

A HEAVENLY CALLING, INHERITANCE

ISRAEL'S IS EARTHLY, BUT THE CHRISTIANS' IS HEAVENLY

By Arlen L. Chirwood

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children [sons] by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will...

Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.

That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even in him.

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will” (Eph. 1:3-5, 9-11).

Christians have a heavenly calling, a heavenly hope, a heavenly inheritance, a heavenly citizenship, heavenly blessings, and they are confronted with an ever-present heavenly battle against the present rulers who occupy the heavenly land to which they have been called (Eph. 1:3; 6:11-18; Phil. 3:20; Col. 1:5; Heb. 3:1; I Peter 1:4).

The one book in the New Testament which, in its overall structure, possibly sets forth that facet of truth dealing with the Christians' relationship to this *heavenly land* better than any other is Paul's epistle to the Ephesians. Paul used the expression “in heavenly places [lit., ‘in the heavenlies’]” five different times in the six chapters of this epistle.

Two of these times, *the Christians' position in the heavenlies* is in view (1:3; 2:6); two other times, *the position of Satan and his angels in the heavenlies* comes into view (3:10; 6:12); and the other time, *the position of Christ at the right hand of God, also in a heavenly place*, is in view (1:20).

The Christians' Position — In the Heavens

Revelation in Paul's letter to the Ephesians begins by revealing *blessings awaiting Christians* “in heavenly places [‘in the heavenlies’] in Christ,” and terminates by revealing *a present warfare confronting Christians* against “spiritual wickedness in high places [‘the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenlies’]” (1:3; 6:12).

The heavenlies, wherein blessings are to be realized in chapter one, and *the heavenlies* in which the enemy presently resides in chapters three and six, must be looked upon as *ONE and the SAME*.

The Christians' positional standing is “in Christ” *in the heavens where God Himself dwells*; *BUT*, contextually, the spiritual blessings in view are to be realized by Christians as *they move in, conquer, and dwell in the heavenly land held by the enemy in chapter six*. In this respect, there are heavenly blessings for present victorious engagements of the enemy, and there are heavenly blessings awaiting victorious Christians in that coming day when the enemy will finally be dislodged from the land.

Contextually, *the blessings* in chapter one are associated with the “adoption” (v. 5), the “dispensation of the fulness of times” (v. 10), the “inheritance” (vv. 11, 14, 18), and the “wisdom and revelation in the knowledge [Gk., *epignosis*,

‘mature knowledge’] of him” (v. 17).

Such blessings to be realized by Christians are, thus, intimately associated with *the heavenly land to which they have been called*; and the entire matter is projected out into the coming age, *BUT NOT* to the exclusion of the present dispensation.

The present spiritual warfare in the heavenlies is with a view to *the coming age*, but spiritual blessings await the victors during both *present and future* time. *There can be NO future occupation of the land apart from a present warfare against the enemy*; and the blessings extend throughout *BOTH* eras.

Ephesians moves progressively from chapter one into things relative to eternal salvation and the revelation of the mystery in chapters two and three. Believing Gentiles have been placed together in the same body with believing Jews. God has broken down the “middle wall of partition” by creating *one new man*, where there is neither “Jew nor Greek” (2:8-16; cf. Gal. 3:28).

Believing Jews and believing Gentiles, together in one body, forming *the one new man*, then become “fellowheirs” of *the heavenly promises and blessings* in view (Eph. 3:6; cf. Gal. 3:29). *The very purpose for an individual's salvation is to be realized through the reception of the inheritance introduced in chapter one and continued in chapters two and three*.

The Christians' association with *the heavenlies* is presently being made known to the “principalities and powers in heavenly places [‘in the heavenlies’]” “by [‘through’] the church” (3:9, 10).

God is making known to the incumbent rulers in the heavenlies that *they are ABOUT to be replaced*; and He is making this known through *the ones who are destined to occupy these positions, the ones presently engaging the enemy in the heavenlies*.

Ephesians then continues by exhorting Christians to walk worthy of their high calling (4:1ff) and revealing the need for pastor-teachers in the Church (4:11-16). Pastor-teachers have been placed in the Church to lead Christians into a

mature knowledge of, contextually, *their calling in relation to the heavenlies*.

Christians are to know about the blessings awaiting them in the heavenlies, the coming dispensation, the inheritance, the mystery, etc. And to make this known, in the strict Biblical sense, is *the primary task of pastor-teachers*.

The latter part of chapter four and the first part of chapter five continue with thoughts and exhortations concerning walking worthy of one's high calling; and this is followed by related material in the latter part of chapter five and the first part of chapter six concerning the relationship of husbands and wives, children and parents, and servants and masters.

Then, at the conclusion of the epistle, in the latter part of chapter six, *the crux* of the entire matter comes into view.

Beginning in 6:10, the Apostle Paul says, "*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.*"

The engagement with the enemy now comes to *the forefront* in the epistle. *The enemy is revealed, and the proper armor with which the Christian is to clothe himself is given* (vv. 12-17).

The Christians' Warfare — In the Heavens

There is *a battle* to be fought, and there is *a victory* to be won. This battle *NOT ONLY* requires *extensive preparation BUT ALSO the correct armor*; and pastor-teachers in the Church are to see that Christians placed under their care become properly equipped to engage the enemy in the battle at hand (*cf.* 3:10, 11; 4:11-16; 6:11-18).

Going forth to battle, one's loins are to be *girded with truth* (showing truthfulness, earnestness, and sincerity in the conflict), a person is to have on *the breastplate of righteousness* (showing a righteous manner of living), his feet are to be shod with *the preparation of the gospel of peace* (showing that the messenger properly understands and is able to proclaim both present and future aspects of salvation),

he is to take *the shield of faith* (showing faithfulness to act in the realm God has commanded), he is to put on *the helmet of salvation* (showing a hope relative to a future salvation [the salvation of the soul]), and he is to take *the sword of the Spirit* (showing an acquisition of the Word of God).

ONLY in this fashion can a Christian stand in a victorious manner against "the wiles of the devil."

(*Ref.* Ch. IV in the author's book, *Judgment Seat of Christ*, for a fuller discussion of Eph. 6:14-17.)

One's *faithfulness* in the entire realm of proper preparation is the primary prerequisite. As in Jude 3, one is to "earnestly contend for the faith [*i.e.*, 'earnestly strive for (with reference to, in the good contest of) the faith']." He, according to the parallel passage in I Tim. 6:12, is to "Fight the good fight of faith [*lit.*, 'Strive in the good contest of the faith']"; and, in this manner he is to "lay hold on eternal life [*lit.*, 'lay hold on life for the age' (a future salvation, to be realized during the Messianic Era, associated in the text with *his calling*)]."

The words translated "contend" in Jude 3 and "fight" in I Tim. 6:12 are from *epagonizomai* and *agonizomai* respectively in the Greek text. Note that the only difference in these two words is the prefix "*ep*" in Jude (this is the preposition *epi* ['upon'] prefixed to the word [the "*i*" is dropped when *epi* is prefixed to a word beginning with a vowel]). *Epi*, used in this manner, intensifies the meaning of the word, providing the translation, "earnestly contend ['earnestly strive']."

Agonizomai is the Greek word from which our English word "agonize" is derived. The word could more properly be translated "strive," as in Luke 13:24 and I Cor. 9:25. Every muscle is to be strained, every effort is to be expended, in the "good contest of the faith."

In Jude 3-5 this contest is associated with entrance into the land to which Christians have been called, drawing from the type of the Israelites

under Moses; and the false teachers in these verses are seeking, through that which they are teaching, to mislead and thus prevent Christians from entering this land (*ref.* the ten unfaithful spies during Moses' day and the results of their message).

However, Christians following the admonition in Jude 3 *need NOT fear* the false teachers in Jude 4, *NOR fear* being numbered among the unfaithful in Jude 5. Such Christians will experience victory after victory in the battle and partake of rich spiritual blessings which the Lord has reserved for His conquerors, *both now and in the coming age*.

Seated on the Throne — In the Heavens

Dare to be a Caleb! Dare to be a Joshua!

Rewards for those who so govern their lives will be the same as Caleb and Joshua's — *present victory, and the ultimate possession of one's inheritance* (Joshua 13:7-14; 19:48-50).

As Christ is today seated with His Father on His Father's throne, He is inviting Christians to one day sit with Him on His Own throne (Ps. 110:1; Rev. 3:21), which will be located *in the heavens* — located in the place from which Satan and his angels rule today, with Christ and His co-heirs replacing Satan and his angels in that day.

Christ, having *a reign BOTH from the heavens and upon earth* in that day, will rule from *His Own throne with His co-heirs in the heavens and from David's throne in Israel's midst on earth* (Joel 2:27-32; Luke 1:31-33; Rev. 3:21). *And these two thrones should NEVER be confused with one another*.

Israel's calling is *earthly, connected with David's throne*; the Church's calling is *heavenly, connected with Christ's Own throne*. And *overcoming Christians will sit with Christ on His throne in the heavens, NOT with Him on David's throne on earth*.

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