

## THE UNSEEN SPIRITUAL WORLD (Continued)

Last month in beginning this subject we stated, “There is both a dark side and a bright side of the spiritual world,” and we considered the dark side. This month we will look at what the Bible says about the bright side of the unseen spiritual world. We begin with “the heavenly host” that is identified as “The Council of the Lord.” This council was in existence before and witnessed the creation as related in Genesis chapter 1. “When I laid the foundation of the earth, and laid the cornerstone when the *morning stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy?*” (Job 38:7). This shows God was creator of heavenly beings that make up His Council, the heavenly hosts, before He created the world. The Apostle Paul states: “I bow my knees before the Father, from whom the whole *family* in heaven and earth derives its name” (Eph. 3:14). “The family in heaven” is the Council, or host of Heaven, and the family on earth is the people of God that He has used throughout history to carry out His will in the world. The Divine council was created by God to be His administrators in the unseen spiritual realm. His creation of mankind was to represent God in the world, that is, to bear his image (Gen. 1:26) and “be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, and rule over it.” This earthly family was to do on earth what the heavenly family was to do in the unseen spiritual world. The fact of man’s sin did not alter God’s plan. Genesis 3:15 was a prophesy that God’s purpose to have a family on earth would someday fulfill His original purpose stated in Genesis 1:26-28.

The influence of the heavenly council upon the earth is seen in the angels, the only ones of the council that are mentioned as having anything to do with the family on earth after Adam’s expulsion from the garden (Gen. 3:24), with the exception of their appearance in prophetic visions. The book of Genesis records several angelic encounters with men. To illustrate one important fact of angels we cite Genesis 28:10-16. God appeared to Jacob in a dream, “and behold, a ladder was set on earth with the top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were *ascending* and *descending* on it” (ver. 12). In John 1:57 Jesus told Nathaniel: “Truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God *ascending* and *descending* on the Son of Man.” This shows there are many angels on earth in communication with God beside the angels in heaven. When God revealed the birth of His son to the shepherds (Luke 2:9-13) “an angel of the Lord *suddenly stood* before them...” (ver.9) then, “suddenly there appeared with the angel *a multitude of the heavenly host* praising God” (ver. 13). This is the only time the heavenly host appears on the earth in Scripture.

A few years ago the religious system was flooded with books on Angels that generated much unscriptural and confusing teaching concerning angels. We list a few titles of these popular books: “There’s an Angel on Your Shoulder,” “The Angel Within Us,” “Ask Your Angel,” “Answers from Angels,” “Songs Angels Sing,” “Dance With Angels,” “Angelic Healing,” and “The Brush of Angel’s Wings.” The word angel is *aggelos*, meaning “messenger.” It is used of John the Baptist in Matthew 11:10: “Behold I send my *messenger* before you.” And by Paul in II Corinthians 12:7: “There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, *a messenger* of Satan, that he might buffet me lest I should be

exceedingly uplifted.” Angels are “all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation” (Heb. 1:14), and “the angel of the Lord encamps around those that fear Him, and rescues them” (Psalm 34:7). The angels *render service* to the Believers, so to the Christian there is no such thing as “luck.” Because they are our servants, don’t underestimate them. Realize they “are greater in might and power” than man (II Pet. 2:11). For example, one angel slew 185,000 Assyrians in one night (II Kings 19:35). Be aware that the Christians will judge angels! (I Cor. 6:3).

Leaving the subject of angels we turn now to the relation of the believer to the unseen spiritual world, a subject unknown by the majority of believers, unexplained by the commentaries, never taught in Bible Colleges and Seminaries nor mentioned in pulpits, but is the essence of what God expects His family on earth to be. The word that best describes this subject is the word *heavenlies*, incorrectly translated “heavenly places” by the King James version. This term, *heavenlies* is found only in the book of Ephesians but the connotation of the word is what we have been discussing in the entirety of this article. Paul is using the word to describe the concept of the unseen spiritual world as it is applicable to the believer. The most complete statement in the New Testament that describes the meaning of the word *heavenlies* is I Corinthians 2:9-12: “Things which the eye has not seen and the ear has not heard, and which has not entered the heart of man all that God has prepared for those who love Him, for to us *God has revealed them* through the Spirit...Now we have received, **not the spirit** of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we might know the things freely given to us by God.”

The Scripture’s subject of *the heavenlies* is so fantastically supernatural, unearthly and beyond human comprehension that it can only be understood by a faith comparable to Abraham’s faith when he “staggered not in unbelief” at the promise that from the human point was impossible (Rom. 4: 17-20). The church has been denied the faith to believe in the *heavenlies* because “faith comes from hearing and hearing from the word of Christ” (Rom. 10:17), and the subject is never heard because it is never preached. Paul first uses the word in Ephesians 1:3: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with *every spiritual blessing* in the heavenlies in Christ.” Note the word *every* spiritual blessing. This means God has given us everything we need to be what He wants us to be and to do everything He wants us to do. The Apostle Peter confirms this when he stated: “His divine power has granted to us *everything* pertaining to life and godliness” (II Pet. 1:3). (The only thing God has not given us that is yet to come is our new bodies): “...we ourselves having the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons. *the redemption of our body*. For in hope we have been saved, but hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopes for what he already sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, with patience we wait eagerly for it” (Rom. 8:23-25).

Paul then lists some of the spiritual blessings found only in the heavenlies in Christ (verses 1-14). These are: We are chosen in him to be holy and blameless before Him, We are predestined to

*adoption as sons, we have redemption and forgiveness of our trespasses*, His grace has been lavished on us, He made known to us the mystery of His will and our inheritance has been predestined, confirmed by the Holy Spirit, our pledge. What more could we ask for in this life? The only thing God has not given us is the redemption of our bodies, which is our hope (Rom. 8:23-25). The next thing Paul says about the *heavenlies* is: “He raised Christ from the dead and seated him at His right hand in the *heavenlies*, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come” Eph. 1:20-21). The book of Hebrews identifies the *heavenlies* into which Christ ascended as “*heaven itself*” (Heb. 9:24). (This means that “heaven” is in the *heavenlies*, or the spirit world).

Now, as we consider the next verses concerning the *heavenlies* we ask you to exercise faith comparable to the faith of Abraham we mentioned above. Ephesians 2:5-7: God, “even when we were dead in our transgressions, *made us alive together with Christ and raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenlies* in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.” Let’s note what it means to be “in Christ.” Most Christians have conceived the Christian life as an imitation of Christ. It is not an imitation of Christ; it is a participation of Christ. “For we are made partakers of Christ” (Heb. 3:14). This means that whatever happened to Christ also happened to us *spiritually*. *When Christ died, we died* (Rom. 6:6,8; II Cor, 5:14). *When Christ was buried, we were buried* (Rom. 6:4). *When Christ was raised, we were raised* (Col. 3:1; Eph. 2:6). This brings us to the important fact about the *heavenlies* we need to understand: *Not only were we raised up with Christ, we have been “seated with him in the heavenlies* (Eph. 2:6). *When Christ ascended, He was seated on God’s right hand, so, Paul says, this has also happened to the believer. Everything mentioned above that happened to Christ has happened to the believer spiritually. Another thing we must bear in mind is that all these statements made by the Apostle are in the past tense. He is not saying that these things are going to happen to us; they have happened. We are seated with Christ in the heavenlies. It is not a prophecy, it is not a prediction, it is not holding out before us something that is going to happen.*

Another passage that speaks vociferously on this subject, but does not use the word *heavenlies* is Hebrews 12:22-24: “You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the *heavenly* Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the general assembly of the church of the first born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel.” Therefore, brethren, we have confidence to *enter the holy place* (Heaven itself... Heb. 9:24) by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he inaugurated for us...let us therefore draw near” (Heb. 10:17-22). God wants the believer to now use all the heavenly resources that He has placed at our disposal in the *heavenlies*. God is not going to add anything more to heaven than what He has already made available to us, by faith. He repeatedly tells us in scripture there is one thing, and only one thing, in heaven and on earth He has not given us, and that is our new body (Rom. 8:23).

We turn now to Paul’s fourth reference to the *heavenlies*: (Eph. 3:9, 10). His purpose was “to bring to light what is the administ-

ration of the mystery, which in ages past was hidden in God, so that *now* the manifold wisdom of God might *be made known through the church* to the rulers and authorities in the *heavenlies*.” This is the most astonishing passage in the New Testament that reveals the purpose of the church. Since this purpose is virtually unknown to the modern church, it must be limited to the believer who exercises the faith we have been emphasizing in this article. God makes known His manifold wisdom to the *rulers and authorities in the heavenlies* through the church. The context of this statement is that the mystery of the gospel, which had been hidden for ages is now made known by the preaching of the gospel. Concerning this the Apostle Peter states it was “announced by those who preach the gospel through the Holy Spirit, *things into which angels desire to look*” (I Pet. 1:12). This tells us these *authorities and rulers* were angels to which the gospel was to be made known by the church. The staggering and astounding truth is that they did not know and understand that God accomplished salvation to fallen man by the preaching of the gospel. This is the manifold wisdom of God which the angels did not know, now is to be made known to these *authorities and rulers in the heavenlies* by the church.

The last time Paul uses the word *heavenlies* is Ephesian 6:12-13: “Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the *heavenlies* (translated *high places* by the KJV). Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.” He then lists just what the Christian’s armor is that will enable him to stand firm (vers. 13-18). At this point the question might arise, that is, if what we have said thus far about the believer is true, if we are “sitting with Christ in the *heavenlies*,” and have direct access to heaven itself, and we do not have to die to go to heaven since we are there spiritually, and “the rulers and authorities in the *heavenlies* are learning from the church the manifold wisdom of God” then why do we have to struggle against the rulers and authorities in the *heavenlies*? When Christ Ascended and was seated on the right hand of the Father (Psalm 110:1; Eph. 1:20, Col. 3:1, Heb. 1:3), He did not just sit there, his real work had only begun; Acts 1:1: “The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus *began* both to do and teach, until the day when he was taken up to heaven.” His earthly ministry was simply preparatory for his present heavenly ministry which he continues through his church, his body: “therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us (“we stand in Christ’s stead” KJV), we beg you, on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (II Cor. 5:20).

These spiritual powers are not to be feared by the believer. We are assured we have access to armor supplied by God. We close this section by quoting from the book *Therefore Stand* by Dr. Wilber Smith: “When the Apostle Paul describes for believers the divinely prepared weapons they are to make use of, with the world-rulers of this *darkness*, he speaks of *only one offensive weapon*, the word of God, and when we strike we must strike with this weapon which God puts in our hands. If we have Paul’s vision, Paul’s conception, we shall not say, ‘There are many adversaries, therefore, we must abandon the work;’ but rather having done all, to stand.” We add “Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might” (Eph. 6:10).