

HEAVEN and the HEAVENLIES

"Now immediately after the pressure (squeezing; affliction) of those days, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give her radiating glow; and the stars will fall from the heaven and the abilities (the powers) of the heavens will be shaken.

"And then the sign (signal; portent; omen; ensign; mark; token) of the Son of man will be brought to light and made visible within the heaven;

"And then all the tribes of the land will grieve, and they will see the Son of man progressively going (or: coming) upon the clouds of the heaven, with ability (power) and much of that which calls forth praise (glory).

"And He will send forth His agents (messengers) as apostles with a voice of a great trumpet; and they will fully gather together His chosen ones (His selected and picked out ones; His elected ones) from out of the four winds: from extreme points of [the] heavens, even to their extremities!" Matt. 24:29-31 (my trans.)

A parallel passage in Mark 13:27 reads: "... from an extremity of earth even to an extremity of heaven."

Setting aside questions of whether we should take a futurist view or a preterist view of this passage, I would like to consider the Lord's use of the word "heaven" in this context.

Vs. 29 speaks first of the "heaven" which contains stars, and aside from a figurative interpretation this would seem to indicate the sky or the universe of space. Then it goes on to speak of the abilities (or, powers) of the heavens. But just what are these abilities (or, powers)? Here we often fill in the blanks with our own imaginations.

Vs. 30 speaks of the sign of the Son of man (Mark's passage does not use the word "sign," but simply, ... they will see the Son of man progressively coming within clouds...) upon the clouds of the heaven (I like to bring in Nah. 1:3 at this point, where it says ... the clouds are the DUST of His FEET.) What heaven is this? It is a heaven with clouds. Then is He referring to "the heaven" being the sky? Or is all this metaphor?

Then we have the "heavens" where His chosen ones are dwelling (or, existing) in vs. 31. Mark's version has them in the extremity of land (earth) as well as of heaven. But these heavens are associated with the "four winds." So which heavens are these?

I suggest that these verses are using apocalyptic language, just as the rest of ch. 24 does. I suggest that these are all metaphors. "Four winds" and "extremities" mean from all directions and the farthest corner of the land. But what about the term "heaven(s)"? Are the agents which He sends out as apostles those who live in the world of spirit, or are they those who are "raised up and seated together within the heavenlies within Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6)? The word "heavenlies" is the word "heaven" with the prefix *epi* attached. *Epi* means "upon" when used by itself, and can carry this meaning when used as a prefix, but can also carry the sense of full or complete, e.g. *epi-gnosis* means full or complete intimate and experiential knowledge. Or, this prefix can give the sense of being superimposed upon something.

The context of Eph. 2:6 is that of being seated (or enthroned) together within Christ. This, I suggest, is giving

the sense of ruling over the heavens, and everything below them. Superimposed upon the fullness of the heavens.

But first, let's consider how the word "heaven" is used, to find its Scriptural meaning. Is heaven a place, as tradition has taught us, or is it a sphere or plane of existence, or is it sometimes a metaphor for that which exists above or higher than the earth? Is it a figure for what is above, while earth is a figure for what is below?

Young gives the meaning of the Heb. (shamayim/shemayin) "heaven" as: "heaved up things." For the Gr. ouranos he gives: "heaven, sky, air." But let's take our understanding from how these words are used for something other than "the sky," which is often more a point of reference or contrast, and often used as a metaphor.

"The heaven [is] My throne, yet the earth [is] a footstool of My feet." Heb. 7:49

Is this an ontological saying about the existence of heaven or His throne? Or is it an analogy by way of contrast? Is heaven a figure for the realm of His rule? Is earth a figure for that over which He rules -- is under His feet?

"... you shall know that the heavens do rule." Dan. 4:26

We see in Gen. 1:1 that "the heavens" are part of the creation. Then in vs. 6-8, "Become shall an atmosphere in the midst of the water, and becoming is a separation between water and water... And calling is the Elohim to the atmosphere, "heavens" (heaved up things, or heaved up ones)." (Concordant OT)

In vs. 9 note that the water flows together "from under the heavens to one place." This results in the appearing of dry land. Note in vs. 8 that "the heavens" (atmosphere) came to have water above it, after the separation of the waters to those above the heavens and those under the heavens. Is this the first figure of two different callings; the high call being figured by the waters (often a figure of people) above the heavens (the "upon-heavens," or "the heavenlies"), and the calling which is to be governed by the heavens? Recall that Paul spoke of both "upon-the-heavens" bodies and "upon-the-earth (land)" bodies in I Cor. 15:40, and that these have "different" glories. Then in vs. 42 he said, "and THUS is the standing-back-up-again (resurrection) of the dead ones."

Back to Gen. 1, vs. 14-15 speak of the luminaries "in the atmosphere of the heavens, to give light on the earth."

"The intelligent shall warn as the warning of the atmosphere, and those justifying the many are as the stars for the eon and further." (Dan. 12:3, Concordant OT)

"But the Teachers will shine like Lights in space; and those who have led many to righteousness, like Stars for ever and ever." (Ferrar Fenton trans.)

"And those teaching do shine as the brightness of the expanse, and those justifying the multitudes as stars to the age and for ever." (Young)

Can you see a correlation here? I think that those "justifying the many" are those who are bringing the multitudes into "the Way pointed out," into a "right-wised relationship of fair and equitable dealings."

Now with the thought of these being "teachers,"
"The heavens are recounting the glory of El,
And the atmosphere is telling the work of His hands.

**Day after day is uttering a saying,
And night after night is disclosing knowledge." (Ps. 19:1-2, Concordant OT)**

In Gen. 1:20, Elohim is saying "Roam shall the water with the roaming, living soul; and the flyer shall fly over the earth on the face of the atmosphere of the heavens." Once again we see a contrast of the two realms. This contrast is repeated all through the Scriptures.

**The next place that the heavens is mentioned is in Gen. 6:17,
"And I, behold Me bringing a deluge of water over the earth (land) to wreck all flesh, which has in it the spirit of the living, from under the heavens. All that is in the earth (land) shall expire." (Concordant OT; my additions: the Heb. erets can be translated either "land" or "earth")**

Note that Noah's group floated "upon" the waters, another figure of the high call.

It is interesting to observe that in Gen. 11:4 that those at Babel wanted to build a tower "with its head in the heavens" (Concordant). This speaks to me of being an imitation of the called-out assembly (His body) which also has its Head "in the heavens." This, of course, corresponds both in name and character with the Babylon of Rev. 17.

Now thus far in our study, "the heavens" can be seen as either the sky and the natural atmosphere, or figuratively as that which is above, which rules, and which brings light (teaching) and judgment.

**The term "heavens" is used only once in the book of Leviticus, in 26:19, in regard to punishment (vs. 18),
"I will break the pomp of your strength and make your heavens like iron and your land like copper." (CVOT: Concordant OT)**

The figure of "hard times" is confirmed in the context of the passage, but note that it was "their" heavens that were turned to judgment rather than blessings. The "heavens" were related to them. Literally it would have involved the skies not bringing rain ("breaking the staff of bread" in vs. 26). But the term here applied specifically to their "world" and their "lives."

It was used to describe high walls in Deut. 1:28 , "... a people greater and taller than we, cities large and walled-up into the heavens..." (Roth.)

"Then you approached and stood below the mountain, when the mountain was consumed with fire unto the heart of the heavens... and Yahweh spoke to you from the midst of the fire..." (Deut. 4:11-12, CVOT)

**Yahweh was in the heart of the heavens when He was there on Mt. Sinai. This picture parallels John 3:13,
"And no one has ascended into heaven except He Who descends out of heaven, the Son of Mankind Who IS IN HEAVEN." This was where Jesus was, as He ministered upon the earth. Now isn't this a picture of heaven!**

**But now let's go back to Deut. 4:19, where we see a "natural" description of the heavens,
"... lest you should lift up your eyes toward the heavens, and you see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the hosts of heaven, and be induced to bow yourself down to them..." (CVOT),
yet in Joseph's dream, the sun and the moon and the stars were figures of the rulers of Israel (Gen. 37:9-10).**

Deut. 4:32 uses our term in a phrase that calls to mind Matt. 24:31, above. Here He is speaking of "from the day that Elohim created humanity on earth,"

"and from one end of the heavens unto the other end of the heavens: Has there occurred anything like this great thing, or has anything been heard like it?"

I think we could agree that the word is being used idiomatically here, as in Matt. 24:31.

In regard to Israel following the words of Yahweh, it was "so that your days are multiplied... as the days of the heavens on the earth." (Deut. 11:21, Young) An interesting thought. Was this an analogy showing great length, or showing quality?

Again Deut. uses the term parallel to Matt. 24:31. In ch. 30:4,5 He says, "If it comes to be that you should be expelled to the end of the heavens, from there Yahweh your Elohim shall convene you, and... will bring you to the land..."

Judges 5:20, which says,

"From heaven they fought:

The stars from their highways fought with Sisera," (Young)

follows vs. 19,

"Kings came -- they fought..."

and is in the midst of the song of Deborah, and I suggest that vs. 20 is more poetic than literal.

In II Ki. 2:1,11 we see that Elijah was "went up by a whirlwind into the heavens." No further explanation is given, so our imaginations usually kick in here. Recall that Elijah was with Moses and Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. Had Elijah been just hanging around, or did he simply appear there? So where did the storm wind take Elijah? To be in the cloud of witnesses (Heb. 12:1)? Is this the kind of cloud that He will be seen in - His witnesses?

Now the situation with Elisha and his servant (II Ki. 6:15-17) presents an interesting picture. Elisha knew (probably saw) that the mountain where he was "was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." But Elisha did not make use of these. Rather, he used blindness upon the host of the Syrians. We saw "a chariot of fire and horses of fire" back in ch. 2:11, just before Elijah was taken up. Were these simply manifestations, such as the pillar of fire and smoke that led Israel in the wilderness? Did they appear in a form that would speak to these men in their situations, such as did the visions which John saw in Rev.? When Elisha saw this in 2:11-12, he said,

"My Father, my Father: the chariot of Israel and its horseman!"

was he referring to Elijah as his father, or was his excited exclamation a recognition that this manifestation was of God, His Father, Who was indeed Israel's defense -- Israel's war chariot and Warrior? Whichever, we see here that "the heavens" are right here on earth, too.

In the Psalms, "the heavens" are spoken of as God's dwelling, and the source of blessings and deliverance. Yet, did He not "tabernacle" in their midst? Was the holy of holies "heaven" in some respect? Note the decorations of the beautiful veil -- with cherubim embroidered into them -- and the cherubim on the ark.

In Isa. 14, the "shining one," the "son of the dawn," had intentions of rising "up to the heavens" (vs.13) He recognized who he was, and said, "I am like the Most High" (vs. 14, Young)

"Only -- unto Sheol thou art brought down

Unto the sides of the pit.

Thy beholders look to thee, to thee they attend,

Is this the man causing the earth to tremble, shaking kingdoms?

He hath made the world as a wilderness..." (vs. 15-17, Young)

This is the one who had "fallen from the heavens" (vs.12). Now we know that this was literally a "simile concerning the king of Babylon" (vs. 4) It is my opinion that this picture is also a figure of the fall of Adam from the garden (see a parallel passage in Ezk. 28, where that one was "cast to the earth" [vs. 17], even though he had "been in Eden, the garden of God" [vs. 13]. Vs. 2 says that although he had said "I am a god... yet thou art man [Heb. Adam]" and in vs. 8 this one is also brought "down to the pit" as was the king of Babylon). But for our study, I think this is an important point: falling from "heaven" was a figure for loss of

rulership and exalted position.

In Ezk. 28 we see that God used "the terrible of the nations" to "defile thy brightness." (vs. 7) The description in vs. 13 of being in Eden and having precious stones as his covering speaks to me of the vestments of the high priest, for the holy of holies was in figure decorated as a garden, and I suggest that this is a figure of Eden where man has access to the presence and voice of the Lord. Vs. 14 says "you [were] an anointed cherub that covered." The ark, in the holy of holies had a cherub on each end of the mercy seat (cherub is the singular of cherubim), and "covered with their wings over the mercy seat" (Ex. 37:9). Another interesting point is that the rest of Ex. 37:9 says, literally, "... with their faces one to a brother (Heb. ach); to the mercy seatward were the faces of the cherubim." This is also stated in Ex. 25:20, "And the cherubim shall stretch forth their wings on high covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to a brother; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubim be." Also, vs. 19 says "... of (lit. from) the mercy seat shall you make the cherubim." The cherubim are of the substance of "the mercy seat."

From the visions of the "living ones" in Ezk. and Rev., we learn that these cherubim are figures of ones in the heavens. And we see them in the holy of holies, the dwelling place of God. Now consider, the Tabernacle -- and later, the Temple -- are figures of the body of Christ.

Back to Ezk. 28, vs. 14 tells us that this cherub was "upon the holy mountain of God" and "walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire" -- the coals of the brazen altar and the altar of incense. This is the figure of the movement of a priest in serving the Temple. Note vs. 18, "From the abundance of your iniquity, by the perversity of your traffic [note vs.16: the abundance of merchandise -- selling & trading in the Temple] you have polluted your SANCTUARIES... I will make you become ASHES upon the earth..."

The word "ashes" Young gives as epher, which he also defines as "dust," in his Concordance. The Heb. word elsewhere translated as dust (e.g. Gen. 2:7) is a variation of this same word: apha which Young also defines as : "ashes, clay, dust." So did this cherub become "dust upon the earth"?

We have similar descriptions of "the Assyrian" in Ezk. 31. The Septuagint version of vs. 3 reads, "his beginning reached to the midst of the clouds." Vs. 8 says, "The cedars in the garden (LXX: paradise) of God could not hide him... nor was any tree in the garden of God like unto him in his beauty." Vs. 9, "... all the trees of Eden, that were in the garden of God, envied him." Vs. 11, "... I have driven him out for his wickedness." Vs. 14, "... for they are all delivered unto death, to the nether parts of the earth (land), in the midst of the children of men (Adam), with them that go down to the pit." Vs. 16-18 speak of "his fall" and being cast down "into Sheol" and he will "be brought down with the trees of Eden unto the nether parts of the earth (land), in the midst of the uncircumcised..."

In Ezk. 32 we have a lament for the fall of Egypt. Vs. 7-8 says, "And when I shall put you out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light, and the luminaries of the light in the heavens I will make dark over you, and set darkness upon your land..."

In all these figures we see the heavens and Eden being a place of exaltation, rule and glory. We see the earth as a figure of Sheol, death, darkness and ruin. As I said earlier, the heavens and the earth are used to describe a contrast between these two extremes. Jer. 51:53 gives this picture, "Though Babylon should mount up to heaven... yet from Me shall spoilers come unto her, saith Yahweh." So, in the OT we see many figurative uses of the word "heaven." In Mal. 3:10, heaven is a figure for a source of blessing.

In Matt.5:34, heaven is defined as God's throne. In Matt. 28:18 Jesus says, "All authority within heaven and

upon earth is given to Me." Throughout the synoptic gospels God's kingdom is described as being "of heaven," which could be translated as "pertaining to heaven or belonging to heaven." In John 3:27 heaven is seen as the source of things being given to mankind. In Jn. 6:38 Jesus says that He came down from heaven. In vs. 51 He describes Himself as being "the living bread which came down from heaven" --once again, a gift.

In Matt. 13, the Kingdom of heaven is compared to sowing good seed in a field, then an enemy sowing weeds into the same field. There is growth, and then a harvest for both. The word "kingdom" can also be translated "reign," as the sphere and activity of a king's rule, not just the location of it. It seems from this parable, the kingdom of heaven is sown into the earth. In vs. 33 it is compared to the invasive expansion of yeast which completely permeates what it is put into. In vs. 44 it is compared to treasure "hidden in a field." Once again, the reign of God (or, heaven) being placed in the earth.

In vs. 45-46 it is brought into the life of a merchant who deals with pearls, and finds "one pearl of great price" and sells all to buy it. It seems that the Kingdom of heaven is involved with everyday life. Does this mean that heaven is involved with everyday life?

In vs. 47-48 we are given a picture of the vocation of fishing. The kingdom of heaven is compared to a fisherman's net: it drags in both the good and the useless, and throws the useless back into the sea. In vs. 49 Jesus compares this to His agents separating the wicked (the unsound; those in a bad condition; the miserable ones; the malevolent ones) forth from out of the midst of the just ones (the right-wised ones who are in accord with and have been placed into the Way pointed out) and cast them into the furnace of fire (figure like the lake of fire), or like casting them back into the sea. The Indians of this country would rather use them as fertilizer. This is obviously not a furnace which burns them up, like the annihilationist would suppose, for there is sorrow, pain and regret in this figure. It is, I submit, a figure for what was about to happen in His kingdom, for this was to exist in the conjunction (the end-together) of the age which was then upon the Jews, when Jerusalem and the Temple were burned in fire by the Romans. But Jesus had sent forth His disciples as "fishers of men," to gather out His elect for the Kingdom.

In vs. 52 He says,

"... every scribe (interpreter; teacher) being discipled, trained and instructed by the Kingdom of the heavens (or: in the kingdom...; for the kingdom...) is like aman, a householder, who is constantly bringing forth from out of the midst of his treasury new things and old things."

Was Jesus here referring to Himself and His manner of teaching the Kingdom? Did He draw from both covenants? Should we? Draw examples, yes, but apply them only under the new arrangement and dispensation.

The book of Hebrews does this a lot. Consider ch. 9:24,

"For Christ did not enter into holy places made by hands -- the antitypes of THE TRUE ONES -- but into the heaven itself, now to be made apparent (be disclosed) by the presence of God over us."

I suggest that the True Temple into which He entered was His body -- the called out. I suggest that the heaven referred to here is the realm of the spirit and of the kingdom which is within us, and which we corporately compose. He has put His blood upon the mercy seat of our hearts: God's presence is a propitiary shelter over us and within us. Thus does the blood of Jesus Christ continually cleanse us from all and every sin (failure; missing of the target) -- I John 1:7 -- and this happens within us where He has entered.

This study is just scratching the surface of considering "the heavens," but before I close it, let's look at "the heavnlies," the upon-the-heavens, again. This word is used, quite appropriately, as an adjective describing the Father, in Matt. 18:35. Jesus speaks of "the heavenly things" in contrast to "the earthly things" in John 3:12. Being born back up again (from above) is one of these "heavenly" things.

In I Cor. 15:48, Paul speaks of those who are "the heavenly ones," the ones who are upon the heavens -- they are ones "such as the Heavenly One." Vs. 49 tells us that "we shall also bear the likeness (image) of the Heavenly One." Here, then, it seems that the "heavenly" speaks of a quality or character or essence. It, like the situation in John 3:12, seems to be contrasted to the earthly -- just as heaven and earth are contrasted.

Now let's go to Eph. Ch. 1:3 tells us that there are "heavenlies" within Christ, where there are "every spiritual blessing." Ch. 1:20 speaks of,
"... Christ, [God] having raised Him out from the midst of dead ones and seating Him at His right hand, WITHIN the heavenly ones (the ones upon-the-heavens)."

Now if we correlate this with I Cor. 15:48, I think we get the picture. This may now adjust our view of ch. 2:6, for *en tois epouraniois* can be translated "among the heavenly ones within Christ Jesus" as well as "within the heavenly places within Christ Jesus." He has seated us together among a larger group that is within the Christ. He is within us; we are within Him.

So the question comes, in regard to Eph. 3:10, who are the rulers (chief ones; sovereignties; beginning leaders; princes) and authorities among those upon-the-heavens (within the super-heavenlies)? God's many-colored, greatly diverse wisdom is to be made known to these through the called-out congregation. Paul does not connect the word "heavenlies" with Christ in this present context. Rather, in vs. 8 he is speaking of addressing the nations with the good news, and in vs. 9 of illuminating "all men" (everyone), then in vs. 10, "to the end that..."

Thus, my conclusion of this passage is that Paul is using here a figurative sense of the word "heavenlies," as the prophets did when speaking of the king of Babylon, the prince of Tyre, of Egypt, etc. It is these earthly authorities to which the ecclesia is to make known the "many-phased wisdom of God, in accord with a purpose of the ages (a fore-designed plan of the ages) which He formed within the Christ -- Jesus -- by our Lord." (Eph. 3:10-11).

Now let's look at Eph. 6:10-12. I'll give my trans.,

"Of the remainder, be constantly empowering yourselves (engendering ability within yourselves) within the Lord and within the force (strength) of His might [or: the might of His strength]:

you folks must enter within [or: clothe yourselves with] God's full suit of armor and implements of war, in order for you to be continuously able (powerful) to stand (to make a stand) facing toward the crafty methods (stratagems) of the adversary, because for us, the wrestling is not against (toward) blood and flesh, but rather against (toward: i.e., 'face to face') the rulers (sovereignties;

those in first position; the beginning ones; the princes) and [face to face] against the authorities, [facing] toward (against) the world strong-ones (the system's mighty ones) of THIS darkness, [facing] toward (against) the spiritual things (spiritual aspects or elements) of the bad condition (the depravity; the wickedness; the evil) within the heavenly ones (heavenly places)."

It is not a physical warfare, but a psychological, emotional, mental, spiritual wrestling (which speaks of intimate contact) with positions of leadership and with governments. I believe that these are the rulers of human governments, of authorities within the apostate church systems, and of corporate businesses. Walter Wink, in *Naming the Powers*, and *Unmasking the Powers*, wrote of the "spirit" that is created when any group comes together. When that group disbands or disperses, the spirit of that group ceases to be. But every corporation or culture creates its own spirit, and we encounter these "principalities" in our daily lives, and often we must wrestle against them. This is one of the main problems with having "church governments" and "church hierarchies" or structures. These structures produce a spirit (life) of their own which sits in

the Temple of God, and makes us desolate. They take the Spirit's rightful place, and having done all, we are called to take a stand against them.

Finally, Heb. 3:1 speaks of our "heavenly" calling. Heb. 6:4 speaks of the "heavenly gift." Heb. 8:5 shows how the old covenant things are an example and a shadow of the "heavenly ones," the ones-upon-the-heavens. Heb. 11:16 speaks of "a better, that is, a heavenly [Fatherland]." And II Tim. 4:18 refers to "His heavenly Kingdom." All of this is not far away -- it's right here.

Shalom,
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