

# “Being God’s inheritance: Ephesians 1:18b”

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## Introduction

1. Last week we looked for the second time at this remarkable prayer that Paul prays for the believers in the church at Ephesus, in western Turkey. Craig focused our attention on the first part of v.18 in which Paul prays that God would help these guys fully understand the hope of their calling. Craig gave a one paragraph summary that is brilliant:

**“We are called to belong to the one people of God (who are also His family), who are reconciled to the Father, joined to Jesus, filled with His Spirit, growing together and revealing God to the world. We have the absolutely certain hope that we will rise from the dead, receive transformed and immortal bodies, live together with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the redeemed and renewed creation (new heavens and earth) and inherit everything God has promised. And this will come about at the sure and certain return of Christ!”**

2. In v.18-19, Paul then proceeds to pray for two additional things. First, he prays that God would help them/us comprehend:
  - the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy ones (v.18b), then
  - his incomparably great power for us who believe (v.19).
3. Today we are going to look at the first of these two requests: “the riches of his (God) glorious inheritance in the holy ones.”

## Exposition of 1:18b

**the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy ones,**

- lit.: “the riches of the glory of his inheritance in his holy ones”
- **riches**, *ploutos*, and **glory**, *doxa*, are frequently used together in the Greek OT to depict the wealth and honor of a king. A good example is 2 Chron 32:27:

“Hezekiah had very great riches and glory, and he made treasuries for his silver and gold.”

- In the NT, God applies this idea to his people, whom he has redeemed in Jesus Christ, and it an astonishing claim. Clint Arnold summarizes: “The point here is that Paul wants his readers to know how deeply God values and cherishes them. They are God’s incredibly valuable and glorious inheritance.” We need to let that sink in.
- To fully appreciate what Paul is referring to, we need to back up and get an overview of God’s creative purposes and how it is that we fit into his overarching cosmic plan. So today, we’ll look at some big picture stuff that will help you make sense, not just of this verse, but of the whole narrative trajectory of the bible. So, let’s look at the biblical drama of redemption as it unfolds in six acts.

## The drama of redemption in six acts

### Act 1. Eternity Past. Before creation

- The vibrant love and life within the Holy Trinity
- The creation of the heavenly family: the *elohim*. Before the creation of the material cosmos (Job 38:4-7), God created a large variety of spiritual (non-material) beings for different purposes and having different levels of authority and responsibility. Some of the names or ranks assigned to these beings are: angels, seraphim, cherubim, sons of God, watchers or “holy ones, rulers, authorities, powers, dominions, cosmic powers, thrones, and members of God’s divine council. These are known collectively as *elohim* (that is, heavenly beings or “gods”) or the “host of heaven”. They were created to rule the heavenly realm on God’s behalf.
- The decision to create an earthly family that would extend the reign of God in heaven to the earth (Psalm 8:3-6). The *elohim* would assist.
- **Eph 1:3-4: “Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. <sup>4</sup>For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless before Him.”**

### Act 2. The creation and fall of Adam and Eve

- The creation of humanity in God’s image (Gen 1:26-28: essence, resemblance)
- The command to “rule” the earth (Gen 1:26-28)
- The rebellion of *nacash* (serpent, Satan) and humanity (Gen 3:1-7)
- The preservation of some human goodness (Gen 4:26)
- The rebellion of some *elohim* and humans, creation of Nephilim (Gen 6:1-4)

- Gen 6:1-2, 4: “When human beings began to increase in number on the earth and daughters were born to them, <sup>2</sup>the sons of God saw that the daughters of humans were beautiful, and they married any of them they chose... The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—when the sons of God went to the daughters of humans and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown.”

### **Act 3. Reset: The choosing of Noah and his family**

- The rescue of one family from the flood (Gen 6:8-10)
- The command to “fill” the earth (Gen 9:1, 7)
- The rebellion of humans and the building of the Ziggurat at Babylon (Gen 11:1-9).
- The dispersal of the people and disinheritance of the nations (Gen 11:8-9)
- Deut 32:8: “When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God.”

### **Act 4. Reset: The choosing of Abraham and his family (Israel)**

- The calling of Abraham (Gen 12:1-3)
- The choosing of Isaac (Gen 26:23-24) and Jacob (Gen 28:13-15)
- The covenant with Israel (Deut 7:6) Deut 7:6: “For you are a people holy to Yahweh your God. Yahweh your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.”

### **Act 5. The choosing of the Church: God’s holy ones from all nations**

- The re-inheriting of the nations in Christ (Matt 28:19-20)
- The re-gathering of the nations at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-12)
- Eph 3:4-6: “In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, <sup>5</sup> which was not made known to people in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets. <sup>6</sup> This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”

### **Act 6. Eternity future: The families reunited forever**

- The rejoining of a renewed heaven and earth as in Eden (Rev 21:1-22:5) The reunion of God’s heavenly and earthly families (Heb 12:22-24; Rev 7:9-12)
- Rev 21:1-4: “Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup> I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his

people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup> ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

## Conclusion

- So, from eternity past God’s purpose was to create a lasting place where His celestial and terrestrial families would live together in mutual love, fellowship and joyful vocation as His inheritance.
- In the world to come, the “sons of God” in heaven and earth—human and divine—will serve together on a reconstituted and expanded divine council, ruling the “new heavens and earth”. The heavenly imagers and human imagers will thus become “one” under Christ. As Christians, we will reign with Jesus forever, reflecting His perfect nature, acting on his behalf and communing with Him and His Father in the Spirit.

## Recommended resources

- The Bible Project video series on “Spiritual Beings”:  
<https://bibleproject.com/explore/spiritual-beings/>
- Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (PDF):  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254783182\\_Dictionary\\_of\\_Deities\\_and\\_Demons\\_in\\_the\\_Bible](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254783182_Dictionary_of_Deities_and_Demons_in_the_Bible)
- Heiser, Michael. *Unseen Realm* (footnoted); *Supernatural* (distillation of *Unseen Realm*)
- Heiser, Michael. YouTube videos:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZKy1Xt2Ow0> (Part 1 of 4 hour long talks; there are many others on YouTube as well)