

Ascension Sunday: Under His Feet – Eph 1:19-23

Introduction – Forty days after Jesus rose from the dead, He ascended to heaven, just as the Scriptures foretold. Acts 1:1-11 tells us of the disciples witnessing departure from earth. Daniel 7:13-14 had already given us a picture of what this would look like from the heavenly view. Paul instructs us that the power which raised Christ from the dead and seated Him in heaven is the exceeding power of God given “*toward us who believe.*” The church is the body of Christ, the manifestation of the power of Jesus’ rule over heaven and earth. In this way, we are to see all things “*under His feet.*” And then, we are to live like it.

The Son of Man and All Things under His Feet (Psalm 8:6) – Psalm 8 declares the glory of man’s humility before God and his exaltation over all of creation. The first Adam was given this cultural mandate but fell. The second Adam, Jesus Christ, ascended to that throne where He took His authoritative role over all heaven and earth.

Do We See All Things under His Feet? (Heb 2:5-9) – A common misunderstanding that Jesus is not Lord over the earth exists because we still see so much evil and rebellion in the world. Hebrew Christians in the first century were tempted in just this way – and tempted to fall away from Christ because of it. They were being persecuted and the church did not seem to have power over its enemies. They were exhorted to “*see Jesus,*” high and lifted up in the preaching of the gospel and by faith as they came to the New Jerusalem, even up into heaven, on the Lord’s Day worship services (Heb 12:22-24).

All Things Brought under His Feet (1 Cor 15:25-28) – We live in the age of Christ, having been established as King of kings over all; the Father brings forth that reign by bringing all things under submission to Christ (Psalm 110:1). The last enemy to be defeated is death which will be defeated when He comes again. His enemies are put down by the preaching of the gospel and the discipling of the nations, which is the fulfillment of the cultural mandate.

Knowledge of that Power of God (Eph 1:19-23) – We join Paul in the middle of his first prayer in his letter to the Ephesians. He prays that the church would know “*what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe...*” and uses all kinds of “*power*” words to express all that has been given to us. This is the same power that raised Jesus from the dead and set Him at God’s right hand. This power has set Christ “*far above*” all current and future authorities. That power exists now in the life of His body, for He is the fullness of the body “*who fills all in all.*”

Power Given – This is not a prayer for power. It is a prayer for knowledge of power already given. The only way anyone becomes a Christian is through this power; the only way anyone remains faithful to Christ is through this power. It is the powerful work of the Holy Spirit sent because Jesus has been enthroned with power at the Father’s right hand. The new birth grants every believer everything in Christ (2 Pet 1:3). It is a prayer for enlightenment for us to unleash that power as the church community, the body and bride of Christ, to the rest of the world. We don’t need power to evangelize; the gospel is that power (Rom 1:16). We don’t need power to endure suffering; that power exists in these earthen vessels (2 Cor 4:7). We don’t need additional power to obey God; that power is at work in us (Phil 2:12-13).

But notice, we all struggle with these things, just as did the Ephesians – that is why Paul is writing to them (and why this letter quickly circulated to all the churches). What we do need is this prayer to be answered – what we do need is the fresh revival of this knowledge that can only be given by the Holy Spirit.

Christ Unleashed – As individual members of the body of Christ, we have the gift of being able to unleash the work of Christ in us; this transforms the way we live (Gal 2:20). But the power must be exercised by faith and that faith is evidenced through our obedience to His commands. When we are obeying, it is evidence of our love of God and our union with Christ. Just one example: In Eph 5:28-30, Paul compares the relationship of husband and wife to Christ and His body. Remember, Christ was made head of all things for the sake of the church (Eph 1:22-23), “*which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*” This Head gave all He had for the sake of the church because it is His body. We do the same things with our own physical bodies – our head is constantly listening and making decisions for its body. We “*nourish and cherish (keep warm)*” our own bodies. This is what it looks like when Christ exercises authority over His bride; this is what it is to look like as husbands act with authority over theirs. It is a body-empowering authority.

Corporately, the church is seated with Christ (Eph 2:4) and every Lord’s Day we covenantally ascend to be with Christ in our worship service. As we pray for reformation and revival in the church and over the land, we are praying for His power, which is already given, to be understood, declared, and unleashed. This is why the vision for the church in this age should always be forward-looking and optimistic.