It's a human being that sits in the #1 position in the universe. You don't have to worry that we're going to find some creatures out there that are more advanced than or superior to us; a human being is #1. The human race is the superior race. If you want to know what's going on in the universe just stay tuned to planet earth and what's happened here. Of all the galaxies, planets, and so forth, what happened on earth is primary. If there are other life forms in the universe then salvation is only through what happened on earth, only through Jesus Christ.

This brings us to the idea that the earth is the center of the universe. Recent Creation Research has discovered that Red Shift is quantized. What this means is that other galaxies are lumped together as you go away from our galaxy. What this means is that you will go away from earth and then all of a sudden there will be a clump of galaxies. And then you will go farther out for a long time, there's nothing, and then all of a sudden, you have another huge clump of galaxies. So, we are observing a quantized Red Shift. Why are we seeing this? There are only two explanations. First, pick up any Time Magazine, newspaper, or textbook and you will find that they teach the Universe came about by the Big Bang, which is the result of the Theory of General Relativity applied to two things:

- 1) the universe is unbounded
- 2) the observation of Red Shift

Statement 2 is an observable phenomenon. But notice statement 1. This is an arbitrary assumption. How would anyone know if the universe was unbounded? No one can observe that. So, scientists here have to choose a position...either the universe is bounded or unbounded. How do they make the choice? The only way is to make a philosophical conjecture. The choice amounts to which worldview would you like to believe in? The Big Bang is not science, is not a fact, is not proved...it is the result of a philosophical choice. Why not choose a bounded universe? Because a bounded universe would mean that the earth is at or near the center and such an idea strongly smacks of purpose. The Big Bang is not science, its philosophy but the media touts it as if it's fact. But if we replace statement 1 above with the biblical assumption of a bounded universe and load this in the Theory of General Relativity guess what we find? That while distant starlight aged by billions of years during creation week time on earth to create took only 6 days. In a bounded universe our

galaxy is at the center and the other galaxies form concentric circles around our galaxy. On top of all this, picture this thing in 3-D and then add the fact that it's rotating on an axis around our galaxy. Regardless of the concept that the earth is rotating around the sun rather than vice versa (incidentally, some brilliant mathematicians still think that the sun is rotating around the earth). Nevertheless, this does not rule out the idea that the earth is at the center of the universe. The earth is center stage. And as Bible-believing Christians we've got to stand up for this idea in the modern space age. As a Christian you have to make a choice and the choice amounts to a choice of worshipping God or being idolatrous. Let me show you why...When you look out from earth you see equal star density in every direction. What does this indicate? Well, it can only indicate one of two things; it could mean that the universe is unbounded, that it is infinite or it could mean that the universe is bounded and the earth is at or near the center. If we go with option one like the Big Bang arbitrarily asserts then we are stuck in idolatry because now we are taking the attributes of God and applying them to something created. We are saying the universe is infinite and boundless (a weak form of omnipresence). It's astounding that such brilliant unbelievers as Carl Sagan would see the amazing complexity of the universe to such an extent that it became his god. Sagan worshipped the universe. Unbelievers aren't stupid, they're often very brilliant individuals but they presuppose naturalism, they hold down the truth that they know to be true and it's by this mechanism of suppressing the truth that they become fools (Rom. 1:18-22). So, we, as Bible-believing Christians have got to abandon the secular humanistic methods of doing science because it's loaded full of unbelieving baggage. We can't harmonize modern secular science with Genesis. It's simply a dead end. People have been trying to do it for over 150 years and it's always a dead end. We've got to abandon idolatrous thought patterns and realize that God alone is infinite and omnipresent and we therefore accept the biblical inference that the earth is young and at or near the center of the universe. This explains the equal star density in every direction in a bounded universe (the biblical assumption). So, we've got to stand for this idea, it's biblical and you can't harmonize Genesis with this cooky viewpoints. It just doesn't work. So, either stick with the Bible or abandon it but don't try to hold on to both sides. So, let's back up now and get this sequence down of what took place as Jesus Christ, in His humanity, is the supreme ruler of the universe.

First, Psalm 110:1, year 1000BC. Now, we know who the first LORD is because it's YHWH in the Hebrew text. However, the question is, who is David referring to when he says "my Lord". If YHWH is talking to David's Lord then who is David's Lord? David was the highest authority in the nation. He was the king. He had no superior officers. However, he does address someone else as his Lord. Now, this is one of the intimations in the OT that there is a Trinity. David did answer to an authority whose equal was YHWH

Himself. This is the verse that is quoted in Ephesians 1:20. This is a radical idea. To think that a man is sitting at the helm of the universe. This is saying something significant about man. Man was created to be great, to rule and have dominion and presently we have just that in the humanity of Jesus Christ. Just think of that, a man is ruling the entire universe as we speak. Christianity has a view of man that is far higher than any other philosophy or religion. Man is the high point of God's creation.

Second, Mark 16:19-20 (Problem with the text here, vv. 9-20). Notice that Mark is careful to point out that Jesus sat down at the right hand of the Father and that he connects this with the apostles present successful ministry because of God's power working in them. See, he connects it with the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Christ had to be in a position of rule and authority before He could send the Holy Spirit in His stead.

Third, Acts 2:32-34. This is Peter's sermon, just before the famous Acts 2:38, which does not teach baptismal regeneration by the way. Notice how Peter links the resurrection (v. 32) with the ascension, session at the right hand of God, and the pouring forth of the Holy Spirit. Peter is making a remarkable accusation of the nation of Israel. Peter is saying that Israel's supreme court convicted Jesus Christ and put Him on the cross and now God has made this supposed crook the ruler of the universe. This incidentally was one of the most difficult things for early Christians to face because they were worshipping someone who was convicted as a criminal and so they had to face this kind of charge against Christianity.

Fourth, Acts 7:56ff. Notice that as a fellow Christian, the first martyr in Church History, Stephen sees Christ standing, as if He rose up off of His seat and welcomed Stephen into His presence. Christ is standing, not sitting upon his entry. Christ has such a personal interest in you that He stands up when you come into His presence. This is an extreme reaction by the crowd. It's a reaction by those kinds of people who say, "I've made up my mind, don't confuse me with the facts". They didn't want to hear the vision; they had already made up their mind.

Fifth, 2 Cor. 13:3ff. He lives is in the present tense. Jesus presently lives. He had to go through this sequence; crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and session. If He didn't, if He really didn't rise from the dead then we have no power to go on living and we might as well give Christianity up! The Liberals would be right then and Christianity is reduced to an emotional crutch, an emotional feeling. If that's true that He didn't really rise from the dead then can He be sitting at the Father's right hand? And if He's not sitting at the Father's right hand then we don't have any power. It's because He is risen and is seated at the right hand of God that we have the power to live. These things are integrally connected, and you



ought to push people to the either/or position. Either you accept all of Christianity or just dump the whole thing. There's no basis for people who want to deny the resurrection and yet hold on to their cozy Christian morality. Who cares if Jesus was just a good teacher if He wasn't who He really claimed to be? So, if you deny Jesus' claim to physical, bodily resurrection in history then you might as well toss Christian morality because the whole thing is connected. Paul's point is that Jesus presently lives at the right hand of the Father and that's why we have the power to live.

Sixth, Col. 2:10, 12, 15. Notice v. 10. We're complete in Him. We don't need any second blessings. v. 12 the *energeia*. v. 15 is the result Jesus Christ is in the supreme position.

Now, here's the application of the Doctrine of Session. This application was demonstrated by Stephen in Acts 7. While he was being stoned, he could have cared less. How could he do it? How could he go through that? Because he knew where Jesus was. He knew who ruled the universe. He didn't have any questioning of this idea. Now, the heat is coming in America and I'm afraid many of us here are going to see persecution of Christianity in a physical way. Then we're going to see which Christians really believe the Bible, we're going to see what they know about the Session of Jesus Christ. And I'm afraid we're going to have a lot of Christians split off when the pressure comes. But you don't have to, you know the doctrine of the Session, you know that Jesus Christ sits as ruler of the entire universe and He gives believers the ability to stand before any human ruler and not back down. You don't have to be afraid of anyone ever because Jesus Christ rules the universe. You don't have to fear any ruler or authority, human or otherwise, because you know who really rules. As you can see ideas are powerful and this idea of Christ's Session at the right hand of the Father is one of the most powerful ideas in the entire Bible.

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<sup>i</sup> Dallas Theological Seminary, (1999-2000 Catalog), 155.

<sup>ii</sup> Robert Thomas, "A Critique of Progressive Dispensational Hermeneutics", in *When the Trumpet Sounds*, General Editors Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy, (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1995), 418.

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