

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

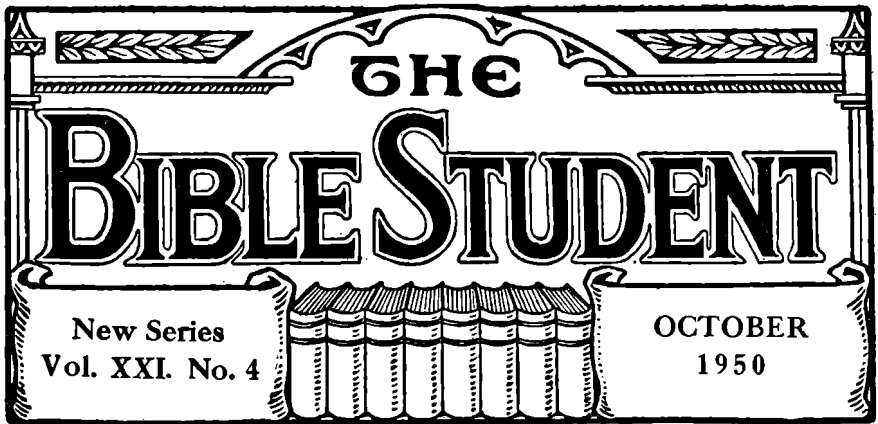
<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Bible Student* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bible-student_01.php



“ The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light ”

C O N T E N T S

	PAGE
IN THE HEAVENLIES	145
THE TENT DOOR	151
CHRIST IN THE FOUR GOSPELS	154
WHO ARE PRIESTS?	160
HYPERBOLES OF FAITH	165
NOTES ON HEBREWS	169
THE PRECIOUS BLOOD OF CHRIST	175
THE BELIEVER'S PRIESTLY SERVICE	181
EXEGETICAL STUDY OF COLOSSIANS	188

Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

The Bible Student

Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

NEW SERIES

SEPTEMBER, 1950

VOL. XXI. No. 4

IN THE HEAVENLIES

BY THE EDITOR

The next occurrence of this "golden phrase" compels us to consider the first of two matchless prayers of the apostle found in this epistle to the Ephesians (ch. 1:15-23). Read the whole passage several times ere you take up this study—let the soaring notes of fervent prayer penetrate the inner chambers of the soul and create a response in like petition.

First go back to our last study and remind yourself of the wealth of provision recounted for us there. Also of the way in which those blessings have become our own: (a) They had been eternally purposed in God the Father (vv. 3-6 a); (b) they had been historically mediated through God the Son (vv. 6b-12); (c) they had been spiritually applied by God the Spirit (vv. 12-14). And in connection with each Person of the Holy Trinity, practically the same phrase occurs in this paragraph (3-14), showing that all the blessings were given in order that they might be used *for the Divine glory*; 'to the praise of the glory of His grace' (v. 6); 'to the praise of His glory' (vv. 12 and 14).

It is upon this wealth of blessing that the Apostle bases his prayer: "For this cause (on this account). . . I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you (and for you) in my prayers. . . ." But it is only possible now to study that special portion of the prayer which forms the more immediate context of the phrase we are considering. "In the heavenlies" is here shown as *the place of Christ's Exaltation, whence flows all Power for the believer.*

Note in passing, the primary request is that God would bestow upon them "*a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him*", with the consequent "*enlightenment of heart*" to perceive the great things He had accomplished for them. "The illumination is to be of that deep and subtle kind which, in the light of

obedience to His holy commands.* But in the New Testament it is to the unique miracle of the Resurrection we must turn, which in a far greater, more glorious, and altogether transcending manner, provides the criterion by which God's power is to be measured.

But we may ask, with Dale, exactly why is it that Paul speaks with such a passion of emphasis of this power—he seems to be struggling with a concept altogether too large for expression? What is the explanation of the extraordinary strength of the apostle's language? Christ Himself had raised the dead—the widow of Nain's son, Lazarus, and the daughter of Jairus. What was the difference?

The answer is found in the unique character of our Lord's resurrection.

With Lazarus (and the others) it was but a return to normal, natural life down here—a life still subject to death and disease. "There is no reason to believe that his intellectual powers had received any sudden enlargement, or that his moral life had risen to any extraordinary heights of grandeur, or that in any other respect he had become a very different man from what he was before." The same is true of others who had been raised. But with Christ it was not a return to the life which death had interrupted; it was to an altogether new set of conditions. From being in the "form of a servant" with a body capable of death He is now exalted to the pinnacle of Universal Sovereignty.

"He is not merely surrounded with the pomp and circumstance of supreme authority. He does not merely watch, with a perfect sympathy of joy, the infinite activities of the Divine life and the tremendous manifestations of the Divine power, as a son might watch the successive triumphs of his father's heroism and his father's genius. He Himself is LORD of all. He controls and governs all the immense forces of the material universe; He controls and governs the more immense and awful forces of the moral and spiritual universe. He, the Christ whom men knew on earth, He—and not another—He who was born at Bethlehem, who was a child in the home of Joseph and Mary at Nazareth, who grew in wisdom and stature, who was tempted, who delivered the sermon on the mount, whose arms enfolded little children, who was betrayed by Judas, who was charged with treason against Cæsar and with blasphemy against God, who was scourged, who

* See Exod. 13: 3, 9, 14; 32: 11; Deut. 9: 29; Jer. 32: 21; Dan. 9: 15.

was crucified—He, and not another, is LORD OF ALL. This is the explanation of the emphasis with which Paul speaks of the great power of God that was manifested in the exaltation of Christ.” (Dale)

Yet another feature, which we must never forget, and in the remembrance of which there is most wonderful comfort, is the fact that, notwithstanding this unutterable glory of exaltation it is still *“this same Jesus”*—the One in whom full deity and perfect humanity united and found expression. That is, Christ does not leave behind Him His human nature in reaching those heights of glory. Rather, He carries up with Him the same perfect humanity and the same full deity that characterized Him on earth. Of His own resurrection body He says: “Handle me, and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.” And it was in that same body He ascended up on high. As Dale says: “The incarnation was wonderful: that it should have been possible for the Eternal Word who ‘was in the beginning with God’ and and who ‘was God’ ‘by whom all things were made’, to descend from the eternal splendours of Divine supremacy and to become man, is an infinite mystery. But that, having become man and *retaining His humanity*, it should have been possible for Him to reascend to those heights of authority and glory is also an infinite mystery.” “Retaining His humanity”—just there is the emphasis. There lies the wonder, the glory, even though the mystery. “He shall reign for ever and ever” says Bishop Pearson (quoted by Ellicott), *“to the complete eternity of the duration of His humanity, which for the future is coeternal to His Divinity.”*

Oh the grace, the grandeur, the glory of it all! Such are the features that force the apostle to contemplate the wonderworking, infinite *energeia* of God. And how these features may bring us comfort and peace and joy is revealed in such verses as the following: “This same *Jesus* is made both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). This same *Jesus* is still “touched with the feeling of our infirmities”, having been “tempted in all points like as we are, apart from sin” (Heb. 4:15). This same *Jesus* “hath an unchangeable priesthood, wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:24, 25). “This same *Jesus* . . . shall so come in like manner” (Acts 1:11) to receive us to that “place” He is now preparing for us (John 14:2). He is truly “The Man in the Glory.”

(2) *Its Extent is seen in the supreme Exaltation of Christ.*

This Exaltation is exhibited in

- (a) Christ's Supremacy above all created intelligences (v. 21);
- (b) Christ's Sovereignty in the material and moral Universe (v. 22); and
- (c) Christ's Headship in the Church, which is His Body.

(a) No brief exposition can adequately wrestle with the accumulated imagery of glory. You must sit down and *ponder each word*. Who can measure that "*far above*"? What disciplined imagination can marshal that glittering array of "*all Government, and Authority, and Power and Lordship, and every Name that is named*"? Even a Milton could do no more than re-state their Scripture titles in that majestic line:

"Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Virtues, Powers."

Over all these heavenly intelligences Christ is supreme—not as one, even though the highest, of them; but as "*far above*" them in both essence and dignity. They have no throne; He *sits* as a "Priest upon His Throne" (Zech. 6:13), at the Father's right hand. And this "Session, like Resurrection, is the act of the Father's accepting and glorifying Will" (Moule). "*God* also hath highly exalted Him and given Him a Name which is above every name; that at the Name of *Jesus* (the human title) every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth" (Phil. 2:9, 10).

(b) Then comes the other picture of Christ's Sovereignty, first, over all Creation (v. 22). He is not only Supreme, He is Sovereign. "The phrase carries the thought of Christ's Lordship on from His relation to angels as their King to His attitude towards all opposition as its Conqueror." Every tongue is to confess that "*Christ is Lord*." There is to be no place in all the vast, limitless reaches of space, time, or eternity where He is not absolutely IMPERATOR!

(c) Finally, Sovereignty is viewed in its other aspect of Headship over the Church. At once we are made aware of the difference between the various relationships previously mentioned and this: "Head" implies not merely exaltation but *vital union*, whilst "His body" carries the thought further—to the fact that the will of the Head is exercised through the members. He is the Source and Cause of the Church's spiritual life, in a sense and in a manner in which no one else could be—"Head over *all things* to the Church."

(3) The *Exercise* of this thought-surpassing Power is "*to us-ward who believe.*" The outflow of this celestial dynamic is toward us and for us. We are not merely to gaze upon it in wonderment, we are to *experience* it in ourselves. In fact, not merely the power, but the hope and the glory previously mentioned are for us. "His calling" reminds us of the *past* when we turned to Him at conversion and there was created within us a "hope that maketh not ashamed". "His inheritance" directs our eyes to the glorious *future* when "He shall be manifested" and we also shall be manifested with Him. "His power" is the *present* guarantee of victory and blessing. At the same time all three are both present and future.

We shall lose the whole purport of this great petition if we fail to see that all is for us and *to-day*. The secret lies in that little word "believe". Faith relies and receives. It puts us in contact with the Source of blessing, and in union with Him we shall find spiritual illumination, insight, experience, and power that shall all be to His praise and glory.

THE TENT DOOR

BY ALEX SOUTTER

The Tent Door episode in Abraham's life is one of richest charm. Its homeliness warms the heart. Its simplicity has a direct message for the soul. Its practical import brings a present-day challenge to all God's pilgrim people.

Behind him lay years of sweet communion with God. Around him there were placed tangible tokens of his pilgrimage—the altar, the tent, and the well. The future was lit up with God's sure word of promise: the glory of God would most surely be his portion, since he was the chosen friend of the God of glory.

His life had not been free from failure. Witness the downward trek to Egypt, and Pharaoh's word of censure—and Hagar. Perhaps young Ishmael would be within ear shot as Abraham sat there in quiet contemplation, and Ishmael was an ever present reminder of the frustration that follows every form of fleshly activity. But despite this failure, the repose he now enjoyed by the tent door was but the fruit of a life of communion with the One Who had called him from "beyond the River".