



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume 33
Issue 809

Higher Powers and Conventional Christian Interpretation

by — Tom L. Ballinger

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation (Romans 13:1-2).

Perhaps there has not been a more misunderstood and misapplied verse in the Bible than this:

*Let every soul be subject unto the **higher powers** (Romans 13:1).*

In all of “church theology,” the “higher powers” are made to be civil authorities, whoever they may be, at any time and in any country. It is unworkable and cannot be followed-out through the additional statements which follow Paul’s admonition.

Most misapply the verse as if God is saying, “You must submit to all governmental authority.”

Who was it who first applied the words, “higher powers,” to civil authorities? I don’t know, but could it have been during the time when people were told to believe in *the Divine Right of Kings*? Could the civil powers and organized religion have worked in collusion with one another to maintain the absolute dominion over the lives and thoughts of the people?

Whoever began this misapplication instituted a sequence of errors which have been a yoke upon the necks of many whose only desire was to believe what was written in the Word of God. The text under consideration cannot be believed unless people



shut their minds to the most obvious facts and divorce it from all that follows in Paul’s dissertation.

Consider for example I Corinthians 6:1-3.

Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?

The Corinthian believers were identified as subjects of the new nation, the *Commonwealth of Israel*. Caesar was not their king, the governors of the Roman Empire were not their rulers. The seat of their government was not Rome. Christ Jesus was their King; His Divinely commissioned men [the Apostles] were their rulers.

Higher Powers and Conventional Christian Interpretation.....	6889
Reader's Question Box #37: Are There Two Gospels Today?.....	6893
Reader's Question Box #38: Will We "Always Be Together With the Lord"?	6893

Paul continues in Romans 13:1, “the powers that be are ordained of God.” The phrase “the powers that be” has become, by conventional usage, a synonym for civil authorities, but was that what Paul was conveying when he wrote these words? To continue to read will shed great light.

For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same (Romans 13:3).

For those who insist that this passage sets forth our duty towards civil authorities, this verse creates a major problem. Throughout human history, civil rulers have terrified those who did good, and they didn't praise those who did good. I'll not even attempt to list rulers who have persecuted those who have done good and rewarded those who have done evil. They are too numerous to mention. The “higher powers” of Romans 13 have nothing to do with civil authorities.

For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the min-

ister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil (Romans 13:4).

A “minister” is one who serves under a higher authority but is delegated the responsibility to act in the name of, and with the authority of, the one who designated him. In Romans 13, the “minister” is one who had been chosen, or designated by Jesus Christ to act in His behalf. As we all should know, if you give someone the responsibility to do a job, you must also grant him the authority (power) to get it accomplished. Christ did this with His ministers during the Acts period.

During this time frame (Acts 2-28), there were men on the Earth who were given not only the responsibility to govern the communities of believers but, also, the authority (power) to do so. They were “*endued with power from on high*” (Luke 24:49). They were so divinely equipped that they could forgive (John 20:23), they could heal the sick (Mark 16:18; Acts 3:6) and raise the dead (Matthew 10:8; Acts 9:3-43; 20:9-12).

Peter exercised the use of the “sword” when he pro-

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Scripture education in a weekly format!

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
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- 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 (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the Body of Christ (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- 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 and ascended seat-

ed position among the celestials (Romans 6; Ephesians 2:6);
– adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of ordinary men intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. 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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For definitions of abbreviations/acronyms, see index after the order form.

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nounced the death sentence on Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5. A metaphor for exercising the power of life, or death, is the expression “*bearth not the sword in vain.*” The couple lied to the Holy Spirit, and Peter spoke, and they fell down, dead.

Paul suggested to the rulers in Corinth to use the “*sword*” against a man under their jurisdiction:

For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus (I Corinthians 5:3-5).

In order to avoid wrath, they had to be submissive to the laws imposed on them by the Apostolic “*higher powers.*” Such was to be done for the sake of their conscience.

Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake (Romans 13:5).

Paul reminded the believers, in Hebrews 2:2-3, that the Word spoken by the angels (when the Law was given),

was steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; [therefore] how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation.

If the Law that God gave to Moses, through the message by the angels, proved to be sure, and every violation received a just and adequate penalty, how were the New Testament believers going to escape punishment if they failed to live up to their lawful responsibilities?

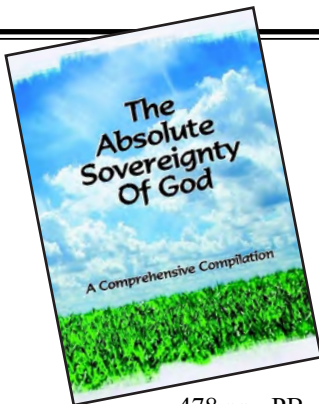
The answer was that, during the Acts Period, they wouldn’t escape. During the Book of Acts the principle of Law was operating. Law is associated with government, and the Government of Israel’s Messiah was in effect for believers.

Romans 13:6-7 goes on to say,

For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

Tribute (taxes) are paid by citizens of a government for the use of the nation. The government here was the *Commonwealth of Israel*. The taxes in question were not those extracted by human governments but by the ministers of God.

Not a great deal is said about the taxation for the *Commonwealth of Israel*. It appears that they were to be paid voluntarily, quite a change from the Mosaic Law. Paul refers to them as “*gifts*” in II Corinthians 8-9 (cf. Romans 15:26-27). This giving of tribute was to be done willingly, not grudgingly (as did Ananias and Sapphira).



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The superior authority during the Acts Period was not limited to the Apostles themselves. There were gifts of “government” (I Corinthians 12:28), and some were set in the churches to be rulers, or governors. All of those who possessed this gift qualified as “higher powers” to whom all believers at the time were to be subject.

Thus, the admonition to,

*Remember them which **rule over** you ... Obey them that have **rule over** you, and submit yourselves ... Salute all them that have **rule over** you (Hebrews 13:7, 17, 24).*

*Know them which labor among you, and are **over** you in the Lord (I Thessalonians 5:12).*

*Let the elders that **rule** well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the Word and doctrine (I Timothy 5:17).*

However, such is not the truth for today. Believers today have no flesh-and-blood rulers. We have the “high calling” and are submissive to the authority of our Head – the Lord Jesus Christ. To Him alone we owe our allegiance. There are no intermediaries between us and Him.

When Romans 13:1-7 is read in light of the truths set forth, all questions and all difficulties vanish. The Lord Jesus Christ appointed the Apostles and other rulers to be the “higher powers” – “higher” in the sense they had their authority to rule from a higher authority than that of mere humans. The Jewish believers

made up the *Israel of God*, and even the alien Gentile believers were to be subject to these authorities. If any resisted their authority, they resisted God’s ordinance and would be punished. Believers were not to be fearful of the ruler’s power. As long as they were submissive, there was nothing to be terrified about. If they did good, they would receive praise, not punishment (i.e., “the sword”).

These truths make it abundantly clear that we must subscribe to God’s approved method of Bible study: “rightly dividing the Word of Truth” (II Timothy 2:15). When the Acts Period ended God ushered in a new and unprophesied dispensation, the Dispensation of the Mystery. With the new administration of God coming into operation, the “higher powers” were no longer operable. The “higher powers” belonged to a past administration and are not part of the truth for today. Ever since Acts 28:28 (the dispensational boundary line), the “powers that be” were withdrawn.

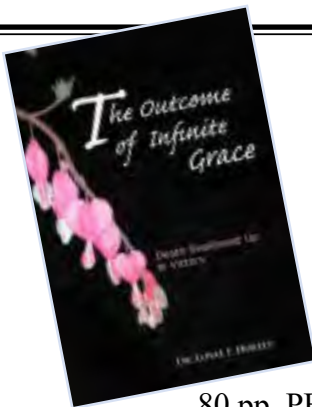
In resurrection, the “higher powers” of the Pentecost Dispensation will, again, take their places of authority when the Kingdom comes. **BSN**

Plainer Words
(abridged & edited)

[**Editor:**] For a further look at the “Higher Powers” see “Powers, Rulers and Ministers of God,” Duane Gallentine, *Bible Student’s Notebook* #101.

TOPICS:

Major: Authority; Government; Romans (13:1-2)
Minor: Interpretation; Right Division



80 pp, PB

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The Outcome of Infinite Grace

by — Loyal F. Hurley

“The last enemy to be destroyed is death!” It was this verse which caused the author, a pastor, to study afresh the subject of the fate of the wicked. The three choices apparent from a surface reading of various biblical texts were eternal torment, extermination or ultimate reconciliation. The author studied to find which one was true.

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Reader's Question Box #37

Are There Two Gospels Today?

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Q: Can you please tell me your current stance on the “two” evangels? I am starting to question this teaching. I can understand the Kingdom Gospel and Paul’s Gospel being different, but perhaps they do not run concurrently. – *T.O.*



fell, being temporarily set aside, and the Secret Administration was revealed by Paul, the Gospel of the Kingdom (or the Gospel of the Circumcision) was likewise set aside.

Today there are not two active gospels. The *only* gospel currently remaining in operation is Paul’s Gospel. I hope that this helps to clarify the issue. **BSN**

A: You are exactly right. There are in fact two primary Gospels, as you mentioned – The Gospel of the Kingdom and Paul’s Gospel.

These two gospels (or evangels) ran concurrently during the last half of the Book of Acts. Once Israel

TOPICS:

Major: Gospel; Paul’s Gospel
Minor: Right Division



Reader's Question Box #38

Will We “Always Be Together With the Lord”?

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Q: Will we always be with Christ Jesus from our resurrection or snatching away? My understanding is that we, the ecclesia, are a heavenly people, with citizenship in Heaven and that our destiny is in the Celestials. This is then contrasted with Israel, whose destiny is tied with Earth. In I Thessalonians 4 where the snatching away of the surviving ecclesia is described, it says in verse 17 that those will meet the Lord in the air and “*thus shall we always be together with the Lord.*” He is now seated at God’s right hand high above the Heavens. But it is also my understanding that He is going to be literally present on the Earth as King during the Millennial Kingdom (Zechariah 8:3) and that we will remain in the Celestials. If that’s the case, how are we going to be always together with the Lord? As I understand it, we are not the ones referred to in Revelation 20:4 who will reign with Christ for a thousand years. However, in the most recent *BSN* (#803) you explained that the

rulers in the Celestials will also have jurisdiction over the terrestrial (the Earth). I don’t know if that means we will be at Christ’s right hand both in the Celestials and on Earth. ...

Am I correct in believing that those who are not part of the ecclesia and are not of the saints that belong to the second sphere of glory will, during the eon of the New Jerusalem (after the Millennium Kingdom), be on the New Earth, of the nations mentioned in Revelation 21:24, of which those who have “*rinsed their robes*” and who are thirsting for the water of life (Revelation 21:14, 17) will be granted access to the City? – *J.G.*

A: Thank you for your questions. I am actually thrilled by them. They show a great dedication to understanding. First, let me gather, restate and confirm most of your wonderful statements. By

confirming these in this way, a lot of your questions will already be answered.

We, the ecclesia, are indeed a heavenly people, with citizenship in Heaven. Our destiny is in the Celestials. This is contrasted with Israel, whose destiny is tied to the Earth.

Christ is now seated at God's right hand high above the Heavens. But He is going to be literally present on the Earth as King during the Millennial Kingdom (Zechariah 8:3), during which time we will continue our work in the Celestials. We are not the ones referred to in Revelation 20:4 who will reign with Christ for a thousand years. During the eon of the Heavenly Jerusalem (which will be after the Millennial Kingdom on Earth), when God Himself will "be tabernacling with mankind" (Revelation 21:3), we will remain in the highest sphere – Heaven.

During the eon of the New Jerusalem (after the Millennium Kingdom), those who are not part of the current ecclesia and are not of the saints that belong to the second Sphere of Glory, will be on the New Earth. However, those of the nations mentioned in Revelation 21:24, who have "rinsed their robes" and who are thirsting for the water of life (Revelation 21:14, 17), will be granted access to the City.

Now, let's move on to that which *appears* contradictory.

After our appearing with Christ in Glory, we will not always be in His physical presence. After our joint-appearance at the Command Center (the right hand of God), the members of His Body will be dispatched throughout the Heavens to begin our occupation of the Celestials. We will be involved in the reconciliation of the Celestials, instituting the righteous rule of God there. So, while, as a unit, the Body of Christ with its Head will be occupying the Celestials, we will not all be at the same exact place at the exact same time.

When Christ takes up His prophetic place as Israel's King on the Earth, we will remain in our Celestial place of calling. Christ Himself, with the assistance of believing Israel, will be involved in the reconciliation

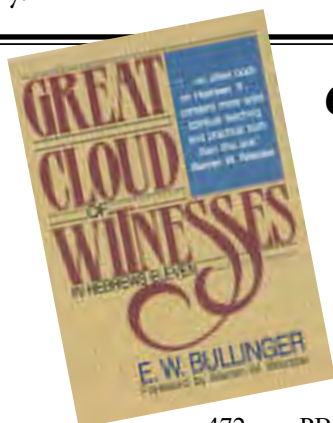
of the Earth, instituting the righteous rule of God here. All the while we will continue to maintain that process in the Celestials. After all, the Secret of Christ is that He is

given the reconciliation of all things both in Heaven and on Earth, in Himself. What a glorious universal reconciliation this will be!

As for I Thessalonians, it is vitally important that we correctly understand the place that it occupies in the Word of God.

During Paul's early ministry, covered by the book of Acts, he was a prophetic light "to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:47). Being such was a *prophetic* ministry under

With these truths in mind we can say that the teachings found in I Thessalonians 4 are tied to "the hope of Israel" and not to our appearing with Christ in our Celestial calling (Colossians 3:1-4), which is a part of the Secret Administration.



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the auspices of Israel (Isaiah 49:6). Salvation during the Acts period was bound up in Israel's restoration and the "sure mercies of David," with Paul "acting as a priest" (Romans 15:15-16, CV).

Therefore, during the Acts period, by Paul's own admission, his ministry was limited to what "the prophets and Moses did say should come" (Acts 26:22). Thus, according to Paul's own testimony, during his Acts-period ministry, he preached "the hope of Israel." At the end of the period covered by the book of Acts he plainly declared, "for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain" (Acts 28:20).

Throughout Paul's ministry in the Acts period, Israel had priority over Gentiles (Romans 1:16; 2:10). Believing Gentiles of Paul's early ministry were grafted into the root and fatness of Israel (Romans 11:17). Thus, as a priest of God to the nations, Paul was a competent dispenser of Israel's New Covenant to them (II Corinthians 3:6).

During Paul's early ministry, the believing Gentiles were made guests of the promises covenanted to Israel (Ephesians 2:12). These Gentiles were thus made partakers of Israel's "spiritual things" (Romans 15:27). Thus, the Gentiles were brought in and counted as spiritual seed of Abraham and heirs of Israel's promises (Galatians 3:29). Not only did Paul teach believing Gentiles during the Acts period that Abraham was their father, but he also taught them that Jerusalem was their mother (Galatians 4:26).

In the last chapter of the Book of Acts, Paul declares to Israel the final prophetic blinding foretold by Isa-

iah of their generation (:25-27). Paul then pronounces the decree that, now *apart* from Israel, "the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles" (Acts 28:28).

The next time that we find Paul imprisoned, we do not see him bound for "the hope of Israel," but, by his own inspired testimony, he was then shackled for a "mystery," or "secret" (Ephesians 6:19, 20; Colossians 4:3).

In Paul's latter ministry he wrote and ministered concerning a new *Secret Administration* (Ephesians 3:9). This present administration he also identified as, "the Administration of the Grace of God" (Ephesians 3:2, CV).

In God's present purpose today all covenant and national advantages have been removed (Ephesians 2:14-15), and believers can now enjoy the "Administration of the SECRET" (Ephesians 3:9), along with a new and superior calling and hope, the Celestial Appearing with Christ in Glory (Colossians 3:4).

A.E. Knoch writes concerning the timing of this grand transition of Paul "from glory to glory" (II Corinthians 3:18),

Israel is not finally set aside until Paul is a prisoner in Rome. Isaiah's solemn message is sounded in their ears for the last time, and the salvation of God is sent direct to the nations (Acts 28:28). Not until this crisis was it possible to reveal the last and crowning ministry of the great apostle. Hitherto blessing must be in some sort subordinate to Israel; now they are out of the way, and grace is



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free to carry out the dictates of love.

So a secret is made known – *the secret of Christ* – which places Him upon the highest place in Heaven, even as He shall be upon the Earth. And this secret it is which underlies Paul’s final ministry. It leaves Earth for Heaven. Jewish privileges disappear. The nations are not discriminated against in this supernal glory but are blessed equally with the chosen people in the heavenly spheres. ...

At last we find ourselves at the very zenith of revelation. This is found in Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, epistles written after the apostle was imprisoned in Rome. They contain the truth of all truth for us. They are the touchstone of all doctrine for the present. They are the limit of glory beyond which there can be no more. ...

Paul’s earlier ministries need modification to accord with the present truth.

With these truths in mind we can say that the teachings found in I Thessalonians 4 are tied to “*the hope of Israel*” and not to our appearing with Christ in our Celestial calling (Colossians 3:1-4), which is a part of the *Secret Administration*.

Now, with fresh eyes, let’s briefly reconsider I Thessalonians 4.

... *the Lord Himself will be descending from Heaven ...* (:16)

This is not Christ appearing in Heaven, and our ap-

pearing with Him there. This is Christ’s *descent from Heaven* to take up His Millennial Reign (*i.e.*, “*the hope of Israel*”). Nowhere in the passage does it say that Christ is going back to Heaven.

... *the voice of the Chief Messenger ...* (:16).

This is Michael (Jude 1:9), “*the great chief, standing over*” Israel (Daniel 12:1; 10:13, 21).

... *with the trumpet of God ...* (:16).

This is the “*last trump*” (I Corinthians 15:52) of the Book of Revelation.

... *be snatched away together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air ...* (:17)

There is nothing Celestial here. Christ left Heaven to be in the “*clouds*” of Earth’s “*air*.”

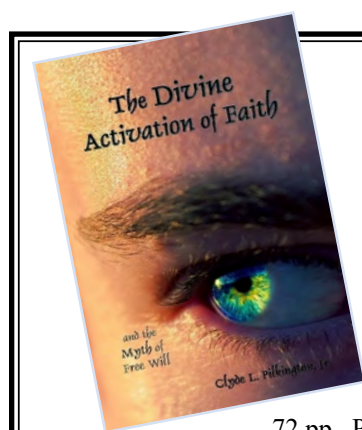
... *And thus shall we always be together with the Lord ...* (:18)

Those who were here recipients of “*the hope of Israel*” will be “*always together with the Lord*,” reigning and ruling with Him in His Millennial Kingdom.

Our hope stands in stark contrast with Israel’s. The hope of the *Secret Administration* is “*pre-expectant*” about all of this (Ephesians 1:12). **BSN**

TOPICS:

Major: Appearing; Rapture; Spheres, Three
Minor: Kingdom of Heaven; Right Division



72 pp., PB

See order form.

The Divine Activation of Faith, and the Myth of Free Will

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

What is faith? Who is a believer? Is faith a matter of human choice, or is it a gift from God? Do those who have faith understand and believe everything correctly? Or, do they experience areas or degrees of unbelief? Can one be weak or strong in faith? Is there room in faith for growth? These are among the important questions that are considered in this work.