

# Living with New Eyes

## St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

### Study 3 | Ephesians 1:15-23

#### "Hope Realized"

- 1. Describe the various positions of accomplishment and authority with which Paul describes Jesus. In what specific ways does Paul use these to encourage the church?**

In verse 15 Paul calls Jesus "the *Lord* Jesus". Now we have already seen this term in Paul's letter, but have not yet commented on it. "Lord" is the English translation of the Greek term *kurios*. *Kurios* is important for two connotations it would have had for the original hearers. 1) In the Greek translation of the Old Testament that most early Christians, and many Jews, would have read as their Scriptures, *kurios* was the term used for the Hebrew terms "Lord" (as in "Lord God") and the proper name Yahweh. So to call Jesus "Lord" is to call him both Yahweh and God. 2) *Kurios* was the title given to Caesar in the Roman Empire. So to call Jesus "Lord" was to call him Caesar and Emperor. In verses 19-20 Paul describes God's powerful work in Christ and its accomplishments on our behalf. He says that because of Christ there is an "immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe". Paul encourages the church with this knowledge, that they might trust God to work mightily on their behalf because he displayed his might in raising Jesus from the dead. He goes on to describe the authority granted to Christ by God in the resurrection: "he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but in the age to come." This passage and all the way through the end are the highlights with regard to this set of questions. You might pause here after verse 21 to let the previous verses sink in through discussion. What does it mean for Jesus to be *seated* at God's *right hand*? For one thing, the right hand in the Bible is the instrument of strength and authority. And kings deliver their judgments and rulings from their thrones while seated. What does it mean for Jesus to be seated and rule far above *all* rule and authority and power that is named anywhere on earth at any time in history? Can this be true? How should it encourage and change the church? Lastly, in verses 22-23 Paul writes of Jesus "And he [God] put all things under his [Jesus] feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all". This is an astounding statement. Try to unpack it together. In brief, Paul says that God has put everything in the universe under Jesus' victorious rule and that Jesus rules everything for the sake of his church! He also says that the though God fills everything in the universe with his own presence, the church is actually the fullness of God himself in Christ, and is Jesus' very own body. We are therefore, in light of the context, an extension not only of Jesus' presence but an extension of his authority in this world. He rules all things for the sake of the church, and he rules in and through and with the church.

**2. What does Paul pray may be given to the church? What exactly does he want them to see?**

Paul prays that the church may be given “a spirit of wisdom” and a spirit to which has been revealed “the knowledge of him [Christ]”. He prays that, because the church has had the eyes of our hearts enlightened to Jesus, we might know the hope that God has called us to; the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints; and the immeasurable greatness of God’s power in Jesus. The only grammatical difficulty here is in the clause that speaks of his inheritance. It’s debatable whether that phrase refers to knowing the richness of the fact that Jesus’ own inheritance is the saints, or whether it refers to the richness of the saints’ inheritance, which is in Jesus. Discuss the beauty of both possibilities. You should also discuss what it means specifically to have our eyes opened to “wisdom,” “knowledge of Jesus,” “hope,” and “the greatness of God’s power.” What exactly do we need to see here? How would such sight change us?

**3. What does it mean for you personally to be considered a part of this Christ’s body? In what areas should you see things differently in life or be changed by this knowledge?**

The fact that Paul calls the church Christ’s own body and his very fullness here on earth is one of the Biblical statements most loved and most meditated upon throughout church history. Just encourage the group to run with the picture, which is more than a mere metaphor: it has some “flesh” to it, if you will. What does it mean practically and theologically, especially in light of the prior context? What does it mean for you personally? How would a firm belief and practice--tied to the knowledge that we are together Christ’s own body on earth (as the head he is in Heaven)--change the way you think, pray, live? How should such knowledge change the church as a community?