

“We Are Seated With Christ In Heaven.”

Ephesians 2:4-7 (ESV)

**4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,
5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—
6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,
7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.**

Thank you for inviting me again to worship and to learn from the Bible together.

Today’s title is ‘**We Are Seated With Christ In Heaven.**’ But if you hear this title, you might want to say, “O, it’s wrong. We are not in heaven now. When we die, Christians’ spirits go to heaven.” This comment is correct. But the Bible also teaches us, that ‘**We Are Seated With Christ In Heaven.**’

Now shall we pray and see the passage.

Prayer:

Dear Father, thank you that you saved us when we believed in Jesus as our Savior. And not only that our sins are forgiven, You seated us very close with Jesus. Please let us know how close You have put us with Jesus. Please open our eyes and help us to understand Your words. I pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

1. God Made Us Alive Together With Christ v4-5

Now let’s see Ephesians Chapter 2, verse 4.

Ephesians 2:4

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,

Because of His great love, what did God do? He allowed us that we can go to Heaven? Yes, it is true. But it is not mentioned here.

Because of His great love---

Ephesians 2:5

5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

“**We were dead in our trespasses.**” This means, before we believed in Jesus Christ, even though our bodies and minds were alive and very active, and we accomplished many things, still our spirits were dead. Now how does our spirit function? Our spirit is where we feel God and communicate with Him. If our spirit is dead, we cannot know God. We do not feel love or anything from God. This gap between God and us was brought about because of our trespasses or sins. When we believe in Jesus as our Savior and Lord, God makes us alive together with Christ.

Since Christ died for our sins, we were forgiven and so we will go to heaven. This is right! But what is

emphasized here is that God makes us alive together with Christ.

Many Christians agree that John 3:16 is the very summary of the whole Bible.

John 3:16

16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

So whoever believes in Jesus, has eternal life. Sometime Christians might say that “I am a Christian, so I will have eternal life when I go to heaven.” But this is not correct. This eternal life is the life of God and of Christ. God so loved us, so when we believe in Jesus, we have eternal life. We feel the love of God and feel God so close even if we are not yet in heaven.

Many people in the world might consider that all religions are somewhat the same. If Christ saves Christians, then Buddhism also saves their believers to their salvation. Is it true?

The largest Buddhist denomination in Japan is the Jodo-shinshu. They claim to have a membership of 15 million. The founder of Jodo-shinshu was Shinran who had his ministry in the 13th century. Shinran dedicated himself in Nembutsu or chanting ‘Namu-Amidabutsu.’ ‘Namu’ means ‘I rely on’ or ‘I trust in.’ ‘Amidabutsu’ means ‘Amitabha Buddha.’ So Namu-Amidabutsu means I rely on or I believe in Amitabha Buddha.

Shinran devoted himself in teaching people Nembutsu or chanting Namu-Amidabutsu for over 50 years.

Shinran’s words were recorded in a booklet called ‘Tannisho.’ Years ago, I was interested to know what Shinran actually taught. Then I was surprised at a passage. This is it.

Shinran’s words (‘Tannisho’, chapter 2)

“I really do not know whether the nembutsu may be the cause for my birth in the Pure Land, or the act that shall condemn me to hell.”

(cause for my birth in the Pure Land = cause for going to Paradise)

Here, Shinran confessed that he did not know if he could go to the Pure Land or Paradise.

Even though Shinran dedicated himself in teaching people to chant namu-amidabutsu to go to the Pure Land, he did not have a conviction that he could go there.

As a Christian I sometimes lead people to believe in Jesus. If a person believes in Jesus as the Savior and confesses so, as the Bible promises, the person is saved and has eternal life. So, right in this instance or within a few days, the person has the sense of having eternal life and is convinced they are saved. So, I do not have to persuade them that they have eternal life.

Ephesians 2:5

5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

In verse five, the emphasis is not ‘you will go to heaven’, but **(God) made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have (now) been saved—**

Now, go to Ephesians 2:6.

2. God Seated Us With Christ In Heaven v6-7

Ephesians 2:6

6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

‘(God) raised us up with him (Jesus).’

Jesus died on the cross and God raised Him up on the third day.

We were given eternal life of God when we believed in Jesus. This is what already happened for all Christians. But our bodies have not been dead so far, so our bodies could not have been raised up. This means that, God raised our spirits up with Christ’s eternal life, when we believed in Jesus.

and (God) seated us with him (Jesus) in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

This is also in the past tense. This is what God did for us when we believed in Jesus.

God seated us with Christ in Heaven.

Now we can have the image that every Christian is sitting together with Christ now. We can think of a larger chair or a small sofa where Jesus and I sit together. Every Christian is now sitting with Christ.

If we sit together for example with the Prime Minister, or with the Emperor or whoever of a very high ranking special people on a same chair, what might happen? By sitting so close, maybe the shoulders touch. We must be feeling the warmth, love and heart of the person sitting close by.

The Bible is saying that, this is the relation between Jesus and each of us.

An elderly Christian lady used to say, “I am glad because Jesus saved me. So I can well go to Heaven. But I will probably be sitting at a very corner of Heaven.” I think she thought of heaven, Jesus sitting right in the center and great, first class Christians are surrounding Him, and still the second class Christians encircle around. And I think she considered herself to be an ordinary, less significant Christian. So she placed herself far away from Jesus in Heaven.

There must be billions of Christians in heaven.

But the message of the Bible is that every Christian sits together with Jesus, now.

Ephesians 2:7

7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

So that in the coming ages

When are the coming ages? Paul wrote his letters in the first century. So the second century is a coming age. The third, fourth centuries, and the tenth and even now, the twenty-first century is a coming age. And it goes into eternity. So any time after Apostle Paul wrote it is a coming age.

he (God) might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

How does God show the immeasurable riches of his grace? In kindness toward us. In the personal relations between Jesus and us. Not in power or authority. But in the closeness with Jesus or oneness with Jesus. So by our feeling Jesus Himself directly and closely.

Every Christian sits with Christ and feels Christ so close always. By this the immeasurable riches of his grace reveals.

Jesus Himself shared the similar message with his disciples in a famous passage.

3. To know Christ Himself Matthew 11:28-30, 27

Matthew 11:28

28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Do you like this passage? It invites any one to have rest with Jesus. But I did not like it so much. I thought this might pamper and weaken a Christian. If we say, "Oh, Jesus, I am tired. Give me a rest." It seemed to be too easy an attitude. At school, for example, rather than easily escaping for school infirmary, staying at the classroom and keep learning is a better attitude to take, I thought. Christians should say, "I will stand firm to fight out for my responsibility, until I become really tired."

But Jesus says,
"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, I will give you rest."

Matthew 11:29

29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

What is a yoke?

A yoke is a wooden bar connecting two animals such as oxen, horses or donkeys together in order to pull something, a plow or a cart, for example.

"Take my yoke upon you."

We may want to say, "O, you said you will give me rest. But you put your yoke on me. It means you put half of your burden on me, I already have my own burdens?"

But Jesus says
"learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

Here, 'to take Jesus' yoke upon us,' means to trust Jesus that He would do it. Our taking Jesus' yoke on us, means our trusting Jesus, we are invited to let Jesus take our own responsibilities. By taking His yoke, He takes our responsibilities. We walk with Him. We can say, "Jesus, let me take your yoke and take all my responsibilities."

Matthew 11:30

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

I think I shared with you what happened to my daughter who works in Tokyo two years ago. She suffered from a rupture of her brain aneurysm, a knob on her blood vessel broke. So, she had bleeding in her brain. She was hospitalized and had the operation, opening a large part of her skull. On the day of her operation we went to the hospital. We waited. She had anaphylaxis shock to a

medicine used in the process. Her blood pressure dropped down. The operation was postponed to the next week. We went. The operation took more than ten hours. It was quite successful. The next day, her doctor made an inspection on my daughter's brain vessels. It showed another aneurysm. So, the next week another operation took place. It took more than nine hours. Again it was successful. Before each operation I had to go to the hospital to hear the explanation and sign the documents for approval three days earlier. Therefore I had to go to Tokyo eight times in a month and a half until she was discharged from the hospital.

During this time I was to preach every Sunday and to teach a class at our seminary every week. Usually these two would make my schedule almost full. But I never felt I had to work harder. I always thought that God would make me do whatever He wants me to do. So I did not have to worry. I simply trusted God that He would let me do these things.

In the meantime, my pastor friend asked me to officiate a wedding for an international couple in their church. The bridegroom was from India and the bride was a Japanese. We met for preparation. I made a bi-lingual program, officiated the wedding and gave a message in English and Japanese. In this process, to our surprise, the bride was led to be baptized. God accomplished what He wanted to do.

30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

This was exactly true. I did not know that God was so perfect in helping me, leading me, day to day, together to do everything He wants me to do.

I was a pastor in Hirakata for 35 years. Then after this, as a part-time pastor for a church in the north of Nagoya for seven years, until March this year. So I had been a pastor for 42 years. And this experience related with my daughter's operation took place just two years ago. I had long been a pastor trying to do my best or trying to attain certain things. Then, at last, for two years I am now learning to walk with Jesus.

Rather than trying to do our best, how peaceful it is to walk with Jesus, trusting that He would accomplish everything with me.

Let me mention one more thing that I learned very recently.

Let's see a verse just before the passage we just read,

Matthew 11:27

27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

I think this verse seems a little bit difficult.

Jesus has everything from the Father. And only the Father knows everything of Jesus. We humans know only a very little of God the Father. While Christ knows everything of the Father.

But, 'the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him (the Father)' knows the Father.

Now, who are, 'anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him,' God, the Father?

This must be us, the Christians.

So, Jesus and anyone to whom Jesus chooses to reveal him, Christians, know the Father. In other words, Christians can know the Father so well as the Son, Jesus, knows the Father. Also this verse leads us to say that Christians can know the Son, Jesus, so well as God, the Father, knows everything of Jesus.

In this verse, the word 'knows' is used twice. 'knows the Son' and 'knows the Father.'

‘knows’ (twice)

[ginôskô]	to know (in general, most frequently used)	×
[epiginôskô]	to know thoroughly, to know accurately	○
([epi] ‘on’, for emphasis)		

In the New Testament, the most frequently used word for ‘know’ is [ginôskô]. But in this verse, [epiginôskô] which means ‘know thoroughly’ or ‘know accurately’ is used for twice. It means, when Christ Jesus chooses us to reveal God, the Father, or to reveal Jesus Himself, we can know them thoroughly and accurately, in other words we can know God, the Father, and Jesus so closely and abundantly.

How can we know Jesus or the Father so well?

This, Jesus Himself explained in just following verses, 28, 29 and 30. We just saw these verses.

Let’s pray:

Dear Father, you will surely lead us, who believes in Jesus, to go to Heaven. But You have already seated us together to be so close with Jesus. And You always invite us to take Jesus’ yoke on us to be one with Him. You want us to reveal gentleness and lowliness of Jesus through us. Help us and lead us so that we can always be together and one with Jesus. In His name, Amen.