

A couple of months ago I mulled over Ephesians 2:6 as a puzzle: what does it mean to be “seated with him in the heavens?” That is past tense, an accomplished state of things now, not a future event.

In a typical Christian dualist way of approaching this, which is how I have seen it until recently, we have an idea that being seated with Jesus in the heavens means that, were we to have the right sort of spiritual “telescope” with which we could see across a flesh/spirit divide, we could look “out there somewhere”, usually imagined at some great distance, and see ourselves literally sitting down with him. Until I rethought this, it never applied to my life here and now; it applied to some future life “in heaven”. Perhaps not all see it that way; I certainly did, as do those with whom I have discussed this.

Yet, if we understand the centrality of Incarnation and Resurrection as happening here, on the earth, that God became human and will never lose that nature, that at the resurrection we will be like him as he already is now on a new heaven and new earth, how we might understand this verse changes remarkably. I think there is reason to consider that we are already seated with him in the heavens, here and now in our present existence, in a different modality of existence that is integral to our present lives on the earth.

What do I mean by “modality of existence”? I mean simply a different form of existence which we are already living now, which began when we received the Holy Spirit as a seal of the promise yet to be fulfilled; with the Spirit living in us we live in multiple “dimensions” or “modalities” at once, though we perceive them but dimly. We are already living our new lives by the Spirit here and now, not in a different spiritual place or time, not out there somewhere, but seated already with Jesus in the heavens, now, here, as I type this. This sounds strange even to me now, as we don’t perceive ourselves that way.

This gives a new dimension to Ephesians 2:10, that we are created in Christ Jesus for good works. That is not later, or somewhere else; that is now, and here, as the manifestation of our new modality of existence, our new lives, which are yet to be fulfilled. I think this is the task of the church, to begin living by the ethics of the Kingdom here and now as evidence of that new life, making that new existence indirectly manifest by how we live.

That existence is summed up in two commands: we are to love God with all our hearts, and we are to love others as ourselves.

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