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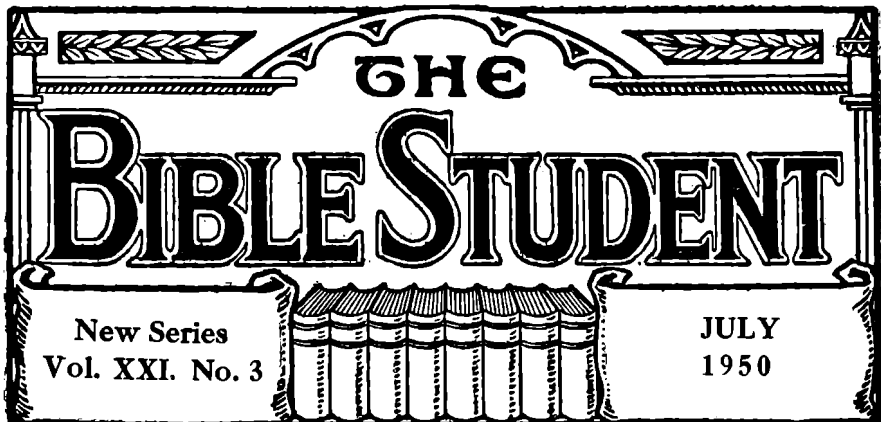
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"The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light"

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Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

The Bible Student

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NEW SERIES

JULY, 1950

VOL. XXI. No. 3

IN THE HEAVENLIES

BY THE EDITOR

The primary key-note of the Epistle to the Ephesians is the one "weighty golden phrase", "The Heavens", five times repeated. It is around this phrase the Apostle groups much of his teaching, like massive bulwarks of truth placed at certain vantage points, together forming a glorious Temple of Truth. To get a spiritual grasp of the Epistle therefore, we need to study the contexts in which it is found.

First, a word of explanation as to its import. As here used the phrase *en tois epouraniois* is peculiar to this Epistle, though the adjective *epouranios* is found in thirteen other N.T. passages, the first in John 3:12 and the last in Heb. 12:22. In general terms it refers to the supra-sensual, spiritual world, which is perceived not by sight but by the "inner vision" of faith (cf. 2 Cor. 4:18); not distant and future but present and near; none the less real because the limitations of our minds and language force us to localize the conception, though its confines stretch limitless and formless into the Eternal.

The seraphic vision of Isaiah must have caught some glimpse of its true significance when he records the great utterance of Jehovah God: "Thus saith the High and Exalted One who inhabiteth Eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in *the High and Holy Place*" (ch. 57:15, see whole verse). The Psalmist also must have been scanning its far-flung battlements when he speaks of the man who "dwells in the *Secret Place* of the Most High" (Ps. 91:1).

More precisely, the "heavens" is that immaterial realm which lies beyond and behind and yet in touch with the world of sense: The sphere where Christ is now "seated at God's right hand" and we in Him (cf. verse 20 and Ps. 110:1). In this realm great spiritual forces are at work on behalf of the redeemed

of earth: Forces, which take an intelligent interest in forwarding the sovereign purposes of God in blessing His people with every spiritual blessing in Christ. It may be considered as the spiritual and present counterpart of the earthly Canaan of old, but in a far more ideal sense flowing with the "milk and honey" of greater joys and blessings, ministered by the Gracious Spirit of God for the new order of heavenly sojourners and pilgrims, as they move onward to the Celestial City of God, having the glory of God (Rev. 21:10, 11).

Yet it is necessary to make clear that the blessings in the heavenlies are not merely those which come from that realm, but those which lift us up into that supernal region, giving us a place and heritage in God through Christ by the Spirit in those heavenly spheres. We must realize that our "life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3) *there*; and again, "our citizenship is in heaven" (Phil. 13:20), or as F. B. Meyer puts it, we are "burgesses of heaven", of "the heavenlies." He further quotes a saying by Lady Powerscourt: "The Christian is not a man who, standing on earth, looks up to heaven; but who, being in 'heaven', looks down upon earth, and throughout his life he recognises that he is a foreigner indeed." Being now "in the heavenlies in Christ" enables us to use the Lord's own description—"I am not of this world, I am from above", a statement which caused those around to gnash their teeth at Him and cast Him out, as the citizens of Vanity Fair did Christian and his companion. It also recalls Paul's answer to the Roman captain's question: "I was freeborn, my birth carried with it the right of citizenship" of Imperial Rome! How infinitely greater and more glorious his and your citizenship of the heavenlies!

Turn now to the five references in the Epistle and carefully note the distinctive aspect of the phrase presented in each.

Ch. 1:3—The Sphere of the Spirit's operations wherein He imparts every spiritual blessing provided in Christ for our present enjoyment.

Ch. 1:19, 20—The Sphere of Christ's present exaltation and Headship, whence flow enlightenment and power for the believer.

Ch. 2:6—The Sphere of the believer's enthronment and union with Christ.

Ch. 3:10—The Sphere in which the Church today presents a spectacle of holy wonderment and instruction to the rapt eyes of angelic intelligences.

Ch. 6:12—The Sphere to which Evil Powers have mysterious access and must be met in spiritual conflict.

1. God's Manifold Blessings. Chap. 1:3.

Verse 3 is strictly only the introduction to the whole passage ending at verse 14, which deals with the subject of the position and privileges into which the grace of God in Christ Jesus has introduced believers. Probably no other passage in the New Testament is so concentratedly full in its presentation of the glorious scope and character of the believer's spiritual blessings, made his through the work of Christ on the cross of Calvary.

The glorious character of these divine blessings as given here may be summarised thus:

1. *Their Source is GOD.* This refers to the Father—the Origin and Fountain-head of all Divine Energy put forth in grace for our salvation, for “God so loved the world that HE gave” His “unspeakable Gift”: And, to quote the apostle again, “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also *with Him freely give us all things?*” (Rom. 8:32). God is thus ever blessing His people; His every gift is a blessing, and every blessing a gift of infinite love. We can hardly turn a page of Biblical history without being made aware of the blessings of our God, and the God of blessing. “Every good gift (or *giving*) and every perfect boon is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom can be no variation nor shadow that is cast by turning” (Jas. 1:17, R.V.).

But it is upon the great *Source* of all blessings we must fix our gaze more often than upon His gifts merely. The greater our conception of this glorious Person—“the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (note the extended name, expressive of the intimacy between Father and Son in one beneficent objective)—the greater will His blessings appear. We may measure the real force and depth of every religious experience by the greatness of our conception of God the Giver. “God should be great to the *imagination*, filling it with splendour; great to the *intellect*, commanding its most reverent homage and raising it to its loftiest activity; great to the *heart*, inspiring it with passionate affection, with perfect trust, with deep gratitude, with glorious hope, and with the awe which will restrain from sin; great to the *conscience* as the personal revelation of the eternal law of righteousness; infinitely great to all that is noblest in man—great as the Creator of all things; great because of His eternal justice; great because

of His infinite love; great as the Fountain of all moral and spiritual perfection in His creatures; great as the Fountain of all their blessedness" (R. W. Dale). Yes, let us have great thoughts of God!

2. *Their Sufficiency is in CHRIST.* Every blessing is stored up in HIM, "for it was the good pleasure of the Father that in HIM should *all fulness* dwell" (Col. 1:19; 2:9). All spiritual replenishment is guaranteed through Him, the ascended Lord, from whom ever flow rivers of living water, to satisfy the soul's thirst. "God shall supply *every need* of yours according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus"—or, as Weymouth would render it, "in the fulness of His glorious riches in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). There is no human need known to man but what can be met from the plenitude of supply of the "riches of His grace" and the "riches of His glory."

The phrase "in Christ" occurs seven times in the first fourteen verses, and each occurrence adds some new feature to the full display of the divine sufficiency of the believer's blessings in Christ. Let us note these briefly:

First, He has chosen you; chosen you to be the objects of His eternal, sovereign, pure and holy love. It is in Christ that He has chosen you (v. 4.).

Secondly, He has predestinated you or appointed you unto the position of sonship to Himself. It is through Jesus Christ that this adoption is reached and realized (v. 5).

Thirdly, you are accepted; not merely pitied, indulged, condescended; but received into favour; justified. You are accepted, dealt graciously with, in the Beloved One (v. 6).

Fourthly, you have redemption; the full redemption His blood procures; forgiveness of sin reaching to the full participation of all the rich grace in which God has abounded toward us so wondrously and so wisely. In Christ you have this full redemption, this free forgiveness of sin (vv. 7, 8).

Fifthly, you become members of the great family, composed of all the faithful in heaven and on earth, who are to be gathered into one in Christ (v. 10).

Sixthly, you have obtained an inheritance, the inheritance of the saints in light, according to the gracious purposes of God. For if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ and in Christ (v. 11).

Seventhly, you are now sealed by the Holy Spirit, and He is

the earnest of the inheritance; sealed, because you are Christ's; you have the earnest, for the inheritance is yours; a foretaste of glory. It is in Christ you have this inheritance (vv. 13, 14).

With such blessings of the Spirit in Christ does God bless you in the heavenlies. And you bless Him, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; dwelling with Him there as in a home; and partaking in some sense of His own blessedness, in the Son and by the Spirit.

3. *Their Supply is through the Holy Spirit.* Ellicott (and other Gk. authorities) would render, it: "Blessed with every spiritual blessing of the Spirit"—viewing the Spirit as the Agency or Channel. In this R. S. Candlish concurs when he says, "the blessings are the Spirit's. They are all such blessings as He imparts. And they are enjoyed in the heavenlies. . . . Let Him shut you up into the heavenlies, where He can bless you with all His own precious blessings in Christ." How essential then, not to grieve the Spirit of God "whereby ye are sealed" (ch. 4:30) and never to quench Him who so graciously blesses you (1 Thess. 5:19). How shall we be blessed if we vex the Heart that blesses?

At the same time we must not fail to note that the blessings themselves are spiritual in character. The blessings of Israel in the Old Testament were primarily material: "Blessed shalt thou be in the city . . . and in the field. . . . Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store . . ." Deut. 28:3-6. But in the New Testament the emphasis is always on the spiritual, though not ignoring the material. If the Holy Spirit is the Channel, His blessings must partake of His own character—"which He poured out upon us richly" (Tit. 3:6).

How tragic then is human perversity, that in spite of such limitless provision the prophet's cry still rings true: "Be astonished ye heavens at this. . . . My people have forsaken the fountain of living waters!" (See Jer. 2:12, 13). Instead of fulness there is famishing: "They have hewn them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." But the Christ of glory can never fail, His blessings never stagnate even though some refuse them. They ever continue to pour forth in living torrents of spiritual power. And when our "broken cisterns" have been left far behind in oblivion, "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne . . . shall guide (us) unto fountains of waters of life" (Rev. 7:17). The Lamb in the midst of the throne is Saviour, Salvation, Sufficiency, and Security—the blessed Guarantor of ever spiritual blessing for His people.

In closing do not forget to note carefully the "magnificent array of Gospel 'alls,'" as Charles Fox calls them, ten in number, found in this first chapter. The "all" of spiritual blessings (v. 3); of Divine Wisdom (v. 8); of worlds seen and unseen, headed up in Him (v. 10); the "all" of His purposes and will (v. 11); the "all" of divine inclusion (v. 15); the "all" over which the Son is exalted (v. 21); the "all" of things subjugated (v. 22); the "all" of the church (v. 22); the "all" of the dual Fulness—the church the fulness of Christ and Christ the fulness of the church, "which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all" (v. 23).

CHRIST IN THE FOUR GOSPELS

BY A. NAISMITH, M.A.

IV. The Purpose of the Writers

It has been observed earlier in this series that each of the Four Evangelists whose narratives of our Lord's life on earth appear in the first books of the New Testament portrays Jesus from a different viewpoint. Matthew tells us *what He said*; Mark tells us *what He did*; Luke tells us *what He felt*; and John tells us *what He is*. Accordingly, we expect to find the special purpose Matthew had before him to be apparent in the discourses He records, while Mark's presentation of our Lord and Master will be reflected in His activities rather than in His words. Every detail Luke gives us will unveil the heart of Jesus and show how He was "touched with a feeling of our infirmities". John's selection from the numerous incidents He might have described,—for he tells us the world itself could not contain all the books that might be written about his Lord,—will comprise those that emphasize His Deity.

IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL the main divisions are clearly indicated by the recurrence of some such words as "When Jesus had ended these sayings"—or "words"—or "parables"—found in 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1 and 26:1. These punctuating clauses mark the conclusion of the five main discourses in the Gospel. These five sections, from Ch. 5:1 to Ch. 25:56, are preceded by an all-important narrative section and followed by an equally important narrative section. This Gospel might therefore be divided as follows: