

Q&A: What does it mean to be co-heirs with Christ?

Sarah asks:

Hi Will,

What does it mean to be co-heirs with Christ in Romans 8:17?

It must be unfathomable, outrageous grace to inherit all that Christ has as God the Son!

This is way better than Eden isn't it?

What does being co-heirs with Jesus look like expressed in our relationship with him for eternity – how does it fit in with us being the worshippers and him being worshipped? I suppose I mean what does it mean to be alongside God as heirs but being glorified humans, not divine?

[This is a Q&A question that has been submitted through this blog. You can submit a question (anonymously if you like) here: <http://briggs.id.au/jour/qanda/>]

Thanks Sarah,



The passage you are quoting is (to use the NIV) Romans 8:14-17:

14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by

him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

To respond to your first two points. Yes, this is “unfathomable, outrageous grace” and yes, “this is way better than Eden”!

You ask what does it *mean*?

Firstly, we need to grasp what Christ's inheritance *is*. The answer is big and simple: Christ's inheritance is *everything*. It isn't always spelled out; after all, how do you detail everything? What might it include? *Big things*, like “eternal life”, the “new heaven and the new earth”, and “peace.” It's *everything*.

The go-to passage that helps us out is Hebrews 1:1-2

1 In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.

You might also be familiar with the “attitude of Christ” that Paul espouses in Philippians 2:1-11. This passage talks about the “self-emptying” (the technical term is *kenosis*) of Jesus, “who, though he was in the form of God... emptied himself, taking the form of a slave... he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.” Paul then talks about Christ's *exaltation*, and in many ways he is talking about Christ's *inheritance* – what God the Father *rightly* gives the Son who gave himself up for his people:

9 Therefore God also highly exalted him

*and gave him the name
that is above every name,
10 so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.*

Christ's inheritance is the *reverse kenosis*, that comes not from himself, but from his Father.

And it's not just every *thing*, it is also *all authority*. Just look at Matthew 28:18 or 1 Corinthians 15:24 and many other places. Jesus really *is* the "Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End (Revelation 21:6).

That's his inheritance. Of which we are *co-heirs*.

That's amazing.

We can pull it apart theologically, but the narrative is simple: The heart of God has always been to share the fullness of himself with his people. We see it in Eden. We see it as he reaches out to Abram, making his promises, intervening in history. We see it as his presence goes with his people out of Egypt, through the sea, and on into the wilderness years. We see it as he speaks through his prophets. We see it as he nurtures a king whose heart is after his own. We see it as he pours himself out as a child, and in sharing our humanity, *covers us* with his grace and his purpose. He now shares with us his sonship, his sweet heart of faith, his trust and dependence, his obedience even to the point of death, and the blessings that rightly flow from it.

We are "in Christ" as he covers us, and Christ is "in us" by his Spirit. Salvation catches us up into the relational dynamics of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Thinking of

salvation without any sense of sharing in Christ's inheritance, is like conceiving of a banquet without any reference to food; you can sort of imagine something in the abstract, but it doesn't really make any sense.

But your secondary question draws the meaning out even more. You ask, "*What does being co-heirs with Jesus look like expressed in our relationship with him for eternity – how does it fit in with us being the worshippers and him being worshipped?*"

I think there's something here: God *is* a worshipper. The object of God's worship is himself. This is not vanity, it is truthful *delight* and entirely appropriate. The Father *adores* the Son. The Son is *devoted* to the Father. The Spirit *raises up* the name of God! Surely we can say that Jesus, as the incarnate Son of God, rightly *worships* his Father, perfectly, throughout his life and especially in his death.

To be co-heirs with Christ is, therefore, to share in his role as a worshipper. In Christ, we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and, in Christ, it is worthy and honourable and *received* in great delight by Almighty Creator God.

Again, there's something amazing about that.

But does our inheritance with Christ also mean an inheritance in the worship he *receives*? In some sense, yes, but I mean this very carefully: as Christ's people, we share in the worship *he* receives, not in any worship we receive, but in the worship *he* receives.

What I'm trying to grasp is in this account from the end of the book, in Revelation 21:9-27:

9 One of the seven angels... came and said to me, 'Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.' 10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and

showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. 11 It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

John then goes on to talk about the gates and walls of the New Jerusalem and includes imagery of apostolic foundations and things like that. The overall picture is one of beauty, and purity, of the Bride of Christ, who shines (and this is the point) *with the glory of God*. Jesus covers his bride with *his* glory. *That* is our inheritance. It is not *our* glory. It is *his*. But we share in it. All creation will gaze upon us, his people, and worship him.

And that brings us back to Romans 8:17, where we started, because there it is in the second part of the verse:

*Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that **we may also share in his glory.***

It *is* outrageously amazing.

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