

# The Divine Warrior

## Part I: The King

Ephesians 1:15 "For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints,

<sup>16</sup> I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,

<sup>17</sup> that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,

<sup>18</sup> having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

<sup>19</sup> and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might

<sup>20</sup> that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,

<sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

<sup>22</sup> And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,

<sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all."

(Eph 1:15-23)

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## Divine Warrior

THE FAMOUS SONG BEGINS,

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord

He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored  
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword  
Glory, Glory Hallelujah. His truth is marching on<sup>1</sup>

The song draws upon two memorable passages: Isaiah 63 and Revelation 19. Isaiah is a discussion between the watchman of Israel and the Divine Warrior:

“Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength?”

“It is I, speaking in righteousness, might to save,” comes the voice of I AM.

“Why is your apparel red, and your garments like his who treads in the winepress?”

“I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their lifeblood spattered on my garments and stained all my apparel. For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and my year of redemption had come” (Isa 63:1-4).

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<sup>1</sup> Julia Ward Howe, “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” *The Atlantic* 9/52 (1862): 10.

*The Divine Warrior.* This is a theme well known to Jews and Christians of the past from Moses to the Maccabees, from Constantine to the Crusaders. The entire Exodus is about this, as the LORD “fights” for his people against Egypt. It is perhaps best summed up by **Exodus 15:3**, “**Yahweh is a man of war. Yahweh is his Name.**”

Joshua once met his man and fell on his face to the earth and worshipped him after he told him, “**I am the commander of the army of the LORD. Now I have come**” (**Josh 5:14**). Balaam encountered him on the road when his donkey talked to him. It was the Angel of the LORD and he had a **drawn sword** in his hand (**Num 22:22-23**). David saw him about to destroy Jerusalem because of his own stupid sin (**1Ch 21:16**). He called him the “**hand of the LORD**” for he is the Right Hand of the Father in heaven.

But many, especially in modern “enlightened” times, see something insensitive and unrefined about a God who would fight against and destroy his enemies. Long ago, the heretic Marcion rejected the Old Testament “**partly because of its portrayal of YHWH as a warrior god.**”<sup>2</sup> Feminist scholars have said that such a violent deity cannot fit with

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<sup>2</sup> **Charlie Trimm**, “*YHWH Fights For Them*”: *The Divine Warrior in the Exodus Narrative*, *Gorgias Biblical Studies* 58 (Piscatawa, NJ: Gorgias, 2014), 2.

our modern sensibilities.<sup>3</sup> Some pacifist scholars have argued that the NT rejected this view of God.<sup>4</sup> And others from Thomas Jefferson to Richard Dawkins have said this is a main reason for their rejection of the biblical God entirely.<sup>5</sup>

The Psalms are especially important for helping us see something that atheists, deists, feminists, and pacifists like these do not comprehend. Psalms like **Ps 24, 29, 46, 47, 48, 68, 76, 98, and 110** are all **divine warrior psalms**. You could call them “**victory hymns**,”<sup>6</sup> as they celebrate great military achievements of Yahweh. At least two of them make their way into Ephesians and one of those is in our passage today (see **Ps 110:1; Eph 1:22** and **Ps 68:18; Eph 4:8**<sup>7</sup>). The thing of note in relation to those who reject this whole idea is that all of these appear in the immediate context of **explicit praise** or commands to praise the LORD. For example, in Psalm 98, a psalm sung by worshipers at the temple to celebrate the

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<sup>3</sup> For example Carol P. Christ, “Feminist Liberation Theology and Yahweh as Holy Warrior: An Analysis of Symbol,” in *Women’s Spirit Bonding*, ed. Janet Kalven and Mary I. Buckley (New York: Pilgrim, 1984), 202-12. Cited in Trimm.

<sup>4</sup> For example, C. S. Cowles, “The Case for Radical Discontinuity,” in *Show Them No Mercy: Four Views on God and Canaanite Genocide* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2003: 11-46. Cited in Trimm.

<sup>5</sup> See Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Mariner, 2006), 51.

<sup>6</sup> For example, **Tremper Longman III**, “Psalm 98: A Divine Warrior Victory Song,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 27:3 (1984): 290-307.

<sup>7</sup> **When we come to this passage, an article to reference is Dan Claire**, “The Gifts of the Divine Warrior in Ephesians 4:7-11,” The Catholic University of America, [https://www.academia.edu/34296738/The\\_Gifts\\_Of\\_The\\_Divine\\_Warrior\\_in\\_Ephesians\\_4\\_7-11](https://www.academia.edu/34296738/The_Gifts_Of_The_Divine_Warrior_in_Ephesians_4_7-11).

triumphant return of Yahweh from battle,<sup>8</sup> you have a list of his conquests (Ps 98:1-3) followed immediately by an expanding community called to worship him—Israel, then the nations, then all of creation.<sup>9</sup> It is not doubt or anger that the Divine Warrior instills in his people, *but worship*. Unbelievers can't fathom that.

Many of these songs follow a kind of stock pattern of elements such as stated **conflict**, a **victory** and/or **victory shout**, divine **kingship**, divine **house-building**, and a **celebration**.

Ps 29:	Conflict	Victory/shout	Kingship	House-building	Celebration	Blessing
Ps 68:	Conflict	Victory	Kingship	Procession	House-building	Celebration
Ps 110:	Conflict	Victory	Kingship	Housebuilding	Celebration	

In fact, this pattern was followed around the ancient world when they likewise told stories of victories of their gods and then praised them accordingly.<sup>10</sup>

Baal Cycle 1:	Threat	Conflict	Victory	Kingship	House-building	Celebration
Baal Cycle 2:	Threat	Conflict	Victory	Kingship		
Enuma Elish:	Threat	Conflict	Victory	Kingship	House-building	Celebration

<sup>8</sup> See Longman.

<sup>9</sup> Timothy Gombis, "The Triumph of God in Christ: Divine Warfare in the Argument of Ephesians," a Dissertation at the University of St. Andrews, 2005, 53-54. <https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/10023/2321/TimothyGombisPhDthesis.pdf?sequence=6&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>10</sup> These charts are summaries of the analysis of Gombis, pp. 9-34.

Why should any of this matter in to our study of Ephesians? For this reason. While in one sense we have seen that this letter is very symmetrical in terms of its division into theology and application, in another sense this letter has remained a bit of an enigma. We have noted how the opening has this amazing [sentence](#) that is not only unrivaled to anything in terms of length anywhere in the ancient world, but its content is unlike anything else we find in the letters of Paul. After its standard greeting, this so-called *barakah* or “praise cry” elevates us to heights that are seldom seen, even in God’s word. Why would Paul begin with such a long praise-cry?

Curiously, after this he immediately launches into [a prayer](#) for the Ephesians. This takes us into the passage [today](#). This prayer reiterates things he has just said about the Spirit ([17](#)), our glorious inheritance ([18](#)), and the immeasurable greatness of God’s power ([19](#)). Why would he do that? We will see that it is a prayer that they, and we, will truly come to know these things in an [intimate, personal way](#). How?

That takes place in the next part. This prayer is followed by **the thesis** of the letter (**vv. 20-23**).<sup>11</sup> We all learned early on in writing essays that you have to have a purpose statement that explains what you are going to write about. Paul's thesis is a very special understanding of the work of Christ which he previously had told us is the key to knowing the mystery of his will (9) which is only unlocked in knowing and believing the work of Jesus Christ as God became a man. This mystery, he said, somehow deals with all things, both in heaven and on earth, being “**summed up**” (the ESV's “unite”) in Christ (10). The content of the thesis, and thus the content of the rest of the letter, will thus in all ways teach you about what this means.

There are two things I want you to see here. One is a general point about the relationship of this prayer to the thesis. The other is the more specific content of that thesis. First, the **general**. What we will see is that through the powerful working of God's Spirit in the lives of his people, the Lord will answer his prayer if—and *only if*—they hear and *under-*

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<sup>11</sup> **Gombis** notes that vs. 19's “The working of his great might” is restated again in 6:10, thus “**forming an *inclusio* that sets the limits within which the argument of the letter is found.**” (56). In other words, this demonstrates that this is, in fact, the thesis of the letter.

*stand* the thesis (which, of course, the rest of the letter is going to unfold).<sup>12</sup> Thus, the letter becomes Holy Scripture itself, the very means of grace through which God's people are changed from the inside out.

Second, the **specific**. The enigma of this letter's structure is that it is not apparent where or how he transitions from a basic introduction to more general theology. While his content is certainly profound, it almost seems like it is a rather aimless rambling of majestic truths with no real argument present. This is solved by understanding that the thesis sets you up for perhaps the most unique Divine Warrior Epic in the Scripture. This is not a normal letter! If this is true, then it means that viewing Jesus Christ as a divine warrior is the key in this letter to having this prayer answered in your own life. We will not be able to see this all in our passage today, but it is important to state the point up front, so that you will be on the lookout for it.

What many commentators have failed to grasp is that Paul is following the same basic pattern of the divine warrior

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<sup>12</sup> This point can be made another way. When viewing the entire letter as a chiasm, some have seen this same point come to the forefront in the chiasm's center (Eph 3:10) which parallels the thesis. For example, **Christine Miller**, "Book of Ephesians Chiastic Structure," *A Little Perspective* (Aug 20, 2013), <http://www.alittleperspective.com/book-of-ephesians-chiastic-structure/>

psalms and stories by carefully including the main elements that are always found in them:

Lordship/Kingship (1:20-23)  
Threat #1 (2:1-3)  
Triumph #1 (2:4-6)  
Purpose of God in His Triumph (2:7-10)  
Threat #2 (2:11-12)  
Triumph #2 (2:13-16)  
Victory Shout (2:17)  
Celebration (2:18)  
House-building (2:20-22)<sup>13</sup>

With the thesis as the first stage, Paul develops “a tightly woven argument” of divine warfare of the Divine Warrior through the first two chapters.<sup>14</sup> I believe he is doing this primarily as a positive subversion in this, the capital of Asia Minor with its major worship of the gods, particularly Artemis.<sup>15</sup> There is a spiritual battle going on and Paul wants the Christians of Asia Minor to know, despite all they might

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<sup>13</sup> This is all from Gombis' study.

<sup>14</sup> Gombis, 52.

<sup>15</sup> Michael Immendorfer, *Ephesians and Artemis: The Cult of the Great Goddess of Ephesus as the Epistle's Context*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 436 (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

see around them, that the victory is secure because Jesus Christ has already conquered.<sup>16</sup>

## Paul's Prayer for Enlightenment (1:15-19)

As the Apostle concludes his majestic sentence, he is immediately moved by the Spirit to pray for these saints. He explains himself. “For this reason,” he says. The Triune God has worked this great work—the Father predestining, the Son procuring, and the Spirit applying salvation to many people. This includes the Ephesian Christians. “For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints” (Eph 1:15).

Here, some have seen a problem. “I have heard of your faith” clearly indicates an author who is not familiar with the recipients (see also 3:2-3; 4:21). But this does not prove that Paul did not write the letter. When we remember that the words “in Ephesus” from vs. 1 were added later, then the idea that this was a letter that “circulated in the Lycus valley before eventually finding its way to Ephesus ... is perfectly

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<sup>16</sup> To be deleted later: Gombis will discuss this, but this note is a reminder that the section where Paul a “prisoner” (3:1ff) is directly related to this point.

understandable.”<sup>17</sup> Paul obviously was not familiar with everyone who received the letter, and thus would not have pretended to know them, even if he did know the Christians in Ephesus.

The point here though is that these people are in fact Christians who clearly believe in Christ. This is not bare knowledge of Christ, but personal faith in him. They also have love for all the Christians. Not some of the Christians. Not those who are lovable to them personally. All of them. That’s what Christians do! The Puritan James Fergusson called the graces of faith in Christ and love to the saints “the two legs of a Christian,” where if one is dead and withered he cannot walk.<sup>18</sup> So have faith in God and love your all Christians and let it be known to all the world.

Because of these things Paul says, “I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers” (Eph 1:16). The Apostle praises God who is the source of salvation because clearly, he is at work in the salvation of people beyond the reach even of the Apostle. But he also prays for them. We are not left wondering about the content of his

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<sup>17</sup> Ben Witherington III, *The Letters to Philemon, the Colossians, and the Ephesians : A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on the Captivity Epistles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 240.

<sup>18</sup> James Fergusson (1621-1667), *A Brief Exposition of the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians* (London: Printed for the Company of Stationers, 1659), 51.

prayer, and what he asks should be the heart's cry of every pastor and elder who have been entrusted with the care of the souls of a local congregation.

He prays for **two things**. He prays first that **a triune spirit of wisdom and revelation (17-18a)** be granted. That is, he prays they would come to *know* something. Second, he fills that content of knowing with **three things (18b-19)**. Let's look at both.

## *Spirit of Wisdom*

*A triune spirit.* “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of...” (17a). The **Son** of the **Father** gives the **Spirit**. We have just seen that the Holy Spirit is given to believers as a deposit of our inheritance. This is the same Spirit. We know this because Paul is clearly referring back to Isaiah. “And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD” (Isa 11:2). So, when he prays for God to “give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him” (17b), he is praying for God's Holy Spirit to grant wisdom and understanding, just

as he did for Christ. As **Sam Storms** says, “This is good news indeed! The same Spirit who anointed the Lord Jesus Christ and empowered him with wisdom and understanding and knowledge [will anoint] us.”<sup>19</sup>

You have to understand that **the mysteries** of Christianity are understood first in Christ. For this is the “**knowledge of him**.” But second, they are understood only when the Holy Spirit illumines a darkened mind with the truth about Christ. They are not gained by clever reason or logical philosophizing about the unknown mysteries of the secret things of God. **Calvin** says, “The gifts of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation are not endowments of nature ... Until we have been taught by the Spirit, everything we know is folly and ignorance. Until the Spirit of God makes it clear to us by an inner revelation, the knowledge of our divine election is beyond the understanding of our minds.”

Inner revelation is gained through outer revelation (*apokalupsis*), that is the unfolding of understanding through the “**word of truth**” (1:13), especially the gospel of Jesus Christ. This includes things done publicly and plainly and openly in ancient times as well as things revealed about God’s plans. Both are revealed through the Holy Scripture.

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<sup>19</sup> **Sam Storms**, *Biblical Studies: Colossians* (Edmond, OK: Sam Storms, 2016), Col 1:9b.

To the person who genuinely comes to God's word desiring to know what he says rather than what they want him to say, God will grant this gift. That is why the Apostle prays as he does. He is certain of the outcome. Are you?

### *Knowledge of Three Things*

God is pleased to do this because he wants people to know some very specific things. Here, it is **three things**. The **first** is “**the hope to which he has called you.**” We who “**hope in Christ**” (12) are called to **a future hope**. Who hopes for what he already sees (**Rom 8:24**)? But our hope is set forward in the opening praise-cry as being called **sons of God** who have a glorious future inheritance (**Eph 1:5, 11**; cf. **Rom 8:23**) that no eye has seen, nor ear has heard (**1Co 2:9**). While we partake of heavenly spiritual blessings now, it is our glorious hope that yet awaits us all. As Ambrosiaster said, “**The hope of [our] faith lies in a heavenly reward**” (**Ambrosiaster**, *Epistle to the Ephesians* 1.18.1). This is what we are called to, by the Holy Spirit, when he effectually calls us as sons and daughters of the heavenly Father. And if he has called us to it, then it is certain that it is real.

The opposite of hope is **despair** and pessimism about the future. Far too many Christians act in this life as if they despair of the next. But when you live your life single-mindedly focused on your heavenly reward, suddenly that which you fixate on in this life changes. With it, your mood and disposition in this life changes too. For who can live their life anticipating their heavenly reward and be full of doom and gloom when God has already so greatly blessed in the heavenlies? This is why the prayer follows the praise.

When you know this, then “**the eyes of your hearts are enlightened**” (18a). The **heart** is the seat of the emotions, the center of your faith. When their hearts were downcast after the crucifixion, the Lord Jesus told them, “**O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe...**” (Luke 24:25). The Apostle says if you “**believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved**” (Rom 10:9). What joy should fill your heart because of these things?

But this is only the first. The **second** is “**the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.**” Do not miss what this is saying or its importance. In the OT, it was *Israel itself* that was called the LORD’s inheritance. The created sons of God received other nations as their inheritance (Deut 32:8). The Son of God received Israel as his (Deut 32:9). “**They are your**

people, your inheritance that you brought out by your great power and your outstretched arm” (Deut 9:29 NIV). But the promise was the Son would one day inherit *the nations* (Ps 2:8, 82:8). This is what Paul is speaking of now. It is not that you will know of *your own* glorious inheritance in heaven. That was the hope of the previous request. Rather, it is that “Paul wants his readers to know how deeply God values and cherishes [Christians]. They are God’s incredibly valuable and glorious inheritance.”<sup>20</sup> It is a staggering thought to think that Jesus won his own inheritance *and it is us!* Since this is true, then how can one Christian despise himself or another? That goes right back to love for all the saints.

The final thing he prays we will know is “the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe” (Eph 1:19) “as displayed in the exercise of his immense strength” (New English Translation).<sup>21</sup> This returns to the entire order of salvation (*ordo salutis*) that was unfolded in the praise-cry: predestination, redemption, effectual calling, etc.). Hear the superlatives: “Immeasurable greatness,” “great might.”

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<sup>20</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 109.

<sup>21</sup> I quote the NET here because it ends vs. 19 with a period and begins vs. 20 as a new sentence, which makes better sense to me of the move from prayer to thesis.

Clinton Arnold, who has spent decades studying the supernatural surroundings of Ephesus suggests that Paul chose the rare words *huperballō* and *megethos* (immeasurable greatness) “to communicate especially to those converted from magic in Asia Minor.”<sup>22</sup> He also uses the word *dunamis* (“power”) which is deliberately contrasted with the “powers” of vs. 21.

What is the power doing? It is saving us from the wicked fallen forces of hell! But look at this power! Spurgeon, looking ahead to the next verse says, “See how high Christ is raised! The same power that brought Christ from the dead, and set him on high, works in the salvation of every believer. Nothing less than omnipotence can save a soul; and omnipotence at its very best in the glorification of Christ is none too great for the salvation of a sinner.”<sup>23</sup> Calvin said,

The wonderful power of God is displayed when we are brought from death to life, when we are changed from being children of hell to being children of God and heirs of eternal life. Foolish people think that all this is hyperbole, but believers who struggle daily in their consciences know just how true it is. Paul wants the Ephesians to contemplate the

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<sup>22</sup> Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 72-73.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Spurgeon, Ephesians 1:18-21 in “Spurgeon’s Verse Expositions of the Bible,” *StudyLight.org*, <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/spe/ephesians-1.html>.

power of God so that they will not be discouraged by their own weaknesses. Their regeneration was his work, after all, and in it he had already displayed his infinite power.

So this is the prayer of the Apostle for these Christians living in and near Ephesus. It is a prayer for God to act as only God can, sending his Spirit in a special way to enlighten our hearts so that we might truly know in the inward man about the hope of calling, the inheritance of the Son, and the power of God in our salvation. Because when you know these things, when you truly know them, everything in your world changes.

## **Paul's Point of Enlightenment (1:20-23)**

In this light, this prayer is connected directly to the thesis which comes now in **vv. 20-23**. The ESV shows you the connection by ending **vs. 19** with no punctuation (unlike something like the NET, see n. 19). “... and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might <sup>20</sup> *that he worked*

*in Christ ...*”<sup>24</sup> What he is about ready to tell you is **the mystery itself**, the very words through which the prayer will be answered. But until you hear **vv. 20-23**, there can be no answer to this prayer. For God does not work in such ways apart from proclamation of the Gospel. And what a Gospel it is!

**Vv. 20-23** are, in a sense, a specific working-out of vs. **19’s** “**immeasurable greatness of his power toward us.**” They describe **four things** that happened to Christ, and because they happened to him, they also happen to his adopted brothers and sisters who are “in him.” What are they? They are:

1. His resurrection from the dead (**20a**)
2. His seat at the right hand in heavenly places (**20b-21**)
3. The subjection of all things under his feet (**22a**)
4. His being head over all things to the church (**22b-23**).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Scholars will tell us that vv. 15-23 are also one long sentence in Greek (cf. **Thomas B. Slater**, *Ephesians*, ed. R. Alan Culpepper, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary [Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Inc., 2012], 47; *The Greek New Testament: SBL Edition*). However, *The Nestle Greek New Testament* puts a period after vs. 19, so the point is obviously debated.

<sup>25</sup> It should be noted, so that you can compare the similarities, that this is “**a poetic reworking of the first chapter of Colossians.**” **Lewis R. Donelson**, *Colossians, Ephesians, First and Second Timothy, and Titus*, ed. Patrick D. Miller and David L. Bartlett, Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 67.

## *Resurrection from the Dead*

Grasping the surpassing greatness of God does not come by thinking about yourself, but by looking outward. This is “the working of his great might that he worked in Christ” (19-20). What happened to Christ? First, “he raised him from the dead.” What can be said about the resurrection? It is the unique event in all history. Not because no one was ever raised from the dead before, there are other resurrections in the Bible.<sup>26</sup> What makes this unique is several things. First, it was promised throughout the OT. After being killed for our iniquities, “he shall prolong his days” and after death sees the light (Isa 53:10-11). He would not be abandoned in Sheol and he would not see bodily corruption (Ps 16:10). He was rescued from the lion’s mouth (Ps 22:19-24).

Second, Jesus predicted his own death and resurrection, several times (Matt 16:21; 17:9; Mark 8:31; 9:9-10; etc.). Importantly, he says that he himself would raise it up (John 2:19; 10:17-18). No one else has ever raised himself from the dead. Since he has this power, then what a power it is! It is the power of Life itself.

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<sup>26</sup> Zarephath’s widows’ son (1Kg 17:17-24); Shunamite’s son (2Kg 4:20-37); man tossed into Elisha’s tomb (2Kg 13:21); Widow of Nain’s son (Luke 7:11-17); Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5:35-43); Lazarus (John 11:1-44); Tabitha (Acts 9:36-41); Eutychus (Acts 20:7-12).

Third, he was dead for **three days**. I've known more than one person personally who told me they were dead and went somewhere in the afterlife. One said he went to hell. Another said she was going up but came back down. None of them were dead for three days. This is a normal biological impossibility.

Fourth, this singular event **turned the world upside down**. Suddenly, the cowardly Apostles were all willing to die for their faith, all because they saw the resurrected Lord Jesus. And die for it they did, almost all ending up as martyrs from the western outskirts of the Roman Empire to India. To believe what they saw with their own eyes and touched with their own hands is to begin to grasp the immeasurable power of God. To deny it is to remain in utter darkness or sin and slavery and death.

### *Seated at the Right Hand in Heavenly Places*

The **second thing** is that immediately after this, God **seated Christ at his right hand in the heavenly places (20b)**. This is the second of the five important “heavenly places” references in the letter. This refers to Jesus’ **bodily ascension** just prior to Pentecost. He told them he would go away, and

he ascended upward into the clouds. The ascension is, in my opinion, the unknown power of God by today's Christians. And this when one scholar says that “the enthronement of Christ is the central and determining Christological theme in Ephesians.”<sup>27</sup> We know the power of his death. We see the power of his resurrection. But we barely comprehend the point of the ascension. This is due, in part, because we have become functional naturalists. The supernatural has very little place in our theology.

Most think he ascended just so he can prepare a place for us (**John 14:2**). But the ascension is where Jesus Christ is crowned as king ... *of heaven*. Look at what it says: “seated at the right hand.” The right-hand is military language of the divine warrior. “Your right hand, O LORD, glorious in power, your right hand, O LORD, shatters the enemy” (**Ex 15:6**). This is Moses’ “man of war” from earlier. Jesus speaks of his being seated “at the right hand of Power” and coming with the clouds of heaven (**Mark 14:62**). This is warfare language of the Second Coming.

This particular language may very well come from **Psalm 110:1**. “Yahweh (The LORD) says to my Adonai

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<sup>27</sup> Erwin Penner, “The Enthronement of Christ in Ephesians,” *Direction* 12.3 (1983): 12-19.

(Lord): ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’ “Lord” is language of a king. And when he comes on the clouds of heaven, he is coming in dominion and glory and to bring his kingdom (**Dan 7:13-14**).<sup>28</sup>

### *He Put All Things Under His Feet*

Psalm 110 is also directly related to the **third thing** which is that **“he put all things under his feet”** (**Eph 1:22a**). This is the point of making his enemies his **“footstool.”** In fact, scholars have argued that the entire movement of Psalm 110 is echoed precisely by **Ephesians 1:20-23** and its unfolding in Ephesians 2.<sup>29</sup>

In that Psalm, it is both human *and non-human* enemies that rival the throne which “David’s Lord” subdues. The end of the Psalm speaks of very earthly “kings” being destroyed (**Ps 110:5-6**). But the verses with **“enemies”** is taken by **Hebrews 10:12ff** as referring to heavenly beings.<sup>30</sup> The

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<sup>28</sup> He is also drawing upon **Psalm 8:6** where God has granted man dominion over all things.

<sup>29</sup> **Gombis**, 56.

<sup>30</sup> One thinks of its similarities to **1Co 2:8** for example. **Thorsten Moritz**, *A Profound Mystery: The Use of the Old Testament in Ephesians* (New York: Brill, 1996), 13. Besides this passage, he also has sections on Isaiah in Eph 2:13-17; Psalm 68:18 and Eph 4:8-10; ethics of Eph 4:25-30; Eph 5:14; Gen 2:24 and Eph 5:31; the Fifth Commandment and Eph 6:2-3; and Isaiah and Eph 6:10, 14-17.

**Thorsten** makes the interesting observation **“Ps 110 and Dan 7:9-27 are the only OT texts to combine the following elements: thrones (plural) are placed in the heavenly court, with God**

point is, it is *all* his enemies. All things have been put under his feet. Would this not be good news to someone living under the paganism of Artemis? Is it not good news in days of ever advancing Marxism or totalitarianism or paganism in the West today?

Going back for a moment, we see that all things under his feet sums up his enthroned position “far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above ever name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come” (Eph 1:21). We need to understand what is being said here. First, this is a present reality, not a future one. It is presently true in heaven.

Second, it names four or five groups: rule, authority, power, dominion, and name. The NT refers time and again to rulers/princes (*archōns*), principalities (*archē*), stars (*aster*), powers (*dunamis*), authorities (*exousia*), lords (*kurios*), dominions (*kuriotes*), names (*onama*), spiritual forces (*pneumatikos*), elemental spirits (*stoicheia*), gods (*theos*), thrones (*thronos*), as well as the catch-all word angels (*aggelos*), all of which were

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sitting on one of them; The son is invited and brought before God and receives authority, glory and reign; judgment is passed on the kingdoms of the nations; the enemies are being destroyed; the resulting kingdom lasts eternally. Rabbi Akiba thought that the second throne in Dan 7 is meant for the Davidic messiah (San 38b). In any case, Dan 7 may be the earliest interpretation of Ps 110. This would suggest that the Psalm was understood as referring to heaven long before Christianity arrived.” P. 16, n. 34.

created by God for his glory.<sup>31</sup> In this passage we have the *arche, exousia, dunamis, kuriotes, and onama*.

You can probably hear in the English translations that these words connote **functions**. Someone is able to rule and have dominion. Someone has authority and power and is therefore a leader. The term “name” signifies the **power** behind them, even as names tell you about a person: Jesus = Yah Saves; Abraham = Father of Many Nations; etc. This may be a fifth group (as Jesus is called “the Name”) or it may be a way of summarizing whatever powers or principalities there are. But clearly these are “**personal, spiritual (or supernatural), and evil powers,**”<sup>32</sup> especially when you consider that later on in the letter, Paul names the **devil!**<sup>33</sup>

This is relevant to the great **superstition and magic in Ephesus**, as the naming of names was foundational to magic. “**Invoking them was the means for harnessing the power and**

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<sup>31</sup> See Matt 9:34, 12:24; Mark 3:22, 13:25; Luke 11:15; John 6:11; Rom 8:38; 1 Cor 8:5, 15:24; 2 Cor 4:4; Gal 4:3, 9; Eph 1:21, 2:2; 3:10; 6:12; Php 2:9; Col 1:16, 2:8, 10, 15, 20; 1 Pet 3:22. For a look at some of these passages see **Michael Heiser**, “The Divine Council in the New Testament: the ARCHONS,” 30-34; **Heiser**, “The *stoicheial* ‘Elements’ or ‘Elemental Spirits,’” *Behind the Façade* vol. 3, no. 10 (March 2005), 36-43. OT counterparts include gods (*elohim*), sons of God (*beney ha-elohim*), holy ones (*qadoshim*), spirits/winds (*ruchot*), hosts (*tsabot*), angels (*malakim*).

<sup>32</sup> **M. Jeff Brannon**, “‘The Heavens’ in Ephesians: A Lexical, Exegetical, and Conceptual Analysis,” A Dissertation at the University of Edinburgh, 2010, 133-34. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/280106.pdf>.

<sup>33</sup> See the good note in Moritz, p. 19 n. 55. Also Brannon’s notes 25-27 on p. 134.

service of the begins represented by their appellations.”<sup>34</sup> It is important that you know what is being claimed here. The point is that Jesus has the name above every name. Alan Segal explains that this is right out of OT prophecies of the second Yahweh. “Many ‘two powers’ themes have come together. Jesus is raised from the dead and enthroned as Christ far above the status of any man or angel. He is sovereign in this age and the age to come, a claim explicitly reserved for God according to rabbinic tradition. Furthermore, Christ has been exalted beyond any title that can be named, implying that he has been awarded the secret name of God.”<sup>35</sup>

Again, who are they? It talks about “all” rule and “every” name. As we’ve seen even in Psalm 110, sometimes they refer to human rulers (cf. Luke 12:11; Titus 3:1). But more often, they refer to heavenly beings. The *Testament of Abraham* 13:10 illustrates this: “And death said to Abraham, ‘I tell you, in all the creation which God created, there is not to be found one like you. For he searched among the angels and archangels, and principalities and powers (*archai kai exousia*).”<sup>36</sup> In Ephesians, Paul makes it very clear that our

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<sup>34</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 114.

<sup>35</sup> Alan Segal, *Two Powers In Heaven* (Boston: Brill, 2002, originally 1977), 212.

<sup>36</sup> Brannon argues that “Paul also draws upon the theme of the king’s reign over his enemies in Psalm 110:2 when he writes about these supernatural powers in this verse. Brannon, 133.

struggle is not against flesh and blood, and then he uses these terms again, meaning that he has in mind primarily fallen heavenly beings. What's particularly interesting is that these rulers and authorities appear together in the LXX in only one verse (see below). It comes on the heels of the Messianic passage of the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven to take his kingdom before the presence of the divine council, right after a prophecy of ten horns, which represent ten kingdoms and their heavenly rulers.

It then designates “**this age**” and also “**the one to come.**” “**In this way, Paul assures his readers that there will never be a time when any demonic being, spirit, or so-called ‘god’ or ‘goddess’ in any way will threaten or rival the supremacy of Christ.**”<sup>37</sup>

### *Head Over All Things to the Church*

The Daniel 7 passage is important. It says, “**But the judgment shall be set, and they shall destroy his authority/rule to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and the authority, and the greatness, and the rule of the**

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<sup>37</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 114.

kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High: his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all authorities/rulers shall serve and obey him” (Dan 7:26-27 LXX and Theodotian).<sup>38</sup> In this, you can hear almost exactly the **fourth point**: God gave Christ “as head over all things to the church” (Eph 1:22).

The meaning of this and how it is basically the same thing as Daniel is seen in the last verse where the church “is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all” (Eph 1:23). The idea of Christ as the head and the church as the body is a classical Pauline analogy for our life in Christ which is developed later in Ephesians (4:15; 5:23). **Bodies** have their life in the **head**. It leads them. It rules them.

What the analogy does, then, is shows you that what belongs to Christ now belongs to you! This is the great mystery, which you **will see for example** in Eph 2:6 where now we are seated in the heavenlies because Christ is! This is what the Gospel teaches when you understand what it means to be “in Christ.” Lightfoot says, “**All the Divine graces which reside in Him are imparted to her; His ‘fulness’ is communicated to her: and thus she may be said to be His [fulness] *pleroma* (1:23).** This is the ideal Church. The actual militant

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<sup>38</sup> See Johnson, *Dissertation*, 198.

Church must be ever advancing, ever struggling towards the attainment of this ideal.”<sup>39</sup>

We really have only just scratched the surface. But thankfully, **he will return** to many of these ideas later on in the letter. As I’ve said, this is the thesis of Ephesians. What you need to be confronted with now is you are being shown a power of immense, staggering proportions. This power has **even now cast down the heavenly rulers** and he is sovereign over all earthly kings and despots. All of them. Nothing can thwart the rule of King Jesus; he is seated even at the right hand of God in heaven.

This must give you **comfort** when days are dark. It might lead you to **wonder** how the days could be so dark if it is true. Yet, what we have just said about the church militant taking hold of these things until Christ returns is the key. It is the church through the gospel that subdues the enemies of God. There is no other way to do it. Any other power is impotent against them. But this power is otherworldly. It shuts the mouths of kings and stops the hands of devils. With it, God is saving many people and through it he is showing the world a little of what they are missing when

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<sup>39</sup> **Joseph Barber Lightfoot**, *Saint Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, 8th ed., Classic Commentaries on the Greek New Testament (London; New York: Macmillan and Co., 1886), 261.

God's people have faith in Christ and have love for all the saints.

My prayer is that you would understand that this divine warfare, this Great Warrior, and his great victory is first, real. It has happened. He has done it. On this, Palm Sunday, it was celebrated, and the people didn't even realize it. Second, it is invisible to human senses. It was through the cross, descent, resurrection, and ascension that these things happened. But this message is foolishness and a stumbling block to those who have no faith. But to us who believe, it is the very power of God, the very same power that raised Jesus from the dead. And since this is so, leave this place with confidence in faith and anxiety to love one another more. And all the more as you see the day of his Coming approaching.

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