

“In Christ”: Seven Wonders of the New World

The Book of Ephesians

Wonder 1: God’s Plan	=	New Creation
Wonder 2: God’s Grace	=	New Life/Birth
Wonder 3: God’s Gifting	=	New DNA
Wonder 4: The Church	=	New Community
Wonder 5: Every Spiritual Blessing: the Hope . . . the Riches . . . the Power . . .	=	New Reasons to Live
Wonder 6: Worthy Living	=	New Ways to Live
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Wonder 1: **God’s Plan**

= **New Creation**

God’s plan (for the universe) is “. . . to sum up all things in Christ.” God is creating a new world in Jesus Christ and bringing all things together under the authority of Jesus, who reigns as head over all things for the church, which is his body. New creation starts with Jesus, continues with his body, the church (the new world/community of God), and includes each of us as followers of Jesus. God’s plan includes the salvation of humans through the life, death, resurrection, and now lordship of Christ. It includes our salvation, our growth, and our empowerment in Christ—“for the praise of his glory”—in and through the church. God’s plan includes the overcoming of prejudice and hatred in the coming together of all types of peoples into God’s one new family. It thus includes a new, united community of faith—growing toward and living by the image of God in Christ. The multi-faceted wisdom of God’s plan is now to be made known to the heavens and the earth through the church.

Key Verses: 1:3-14 (9-10); 3:1-13; 4:1-16 (with Chapters 4-6)

“. . . to head up all things in Christ—the things in the heavens and the things on the earth.”

“. . . according to the plan of the one working all things according to the council of his will.”

“. . . according to the plan of the ages that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Wonder 2: **God’s Grace**

= **New Life/Birth**

Because of his great love for us, God saves us (makes us new) by grace through faith. In Christ, we are made alive, raised up, and seated together in the spiritual realms in Christ. This is how we become a part of God’s new creation—we are born again. This is God’s grace as forgiveness or pardon.

Key Verses: 1:4-7; 2:1-10; 5:22-33

“ . . . chosen for sonship through Jesus Christ . . . in whom we have the redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of trespasses according to the riches of his grace . . . ”

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not from yourselves—
it is the gift of God . . . ”

“ . . . he is the savior of the body as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her in order that . . . but nourishes and cares for it, as Christ does the church . . . ”

Wonder 3: God's Gifting

= **New DNA**

Because we are released from the power and effects of sin, we are set free in Christ to live according to the nature and culture of God's new creation. Within that new world, Christ empowers us to contribute to the health and effectiveness of the body: to each of us grace is given according to the measure of the gift of Christ (“he gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers,” etc.) We each have a place and a means to serve in God's new creation, as we live out the values and actions of the new world. This is God's grace as power.

Key Verses: 2:10; 3:1-13; 4:7-16 (and Chapters 4-6)

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus . . . ”

“ . . . according to the working of his power . . . ”

“But to each of us, grace was given . . . ”

Wonder 4: The Church

= **New Community**

God is overcoming hatred and division, bringing Christians together into one new community of Christ (“so making peace”): “There is one body and one Spirit”—just as we've been called with one hope of our calling—“one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” Through Christ, God is creating a place where unity (peace and love) exist and rule—to unit and grow us into the image of God. It's made up of those who are “called out” into this new existence in Christ: the church. As Christ-followers, we enjoy and maintain the unity of God's Spirit, while living up to the fundamental values and actions of the new community of Christ.

Key Verses: 2:11-22; 4:1-6 (and Chapters 4-6); 5:22-33

“For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility . . . ”

“ . . . with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit . . . ”

“ . . . as Christ loved the church . . . ”

Wonder 5: Every Spiritual Blessing: the Hope . . . the Riches . . . the Power . . . = **New Reasons to Live**

Having been adopted into God’s family by his great love, we receive the status and full blessings of being sons and daughters of God: (1) the hope that comes from new life, now and forever, (2) innumerable riches of being a son or daughter of God, now and forever, and (3) his great power to overcome evil and its discouraging effects. In Christ, God is blessing us with all spiritual blessings, giving us new reasons to live, with great expectations for the future because Christ sits as Lord of the universe for the church. God does this to unite us, to grow us, to empower us, and defend us. From his position as Lord of the universe, Christ also gives each of us gifts of his grace to empower and equip the church for ministry. In Christ we are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit—the guarantee and down payment of our inheritance.

Key Verses: 1:3-4; 1:15-23; 2:1-3:13; 3:14-21; 4:7-16; 6:10-20

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing . . .”

“ . . . what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might . . . ”

“ . . . to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge . . . ”

Wonder 6: Worthy Living = **New Ways to Live**

God calls us to live up to the reality of what it means to be “in Christ”—to be what we are. Being forgiven and recreated in Christ with a certain and secure future, with the blessings of full citizenship in God’s kingdom (“the hope . . . , the riches . . . , the power”), provides the starting point for a whole new existence as part of God’s new community in Christ. The new creation of God is a new reality upon the earth. Being called by God into that new reality (which is the church) means we now seek to live up to the values and purposes of that existence: Putting off the old self, being renewed in the spirit of our minds, and putting on the new self, created in the image of God . . . We affirm and live by the values and actions of God’s new world: renouncing falsehood and living on the basis of truth, we seek to be like God, living lives of love, light, and wisdom—in the church, our families, our work, our days, our moments. This is Holy Spirit living.

Key Verses: 4:1-3; 4:17-24 (Chapters 4-6)

“ . . . to be holy and blameless before him in love.”

“ . . . to live worthy of the calling to which you have been called . . . ”

“. . . to put off your old self . . . be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in holiness and righteousness of truth”

Wonder 7: The Presence and Power of God

= New Access to God

Though the immediate presence of God will not be restored to us until the consummation of God’s plan, through his Spirit, we have new, free and bold access to the presence and power of God in the church. His presence provides protection and strength against the attacks of evil (the power to stand against the attacks of Satan); encouragement in the face of suffering, trials, and tests; leadership and effectiveness for being a part of the growth and functioning of the body. God empowers us to stand against the real enemy and real dangers by putting on his full armor (a symbol for his presence and protection). God lives in his people as we breathe in the air (think “Spirit”) of the new world (think putting on the full armor of God):

- learning what’s real and what’s not (“belt of truth”)
- acting according to God’s nature (“breastplate of righteousness”)
- being proactive with the good news of reconciliation and peace (“shoes of the gospel of peace”)
- knowing what we have in Christ and what we are in God’s eyes (“helmet of salvation”)
- having what God says readily available to us—in our hearts and minds (“the sword of the Spirit”)
- communicating with God (in the Spirit) at all times (“praying at all times”)

The seventh wonder of God’s new world is his presence and power: God walks with his people as we work together to grow up into the fullness of Christ.

Key Verses: 2:11-22; 3:1-13; 6:10-20

“For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. . . .
In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit.”

“. . . in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.”

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.”