

THE WORD OF TRUTH

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THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The preeminent personality in the Bible is the Lord Jesus Christ. He fills the pages of the Book. The preeminent subject of the Bible is the kingdom of God. The one who reads the Bible and fails to find in its pages the record that God has given of His Son, has failed to discover the One of whom it testifies. The one who reads the Bible and fails to come to an understanding of the kingdom of God, has missed the truth that is paramount in its pages.

Anyone who makes a study of the Bible will soon find that he is studying about the kingdom of God. Any man who preaches and teaches the Bible will be preaching and teaching the truth of the kingdom of God. If we do not find and lay hold of the truth of the kingdom of God in the Bible, we will never know what it is talking about.

The truth concerning the kingdom of God has suffered many wounds at the hands of those who should be its friends. It has been defined as being "the church" and applied to organized religion. It has been relegated to Israel by the ignorant cliché that "the kingdom is Jewish." It has been said to be the present rule of God in the hearts of those who belong to Him. This is a commonly accepted definition that will not equate with any occurrence of the term in the New Testament.

The kingdom of God has been belittled by certain dispensationalists. By them it is accorded no place in truth for today. They would divorce it from the ministry of Paul as if it were no part of his message.

One of the most serious offences against the truth of the kingdom of God has been the practice of giving it a broad, indefinite, ephemeral, and meaningless definition. It is defined as being "the sovereignty of God, which is moral and universal, that existed from the beginning and will know no end. It is over all and embraces all." A statement like this is so indefinite that it is meaningless. And, as said before, it will not equate with any occurrence of the term in the New Testament.

Another has said: "The kingdom of God is a wider term than the kingdom of heaven. Nothing is outside this sovereignty. This kingdom is limited by no bounds of time and space. The sovereignty of the kingdom of God includes all ages and dispensations, past, present, and future; all realms, earth, heavens, and the universe; all creation, dominions, principalities, powers, angels, and men; things temporal and things spiritual. It includes the kingdom of heavens and the church."

A definition such as the one just quoted is utterly worthless when we try to understand the kingdom of God by means of it. All one needs to do is to take a definition such as this and place it in any passage in the New Testament where the kingdom of God is mentioned. It will be found that it will shed no light upon any passage, and will serve only to make the passages confused and ridiculous. Try it for example in Matthew 12:28, Matthew 21:43, John 3:5, or 2 Thess. 1:5.

It is true that the kingdom of God is the sovereignty of God, that is, His rule, His order, His government. However, the term "the kingdom of God" in the New Testament, and especially in the language of the Lord Jesus, was always a future reality that would come about by a miraculous intervention of God. This will terminate the misrule of man and will inaugurate the rule of God. It will abolish man's order and bring in God's order. To interpret this phrase as indicating some all-inclusive, all-embracing present reality is to impart into it ideas that were never in the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact this term usually refers to a future condition of blessedness to be experienced upon this earth. It is the "one hope" that is ever held out to all men, no matter what their peculiar calling may be. This is the great truth and hope which all religions have put aside and replaced it with the error and empty hope of going to heaven.

The importance of the kingdom of God as the great general truth of the Bible deserves fresh study. This study needs to be made by men who are able to properly evaluate and to honestly criticize their own positions. It will be of no value if it is made by men who boast that they never change.

The truth of the kingdom of God is the great general truth to which every other truth must be related. Even Paul's final revelation, the truth of God's present unique calling of saints must be related to the great general truth of the kingdom of God. We will enter into our peculiar hope, we will take our place and fulfill our destiny when the kingdom of God is a reality upon this earth.

The importance of the truth of the kingdom of God can be established by certain propositions. These the reader is asked to duly consider.

Proposition 1. Jesus Christ was sent to this earth to proclaim the kingdom of God.

And He said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent. Mark 4:43.

The Lord had brought great blessings to Capernaum. He had proclaimed to the people there the kingdom of God. In order to demonstrate what men could expect when God's government became a reality upon the earth, He had cast out unclean spirits and healed without exception all the sick who were brought to Him. As He took His departure from the city, the people followed Him and urged Him to stay. But He declined saying that He must proclaim the kingdom of God to other cities also, explaining that this is what He had been sent to do.

We need to note here that the Lord's proclamation of the kingdom of God was limited to the cities of Israel and to the people of Israel. This does not mean that the kingdom of God was only for Israel. The day is coming when God is going to judge the inhabited earth in righteousness by that man whom He has ordained (Acts 17:31). Jesus Christ is predestined to reign over the nations (Romans 15:12). Israel is only one of these nations. It is the nations that will put their trust in Him, not just Israel alone (Matt. 12:21).

Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. Mark 1:14, 15.

Proposition 2. Jesus Christ's message to every city and village was the kingdom of God.

And it came to pass afterward, that He went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with Him. Luke 8:1.

His message did not vary. He heralded and told the good news of the kingdom of God in each place He visited.

Proposition 3. When He proclaimed the kingdom of God, He healed all who had need of healing.

And the people, when they knew it, followed Him: and He received them, and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing. Luke 9:11.

When the kingdom of God was proclaimed in Israel, it brought healing to all who had need of healing. When it was in "the blade stage" in the Acts period it brought health and healing to all who came under it. God's purpose in relationship to His kingdom was suspended at Acts 28:28. When it comes again and is imposed universally upon the whole of mankind, it will bring healing and health to the whole human race. This will be the result of God's lifting the curse that caused all sickness and disease. We need to remember that God's government does not demand response before it blesses. It blesses first and then demands a fitting and proper response from all who are blessed.

Proposition 4. The kingdom of God was the hope of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets.

There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the East and from the West, and from the North and from the South, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. Luke 13:28, 29.

A statement similar to this will be found in Matthew 8:11 where the term "the kingdom of the heavens" is used. The destiny of these men is not heaven. They will be raised from the dead to take their place in that divine order that Matthew calls the kingdom of the heavens and Luke calls the kingdom of God. The difference between these two is one of linguistic idiom and not of meaning.

Proposition 5. The kingdom of God was the hope of Joseph of Arimathea.

And, behold, there was a man named Joseph, a counselor; and he was a good man, and a just: (The same had not consented to the counsel and deed of them;) he was of Arimathea, a city of the Jews: who also himself waited for the kingdom of God. Luke 23:50,51.

The kingdom of God has many aspects. Some of these were seen during the earthly ministry of, Jesus Christ. See Matt. 12:28. But this was not what Joseph waited for. He was waiting for that time and for that condition of blessedness in which the whole realm of creation will be under the rule of God. Joseph was not waiting for some "universal sovereignty that existed from the beginning and would have no end." He was waiting for something that would be introduced by a cataclysmic change, a new order of things in which greed, sin, violence, and death would no longer dominate human society.

Proposition 6. The kingdom of God was the subject of the ministry of Jesus Christ in

the forty days that elapsed between His resurrection and His ascension.

To whom also He shewed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Acts 1:3.

These days were important days. They would be the final days that the Lord would spend with His disciples before ascending into heaven. Nevertheless, the theme of His message did not change. He spoke of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Under the kingdom of God, national sovereignty will again be restored to the nation of Israel. The disciples asked Him about this specific feature of the kingdom of God. He did not rebuke them for their question, nor did He deny their specific hope for their nation. He declared that the time was God's secret.

Proposition 7. The kingdom of God was the message of Philip when he first went to the Samaritans.

But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Acts 8:12.

In verse five of this same chapter it is stated that Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. The people of Samaria with one accord gave heed unto all that he said. When this is referred to again, the term "preaching Christ" has been changed to "preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God." Whenever Christ is fully presented, the message will always relate Him to the kingdom of God. Luke, the writer of Acts uses the term "preaching Christ" and "preaching the kingdom of God" synonymously. One cannot be preached apart from the other.

Proposition 8. The kingdom of God was the hope that Paul held out to his earliest converts.

Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. Acts 14:22.

At this point in our study the great Apostle to the Gentiles comes upon the scene. By this time so much has been revealed concerning the kingdom of God that we will find very little in the record of his ministry that will advance the truth beyond that revealed by our Lord. Nevertheless, the kingdom of God was the hope he held out to his first converts in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch.

Proposition 9. The kingdom of God was the great truth that climaxed Paul's message on Mar's Hill.

Because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead. Acts 17:31.

Even though the term "the kingdom of God" is not used by Paul here; nevertheless, that is his message. He must use a simpler and more expressive term in speaking to these men who would not have been familiar with the terminology used by our Lord. The kingdom of God is the day when God will set the order for the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ

Proposition 10. The kingdom of God was Paul's message in Ephesus.

And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. Acts 19:8.

These Ephesians who attended the synagogue could have been like the Bereans. They could have received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the Scriptures, that is, the Old Testament, to see whether these things were so. Paul's message to them was not new. That which he declared to them had been promised beforehand by His prophets in the holy Scriptures (Rom. 1:2). But when some believed not, he withdrew and separated the learners, meeting each day in the school of one Tyrannus. These daily meetings continued for two years so that all dwellers in Asia heard the word of the Lord. However, the message did not change. It was still "the kingdom of God," as later events demonstrate.

Proposition 11. Paul's entire ministry in Ephesus is described as proclaiming the kingdom of God.

And now, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Acts 20:25.

After two years of ministry in Ephesus, a time during which God wrought special miracles by the hand of Paul, he departed into Macedonia. It was his further purpose to continue on to Jerusalem. On the journey to Jerusalem the ship that carried them stopped at Miletus. From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the representatives of the out-called ones in that city. When they came to him, he spoke of his ministry. among them under four descriptive phrases.

1. Testifying submission toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. Acts 20:21.
2. Testifying to the gospel of the grace of God. Acts 20:24.
3. Proclaiming the kingdom of God. Acts 20:25.
4. Declaring all the counsel of God. Acts 20:27.

In the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, He made it plain that the kingdom of God would come in and advance through certain definite stages. The illustration He used was that of growing grain. This has its beginning with seed planted in the earth, and which advances through five stages: (1) The blade, (2) the ear, (3) the full grain in the ear, (4) the ripened grain, (5) the harvest.

In the thirty-three years covered by the book of Acts, the first two stages of God's government were clearly seen. It began in the "blade" stage on the day of Pentecost and advanced into the "ear" stage as the months rolled on. But the kingdom of God never reached the "full grain in the ear," for at the close of the book of Acts all of God's purposes in relationship to His government of the earth were suspended. We live in a time when the kingdom of God is suspended. God's present administration is not one of government. It is an administration of grace. This administration of grace had its beginning when Paul declared that "the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles" at Acts 28:28.

The years that Paul spent in Ephesus were years when God was actively at work in connection with His kingdom purposes upon the earth. In regard to God's government the first duty of all men is to submit. Therefore Paul preached submission in relationship to God. But this was not enough. He proclaimed and called upon men for faith in relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ. He has no new message, but He does have a revelation from God which He calls the good news of the grace of God. This message made it possible for him to offer a place in the kingdom of God to men who because of their character were barred from it. Note this in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 where he lists a dozen kinds of men who can have no place or portion in the kingdom of God. Following this list he declares, "And such were some of you," then goes on to show that these are washed, sanctified, and justified. Therefore, they will enjoy a place and a portion in the kingdom of God.

Peter preached the same Lord Jesus Christ that Paul preached, but he was never authorized to offer a place in the kingdom of God to sinners such as Paul describes in 1 Cor. 6:9,10. Paul alone had the gracious message that could take these in.

From this we learn that the gospel of the grace of God was a message which offered all the benefits of the death of Christ to those who would have been barred from them. Paul was given a message that would give them a place in the kingdom of God.

Proposition 12. The kingdom of God was Paul's message during the full day that he met with the chief men of the Jews in Rome.

And when they had appointed him a day, there came many .to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening. Acts 28:23.

This was an important day-as important as any day Paul had experienced in his entire ministry. Nevertheless, on this day his subject was primarily the kingdom of God. This day ended with Paul making the solemn pronouncement that "the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles" (Acts 28:28). Thus we can say that on the day before the great dispensational change took place that Paul's message was the kingdom of God.

Proposition 13. The kingdom of God was Paul's message for two years after Acts 28:28.

And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus' Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him. Acts 28:30,31.

Even though God's purposes related to His government of the earth were suspended by the salvation of God being sent to the Gentiles, the kingdom of God is still proclaimed. The great work that God is doing under the present administration of grace, the unique and distinct calling which is being produced, will find its end and fulfill its destiny in that new order which will be produced by God's government upon the earth.

When one begins to lay hold of the great truths revealed in the Ephesian epistle he is sure to ask certain questions. When will God's present calling of saints enter into possession of "every spiritual blessing"? When will we be given our place as sons of God? When will we perform those good works which God has before ordained that we should walk in them?

There is only one true answer to these questions. It will all be realized in the kingdom of God. It will be when God's own government establishes His own order upon the earth. This is why Paul warns those to whom he writes that certain classes are excluded from the kingdom of God (Eph. 5:5). This is why certain men can be referred to as his "fellowworkers unto the kingdom of God" (Col. 4:11).

The kingdom of God is the great general truth of the Bible. Every other truth must in some manner be related to it. We cannot reason from the particular to the general. All true knowledge must begin with the great general truth of the kingdom of God. Even the truths of Ephesians and Colossians must be understood in the light that in these two epistles the resumption of God's kingdom purposes, even the coming of the kingdom of God upon the earth is anticipated.

The End.

THE SCOPE OF RESURRECTION

Questions which can be answered by the Word of God should be answered by it. Matters that can be settled by a fact from Sacred Scripture should be settled in this manner. As to the scope of the resurrection, the Apostle Paul settled this once and for all when he said in his defense before Felix:

But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: and have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, BOTH OF THE JUST AND THE UNJUST. Acts. 24:14,15.

Even if this were the only testimony to the universality of resurrection it should be enough. This should settle the matter for all who allow things to be settled by the plain statements of the Word of God. But, alas, some are not of this mind. There are those who are insisting that resurrection is to be the experience only of believers, even going so far as to insist that since no infant can be a believer, none who die in infancy will ever be raised from the dead. The specious arguments that are being used in support of this idea are being accepted by many who do no thinking of their own. Paul's simple declaration is brushed aside, for no fact of Scripture is allowed to stand in the way of this error.

The truth of Acts 24:15 is so positively opposed to this teaching of a limited resurrection that ways must be found to nullify it. We are told that both the "just and the unjust" in this passage are believers, and that the "unjust" are simply the "just" who have done unjust things. The "unjust steward" of Luke 16:1-8 is pointed out as a proof of this. This to my mind is the most childish handling of Scripture I have ever witnessed.

The word for "unjust" in Acts 24:15 is *adikos*. Note this same word in Luke 16:10, I Cor. 6:1, I Peter 3:18, and 2 Peter 2:9 and see if by any stretch of the imagination it can be made to mean "just people who have done unjust things." Read the entire story of the unjust steward and test the idea that he was a "just steward" who did "unjust things." Biblical interpretation has certainly entered upon a sad day when men try to say that the "unjust" are merely the "just" who have slipped into some shady practices.

Paul's great statement settles the question of the scope of the resurrection. A resurrection awaits "both the just and the unjust." This is the teaching of both the Old and New Testament. It was affirmed by Daniel (Daniel 12:2). It was declared by the Lord Jesus Christ (John 5:28, 29). This truth underlies every passage that speaks of future punishment for sins committed in this life. Those who deny the resurrection of "the unjust" must also say that the only punishment men will ever receive for their sins is that which is received in this life. This would make every warning of future punishment to be ridiculous.

If there is no resurrection of the wicked dead then the scribes and the Pharisees have escaped the "judgment of gehenna." In Matt. 23:33 the Lord challenged them to point to some possible way they could escape it. And yet they have escaped it if they are not raised from the dead. They died like any other man and gehenna was not their lot. But it will be their lot, for they will not escape.

If the wicked dead are not raised, then none will ever die the second death. It is a resurrected company that stands before the great white throne. If these people had not died once before, this could not be a second death. Take every occurrence of second (**deuteros**) in the New Testament and you will find one of like kind preceding it. I reject the puerile argument that: "In the same book in which we find reference to the second death, we also have mention of a second resurrection. Does that imply that some must go through two resurrections?"

An argument such as this will appeal only to those who let anything else that comes along do for thinking. The logical thinker will know that there is no mention of a "second resurrection" in Revelation or any place else in the Bible. If anyone ever experiences a "second resurrection" it will be because he experienced a first. However, the term is foreign to the Bible.

A great many problems such as the one just dealt with have been invented to fit the prearranged solution that only some of the dead are raised.

It is said that resurrection is our hope, and if we hold that the unbeliever is to be raised then we are attributing the same hope to both believers and unbelievers. This argument is based upon inaccurate statements. The fact is our hope is IN resurrection. If it were simply resurrection then there would be no distinctive hope of our calling. The great experience that will result in us entering into our blessings will not have the same result for all who are raised.

The argument is raised that there would be no profit in raising men from the dead only to have them die again, that it would be of no help to those who experienced it, and that it would not add to the glory of God.

Arguments such as this show a woeful ignorance of the divine program which will result in every man having his "day in court." Otherwise there would be no equity in the character of God in His dealings with man. God must take everything into account. A man's heredity, his environment, his knowledge, his opportunities, the way in which he used, neglected or resisted the grace of God, all these must be taken into account. He will consider not only what was done, but what man might have done under other circumstances.

This may sound impossible to us. And it would be impossible for us with our limited understanding to deal separately and righteously with the millions of people who have lived upon the earth. But this presents no difficulty to God.

We take our stand with Paul. We believe in a resurrection, both of the just and the unjust.

The End.

MORE ABOUT EPOURANIOS

In the previous issue of THE WORD OF TRUTH the position was taken that the Greek phrase *en tois epouraniois* found in Ephesians 1:3 should be understood as telling us that those who make up God's present calling are to be blessed "among the mighty ones" in Christ. This conclusion is based upon the Septuagint Version use of the singular form of this word as a translation for the Hebrew word *Shaddai* (the Almighty), also upon the fact that the classical Greek writers use the plural of this word in reference to the higher powers, that is, the gods.

This, to me, is solid evidence, and since there is no evidence that indicates otherwise it needs to be accepted. If we are not going to accept the simple and eloquent testimony of the Septuagint translator in regard to the meaning of this word, then we will stultify every other definition of any word which is in any manner based upon the use in the Septuagint. If in the singular this word means the Almighty, then it follow that in the plural it should mean the mighty ones. The Classical writers so used it.

Some may object that this meaning cannot be carried into other occurrences in the New Testament, but let them be sure of their ground before they make this claim.

The fact that *epouranios* occurs only once in the Septuagint does not in any way vitiate its testimony. The diligent student will call to mind the one occurrence of *orthotomeo* in the Septuagint and will acknowledge the conviction this brings that this word does mean "rightly-divide." Even so the single occurrence of *epouranios* in the Septuagint brings the conviction that this word is a descriptive title of God, the Being who above all other beings is Supreme.

However, it was not my intention to limit the translation of *en tois epouraniois* to just one phrase. The exalted beings who are described in Ephesians by this phrase are also described by other terms in the Bible. They are called the high ones, the holy ones, the sons of God, and the gods. Any of these terms can be used to express the truth of *en tois epouraniois* in Ephesians 1:3. In fact, it might be well to use them at times in order that we might fully express every aspect of the tremendous sweep of truth expressed in the first chapter of Ephesians.

Take for example the title "the holy ones." When we recognize that "holy" means set apart for special service, and realize that we have been chosen to be holy (Eph. 1:4), it would be well if we are stressing this truth to say that we are to be blessed "among the holy ones," even among the holiest of all in Christ.

Or if we are stressing the idea that we are predetermined "to the son-place" as declared in Ephesians 1:5 then it might be well to render *en tois epouraniois* in Ephesians 1:3 to read "among the sons of God." Read about these sons of God in Job 1:6 and rest assured that a day will yet come when the sons of God are to present themselves before the Lord and that there will be human beings from the earth among them, and these human beings will be blessed with such a fullness of blessing that they will be exalted above every angelic being that is numbered among the sons of God.

Such terms as "the high ones," "the holy ones," "the mighty ones," and "the sons of God" are all synonymous. They all have to do with position and exaltation and not with nature or character. They are exalted because of the service they perform. These are the *epouraniois* of Ephesians. However, in order to keep this term in harmony with the English rendering of Shaddai, I prefer and will consistently use the phrase "among the mighty ones" as a translation of *en tois epouraniois*.

This understanding of *en tois epouraniois* is in harmony with all five occurrences found in Ephesians, even though a strong objection has been raised that it faces an insurmountable obstacle in the second occurrence (Eph. 1:20). This we will need to consider.

It has usually been my practice in dealing with a criticism of my teaching to publish faithfully and in full every word of the criticism which is being answered. I am going to do this with an article that appeared in Volume 38, Number 9 of *The Berean Expositor*. The portion of Mr. Welch's study that concerns my teaching is herewith given in full.

It is not possible, nor even desirable, that we should take notice of every difference of opinion that is current, but in the present instance silence could be misinterpreted and damage done to the cause of truth. An honoured teacher who has stood for the great principle of right-division for many years has published his findings in the matter of "heavenly places" in a booklet that is headed: "The Earth, not Heaven, is the future home of God's redeemed. This is what I believe. It is a belief that is not based upon tradition, upon emotion, or upon wishful thinking. It is not a conclusion that I have arrived at hurriedly."

This brother's contention is that the words translated in Ephesians 1:3 "in heavenly places" should be rendered "among heavenly beings."

In the first place if the addition of the word "beings" be permissible so also can the addition of the word "places." If Ephesians 1:3 were the only occurrence of the Greek phrase thus translated, we should have to admit there was just as much reason to accept

one translation as the other. This however is not so. We turn to the second occurrence of this phrase, namely in Ephesians 1:20.

There the reference is to the Ascension which as Ephesians 4:10 shows, placed the Lord "far above *all heavens*, that He might fill all things," even as Ephesians 1:20-23 reveals that Christ our Head is seated at the right hand of God "*far above all principality and power.*"

Christ is not represented here as being seated AMONG these heavenly beings but ABOVE them. The apostle even goes so far as to include "every name that is named" either now or in the future and clinches the argument by the quotation "and hath put all things under His feet" Paul has not left us in doubt as to what this quotation implies.

"For in that He put *all* in subjection under Him, He left *nothing* that is not put under Him." (Heb. 2:8).

"But when He saith *all* things are put under Him, it is manifest that He *is* excepted, which did put *all things* under Him (I Cor. 15:27).

With this as our guide, we must decline to accept any conclusion, however slowly arrived at, that would read into this passage that the seated Christ is only conceived as AMONG and not FAR ABOVE every heavenly or spiritual being, "GOD" alone being the most glorious exception.

We are more sure that ever that we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings IN heavenly places, and while thankful for the contrary opinion that has compelled us to "search and see", we cannot but be concerned about those who may not be able to examine such suggestions for themselves. (CH. Welch, in The Berean Expositor, Vol. 38-No. 9, pages 173-174) .

It comes as a surprise to me that it is my contention that the words translated in Ephesians 1:3 "in heavenly places" should be rendered "among heavenly beings." My contention in the article referred to was that it should be rendered "among the superheavenly beings" or "among the super-heavenly ones." However since I found it quite difficult to get people to see that the word *super-heavenly* had to do with exaltation and position and not with nature I gave it up for the more explicit term "the mighty ones." In view of this I would render **Ephesians 1:20, 21:**

Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand among the mighty ones, far above every sovereignty, and authority, and power, and lordship, and every name that is named, not only in this eon, but also in the coming one.

Mr. Welch insists that Christ is not represented here as being "seated AMONG these heavenly beings but ABOVE them." I insist that there are two truths here and one must not be used to deny the other. Christ is represented in this passage to be seated both AMONG and ABOVE these mighty ones.

Of course this would be impossible if the reference here has to do with physical height or to a place in space, as Mr. Welch seems to try to make it. But if it refers to spiritual position, to authority, and to glory, as it most certainly does, then both ABOVE and AMONG these mighty ones can be true.

I would not want to be guilty of misrepresenting the teachings of Mr. Welch, but the only conclusion I can get from his writings is that Christ ascended to a place called "in heavenly places," where there are no "principalities or powers," this realm being far above their place or habitation.

However, in Ephesians 3:10 we read about "principalities and powers" that are "in heavenly places." Therefore if the term *en tois epouraniois* refers to a place, then these "principalities and powers" are most certainly in that place. Thus Christ could not be "far above" them if these words are taken to refer to physical distance.

The conclusion is inescapable. If Christ is seated *en tois epouraniois* and if these principalities and powers are *en tois epouraniois*, then the words "far above all principality and power" in Ephesians 1:20 cannot refer to a place or places in space. *En tois epouraniois* in Ephesians 1:20 cannot be made to mean a place far above the place occupied by "principalities and powers."

Ephesians 1:20, 21 makes no reference to the physical ascension of Christ as recorded in Acts 1:9. Jesus Christ was given a position at the right hand of God among the mighty ones in Christ and far above every sovereignty and authority the moment that God raised Him from the dead. He did not need to wait forty days for this until the physical ascension recorded in Acts 1:9 was accomplished. How else could He have said, "All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth," (Matt. 28:19) if this were not true. These words were spoken before the physical ascension recorded in Acts 1:9. These facts demonstrate that Christ is both AMONG and FAR ABOVE the sovereignties, the authorities, the powers, and the lordships which are declared in Ephesians 3:10 to be *en tois epouraniois*. Every statement in Ephesians 1:20, 21 is a reference to spiritual position and has nothing to do with the physical.

That one can be AMONG and yet ABOVE can be demonstrated by many parallel truth found in Scripture.

Jehovah was *among* Israel. yet he was *above* every man in Israel. Num. 14:14, Deu. 7:21.

John the Baptist was *among* those "born of women," but he was *far above* everyone of them. Matt. 11:11.

Jesus Christ was *among* His disciples as One who served, but He was far above all of them. Luke 22:27. If one of his disciples had climbed to the highest pinnacle of the temple, the Lord would still have been far above him.

Even when the time comes that Christ leaves His present place and is personally present upon the earth, He will still be seated far above every principality and power. I feel it is a mistake to make physical height to be the measure of Christ's exaltation or the measure of our own exaltation.

It should be noted that Ephesians 1:20, 21 refers only to Christ and not to those of God's present calling. Christ alone has a position which is "far above all principality and power." Even though we shall be seated among the mighty ones in Christ (Eph. 2:6), we are not given a position far above all principality and power. They will have their work to do and we will have our work to do, but we are not above them.

A correct understanding of *en tois epouraniois* will solve a major problem of interpretation in Eph. 6:12, where this phrase is translated "in high places." There we discover that our conflict is not with "flesh and blood" but against "principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness among the mighty ones."

We cannot deny the existence of these malignant beings, and neither can we deny them a present place among the mighty ones. They will be taken care of and eliminated in that day when the enemies of Christ are put under His feet.

The End.

WHAT DOES HUPERANO MEAN

This word occurs three times in the New Testament as will be seen by the following concordance.

Eph. 1:21 - Far *above* all principality, and power

Eph. 4:10 - that ascended up *far above* all heavens

Heb. 9:5 - And *over* it the cherubims of glory.

It is the teaching of some that since the word *ana* means *above* that *huperana* must mean much more. This is true, but the facts in the case are that it means *over-above* or *up-above* and not *far-above*. It is the word *ana* that is used in Colossians 3:1 where we are exhorted to "seek those things which are above (*ana*), where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." This is the term used when Paul would set forth the present location of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he would use *huperano* if he desired to express his preeminent position and authority. Nevertheless, there are those who insist that the occurrences of *huperano* in Ephesians 1:21 and 4:10 tell us that Christ is in a *place* that is "far above" the place occupied by principalities and powers.

As has been said before, Ephesians 3:10 shows the error of any such idea. If Christ is "in heavenly places" and if there are principalities and powers "in heavenly places" there is no way we can make His abode to be "far above" the abode of principalities and powers. How can we make "in heavenly places" in Ephesians 1: 20 to be "far above" the "in heavenly places" of Ephesians 3:10?

The occurrence of *huperano* in Hebrews 9:5 shows that it does not mean "far above" so far as distance is concerned, and there are no occurrences of it where it is related to literal height. This word in every occurrence refers to superiority or to eminence. In relation to the ark of the covenant it could not be said that the cherubim were "far above" it. They were part and parcel of the mercy seat. Any thought of distance or physical height is impossible in the reference in Hebrews 9:5. In Hebrews 9:1-4 the writer sets forth all the major items of the tabernacle, and when he comes to the "cherubims of glory" declares that these were "over-above" the whole tabernacle, that is, in importance, in beauty, and in glory. We miss the truth here if we think that *huperano* describes the position in space of the cherubims of glory in relation to the mercy seat.

Ephesians 1:20, 21 has to do with the exaltation of Christ, His position in relationship to every sovereignty, authority, power, and lordship. The word *huperano* is used in setting forth His exalted position. This is in harmony with its use in the Septuagint. Some pertinent occurrences are given as follows:

Deu. 26:19. And to make thee (Israel) high *above* all nations which He hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honor; that those mayest be an holy people unto the Lord thy God.

Deu. 28:1. The Lord thy God will set thee (Israel) on high *above* all the nations of the earth.

Isa. 2:2. and shall be exalted *above* the hills.

Ezek. 43:15. from the altar and *upward* shall be four horns.

These references leave no doubt as to the meaning of *huperano*. It has nothing to do with a higher realm, or place, or sphere. It has to do with spiritual position and not with physical place. Israel is to be above all nations, and yet Israel will most certainly be one of the nations upon the earth.

However, an objection to this is anticipated. It is claimed that Ephesians 4:8-10 sets forth a literal descent from one actual place to another actual place, and a literal ascent from the earth to a literal place which is "far above all heavens." This I categorically deny. I believe it to be a childish

interpretation, and that it comes as a result of grabbing the first idea that appears on the surface. It reveals no careful thought or investigation. The passage under consideration reads as follows:

Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that He ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things). Ephesians 4:8-10.

In coming to a true understanding of any position of Scripture we need to compare Scripture with Scripture. In Philippians 2:5-11 we read more about this "descent" and "ascent" of the Lord Jesus Christ even though the words are not used there. Furthermore any idea of physical places is excluded.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name. Phil. 2:5-9.

The truth set forth in Philippians 2:5-10 is parallel with that set forth in Ephesians 4:8-10. Neither of these passages have anything to do with physical places. If any insist otherwise then they should stand ready to tell us just what "the lower parts of the earth" is. To say that these two terms are in apposition and that "lower parts" and "the earth" are the same will not do. If Paul had meant to say "the earth" he would have said it without resorting to an elaborate figure of speech which would serve only to confuse his readers.

I insist that "the lower parts of the earth" here is identical in meaning with "taking the form of a slave" in Philippians 2:7.

In Scripture the word *earth* is often put for the men who live upon it just as *heavens* is used for the angelic beings who inhabit the place called heaven. See Gen. 6:11, 11:1, Psalm 69:34 and Isa. 1: 2. This is the significance of the word "earth" in Ephesians 4:9. Paul is not setting forth a physical descent from heaven down to the lower parts of the earth. If so, then this term would have to mean Palestine.

These words describe the Lord giving up His glory of being in the form of God and taking upon Himself the likeness of men. However, in His incarnation, He did not appear among the high and well-born men of the earth, but took upon Himself the form of a slave. This is how He descended "into the lower parts of the earth." The great Jehovah had been upon the earth before, but He had never descended into the lower parts of the earth, He had never given up the form of: God to take upon Himself the form of a slave. When His mission was finished, then God highly exalted Him and gave Him a position that is preeminent above all of the heavens.

We can do nothing else but reject the idea that the exaltation of Christ has anything to do with His place in space. He will still be "far above all heavens," He will still be "far above all principality and power," He will still be highly exalted even in the day when He leaves His present place and is personally present upon the earth.

If Ephesians 4:10 refers to a place, then it contradicts many other plain statements in the Word. Notice these references:

He was received up into HEAVEN, and sat on the right hand of God. Mark 16:19.

He was parted from them and carried up into HEAVEN. Luke 24:51.

This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into HEAVEN, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into HEAVEN. Acts 1 :11.

Whom the HEAVEN must receive until the times of the restitution of all things. Acts 3:21.

Knowing that your Master also is in the HEAVENS. Eph. 6:9.

Knowing that ye also have a Master in the HEAVENS. Col. 4:1.

Christ entered. . . into HEAVEN itself. Heb. 9:24.

Since Ephesians 6:8 and Colossians 4:1 repeats and reaffirms the truth that Christ is in the heavens, it is a mistake to interpret Ephesians 4:10 as if it spoke of a place and teach that Christ is "far above all heavens." He is the Highest in the heavens, and He is the Highest of the heavens. He is "far above all heavens" in honor, in glory, and in authority. He is not far above them in space.

The End.

CONCERNING "THE BEREAN EXPOSITOR"

In the current issue of *The Berean Expositor* (Vol. 38, No. 11, September 1956) Mr. Charles H. Welch sets forth his ideas and understanding as to what the future holds when God resumes His prophetic program. If Mr. Welch is correct the outlook is very bleak indeed. He deals with the revolt which precedes the thousand year reign of Christ, the overcomers, the character of the thousand year reign of Christ, the little season when Satan will be loosed, and the final revolt of men against the rule of Christ which follows the loosing of Satan.

The article is set forth as being a refutation of my teaching concerning the Pre-millennial kingdom of God, but the greater part of the article is given over to an attempt to prove that the thousand year reign of Christ is all in vain and its sole purpose is to prove that man is no good. He sums this up by saying: "David may have reigned on earth as vice-regent, the twelve apostles may have sat on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, the overcomers may have reigned as priests of God and of Christ, but all in vain."

Mr. Welch urges all who read his exposition to put everything to the Berean test. This is being done by many capable students in this country. Upon my return from the Conference tour I found that my Associates, Mr. Baudistel and Mr. Ribbens, had given the entire article the most careful scrutiny. I too will be glad to give Mr. Welch's study a careful examination and will welcome the opportunity for a full discussion of all the subjects raised in Mr. Welch's article. However, there are so many matters injected into his presentation that twenty major articles on twenty major subjects would hardly suffice to cover the ground.

Mr. Welch could greatly facilitate inquiry and discussion if he would provide us with some outline that sets forth his understanding of the order of events when God resumes His prophetic program.

It would have been much better if Mr. Welch had written his article and stopped. However, after writing he decided to add a "foreword," and this makes virtually impossible any worthwhile discussion of the subjects he sets forth. In this foreword he characterizes his attitude toward my teaching as being "departing from iniquity." He uses such words as *purge*, *shun*, *depart*, *flee*, and *avoid*. This is entirely uncalled for and he should not seek to inject such a spirit among those who labor to uncover God's truth.

Articles will appear in future issues that will deal with the subjects suggested by Mr. Welch's article. For the present, all I care to say is this. In my personal contacts with Mr. Welch and in the article he has written he gives no evidence of having read anything that I have written, and that his only acquaintance with my teaching is second-hand. He reveals this when he says, "There is no interval for a Pre-Millennial kingdom in the records of the Apocalypse." He does not seem to know that I have never tried to find this period or to put this period anywhere in the Revelation. It cannot be found there. Revelation belongs to the day of the Lord. I am presenting truths which must come before the day of the Lord.

THE EDITOR TO HIS FRIENDS

****Fourteen cities were visited during the Fall Conference tour between September 6 and October 25. Fifty-five messages were given. In almost every place visited a slight increase in attendance was noted. Interest in the studies presented was intense and devoted. I appraise this as being the most pleasant and satisfactory tour I have made. I am deeply grateful to all, who participated in this - to those who made the arrangements, to all who attended, and to all who gave material support. I would especially thank those who took to heart the suggestion which I made in a recent bulletin "that they set aside a small amount each week and have it ready to give at the meetings of these Conference tours." It was evident that many did this. If more will do it between now and the Spring Conference tour it will amply provide for the material needs of this conference ministry. Preliminary arrangements for the Spring Conference are already being made. The dates will be between March 20 and May 10.

****In the line of study most of my efforts during the past ten months have centered in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. A careful, new study is being made of every word, phrase, and sentence in this epistle. In order to test, season, and develop each finding, the material has been presented in a verse-by-verse exposition each Sunday morning to the friends in Los Angeles. A summary of these studies has also been given to twelve other groups in the course of the Fall Conference tour. Questions and comments have been sought at the close of each presentation. Mr. Baudistel and Mr. Ribbens have given their help by going over with me the more difficult matters of translation and interpretation, both before and after they have been presented. The results have been most gratifying and the effort has been fruitful. Some of our conclusions are now being recorded and will be made available to those who receive the tape-recorded ministry. We hope in time to have something available in printed form, but can make no promises when this will be.

****The new method of handling the tape-recorded ministry is working out very well, even though it costs us a good bit more to do it in this manner. Our goal is to send out a reel of tape containing two messages about once a month. Sufficient copies of the master tape are being made by a professional recording company so that we can send copies simultaneously to all who receive this ministry. These are returned to us when the user is through with them, or they can be purchased for the nominal price of \$3.00 for each seven inch reel of tape. This is less than the retail value of the tape.

However, we face certain problems with this ministry which our friends can easily solve. The tapes should be sent back to us within one month. If you need longer we will allow you two extra weeks, but no tape should be held by you longer than six weeks. If you will cooperate in this you will clear up one of our major problems. The next problem is related to the money you send in. We have no way of telling whether you are contributing to the tape ministry or whether you are purchasing the tapes. And if you are purchasing tapes we have no way of knowing what reels you are buying unless you give us the numbers. You need not write a long letter, just make it plain to us what you are doing. We do not know what you intend when you say, "Enclosed is ten dollars for the tapes," Enough said.

****We will welcome more outlets for the tape recorded ministry. If you buy a recorder, make sure that it will play a seven inch reel of tape. Certain recorders that will play only a five inch reel are being offered at a very low price. Some who have bought these are now very disappointed that they cannot play our tapes.

****Please do not take it for granted that your material support is not needed for the work of THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY. It is very definitely needed. The work could not go on without it. I would take this opportunity of expressing my thanks to the many friends who give regularly to the support of this ministry.

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