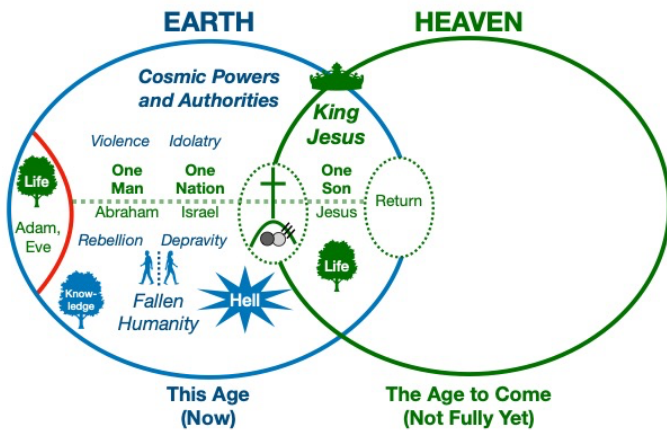


Ephesians

BACKGROUND

Paul's Worldview



In the beginning, the Heavens and Earth were one united realm with God's presence and rule. But Adam and Eve rejected God's rule and instead followed the cosmic powers and authorities God had appointed for the Earth. Together, fallen man and the fallen powers and authorities created hell on earth—with all types of evils, idolatries, violence, crime, oppressions, and injustices.

But God resolved to redeem and restore Creation, to bring heaven and earth back to complete unity as in the beginning.

- First, He blessed **one man**, Noah, to save humanity
- He then chose **one family**, Abraham's, to bless all the nations of the earth
- Next, He chose **one nation**, Israel, to take Him to the nations
- Finally, God sent Jesus, His **one Son**, Messiah. He was victorious over sin and death and ascended to right hand of the God as the ruling Christ.

Paul, writing from prison in Rome, sends this further revelation of Jesus and the whole plan of God.

STORY

Paul, an apostle of Messiah Jesus, to the holy people, the church, in Ephesus and beyond. God has blessed us, the church, in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in the Messiah: we were *chosen before creation to be holy and blameless in his sight, predestined in love to be adopted as his children, redeemed through His blood, forgiven of our sins through his grace and, when we believed, were sealed with the Holy Spirit.*

God has now revealed the mystery of his will, his purpose in Christ—to re-unite all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

I pray continually that God will give you the wisdom and revelation to know that the same great power that raised Jesus from the dead and seated him in the heavenly realm, far above all the earthly powers and authorities, is now at work in you. We, His Church, are the very body of Christ—with Christ as our head.

We were captives of the powers and authorities of the earthly realm—dead in our sins. But God also raised us up and seated us in the heavenly reality with Christ. We are not saved by our works but are saved by the gift of God's grace—alive in Jesus to do the good works God prepared for us to do.

We are no longer divided: Jews v. Gentiles, Black v. White, Rich v. Poor, Men v. Women. Jesus has destroyed the dividing wall between us and made us one, radical, peaceful, new humanity in Him. In Jesus we are joined together and rising as the new, holy Temple of God, the dwelling place for God by his Spirit with Christ as the chief cornerstone. I preach this great mystery which was hidden in the past—that through you, the powers and authorities would see this temple of the church as a monument to the wisdom and victory of God.

I pray that you, the church, rooted and established in love, will have power to grasp *how wide and long and high and deep* is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the full of all the fullness of God.

I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Learn the truth and the way of life of cruciform love—the love Jesus demonstrated on the cross—be completely humble, gentle, patient, bearing with one another in love.

Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in peace: *1 body, 1 Spirit, 1 hope, 1 Lord, 1 faith, 1 baptism, 1 God and Father over all and through all and in all*. Also, realize that God has given gifts to the church to equip us: *apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers*. They guide us to:

- build up the body of Christ until we are all united in the faith and knowledge of Jesus
- become mature and have the whole measure of the fullness of Christ
- no longer as infants tossed back and forth by false doctrines and spiritual fads
- speaking the truth in love, grow up into Christ, our head, held together as each part does its work

Remember that every day we choose to participate in either the Earthly or Heavenly reality: Old Humanity v. New Humanity, Darkness v. Light, Foolish v. Wise. So, for example, put off Lies, put on Truth; put off Anger, put on Peace; put off Laziness and Theft, put on Diligence and Generosity; no longer Gossip, put speak words of Encouragement; don't take Revenge, but offer Forgiveness; put off Promiscuity, put on Self-Control; don't be drunk with wine, but be under Holy Spirit guidance.

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit—walk in the New way of love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us. Live as children of Light in the Heavenly Reality. Find out what pleases the Lord!

Submit to one another in Christ: *husbands and wives, parents and children, employers and employees*. Wives, respect your husbands and allow them to care for you. Husbands, love your wives and be prepared to lay down your lives for them. But I speak of the mystery now revealed—as Jesus provided and gave his life for the church.

We are engaged in divine warfare—not against human enemies, but against the rulers, powers, and authorities of this dark world and evil spiritual forces. So, Body of Christ, put on the full armor of God so you are able to stand your ground: *belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shoes of the Good News of peace, shield of faith to extinguish all flaming arrows, helmet of salvation, sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God*.

Finally, pray on all occasions, with all kinds of requests, for all the Lord's people. Peace and love and grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ.