



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Weekly

Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume XXI
Issue 520

Our Realm: Inherently Celestial

by — John H. Essex (1907-1991)

We are declared to be blessed with every spiritual blessing among the celestials. Christ has been given as “Head over all” that the ecclesia may be used in the work of subjecting all to God.

Then in Philippians 3:20 we have this most remarkable phrase, which should cause us to ponder deeply:

For our realm is inherent in the heavens.

Inherent in the heavens: what do we understand by the word, “inherent”? Let us note two of its other usages.

The man whom Peter and John healed at the gate of the temple in Jerusalem was “inherently lame from his mother’s womb” (Acts 3:2); that is, his lameness was inseparable from him; it had always been with him; it *belonged* to him.

According to Paul, Peter was “inherently a Jew” (Galatians 2:14). He *belonged* to Israel; he could never disassociate himself from Israel. Peter could never have written, as Paul wrote, that in Christ “there is no Jew nor yet Greek” and that “neither circumcision is availing anything, nor uncircumcision” (Galatians 3:28; 5:6).

Peter’s realm was inherently Jewish; ours is inherently celestial. Our realm belongs to the heavens, and has belonged to the heavens since that far-off day before the disruption, when we were chosen in Christ.

We cannot really appreciate the prison letters of Paul unless we take up our position in the midst of the heavens. The heavens have degrees of status, for in both Ephesians and Colossians we read of sovereignties, authorities, powers and lordships among them, and it is above all of these that Christ is raised, and it is as Head over all of these that He is given to the ecclesia.

Why is He thus given? Because the realm of the ecclesia is inherent in the heavens, and it is the privilege of the ecclesia to be used of God in the work of reconciling all in heaven to Himself. This will be no simple task.

It is a complete fallacy to imagine that all in heaven is at present in happy relationship with God. True, the Hebrew Scriptures speak of heavenly hosts, who hearken to the voice of the Lord, and do His pleasure (Psalm 103:21). However, Ephesians 6:12 speaks of “spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials.”

It is because our realm is inherent in the heavens that we do not wrestle with humanity, flesh and blood, but with these celestial forces of wickedness. Colossians 1:20 makes it quite clear that the reconciling work covers those in the heavens as well as those on earth.

The work of reconciling the universe to God will take a long time, but there is no force even among the celestials which can prevent it, for Christ is exalted above the very highest powers that exist. He is graced with the name which is above every name, that in His name, Jesus,

Every knee should be bowing, celestial and terrestrial and subterranean, and every tongue should be acclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord, for the glory of God, the Father (Philippians 2:10-11).

It is in Christ that the lot of the ecclesia is cast, and it is this superior One Who is given to it as Head over all.

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Bible Student's Notebook™ Weekly

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

ISSN: 1936-9360

Volume XXI, No. 520 – November 23, 2015

This free weekly electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - union in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6);
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "church," "denomination," "movement," "organization," "mission," "creed," "meeting," "school," "conference" or "fellowship."

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ABBREVIATION KEY

| | |
|---|--|
| <i>Scripture Version</i> | Concordance (Knoch) |
| (Unless otherwise noted all Scripture quotations are taken from the <i>Bible Student's Version</i>). | CL: A Critical Lexicon and Concordance (Bullinger) |
| CV: Concordant Literal Version | CWS: Complete Word Study Dictionary (Zodhiates) |
| DAR: Darby Translation | FoS: Figures of Speech (Bullinger) |
| DT: Dabhar Translation | SEC: Strong's Exhaustive Concordance |
| FF: Ferrar Fenton Bible | TGL: Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon |
| KJV: King James Version | UR: Unsearchable Riches |
| RE: Rotterdam's Emphasized Bible | VED: Vine's Expository Dictionary |
| WT: Weymouth Translation | YAC: Young's Analytical Concordance |
| YLT: Young's Literal Translation | |
| <i>Reference Sources</i> | <i>Reference Notations</i> |
| AA: Analytical Analysis (Welch) | cf. – compare |
| BDB: Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew Lexicon | e.g. – for example |
| CB: Companion Bible Notes & Appendixes (Bullinger) | et al. – and others |
| CC: Concordant Commentary (Knoch) | etc. – et cetera (and so on) |
| CKC: Concordant Keyword | ff. – and the following |
| | i.e., – that is |

Bible Student's Notebook™

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PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE IN THE PRISON LETTERS

Let us now look at three Scriptures which show unequivocally that the realm of the ecclesia is “*inherent in the heavens.*”

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who blesses us with every spiritual blessing among the celestials, in Christ, according as He chooses us in Him before the disruption of the world ... (Ephesians 1:3-4).

This shows the *origin* of the ecclesia “*among the celestials.*”

Rouses us together and seats us together among the celestials, in Christ Jesus, that, in the oncoming eons, He should be displaying the transcendent riches of His grace in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6-7).

Here we see the *future place and function* of the ecclesia in God's operations “*among the celestials.*”

That now may be made known to the sovereignties and the authorities among the celestials, through the ecclesia, the multifarious wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10).

Here is shown the *present influence* of the ecclesia “*among the celestials.*”

In the context of these prison letters we are clearly out of place on earth; against this celestial background these fleshly tabernacles in which we now dwell become bodies of humiliation, tending always to retard us, and the sooner that they are out of the way the better. The only body really suitable for one whom God has chosen for His ecclesia is one conformed to the body of Christ's glory.

For our realm is inherent in the heavens, out of which we are awaiting a Savior also, the Lord, Jesus Christ, Who will transfigure the body of our humiliation, to conform it to the body of His glory, in accord with the operation which enables Him even to subject all to Himself (Philippians 3:20-21).

Nothing here about a meeting in the air, or about the sounding of a trumpet! In the context of the prison letters these are irrelevant details. What about our always being together with the Lord? Is this now a future expectation or a present spiritual experience?

THE UNITY OF CHRIST AND THE ECCLESIA

The ecclesia is shown to be with Christ – nay, more, to be *in* Christ – from the time when it was chosen in Him before the disruption of the world (long before any of its members appeared on earth) until that grand consummation when God will be All in all. The bond between Christ and the ecclesia becomes a fundamental and essential component of God's purpose; the ecclesia is Christ's complement, by which all in all is being completed.

Paul is the only apostle to speak of the purpose of God, and again only after he has preached the word of the cross. In all but two instances, whenever Paul uses the term “*purpose,*” either as a verb or as a noun, it is to draw attention to the closeness of the relationship between Christ and His ecclesia. In Romans 8:28-29, for instance, he speaks of those,

... who are called according to the purpose that, whom He [God] foreknew, He designates beforehand, also, to be conformed to the image of His Son, for Him to be Firstborn among many brethren.

However it is in Ephesians where the intensity and strength and importance of the bond is most fully brought out. Let us read Ephesians 1:9-12.

In all wisdom and prudence making known to us the secret of His will (in accord with His delight, which He purposed in Him) to have an administration of the complement of the eras, to head up all in the Christ – both that in the heavens and that on the earth – in Him in Whom our lot was cast also, being designated beforehand according to the purpose of the One Who is operating all, in accord with the counsel of His will, that we should be for the laud of His glory, who are pre-expectant in the Christ.

“*In Him in Whom our lot was cast.*” This is the state of “*togetherness*” as portrayed in the prison letters. Or, to quote from Colossians, our lives are “*hid together with Christ in God*” (Colossians 3:3). These expressions are far more intense, far more dynamic, far more penetrating than the one in Thessalonians, “*Thus shall we always be together with the Lord.*” They contain within them the basic ingredient of the whole of the Divine operations.

When God first conceived His *purpose* for the universe, He built it upon the unity of Christ and the ecclesia, and the calling with which He now calls us is,

... in accord with His Own purpose and the grace ►

which is given to us in Christ Jesus before times eonian (II Timothy 1:9).

It is because of this radical oneness that Paul can write, again in reference to God's purpose, that remarkable passage in Ephesians 3:9-11.

To enlighten all as to what is the administration of the secret, which has been concealed from the eons in God, Who creates all, that now may be made known to the sovereignties and authorities among the celestials, through the ecclesia, the multifarious wisdom of God, in accord with the purpose of the eons, which He makes in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

CORRECTLY PARTITIONING PAUL'S WRITINGS

We are well aware how necessary it is to "correctly partition the Word of Truth," and nowhere is this more desirable than in the writings of Paul himself. We should mentally place them into three boxes. The box containing the two letters to the Thessalonians should be placed on the ground. The second box, containing the letters to the Corinthians (2), Galatians and Romans, with its key, the Word of the Cross, should be placed on top; and the third box, containing the prison letters of Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, should be lifted higher still.

Whether we comprehend the truths of only the first box, or whether we assimilate the more advanced teachings of the second box (and many believers have lived and died without understanding the preaching of the cross!), or whether we are given the ability to grasp the length, breadth, depth and height of the marvelous treasures of the third box – in whichever category of believers we find ourselves – let us rejoice in this: THE LORD KNOWS THOSE WHO ARE HIS, and all whom He Calls will always be together with Him.

No one is saved by knowledge: each is saved in grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8), and whatever knowledge we may lack will be made up to us when we are all changed and these bodies of humiliation are conformed to the body of His glory.

THE SUMMIT OF OUR BLESSINGS

So let us not be despondent if we cannot for the moment grasp some of the deeper truths of Scripture. This does not mean that we should give up trying to understand them. Paul's aim was to present every man mature in Christ Jesus, but he realized that this would not be easy. He calls it a toil and a struggle; but if we can enter into the truths of the prison epistles by seeking that which is above, where Christ is – by being disposed to that which is above in preference to that which is on earth – then, even in this life, we shall enter into joy unspeakable, for we shall see our unity with Christ as something really vital to God's designs – as nothing less, in fact, than the firm central pillar around which the whole edifice of God's eonian purpose is being constructed.

With this realization, our lives will take on a new meaning. Every vestige of vagueness and despondency will vanish; doubts and disappointments will melt away; frustrations and failures will become insignificant, for our lives will have become supremely purposeful in the Beloved, Whose complement we are.

Our lives are hid together with Christ in God. Whenever Christ, our Life, should be manifested, then we also shall be manifested together with Him in glory (Colossians 3:3-4). ■

— *Unsearchable Riches*, Volume 62
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The Spirit World

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

The world-mights of this darkness, the spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials, know quite well that we are destined to rule over them, hence they are intensely concerned about us, and are our real adversaries at the present time. Just as Israel was sporadically at war with the nations in the land of promise, so we are waging a defensive right against these celestial hosts.



immoral, the profligate, the worldly; but that is a mistake. A spirit, without a physical body, is not tempted by the pleasures of the flesh. Indeed, he cannot even apprehend such matters, as he has no means of experiencing them. Mankind is tempted from within to such sins and excesses; but Satan is primarily concerned with spiritual affairs, particularly those which affect the purpose of God and His Christ.

Too often we wrestle with blood and flesh, not realizing that these are not our real adversaries but only the necessary human tools of these spirit powers. God gives us these conflicts in order to acquaint us with their stratagems.

We may rest assured that an especially clever plot to hinder God's work, which is camouflaged as an attempt to help it, is not of human invention, especially if it is accompanied by showers of burning arrows, which can be extinguished only by the shield of faith.

It is evident that, as in the case of Adam, the adversary uses intermediaries to accomplish his ends. Those who are deceived by him and his hosts are the tools with which he works.

THE EXAMPLE OF JUDAS

Most saints shrink with horror at the idea that they could be used by Satan to hinder the Lord's work. Let such beware, for they are open to this very thing if they refuse to be on their guard. Judas was not the only one who was used by Satan. Even in his case we can see the strategy of the adversary. He could have found many men to betray our Lord, but how much better for his purpose to lure away one of those near to Christ, one of His chosen apostles!

He works especially well within the ranks of accredited religionists. Most Christians look for evidences of the Adversary's activity among the ranks of the

Hence he seeks to turn aside the saints from the role of suffering and humiliation which will prepare them to cope with Him in heavenly realms, and bend [divert] their energies to world betterment before God's time, and by means similar to those to be employed by Christ, but apart from His personal presence. This can be camouflaged into a most meritorious and glorious crusade against the powers of evil, even if it is the reverse. ►

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Christendom will be convinced that their cause is just, that they are doing the will of God, when they attack and destroy the non-Christian religions and set up a messiah who will unite the world under their banner. The important point is to see that all will be so cleverly accomplished by the powers of darkness that nearly all will be convinced that they are on God's side and are working for the welfare of one world, while they are really carrying out the behests of the powers of darkness. They will be thoroughly deceived, because they will abandon the ground on which this gracious administration is based and the precious promises of Christ's return, and yield to the allurements of the adversary to take His place and perform His work before He comes.

THE EXAMPLE OF PETER

Judas was not the only one who was influenced by Satan. Peter, the chief of the twelve, also was deluded by him (Matthew 16:21-23). He, too, wished to forestall God's time. Our Lord was revealing to His disciples that He must suffer and die; but Peter would have none of this. Many, if not all of us would have agreed with Peter. Here was a Man Who had unlimited power. He could have set up the kingdom at any time and brought blessing to everyone. Yet now He speaks of suffering and death!

Peter seemed to have no inkling of God's purpose in it all, or of the part of evil in bringing about the humiliation of man and the glory of God. Satan always seems to be on man's side and wants to do him a favor, as at the first in the garden of Eden. Peter did not want his Master to suffer; but our Lord has short shrift for such thoughts. He knew whence they came, so He calls Peter "Satan" and "a snare."

As the present is preeminently a *spiritual* administration, and we are destined to reign in the realms now ruled by the adversary, we may rest assured that Satan is far more opposed to us than to the Circumcision apostles [like Peter]. Only occasionally do we read of the parts that evil spirits played in the history of Israel. A very small fraction of the accounts of our Lord's life even refer to the spirit world; but a large part of the closing chapter of Ephesians, the charter of the present grace, is concerned with this phase of our conduct.

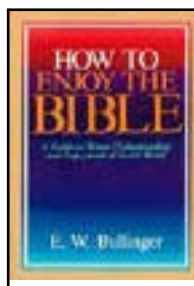
However, we are not spiritists, who communicate directly with the spirit world by means of mediums, ouija boards, or table rapping. Indeed, it is not a question of communication but of *warfare*. It is not a question of physical *force* but of spiritual *stratagems*.

Yet it is carried on *through* blood and flesh, for it is only by means of physical, soulish members of the human race that the spirits can reach us. Paul had warned the saints in Corinth lest somehow, as the serpent deludes Eve by its craftiness, it should be corrupting their apprehension also (II Corinthians 11:3).

The conflicts among the saints often have the appearance of wrestling. Too often they are merely the efforts of the adversary to oppose God's operations. We should look beyond the human instrument to the power behind it, as our Lord did with Peter. Is it not notable that He never called Judas "Satan," so far as we know, but rather Peter, His loyal disciple! No doubt it was a great help to the chief apostle in his future service to recall how ready he was to act the part of the adversary. He wanted to *help*, not to hinder.

It is through well-meant efforts to be of service that the adversary works. The great apostasy of the end time will be a Christian crusade to further His cause. We should be wary and wise and test all as to its concord with God's times and seasons, His plan and purpose.

Men in wrestling seldom hurt or harm each other very seriously; but when a missile like a burning arrow strikes you (in case your large shield is not up) you may rest assured that its ultimate source was not a mortal, but that it came from a spirit power behind him.



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After the Dais, one great change for the better will be our relation to the spiritual powers of darkness. Now they are enemies. It will be our privilege to transform them into friends. Few saints seem to realize what a powerful part they play in our experience today. However, one who seeks to recover God's truth, and to stand for it, is in constant and cruel conflict, for to stop this is the great object of their enmity. Now they thwart and hinder every move, if they can. They transform helpers into hinderers.

The trend of Christendom is proof positive how successful they are. They are far more clever than the saints, and use them freely, by means of misunderstandings and slanders, in harming any work that threatens their domination of the "Christian" world.

"Dissensions and snares beside the teaching" were present even in Paul's day, for even then there were some who slaved for their own bowels and sought, through compliments and adulation, to delude the hearts of the innocent (Romans 16:17-20). The apostle does not instruct us to deal with them, but rather to avoid them.

He recognizes that much of the misconduct among the saints, especially among the leaders and teachers, is due not merely to their frailty, but to the influence of evil spirits.

In that day of illumination we will not need to contend with any deviation from the teaching. Adulation

will be entirely ruled out. All of this will follow from the change from mortal to immortal bodies; but, far more than that, Satan himself, the instigator of human opposition and dissension, will be beneath our feet. Now he dominates the actions of many a saint; but then his place and power will be taken from him, and we will be above him, able to subdue and control the one who, next to our flesh, was the cause of most of our miseries.

Just as the enemies of Christ will figuratively find themselves a footstool for His feet, so will the greatest of all of our enemies be placed beneath our power. Best of all, we will not retaliate. We will not use our authority to further alienate and estrange him from God or from ourselves. We, to whom conciliation was first presented, will be conciliatory to all, and be able to bring back all of our enemies into the circle of friendship and conciliation with God.

Doubtless due to Satan's machinations, we cannot now even bring about peace among ourselves, but then all of our own differences will have been dissolved, and we will be able to bring it to our erstwhile enemy in the spirit world. ■

— *Unsearchable Riches*, Volume 40
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