

A Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation

By Linda Rex

May 12, 2024, Ascension Sunday / Easter—This Sunday, as we reach the end of the Easter season, we pause to consider the ascension of Jesus Christ. This often overlooked celebration is actually an important part of the Christian calendar. Jesus Christ did not just rise from the grave, bringing all of humanity through death into resurrection. He also ascended, to be seated at the Father's right hand in glory in the fellowship of the Spirit.

Apart from the ascension, our human flesh would not have been brought home with the resurrected Jesus into face to face union with his Father in the Spirit. Apart from Jesus' ascension, we would not have been sent the gift of the Holy Spirit sent from his Father. It is the Spirit through whom Jesus and his Father come to dwell in each of us. By faith, the Spirit makes our very own what Jesus has forged for us all in his life, death, resurrection, and ascension. And the coming of the Spirit is what we celebrate on Pentecost, which will be next Sunday, May 19th.

The apostle Paul, in our New Testament reading for Ascension Sunday, records how he constantly prays for the church members in the various congregations to whom this circular letter was sent. Paul is very grateful to God for their faith in the Lord Jesus. The apostle's most urgent plea is for those hearing the letter to be given "a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him." The only way that any of us can come to know God, or come to understand his calling, his power, or his glory, is by God's Spirit giving us enlightenment. And Paul says that this is only possible because of the resurrection power which brought Jesus up from death at work in each of us by the Holy Spirit. As we pray for enlightenment, for ourselves or others, God begins to open our minds and hearts up to the truth.

Paul also acknowledges that whatever we may do as those gathering in Jesus' name, we do only as participants in Jesus' life with his Father in the Spirit. His heavenly Father has placed all things under Jesus' feet, and made him head of the church, which is made up of those who by faith are united with Jesus in his death and resurrection. Consider for a moment what it means that God in Christ is reigning over all.

Then consider even more deeply what it means that human flesh in Jesus Christ is reigning over all. The ramifications of this are mind-blowing. But isn't that the way God always meant it to be? From the beginning, God intended human beings to participate with him in reigning over all he had made. He gave humans the responsibility to tend the earth, to be stewards of all he had made. But we chose to go our own way and to follow the lead of the evil one, who ever stands in opposition to God and seeks to divide, destroy, ruin, and enslave at every point. The evil one, who does not submit to God's will and God's love, is ever drawing us to follow him and obey his will or our own self-will instead.

No matter how powerful or intense the evil one is, he cannot stand against what God has done for humankind in the person of Jesus Christ. In Jesus, now, human beings are united with God in a way where they will never be separated, ever. Jesus has and will forevermore, be fully human and fully God. We, as Paul says, are God's portion. We are God's inheritance. What God has done in the Lord Jesus Christ, he has done for each and every person, whether they know it or believe it or not. The gift has been purchased, wrapped and sent—will we leave it on the desk and never touch it? Will we push it away and refuse it? Or will we simply rip it open and begin to enjoy the benefits of this precious gift each and every moment of the rest of our life.

Moving our thoughts away from ourselves at this point is critical. Here we look at the example of Paul and his heart towards those who would hear the words in this circular letter. He was praying that they not only would receive the gift given, but that they would revel in it and be able to

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experience the full benefits of the gift they were given in Jesus Christ. As we go about our daily lives, who might we pray this prayer for? How might our life in relationship with family, friends, and community be different if we prayed this prayer over those we encounter day by day? As we ask the Lord for his enlightenment, his wisdom, and all the other things Paul mentions here, perhaps we might also ask the Lord to give us heart to pray for others that they too to be given the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.

As we pray this prayer over those God puts in our minds and hearts, we may discover ourselves swept up into what Jesus is doing in this world by the Spirit. And we may find ourselves held in the midst of the life and love of our Father and his Son in the Spirit. And we can rejoice, for that is where we were always meant to be.

Heavenly Father, thank you for all those you have brought to yourself, and those you have created for your glory. May your precious Spirit enlighten each and every person. May you draw each one closer to you and bring them to a deeper faith in your Son Jesus. May your perfect love enable us to see and experience the resurrection power of Jesus at work in us and in the lives of those near us and dear to us, in Jesus' name. Amen.

“For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might which He brought about in Christ, when 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 every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things in subjection under His 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.” Ephesians 1:15–23 NASB

“Now He said to them, ‘These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.’ And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He parted from them and was carried up into heaven. And they, after worshiping Him, returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising God.” Luke 24:44–53 NASB