

THE WORD OF TRUTH

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** The Hope Within Us*

THE HOPE WITHIN US

This study to a certain extent must be presented from the personal standpoint. It is impossible for me to speak impersonally in dealing with such a theme. This study deals with my own hope - the expectation that is mine because of my belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. And while it is true that what one believer may expect, all believers may expect, yet I find many whose hope is quite different from mine. Just what the future holds for those who are believing in Christ *now* is subject to many opinions. Most of these opinions are vaguely and indefinitely held, and often they are nothing more than wishful thinking. Many professing Christians have no idea whatsoever as to what the future holds for them. This would be a very proper attitude if God had not spoken. But God has spoken concerning the expectation of those who believe in Jesus Christ *now*. In view of this I have very definite ideas as to what the future holds for me - ideas that have developed and taken form out of the years I have given to the study of God's Word.

One of the questions that has ever been before me can be expressed in these words: "Where and how are we going to live our future lives?" In the course of my studies in this theme I have found that almost everyone has an opinion as to *where* we are going to be in the life to come. I have definite opinions in regard to this myself. I have declared without equivocation that the earth, not heaven, is the future home of all of God's redeemed. Many will differ and have differed with me concerning this. However, as to *how* we are going to spend our future life, I have not been able to find any opinions in all the literature that is available to me.

True, some have made the general statement that we are to reign with Christ for a thousand years, but this takes care of only the first millennium. It seems that most have only a vague idea that our future life is to be spent living in a bigger and better house than we live in now, an idea that is confidently proved by the "many mansions" of John 14:2.

There was a time in my experience when I almost felt envious of Elijah the prophet. Much of his future work is laid out for him, as Malachi 4:5,6 declares. He is to do a work that will be fascinating and engrossing. God will send him from his present place in heaven and he will do a great spiritual work among the people of Israel. Millions will speak well of him and offer him thanks for what he will do. His future is a busy and useful one. A good portion of his future work is already laid out for him to do. Any man who enjoys serving his fellow-men could well be envious of him.

Consider also the twelve apostles. They are to sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. This is the good work that God has designated beforehand that they shall walk in. They are to live interesting and useful lives, doing a worthwhile work in behalf of their own people and nation of Israel. There was a time in my experience when I almost felt envious of these men whose future life and work is so definitely outlined.

And yet, why should I be envious of them? Does not Ephesians 2:10 tell all who are a part of God's present calling that we are God's achievement, created in Christ Jesus for the good works which are prepared beforehand by God as our sphere of action. These good works cannot be anything that you are doing now, or that I am doing now, no matter what service we may now be performing. These are the good works that we are to do in the life to come. Thus, even as Elijah and the twelve apostles have a future work prepared beforehand by God as their sphere of action, we also have a future work laid out for us. Once we discover what this work is, then we have the answer to the question as to what we are going to be doing in the life to come.

Since these "good works" are to be our sphere of action in the life to come, we need to seek an understanding of them from the pages of God's Word. These good works are the very heart of the hope that is within us. We must know what to expect, and we must be able to give a reason for what we expect. This is in harmony with Peter's exhortation: **"be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (I Peter 3:15).**

The hope of Peter was to take his place upon a divinely created throne maintaining God's order for the twelve tribes of Israel. His reason for this hope was a definite personal promise made to him by the Lord Jesus Christ. See Matt. 19:27-29. However, that which the Lord promised to Peter is not for us. It would be a spiritual tragedy for the present-day believer in Christ to claim this or any other hope which is not his.

This is the mistake made by those who seek to begin God's present calling with the ministry of the Apostle Paul. To his converts in Thessalonica he declared that God had called them "to His own kingdom and glory" (I Thess. 2:12). To his converts in Corinth he declared that they were to judge the world and that they were to judge angels (I Cor. 6:2, 3). There are many who take these words as being a statement of the hope of God's present calling. And if this were God's final word on the matter that is what it would be. However, there is another hope, a higher hope that is revealed in Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

The hope that Paul holds out in I Corinthians 6:2,3 is the hope of those who put their faith in Jesus Christ during the thirty-three years of which the book of Acts is the history. They are to serve God in relationship to His government when the kingdom of God is a reality upon the earth. This is the hope of their calling, but it is not the hope of our calling. We are a distinct and unique calling and will perform a distinct and unique service. This point needs to be clearly understood. If we become confused here, we will never understand the hope that God holds out to us.

The Hope Of His Calling

One of the items for which Paul made request in his Spirit-inspired prayer recorded in Ephesians 1:17-23 was that the Ephesian believers might "know what is the hope of His calling." This cannot be a simple matter, for in order to know it they would have to be given "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him," and the eyes of their understanding would need to be enlightened.

The one who is today standing as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who is today found believing, the record that God has given of His Son, that one is a part of God's present calling. Anyone who today is believing in the Lord Jesus Christ has answered a call from God. No matter how mysterious this may seem, no matter how intangible it may be, the fact remains that the true believer has answered God's call.

Some believers may insist that they were never called. To them a call has to be vocal, physical, emotional, and manifest. Most unbelievers will insist also that they have never been called by God. Nevertheless, the fact remains that if anyone is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ today, he is a believer because he was called of God and has responded to that call. Furthermore, if anyone is an unbeliever today, he is an unbeliever because he has been called by God and has rejected that call.

We cannot accede to the idea that all professing Christians are believers, no matter how sincere they may be in their profession. Neither can we yield to the idea that all church members are believers. Neither do we charge them with being unbelievers. Mankind cannot be divided into two camps-believers and unbelievers. No man is born either a believer or an unbeliever. Any man who is a believer has had to believe a truth that was presented to him by God. Any man who is an unbeliever has had to reject a truth that God has presented to him. The lot of those who are neither believers nor unbelievers we must leave to God, the One alone who is able to judge the living and the dead. In this study we are dealing only with believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, and we insist that all true believers have been called by God and that they stand as God's present calling.

In Ephesians 4:1 we are exhorted "to walk worthy of the calling (vocation) wherewith we are called." If a later statement the Apostle tells us that we are called in one hope of our calling (Eph. 4:4). We have been called by God in this "the dispensation of the grace of God:' It is therefore fitting and proper that we should refer to ourselves as "the grace calling: And while it is true that the terms "God's present calling:' and "the grace calling" are never found in Scripture, they are accurate, unambiguous, and proper designations of that company of believers who have been called of God under His present administration.

This calling has *one* hope and it is a most definite hope. As those who have been called by God, we have every right to expect that there are certain definite blessings that are to be our portion. We have read in Scripture of "the hope of Israel" (Acts 28:20), and we know that Israel can expect certain definite blessings from God. However, the hope of Israel is not our hope. We want to know what we can expect. We want to know what blessings and privileges are to be the portion of this grace calling. Therefore, to all who profess to be believers in dispensational truth, to all who profess to believe in the unique character of God's present calling, this challenge is presented. What is the hope of God's present calling? What can we expect from God in the way of unique honors, blessings and privileges which are not to be the portion of other men?

At this point I would like to speak from the personal standpoint and say that the keystone in the arch of all my hopes for the future is the belief that God's present calling is a unique and distinct calling. I believe that this calling had its beginning after that point in history which is marked by Paul's words in Acts 28:28. This is a fixed conviction with me. It has stood the test of more than two decades of critical investigation. I hold this truth and never compromise or temporize concerning it. I declare it even when my audience has in it those who believe that God's present calling began at Pentecost or at Acts 13.

However, let no one say that I believe "the church" began at Acts 28:28. Neither let anyone say that I believe "the body of Christ" began at Acts 28:28. I deny any such beliefs. But if they say that I believe that God's present calling of believers began after Acts 28:28, they will speak the truth concerning me.

As has already been suggested, there is a unique and distinct company of believers, set forth in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, who are to perform a vastly different service than that company of believers set forth in the Thessalonian and Corinthian epistles. They will walk in their good works, and we will walk in our good works. These works are not the same. I will try to state here in a few words what this difference is.

Before this article is ever printed and reaches the hands of those for whom it is intended, yes, even before the sun arises tomorrow, it may be that mankind as a whole will be living under a new order of things. This new order will be quite different from the administration (dispensation) of the grace of God under which the whole of mankind is living today. It will be an administration of divine government, under which God will be governing the world in righteousness.

This state of things to come will be the kingdom of the heavens - it will be the kingdom of God. When this is a reality, Christ will be reigning over the nations and the nations will be trusting in Him, as Paul states in Romans 15:12. Jesus Christ must reign (govern) until all enemies have been placed under His feet (I Cor. 15:25). This reign is not now a reality, but it could begin before this day is over. It is in no way related to the second coming of Christ. It is related only to God imposing His rule or government upon the earth.

The coming kingdom of God will be both a *theocracy* and a *theophany*. The word *theocracy* has to do with divine rule or government, particularly with God ruling or governing through men who represent and express Him. The word *theophany* has to do with God making Himself known. It has to do with divine manifestations, and it is used in this study particularly with God making Himself known through men who represent and express Him. When the kingdom of God is a reality upon this earth, we of God's present calling are to serve God in a very special way in connection with the *theophany*, not in connection with the *theocracy*.

I beg of the reader here not to force upon the word *theophany* the limited theological meaning of "a manifestation of God in visible and bodily form." It is certainly true that when (before the incarnation) God appeared in a visible or bodily form that these were *theophanies* but to limit the word *theophany* to manifestations such as these is a mistake. Any process or means by which God shines forth, any act of God in making Himself plain, any work by which He makes Himself known, all these are *theophanies*.

The great purpose of God in the kingdom of God is not merely to govern. The purpose of His government is to make Himself known. "Thou shalt know the Lord" is the oft repeated statement that runs like a refrain through the Old Testament. "I will rule . . . and you shall know that I am the Lord" is the word of Jehovah spoken through Ezekiel. "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea," is the promise made through Isaiah (Isa. 11:9). All this is to be accomplished by God manifesting Himself, by God making Himself known. This is the great theophany that is to be the predominant feature of the kingdom of God. Our future service, the good works we shall walk in are related to this theophany, as will be set forth in more detail later. If we read Matthew 16:19, Matthew 19:28, I Corinthians 6:2,3 and I Thessalonians 2:12 we will realize how definitely the twelve apostles and the Corinthian believers are related to the theocracy, the rule of God through men.

But to return to the subject of the hope that is within us. It needs to be carefully noted that this hope is revealed only in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. It is in this epistle alone that God sets forth those unique and distinct "good works" that we are to walk in. It is here alone that we find out what our service for God is to be in the life to come. The revelation of this epistle is one of the great magnitude. Many facts have to be learned from other portions of Scripture before one can even stand on the foothills of this Mount Everest of all truth. One thing we must understand before we can understand our hope is the meaning of a term that appears on the very threshold of Ephesians.

Every Spiritual Blessing

The term "spiritual blessings" has long been used as a high level abstraction by men who deal in glittering generalities. They have lifted this term from God's Word, but they use it without ever defining it. They usually infer that *spiritual* is the opposite of material, which it most certainly is not, so far as the Word of God is concerned. It is constantly affirmed that God promised Israel material blessings, but that He has promised the church spiritual blessings. Those who say this are guilty of using terms which have no meaning, terms which they never define, and all too often such meaningless terms pass for great profundity. They do not define the word *Israel*, they do not define the word *church*, they do not tell us what *spiritual* means, and we are not told what a *blessing* is.

The fact is that God has promised to Israel certain very rich and magnificent spiritual blessings. Take the following statements as examples:

The Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen in thee. Isa. 60:2.

I will put my law in their inward parts and write it in their hearts. Jeremiah 31:33.

They shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them. Jeremiah 31:34.

I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you. Ezekiel 11:19.

Everyone of these promises represent a very definite spiritual blessing. They are God's promises to Israel. In view of them anyone who says that spiritual blessings are not to be the portion of Israel reveals himself to be in ignorance of the Scriptures.

A blessing is a gift from God, specifically a gift of which He has spoken well. A spiritual blessing is primarily a divine gift of knowledge. The spirit of man is that aspect of man that knows. The "spirit which is of God" is given to men so that they might know the things of God (I Cor. 2:12). Any promise of knowledge is a promise of a spiritual blessing. Among spiritual blessings must also be counted such gifts as immortality, incorruptibility, and eternal life.

The great distinction that needs to be made and carefully retained is that while God has spoken well concerning Israel in regard to *many* spiritual blessings, He has spoken well in regard to His present calling in regard to *every* spiritual blessing. In view of the good works that we are to do—good works that will represent the highest and greatest divine service ever to be performed by men, and in view of the equipment we will need to perform this service, God has spoken well concerning us in regard to *every* spiritual blessing. This will be the portion of that unique company of believers whose calling is set forth in Ephesians. We will lack nothing that is needed to equip us for the service we are predestined to perform.

Therefore, it is part of the hope that is within us that we shall be blessed with every spiritual blessing. While other callings are to enjoy *certain* spiritual blessings in harmony with the service they will perform, we are to enjoy *every* spiritual blessing in harmony with our service for God in the life to come.

If the long promised and long awaited kingdom of God should become a reality this day, we are confident that we would begin to enter into possession of these blessings before the day is over. Note that it is said "begin to enter." Our experience will be progressive. And it will make no difference to God whether we are among the living or among the dead. We believe in "God which raiseth the dead", and if we should be among the dead when God begins to govern the earth, we will be raised from the dead to take our place in the great theophany that is to be the chief feature of the kingdom of God. And whether we are among the living or among those restored to life, we will progressively enter into these blessings according to our needs in view of the good works we are to walk in.

But what are these good works? What will be our future service? Once again we turn to Paul's letter to the Ephesians, the one book that gives testimony concerning this.

We Extol His Grace

We have already seen that when the kingdom of God is over the earth, God will govern the world in order that He might make Himself known to the world. In that day God's government will be through men who truly represent and truly express "the Judge of all the earth," even so the great work of making God known will be done by men who will truly represent and express "the God of every grace."

The terms "God the Judge of all" (Heb. 12:23), and "the God of every grace" (I Peter 5:10) set forth the polarity of God's character as it is revealed and expressed in His Son Jesus Christ. He is the God of grace, He is the God of government. When men come to know Him in this two-fold character, they will know God. And no words could be plainer than those found in Ephesians which tell us that we are to be related to "the extolling of the glory of His grace." Ephesians 1:6. We are not to serve God in relationship to the *theocracy*. We are to serve Him in relationship to the *theophany*, and our major work in this will be to make known the God of every grace.

If we consider the steps which precede this statement in Ephesians 1:6, it will glow with a new glory.

1. We are to be blessed with every spiritual blessing. We will lack nothing that is needed for the service we are to perform. The One who has called the workers will fully equip them for the work.

2. We are to be blessed *en tois epouraniois*. The true meaning of this phrase (translated "in heavenly places") will be considered 'later.

3. We were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.

4. We are to be holy (set apart for service) and flawless in His sight.

5. In love He has determined us for the Son-place. We are to take our place among the sons of God. We are now children. We will be sons. The word *son* denotes one who expresses, declares, and represents. Jesus Christ is both the Son of God and the Son of man. We are to be sons of God.

All this that God has said He will do for us is with the end in view that we shall be "extolling the glory of His grace." This goes far beyond the work of making Him known as the God of grace. We will make Him to be glorious unto men as the God of every grace.

This truth is repeated in verse twelve. "That we should be to the extolling of His glory." And it is more fully set forth in a great summation found in Ephesians 2:7-10. Here the truth is almost lost due to the weakness of the translation. An attempt will be made to set it forth by means of a faithful paraphrase.

In order that among the eons to come He should be displaying the transcendent riches of His grace in His goodness to us in Christ Jesus. It is in relationship to this grace that you have been blessed (saved), through faith, and this is not out of yourselves, it is God's gift, it is not of works making it impossible for anyone to boast. For we are God's own achievement, created in Christ Jesus for good works which are prepared beforehand by God as our sphere of action.

During the past 1900 years our God has been writing into the history of His long dealings with mankind a record of the graciousness of His character. To write this record of His grace is His present purpose, and all other purposes are in abeyance until His present purpose is complete. This record is being written by means of a great display of grace under an administration of grace.

Everything that God has done in the past 1900 years has been a work of grace. If He cannot act in grace, He does not act at all. At the present time all His works of grace are done in secret, the riches of grace in His present display are untraceable. When the kingdom of God is a reality that which God has done in secret will then be open and public and His works and ways for the past 1900 years can be traced out. This will be part of our work, and we can rest assured that everything we find will give witness to the grace that is inherent in the character of God.

Thus our future is linked up with making known the great God of every grace, and in doing so we shall open the record of the great grace that He displayed in this the administration of grace. With these facts before us we are ready to take another step in considering the hope that is within us.

What Does *En Tois Epouraniois* Mean

Beyond all dispute, the hope that is within us is very definitely linked up with a Greek phrase that is to be found only in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. This phrase occurs five times. It is translated "in heavenly places" four times, and "in high places" once. A review of these occurrences will show how positively this phrase is linked up with our hope.

In Ephesians 1:3 we are told that we are to be blessed "with every spiritual blessing *en tois epouraniois* in Christ." From this passage alone we see the importance of this phrase, and we are impressed with the need for knowing its exact meaning.

In Ephesians 1:20 we read that after He raised Him from the dead God set Jesus Christ at His own right hand *en tois epouraniois*.

In Ephesians 2:6 we find that God has seated us *en tois epouraniois* in Christ Jesus.

In Ephesians 3:10 we read about "principalities and powers" that are *en tois epouraniois*. These are to be shown through the ecclesia the innumerable aspects of God's wisdom.

In Ephesians 6:12 we read that it is not ours to wrestle with flesh and blood; that we wrestle with the sovereignties, with the authorities, with the world-forces of this darkness, with the spiritual forces of wickedness *en tois epouraniois*.

From these passages we see how vitally this phrase is related to the hope that is within us, also to our present warfare. To misunderstand or to misinterpret this phrase, or to attach to it some meaning that is not warranted by the facts in the case concerning it, will mean that any true understanding of Ephesians is impossible.

Inasmuch as my own understanding and teaching in regard to this phrase has undergone a complete revolution, I beg the indulgence of my readers while I insert here some of my personal experiences in regard to finding the meaning of this important term.

In the past twenty years I have never been free from controversy concerning the meaning of this phrase. Most of my readers will know that in the beginning of my labors as a student of the Word of God, I was a follower of that system of interpretation which is called the Scofield theory of dispensational truth. The *Scofield Reference Bible* was the first book I had as an aid to Bible study, and as I advanced in my knowledge of the Bible, I fully accepted the system of interpretation that was made popular by Scofield. I will never regret this as it was a step in the right direction. However, it was only a step, and my heart now goes out to those who have become impaled upon Scofield's notes and have made no further advance.

In this system of teaching we were prone to state that "the hopes and blessings of Israel are earthly, while the hopes and blessings of the church are heavenly." However, we did not even maintain this crude division, for we reached into Israel and took out all the best people and put them into heaven with the so called "church." We believed in a rapture and a resurrection that was imminent, but which was made part and parcel of the second coming of Christ. In this resurrection and rapture we included every good man from Adam to Christ. Such men as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph were divorced from Israel and given a place in heaven on the basis of full equality with those we called "the church." Thus, while we insisted that "the church" began at Pentecost, we actually included in it every good man and woman from Adam onward.

I held and taught these views for fifteen years, although they were held rather weakly for the last three years of this period. As my knowledge and understanding of God's Word increased, hundreds of passages were being held in suspension. I did not know what to do with these. I could find no place for them in my system of belief.

Twenty-two years ago I came to see the unique and distinct character of God's present calling of believers, a company that is distinct even from those who were called of God during the 33 years of which the book of Acts is the history. I came to see Acts 28:28 as a dispensational boundary line. This view did so much to explain so many passages, to clear up so many difficulties, and to explain what seemed to be hopeless contradictions that it began a new day with my Bible.

However, as would be expected, these new truths began to create new difficulties. Since I believed that one company of Abraham's seed was to be blessed upon the earth and that another company of Abraham's seed was to be blessed in heaven - what then was the distinct and unique place of God's present calling?

It was at this time that I came upon the teaching that there were not just two realms where the saints would abide, but three - a realm that is higher than the heaven to which Enoch and Elijah ascended. This teaching I readily accepted, first, because it seemed absolutely necessary in order to maintain the distinct and unique character of God's grace calling, and, second, because there seemed to be much in Scripture that supported it. I see now that if I had not tried to "rightly-divide" God's people as to their future abodes, I never would have had the difficulty of finding another abode for God's present calling.

The things in Scripture that seemed to lend support to the idea that there is a third realm which is higher than the heaven where angels dwell can be briefly summed up as follows:

The fact that there is a realm called "the heavens of heavens" set forth in the Old Testament. This seemingly had to be a different and higher realm than the place called "heavens." See I Kings 8:27.

The use of the term "above the heavens" found in the Psalms and in Ephesians.

The fact that the word *epouranios* is found in the New Testament. Since *ouranos* meant heaven, it seemed quite possible and probable that *epouranious* designated a higher realm.

On the basis of these things I accepted and began to teach the idea that there were to be three abodes or realms for the people of God-the earth, the heavens, and the heavens of heavens. This teaching will be found in my earliest writing. I can say truthfully that this theory of three realms was fondly believed and fervently declared. Furthermore, I sought to clarify, to develop and to perfect this belief, and it was in the process of doing this that I had my first feelings of doubt concerning it. And I will have to admit that it brought me a feeling of great uneasiness when I first began to feel that the whole idea of a third sphere was built upon a very sandy foundation.

If I were a man who withdrew from all other students, if I were a man who stood aloof from all questions in regard to anything that I am teaching, then I suppose I would still be going on blindly

believing and proclaiming this erroneous idea. But I am not such a man. Through my spoken and written ministry I have made hundreds of friends who are personal students of the Word of God. The goal of these men is to get the truth that God has enshrined in His Word. I consider these men to be honest and sincere, even though they do not agree with me and I do not agree with them in all matters. These men feel free to criticize, to question, and to make suggestions concerning anything which I believe and teach. At the close of almost every message I give the meeting is thrown open for questions and discussion. This has always been a great help in testing and clarifying the ideas that have been presented in the message.

From the moment I published my teachings concerning the three spheres of future glory, the idea was met by a barrage of criticism by both friends and foes. The item that was most severely attacked was that the word *epouranios* signified a future abode, a realm higher than heaven. Nevertheless, I refused to budge from my position, and the attack died down.

In 1946 my position came under severe criticism once again. This was not a public attack. It was made by two brethren in private. To these brethren I readily admitted that I was far from sure about the correctness of my position, but that I would not yield concerning *it* until someone explained to me the difference between "heaven" and the "heaven of heavens," the *meaning* of "far above all heavens," and the true significance of the Greek word *epouranios*. These *things* my critics were not able to do.

Several years later my teaching *in* regard to the third sphere became part of a bitter personal attack against me and my ministry. *This* attack was made by men who knew I had admitted doubt concerning the correctness of my position. I did not feel at that time that these men really cared about the truth. I feel that their one desire was to triumph over me in debate. Subsequent events have convinced me of the truth of this, for since I have freely and openly acknowledged that *epouranios* does not mean a super-heavenly abode, these men have become strangely silent, even going so far as to temporize on their former position. They seem no longer to be interested in the matter since it is no longer of any value as a club with which to beat me.

But, be this as it may, I have not allowed any of this to hinder me in my quest for the truth. I will never hesitate to fully investigate something I have fondly believed, just because someone has made his attacks against it to be a personal matter. True this makes it somewhat harder to say "I was wrong," but truth must triumph no matter how reluctant we may be to yield to carping critics.

In the course of my studies in the Word I had occasion to study every occurrence of the Hebrew word *shamayim*, the word that is usually translated "heaven" or "heavens." As a result I was surprised to find what a broad word it is and how many different meanings it can have. It is used as a descriptive title for God, it is used of the firmament, it is used of the beings who occupy the place where angels dwell, the place where Enoch and Elijah are now located.

The fact that the term "heavens" is used of the planets, or what we might call the planetary heavens, led me into a very fascinating study. This resulted in the conviction that in the opening verse of the Word of God the word "heavens" refers to the planets, with special attention given to this planet on which we live, the earth. This article is not the place to go into the reasons for this conviction. It will have to suffice for me to say that this is my understanding of Genesis 1: 1. If any do not agree, they have the same liberty that I reserve for myself, the liberty to form their own judgment based upon their own information.

My findings in regard to this made possible a new understanding of the term "heavens of heavens." I now see that since "the heavens" in Genesis 1: 1 refers to the planets, the term "heavens of heavens" refers to the place where God has prepared His throne (Psalm 103: 19), the place where Enoch and Elijah are now located.

The fact that "heavens" is also used of heavenly beings, the angelic powers, cleared away the difficulty I had concerning the phrase "above the heavens." This does not refer to places, it refers to beings. In His exaltation Jesus Christ "ascended up far above all heavens" (Eph. 4: 10). If this refers to space or to places it would put Him beyond anything that could be called heaven, even a so-called super-heaven. But it does not refer to places-it refers to beings. His position is above them all.

This left only the word *epouranios* to be considered. If there were sufficient evidence to show that this word had nothing to do with a sphere that is higher than heaven, then my last reason for believing in a future realm was gone.

At this point I had begun to see that my initial reason for receiving the idea of a third realm as a future abode was based entirely upon the fact that "heaven" had been assigned to the so called "star seed of Abraham." As a result of a study made of the hope of Israel, I saw the error of this, so it was no longer necessary to find a place higher than heaven as the hope of our calling. This left me free to make an unbiased and unprejudiced study of the word *epouranios*. Here are the facts as I found them.

What Does *Epouranios* Mean

This word is found twenty times in the Greek New Testament. One of these occurrences is of doubtful textual authority (Matt. 18:35). The translators of the *King James Version* used *heavenly*, *celestial*, and *high* to translate this word, often adding *things* or *places* to complete the thought. This reveals that there was both doubt and difference of opinion among them as to what this word meant. Beyond all question this word is of great importance to the diligent student of present truth, inasmuch as it is found five times in Paul's letter to the Ephesians.

There is an erroneous idea held by some that this word is found only in Ephesians. This is a mistake. The facts are that this word is found in a unique form in Ephesians. In all five occurrences in this epistle it is always dative as to case, plural as to number, but it cannot be immediately determined whether it is masculine or neuter as it stands in the text. *Epouraniois* can be either masculine or neuter, depending upon what the context may reveal.

Also in Ephesians this word is always preceded by the Greek words *en tois*. Now, the word *en* is a very simple word. It means *in* when it is used with the singular and *among* when it is used with the plural. It is translated "among" in Ephesians 2: 3, 3: 8, and 5: 3, so it is nothing but deplorable ignorance that would lead anyone to insist that *en* means *in* and not *among*. Since *epouraniois* here is plural, the evidence is strong that it means among. The word *tois* is merely the definite article, so we can feel assured here that the first two words of this important phrase means *among the*. This leaves us facing the question, "Among the what? What does *e pouraniois* mean?"

This phrase translated "in heavenly places" by the *King James Version* has been altered by some to read "in the heavenlies." They would lead us to think that this is a vast improvement, but all they have done is to replace one meaningless phrase with another that is just as obscure. *Epouraniois* does not mean "heavenly places" and it does not mean "heavenlies."

In my judgment one of the most important clues that points to the true meaning of this word is the fact that it is found once in the *Septuagint Version*. The importance of this one occurrence may not appeal to some, but this will be due to their lack of appreciation of the importance of this version as a whole in discovering the meaning of many Greek words. This importance has been summed up exceptionally well by Mr. Charles H. Welch, the Editor of *The Berean Expositor*. He says as follows:

While dealing with the meaning of the word we must not ignore the testimony of the Septuagint.

Granting that the translators of the Septuagint were uninspired men, we must ever remember the following facts, that the bulk of the quotations in the N.T. are from the Septuagint version, and the presence in home, synagogue and school of that version for several centuries gave sanction and fixity to the words used in its doctrines which neither the Lord nor His apostles contravened, but accepted as starting points for their own teaching. *The Berean Expositor*, Vol. 16, page 38.

In a later issue of the same publication Mr. Welch says:

The reader of *The Berean Expositor* who has been acquainted with its method of exposition for any length of time, will be aware that the testimony of the Septuagint, especially for the light that it sheds upon the meaning of N.T. words is held in high esteem. In our Index of Vols. I-XX of *The Berean Expositor*, we have devoted two pages to a special Index of references to the Septuagint Version of the O.T. *The Berean Expositor*, Vol. 38, No.7, page 139.

A careful examination of the Index referred to by Mr. Welch shows no reference to the word *epouranios* in the *Septuagint Versio.n*. I am confident that if Mr. Welch had taken this into consideration in forming his conclusions as to the meaning of this word, his findings concerning it may have been quite different. I insist that if we allow the Septuagint to give its testimony as to the meaning of *epouranios* it will be impossible for us to any longer believe that it refers to a future abode or to a super-heaven.

It is my earnest desire that Mr. Welch will accept this criticism of his position in the same friendly spirit in which it is given. It is made on the basis of a statement made by him in one of his early volumes:

We count it both a privilege and a responsibility to consider all possible objections to the position we have sought to maintain for the past seventeen years. *The Berean Expositor*, Vol. 16 - page 127. August, 1926.

Let us return to our consideration of the Septuagint testimony concerning *epouranios*. For the sake of some who may be beginners in Biblical matters it needs to be said that the *Septuagint Version* is a Greek version of the Hebrew Old Testament, made for the Greek speaking Jews who lived in Alexandria. This enabled them to read their own Scriptures in the Greek language, a tongue with which the majority of Jews in Egypt were far more familiar than with the ancient Hebrew language.

Now one of the descriptive titles of God found many times in the Hebrew Old Testament is *Shaddai*. Sometimes this is preceded by the word *El*, but often it stands alone. When men turned Hebrew into English they used "the Almighty God" to render *El Shaddai* and "the Almighty" as the equivalent of *Shaddai*. When the Septuagint translators came upon these terms they usually rendered them by the simple term *Theos*, meaning God. However, when one of these translators came upon the term *Shaddai* in Psalm 68:14 he sought to render it more expressively and accurately. Seeking for a Greek word that would be equal to it he laid hold of the word *epouranios* and translated *Shaddai* here by the Greek term *ten epouranion*.

Thus we see that a Hebrew and Greek scholar living several centuries before Christ understood the word *epouranios* to be a fitting and proper translation of a Hebrew word which is a descriptive title of God. Would any care to say that this man did not know Hebrew? Would any dare to say that he was not fully conversant with Greek? Certainly not! His knowledge of both these languages was

what gave him a place among the seventy who are supposed to have made the *Septuagint Version*. And, to repeat and enlarge upon what has already been said, this man knew what *epouranios* meant, he knew that it was a fitting and proper title for the Supreme Being, even the Almighty. This gave a meaning to this word that neither the Lord Jesus nor Paul contravened.

This is the most positive clue that can be found as to the meaning of this word. When we find it in the singular in the New Testament it must be related to the Supreme Being, even our God. In view of this an occurrence of *epouranios* such as that found in Hebrew 3:1 cannot mean either heavenly or superheavenly to me. From henceforth I can only understand this as speaking of "partakers of God's calling" or, at least "partakers of a divine calling."

However there is another important fact that needs to be considered. In the Classical Greek writings of this same period the word *epouranios* in its plural form is found many times. These writers used it of "the higher powers," those whom the Greeks called "the gods." (See *Manual Greek Lexicon of the N.T.* by G. Abbott-Smith). Thus, the Greeks used this term in the singular of the Supreme Being, and in the plural of lesser beings. Therefore, any argument that this word in the singular cannot mean a "being" and in the plural "beings" is an argument based upon ignorance of the facts in the case. The Greeks certainly knew their language better than any American living in the twentieth century.

In view of these facts every occurrence of *epouranios* in the New Testament needs to be reconsidered, and every passage in which this word is found needs to be reinterpreted. Space does not permit the doing of this in this study, furthermore, it is not our subject. We are interested in the occurrences of this word in Ephesians.

In Volume XIV, Number 2 of THE WORD OF TRUTH a brief examination of the Ephesian passages was given. There it was suggested that *en tois epouraniois* should be translated "among the super-heavenly beings" or "among the super-heavenly ones" whichever may be preferred. However, most readers took the adjective *super-heavenly* to indicate a place, but this was not the idea I intended to convey. I was seeking to set forth beings of such exalted character and standing that they could well be called super-heavenly. In the months that have intervened since that article was written the whole subject has been given intense study. This has resulted in clarification and enlargement, as other great truths have been related to it.

Neglected Truths

One cause of failure to understand Paul's letter to the Ephesians is the neglect of certain truths that are prominent there. In Ephesians 1:21 we read about "principality, and power, and might, and dominion." The mere reading of this passage causes at once the question to arise: What are these? Our Lord has been given a position that is above everyone of them. What are they?

In Ephesians 3:10 we read again about "principalities and powers" and there can be no question but that these are descriptive titles of living beings, not the name of inanimate things. Another reference is found in Ephesians 6:12 and it is quite evident here that the reference is to beings.

In Colossians 1:16 they are mentioned again and the title of "thrones" is added to the list. In Colossians 2:10 we find that Christ is the head of every "principality and power," and in Colossians 2:15 that He "spoiled principalities and powers."

Thus we see the prominence given to these terms in Ephesians and Colossians, the two epistles which above all others sets forth truth for the time in which we live. If the truth contained in these passages is ignored, or if it is misunderstood, it might result in, a veil being drawn over these two epistles which will obscure much of the truth they contain.

In all the occurrences noted it seems evident that the references are to angelic beings. However, it must be noted that these are not ordinary angels in the general sense of that term. These are angelic beings who because of the service they perform have been endowed, equipped, and exalted by God so that they fill the high positions set forth by the terms we are considering.

An illustration of this can be found in Titus 3:1 where Paul exhorts Titus to remind his hearers "to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates." In this passage these principalities, powers and magistrates are most certainly human beings. Yet these are not the ordinary run of human beings, for they are men who because of the services they perform in relationship to human governments have been exalted by men to the positions which their descriptive titles indicate. Thus, a human principality is a man who has been exalted among men, and an angelic principality is an angel who has been exalted by God among angels. It remains, therefore, that if God should endue, equip, and exalt a man for this high office, that man would become a divine principality.

It should be particularly noted that while the words *arche dunamis kurios exousia* and *thronos* are found many places in the New Testament, these words receive a prominence in Ephesians and Colossians above all other places. in the New Testament. This gives these words a prominent place in truth for today. Yet they are truths which seem to have been neglected and ignored by most expositors of Ephesians.

There are certain pertinent facts that need to be known about these words before we can form any true judgment in regard to their meaning and to the message which is involved in their appearance in these two epistles.

The word translated "principality" in Eph. 1:21 is *arche*. This describes the highest possible position when it is applied to angels or to men. It is used of Christ as one of His descriptive titles (Rev. 3:14, translated "beginning"). It seems that *sovereignty* would be a much better translation of this word when it is applied to beings. Above all other sovereignties stands the Sovereign, the Lord Jesus Christ. Certain angelic beings have been so qualified and exalted that they are designated as sovereignties. When God's government is a reality over this earth certain men will be qualified and exalted by God to the place of sovereignty. However, this is future. No man is a divine sovereign today. The word *arche* is the basis of the word archangel. Michael is the sovereign angel, the first angel, the principal angel.

The word translated *power* in Ephesians 1:21 is *exousia*. This word means authority and should be so translated. There are of course human authorities and divine authorities. Certain angelic beings have been exalted by God in relationship to the service which they perform and this makes them authorities in the sight of God. There is no man upon earth today who can rightfully claim any god-given authority over men in any matter. All authority today is human authority. Nevertheless, under the kingdom of God men will be given authority and will be qualified by God to exercise the authority He gives to them. This will automatically make these men to be authorities in regard to whatever matter they have been given jurisdiction.

The word translated *might* in Ephesians 1:21 is *dunamis* and should be translated power. When applied to beings, this word denotes the gift of divine ability. This gift will make a man able to do the superhuman. No man has power today. A thousand voices may be raised in dispute of this, but let them save their breath. There is nothing quite as ridiculous as a man claiming or arguing that he has power. All he needs to do is display it. One may have great human ability, and if these abilities are consecrated to God they may be used of Him. But no one is a power before God.

The word translated *dominion* in Ephesians 1:21 is *kuriotes*, and is correctly translated "dominion." This word could also be translated lordship. It will help us to understand this if we

remember that Christ is to be Lord of lords. There will be one Lord, but many lordships, both angelic and human.' No man today can truly say that God has made him a lord. There are divinely appointed lords among angelic beings, but these have little service to perform while the kingdom of God is in abeyance.

The word translated "*thrones*" in Colossians 1:16 is *thronos*. We are not inclined to think of the word *throne* as indicating a being, either angelic or human, but it does nevertheless. While this word actually means "a seat of government" it is by a figure of speech applied to the one who holds that seat. An appeal to the throne is an appeal to the one who sits upon it.

Thus we find five terms applied to angelic beings. They are designated as sovereignties, authorities, powers, dominions, and thrones. No man today can claim to be any of these in the sight of God. Yet the day will surely come when men will be exalted to these places and will bear these titles in relationship to the service they perform before God.

With these facts before us we are now ready to take another step, and consider a related truth.

The Mighty Ones

In order to have a general term under which to classify all these sovereignties, authorities, powers, dominions, and thrones we will make use of the term "the mighty ones." We will do this in order to maintain the contrast between the Mighty One and the mighty ones, between the One called *Epouranios* (sing.) and those called *epouraniois* (plural).

The designation "the mighty ones" is based upon Psalm 82:1, and while some may object to its accuracy, we will use it until some better term is suggested. These "mighty ones" are later referred to as "gods" and as sons of the Most High. See Psalm 82:6. In conformity to our common English usage we find it hard to call angels or men by the term *gods*. Our detractors are apt to accuse us of polytheism if we do. But since the Spirit of God does this, we will also do it and then leave it to our accusers to explain John 10:34-36.

Those who are familiar with Scripture will know that there is One who is revealed in it who is called God, but there are others who are called gods. There is One called the Almighty, but there are others called the mighty ones. There is One called the Most High but there are others called the high ones. There is One who is called the Son of God, but there are others called the sons of God.

It needs to be noted here that if any being, either angelic or human becomes a god, a mighty one, a high one, a son of God, a sovereignty, an authority, a power, or a dominion it is because God gives of Himself to them. They partake of what He is. Even Adam in creation became a son of God (Luke 3:38) because he was made in God's image and after God's likeness. Adam lost this in the fall.

Some will object to the statement made in the previous paragraph because Satan is called "the god of this eon." However, it must be remembered that Satan is the god of this eon because mankind has given him this place. I speak only of those who are "gods" because God made them to be this. See Exodus 7:1.

In view of all the facts that have been set forth I would declare without hesitation or equivocation that the meaning of *en tois epouraniois* in all five occurrences in Ephesians is *among the mighty ones*.

Therefore, as a result of carefully examining all the facts we are able to say with full assurance that it is part of the hope that is within us that we will be blessed with every spiritual blessing among the mighty ones in Christ.

The words *in Christ* here are important. It is my understanding that when the name Christ stands alone it is always connected with blessing just as Lord is related to authority.

If we read Jude 1:9 we discover two mighty ones with an argument going on between them about the body of Moses. One of these mighty ones is Michael the archangel, and he can be said to be a mighty one in Christ. The other is the Devil, and while it must be admitted that he is a mighty one, we will not admit for one moment that he is a mighty one in Christ. A fallen angel is still an angel, and a fallen mighty one is still a mighty one.

Another pertinent passage that bears upon our theme is found in Job 1:6.

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them.

It is evident from the record that these sons of God presented themselves before the Lord in order to give an account and to seek further instructions. The fact that Satan was among them does not alter this in the least. These are the mighty ones, and they are here called the sons of God.

In Ephesians 1:5 we are told that God has pre-determined us to the son-place. This is the natural outcome of being blessed with every spiritual blessing among the mighty ones in Christ. And as sons of God, serving Him in connection with His great theophany upon the earth, it is part of the hope within us that we shall on many occasions present ourselves before Christ in the place where He is now seated. We shall see His glory, we shall give an account of our services and we shall seek from Him instructions for our work. Upon our return to the earth we shall announce to men that we have stood in the presence of Christ Jesus, that we have seen, that we have heard, and the things we declare are the outcome of having been with Christ. In that day we will be offering help to men who hunger after God. Men will receive our witness. We will make known the God who is the God of every grace. We will represent God, we will express God, we will make Him known. These are the good works we shall walk in.

It is the hope within us that we shall live busy and useful lives, serving God in a worthwhile way, fully equipped for the service that we are to perform. When Christ who is our life shall shine forth, we will also shine forth with Him. This will not be in shame, or in reproach. We shall shine forth in our new glory as the mighty ones in Christ.

What a hope! What grace! What glory!

The End.

End, Vol. XIV, No. 5