

Look Who Else Is On The Throne!

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[0 : 00] Made alive, raised up, and seated. But God. But God made us alive, raised us up, and seated us.

But God. As I said last week, that little phrase takes us into the heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We were dead in our transgressions and sins.

But God. We were floating along with everyone else in the river of human society organizing itself without God. But God. We were inadvertently cooperating with spiritual powers that work against the kingdom of God.

But God. We were living in the flesh, in human nature, turned in on itself. We were indulging the desires of the flesh and mind. But God.

We were justly, along with all of humanity, deserving of the wrath of God. But God made us alive together with Christ. But God raised us up with Christ.

[1 : 14] But God seated us with Christ in the heavenly places in Christ. Let us pray. Let us pray. Living God.

We believe that you got a hold of the apostle Paul. While he was imprisoned in Rome. Chained day and night to a soldier.

And you enabled Paul to think these thoughts and to write these words. Will you now help us understand what the words mean?

And even if we cannot fully understand what the words mean, as is the case with me. Will you help us nevertheless actually live into the reality the words are describing?

Please, dear God. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. I want to begin with a little grammar lesson.

[2 : 21] The letters of Paul are not an easy read. Would you agree? Partly because nearly every word and phrase is jam-packed with rich theology.

And partly because Paul uses long, complicated sentences. As is the case with the text before us today. We're going to focus only on verses 4 to 7.

On the verbs. Made alive. Raised up. And seated. In most English translations, it appears that these verses are a new, separate sentence.

But in the original, in the Greek in the Greek in which they were written. They are part of one long sentence that begins at verse 1. Ephesians 2, 1 to 7 is one long sentence.

A hundred and twenty-seven word sentence. One of the many long sentences Paul has in his letter to the Ephesians. This is typical of Paul. Long sentences. So whenever I read Paul, I first take time to try to understand how the long sentence goes together.

[3 : 31] And how the various parts relate to each other. And the first thing I try to do is to get down to the one basic affirmation that holds the whole sentence together.

So, a little grammar lesson. The language in which Paul wrote his letter, Koine Greek, works a lot like English. I suppose it's actually more historically accurate to say that English works a lot like Koine Greek.

And the building blocks of an English sentence are subject, verb, object. Usually in that order. Subject, verb, object.

Sometimes the verb precedes the subject. Down came the rain instead of the rain came down. But for the most part, it is simply subject, verb, object.

Canucks win Stanley Cup. That's the sentence we hope will be broadcast all over the world come June. With many exclamation points.

[4 : 34] Canucks win Stanley Cup. Now, when learning to read Paul in Greek, my mentor at the time, Daniel Fuller, who was the son of Charles E. Fuller, of old-fashioned revival hour radio

program, and the founder of Fuller Theological Seminary, taught us to do sentence diagramming.

I am so grateful. I am so grateful. For the discipline has helped me again and again to make my way through complex sentences to get down to the basic gospel affirmation of the sentence.

Now, the basic structure of an English or Greek sentence can be diagrammed like this. Subject, verb, object. God. Take, for example, the simple sentence, God loves us.

Subject, God. By the way, all great sentences of history begin with the word God.

All the great sentences have God as subject. We will never finally understand human history unless we use sentences with God as the subject.

[5 : 46] This is true of our individual lives. We'll never fully understand our lives unless the significant sentences of our lives begin with the word God.

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, as Paul calls him. When I pass on to the other side, I have instructed those who do my memorial service that the first and last sentence will begin with God and not Daryl.

God. God. God. A good discipline, by the way, is to periodically take out a piece of paper and write out ten sentences with God as subject.

God loves us. Subject, God. Verb, love. Object, us. God loves us. Because of the great love with which he loves us, says the Apostle Paul.

Now, to this simple sentence, God loves us, can be added all kinds of elaborations or qualifications or implications. God, who made heaven and earth, who holds all things together, loves.

[6 : 49] In spite of us, because of us, loves although. God loves us, even though we weren't looking for him. Or God loves us and we did nothing to deserve it. But after all of those extras, it'll come down to the simple sentence, God loves us.

So, Ephesians 2, 1 to 7. One long, complex sentence with many elaborations comes down to the simple subject, verb, object.

Now, actually, three verbs. Subject, three verbs and an object. The same subject and same object for all the verbs.

Each verb complemented by the same phrase, with Christ. God made alive us with Christ. God raised up us with Christ.

God seated us with Christ. The fact is, the preposition with is actually built into the verbs. Each of the verbs begins with the same letters, S-U-N, or sun, which means with.

[7 : 58] Paul takes existing words, made alive, raised up, and seated, and attaches sun, or with, to the verbs. This is typical of Paul. He's always making up new words in order to convey the new reality we have in Jesus Christ.

So, to the verb make alive, he adds sun, so that the new verb is literally with made alive. To the verb raise up, he adds sun, so that the new verb is literally with raised up.

And to the verb seat, he adds sun, so that the new verb is literally with seated. And then he adds the prepositional phrase, in Christ, to locate the reality.

With made alive in Christ, with seated in Christ. Now, when we diagram the whole sentence, the gospel leaps off the page, as you have in the order of worship.

When did God do these three verbs? When we were dead, verse 1. Even when we were dead, verse 5. Why did God do these three verbs? Because being rich in mercy, verse 4.

[9 : 02] And in order to show the surpassing riches of his grace, verse 7. Last week, I called your attention to a little cluster of words Paul uses in this text. A cluster of words he uses in just about all of his letters.

It's the cluster justice, mercy, grace. Justice is God giving us what we deserve. Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve.

And grace is God giving us what we do not deserve. God does all three verbs of the gospel because he's rich in mercy. The word rich is plutos, as in plutocracy, the rule of the super rich.

God does the three verbs of the gospel in order to show the surpassing riches of his grace.

Surpassing is the word hyper or hyperbolic, the word riches, plutos, again.

God does the three verbs of the gospel because of his plutomercy to show the world his hyperbolic plutograce. Okay.

[10 : 07] So, now focus on those three verbs. Made alive, raised up, seated. And notice, it's not. We'll make alive, we'll raise up, we'll seat.

Paul in this text is not talking about something that is only future. He uses the past tense verbs. Made alive, raised up, seated. Now. Now, here is where I wish we knew each other better because right now I would invite you to turn to your neighbors and share what you are thinking or feeling about these verbs.

First, made alive, raised up, seated. Now, we've met these verbs already in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. At least the second and third ones, raised up and seated.

Where have we met these verbs? In Paul's first prayer recorded in Ephesians 1. Listen. It's chapter 1, verses 19 to 21. Paul prays that we might know the surpassing greatness of God's power which he brought about in Christ.

Now, listen. Do you see what Paul wants us to see?

[11 : 34] Do you hear what he wants us to grasp? What the living God did for and with Jesus of Nazareth, he now does for and with those who believe in and belong to Jesus of Nazareth.

God raised up and seated Jesus on the throne to demonstrate his power. God raised up and seated us on the throne to demonstrate his grace. Here then is the gospel Paul is proclaiming in those three verbs.

When we enter into relationship with Jesus Christ, we somehow begin to share in what is true about Jesus Christ right now.

Now, remember, Paul is proclaiming this news while imprisoned in the capital city of the empire, while chained day and night to a Roman soldier.

Oh, how God loved that Roman soldier. To chain him to the apostle Paul. Paul is telling us that no matter what our circumstances involve, we share in what happened to Jesus Christ.

[12 : 48] And we share in what happened to Jesus Christ because we are now in Jesus Christ. It seems to me, therefore, that in order for us to understand what it all means for us to be made alive, raised up and seated, we need to better understand what it means for Christ to be made alive, raised up and seated.

When we understand better what happened to Christ, we better understand what happens to those who are in Christ. And the simplest way I know how to answer that question is to say, Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension changed the way the universe goes together.

Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension changes the way the universe goes together. Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension changes the basic structures of the universe.

Something real, objective, measurable, something revolutionary happened when Jesus died and rose from the dead and ascended to the throne. As Jesus died, the grip sin had on the world was broken.

He who knew no sin became sin for us. And he took upon himself all that sin deserves, and thereby broke sin's grip. As Jesus died, the grip death had on the world was broken.

[14 : 19] Matthew tells us that in the moment that Jesus dies, the tombs were opened. In the moment he dies, the tombs were opened. In the moment he dies, death loses its grip and has to let its captives go.

Therefore, evil has lost its chief weapon in the world, the fear of death. Evil can no longer hold people captive through the fear of death because death is no longer what it was.

Death does not have the last word anymore. When Jesus was raised from the grave, a new reality emerged in the midst of the old.

Jesus' resurrection is not just one man returning to life after dying. In fact, it's not even a returning to life. It is going through death into a whole new order of life.

When Jesus rose from the grave, a new creation, a new humanity, a new Adam, the last Adam, the second Adam, emerged in the world. Easter morning is literally the first day of a new world.

[15 : 23] When Jesus ascended to the throne, when God the Father seated His Son on the throne, all the powers that thought they ruled the world were now submitted to Jesus' feet.

Oh, the powers do not like it, and many of the powers still resist it. It doesn't matter. The universe goes together in a new way. Jesus of Nazareth is now on the throne above all thrones, and there's nothing in the universe that is going to threaten Him.

And all of this, His death, resurrection, and ascension, removes all the barriers between heaven and earth. At the moment Jesus died, the veil in the temple is torn in two, from top to bottom, signaling the fact that all the walls have come down, and there is now a free and full interaction between heaven and earth.

This is what Jesus was announcing in His gospel, the kingdom of God has broken through and come near. I like how New Testament scholar Andrew T. Lincoln sums it up for us. He writes this, Christ's death was a death to the old order, to the powers of this age, including sin. His resurrection was a coming alive of a new order in which He functions as Lord with the power of God.

[16:43] Christ's death and resurrection changed the power structures in history. Now, here then is the gospel in Paul's three verbs. In relationship with the crucified, risen, and ascended Jesus, we enter into the new order, the new configuration, the new structure that resulted from Jesus' crucifixion, resurrection, and enthronement.

Right now, even while we are still alive in these decaying bodies, even while we're still on this profoundly fragile planet, even while sin and evil and death still hang around, even now, we share in Jesus' new order, in His new victory, in His dominion, and in this union of heaven and earth.

Now, we know that Paul is not saying that in relationship with Jesus, we are freed from trouble. For one thing, as I've said, Paul is chained to a soldier, awaiting trial before Caesar.

And Caesar, imagine this, Caesar still thinks he rules the world. And for another, in chapter 6 of Paul's letter, Paul will tell us to stand firm against those powers that have not yet surrendered to the altered structure of the universe.

What Paul is saying is that in union with the crucified, risen, and ascended Christ, death is not final, and therefore does not need to be feared.

[18:15] Sin is not final, and therefore we do not have to live in bondage and shame. Evil is not final, and therefore we don't have to play the game on evil's terms.

And the walls that used to divide heaven and earth have come down, and the resources of heaven are now fully available on earth. If you're about 650 or 700 in this, I should have gotten that many amens by now.

This is amazing. Verb 1. Made us alive with Christ. Enlivened us.

It's the best way to say that. Only God can. Dead people can't enliven themselves. But the God who made Jesus alive can and does.

Now. Jesus says, in the Gospel according to John, whoever hears my word and believes in the one who sent me has passed out of death into life.

[19:22] Now. Ahead of the grave. God who made Jesus alive makes us alive in the life Jesus now enjoys.

And the vital signs are not hard to detect. Those made alive with Christ love Christ and want to love Him more. Those made alive with Christ love His word and want to understand and live it more. Those made alive with Christ love His friends, the church, with all of our warts and blemishes and brokenness. Those who love Christ love the world for which He died and want their neighbors and co-workers to also find Christ.

Those made alive with Christ love His appearing. They long for Jesus to come. Not only to make the world better again, but they can finally see His face.

Made alive with Christ. Verb 2. He has raised us up with Christ. Not only alive, He has taken us into a qualitatively different quality of life.

[20:34] An indestructible life which the grave cannot destroy. Again, Jesus says in John 5, whoever believes in me has eternal life. Now, eternal life is not long life.

Well, it is long life, but that's not the emphasis. Eternal life is the life that God has and is. And it is the life that He gives us in Jesus. We've been transformed, transferred out of the old order of life into the new order of life.

And the old order cannot destroy the new. I have had the privilege of being with many people in the moments before they die.

Some of them, their bodies so weak and apparently just lifeless. And yet, at the core of those persons, there is this quality of life that clearly nothing is going to destroy.

Raised up with Him. And third verb, seated us with Christ in the heavenly places. Christ is on the throne and so too all who belong to Christ.

[21:45] Now, the prophet Daniel saw this centuries ago. In the seventh chapter of his book, he has this vision of a son of man. This will be Jesus' favorite self-designation later on.

The son of man coming up to the throne. And then Daniel sees what he calls the saints of the Most High joining the son of man and also on the throne. In relationship with the one who sits on the

throne, we too are on the throne.

Mercy. Not given what we deserve. Grace. Given what we do not deserve. what does it all mean? I do not yet fully know. As you know, I read widely and I haven't found anyone yet who fully understands what Paul is saying here. What is clear if we're on the throne with Christ is that we need not fear other powers and dominions.

Which means we do not need to live by the values and the agendas of these other power and dominions. Flex their muscles as they might.

[22 : 55] Strut across the face of history as they might. They are no match for the true Lord of the universe with whom we sit. And this too is clear.

The true Lord is a very different kind of Lord. The true king on the throne has a very different understanding of royalty.

He is the servant king who washes the feet of his subjects and invites the world to join him in this very different kind of dominion.

You see, it is the Jesus we meet in the pages of the four gospels who is seated on the throne. I think I've lived much of my life with the idea that Jesus kind of does this thing in his incarnation and then when he's taken to the throne he becomes a different kind of person.

That's not the case. It's the same Jesus who has been seated. Friend of sinners and tax collectors. Healer of sick bodies and troubled minds. It's the same Jesus.

[24 : 03] Gentle and kind and compassionate. The one who enters into the world's pain and trouble and makes it his own. His dominion which stretches from sea to sea and shore to shore is all about servant love.

It's all about choosing the way of costly servanthood. It's all about entering into the brokenness of earth and becoming channels of the resources of heaven.

A very different kind of king leading a very different kind of kingdom. Let me ask you this question. Who is ruling in Japan right now?

That is who is making the world go around for Japan right now? Yes some of the folks in high places who have to make tough decisions but wouldn't you agree that the true rulers in Japan right now are those who dare to enter into the chaos risk their lives and get their hands dirty? they're the ones who are going to make Japan go around right now. Especially those who are literally risking their lives to go into those nuclear plants trying to stave off horrific disaster.

[25 : 26] Ever since the day God seated Jesus of Nazareth on the throne it has been the servants who make the world go around.

alternative reading of reality. No society no nation no city no corporation no church can make it without servants.

Isn't this why the world's leaders were drawn to Mother Teresa like a magnet? In her they saw true royalty. Made alive raised up seated all because of the riches of God's mercy in order to demonstrate the surpassing riches of God's grace.

Made alive raised up seated in order to enjoy the riches of his mercy and the surpassing riches of his grace. Made alive raised up and seated to be part of God's program of extending the riches of mercy and the surpassing riches of grace to the world.

Please dear God will you help us live in the reality of the three verbs made alive raised up seated with Jesus Christ who is made alive raised up and seated.

[27 : 04] Amen.