

# Christian Warfare – Heavenly Places

Ephesians 6:10-12

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:10-12 (NKJV))

As we have said on other occasions regarding so many of the words we encounter in these scriptures, as we read them, our minds are often so caught up in the general context of the subject, or perhaps the words are so similar to other words like them that our thoughts pass right on by them and we miss out on a deeper meaning and message that God intends for us to know about.

That is just one more reason why we must continue to pour these words of scripture into our heart, soul and mind every day, reading and rereading some of the same words over and over again. And if we are faithful to do that, God's Holy Spirit will also be faithful and will reveal things to us that we never knew before.

And that is especially so with some of the words within this passage today. Here in verse 12, we find a mysterious reference being made to a realm in God's kingdom called "Heavenly Places". And as I searched through the scriptures, I found that there were five such references to those same "Heavenly Places", all five given within this Book of Ephesians. May I read them for us? And please do follow along with me. The first time that "Heavenly Places" are mentioned is in Ephesians 1 verse 3. There, we read,

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.  
(Ephesians 1:3 (NASB))

And then in verse 20 of Ephesians 1

19 . . . These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might 20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 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 one to come. (Ephesians 1:19-21 (NASB))

And then in Ephesians 2

3 Among them (the sons of disobedience) we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.  
(Ephesians 2:3-7 (NASB))

And then in Ephesians 3,

7 of which (this gospel) I was made a minister, according to the gift of God's grace which was given to me according to the working of His power. 8 To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, 9 and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things; 10 so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.  
(Ephesians 3:7-10 (NASB))

And then, here in verse 12 of today's passage,

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.  
(Ephesians 6:12 (NKJV))

So then, what are, and where are, these "heavenly places"? Are they simply another name given to the place of "heaven" that we have come to understand from these scriptures, that place where God resides, where He sits on His throne, with Jesus at His right hand, ruling over the world, that place that Solomon described in 2 Chronicles calling it the "heaven of heavens"? Listen! There Solomon said,

5 And the temple which I build will be great, for our God is greater than all gods.  
6 But who is able to build Him a temple, since heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him? (2 Chronicles 2:5-6)

One bible translator speaks of the "heaven of heavens" as being the highest and most Holy of all the heavens.

And then also, where are the “mansions” that Jesus spoke about when He said that He was going to prepare a “place” for those of us who receive Him? Where are those mansions located?

And where also is the place that David spoke about when in Psalm 27 He prayed . . .

4 One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple. (Psalm 27:4 (NKJV))

Where is this “House of the Lord” located, because mysteriously, David is actually speaking about dwelling there even during his living years?

And also, where is the “Third Heaven” that Paul spoke about in 2 Corinthians 12:2 when he said

2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. 3 And I know that this man was caught up into paradise. (2 Corinthians 12:2-3 (ESV))

The man that Paul spoke about here is believed by most Bible Scholars to be Paul himself.

Note here also that Paul called the “third heaven” “paradise”, the same “paradise” that Jesus spoke about when He promised the thief on the cross that, “Today, you will be with me in paradise”

May I say that I love the mystery that God leaves to remain within words such as these? Here, Paul gives only a cryptic elusion to this “third heaven”, and only one mention is made and even then only after 14 years had passed. So again, where is this place, the “third heaven” and “paradise”?

May we begin our thoughts on this question by stating the obvious, that our human ability to comprehend the mind of God will never be sufficient to fully understand such high and holy matters? God’s personality and His ways are beyond searching out. And so also are matters such as this, our trying to fathom where “heaven” and “heavenly places” might be located!

We are, as these words tell us, “flesh and blood”, “corporeal”, but God is not. He is Spirit, without physical being and without the constraints of being in only one place at a time. And because that is His form of being, God actually can be in many places at the

same moment, on His throne in the “heaven of heavens”, but also perhaps on another throne in the “heavenly places”, and also in “Paradise” or the “third heaven”.

Again no, we won't fathom that mystery, but I am convinced that God wants us to ponder such unknowable things, because in our doing so, we gain Spiritual understanding into how excellent and how awesomely great and mighty God really is, not so that we can “explain” Him, but so that we can love Him all the more.

And may I caution us further about this, about trying to “explain” God. I do not believe that God intends us to “explain” Him. These scriptures will do that. He wants us to believe in Him, to love Him and to trust Him. And then, when we have need to “explain” something about Him to others, He will be faithful to give us the words to say, through these scriptures and by unction from the Holy Spirit.

With that in mind, may we pause here for a few moments and remind ourselves of what these scriptures do tell us about God, about His Person, about His character, about who He is!

Recall as Moses spoke to God at the “burning bush”, he ask God “Who” He was. And God answered with the simple words, “I AM”. Think about those words, “I AM”, about what they could mean. They are simple words, but not simple at all. My mind reaches for explanations like, “I AM” all things. I'M not just in all things, I AM all things, “in Me all things exist” and in Me all things “consist” and all things “subsist”. I AM part and partial of everything that is and I give life to everything that has life. If I hold back my breath of life for just a few moments, all things will perish.”

“I AM God! I AM everywhere at one time. I am the Creator and the Sustainer of all things. I created the stars and I hold them in place every moment. The clouds have their unique shapes and being because I form them every moment. I AM Spirit and nothing can contain me or hem me in. I AM everywhere at the same moment! And I AM personal and intimate with every creature, the birds of the air, the animals in the fields, but especially with man, my favored creature, listening to and knowing every thought and every word spoken.

Folks, that is our God, the Great I AM!

Why is such knowledge necessary to our search for where these “heavenly places” spoken about here in this Book of Ephesians might be? It is because if we can grasp only a small understanding of the “Nature” of God, then we can begin to understand why “heaven” is the way it is and how “heaven” can have so many places of being.

So then, considering our original question . . . What are and where are these “Heavenly Places” spoken about here? Is “heaven”, the “heaven of heavens” spoken of by Solomon and these “heavenly places” spoken about here the same place?

May I say immediately, that from the words given here in verse 12 of Ephesians 6, we are able to know that “heaven” and the “heavenly places” are not the exact same place? Listen again to these words of our text!

12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12 (NKJV))

First, note that these words picture us as “wrestling” with principalities, and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this age, and against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. These words are speaking about a present day battle, one taking place today and every day as we live out the days of our living years.

And also, these words clearly say that these demonic forces spoken about here, the powers and principalities and rulers of the darkness and the spiritual hosts of wickedness live and have their being within the heavenly places. And no such thing will be permitted in the “heaven of heavens”. It is pure and holy and no unrighteousness will exist there.

So then, the “heavenly places” are a very different place from “heaven”!

But to answer our question more fully, may I share some excerpts that I have taken from a website that I enjoy and trust, called “gotquestions.org”? There we read that the phrase “heavenly places” is translated from the Greek word epouranios, meaning “the sphere of spiritual activities”, whereas “heaven” is translated from the Greek word “Ouranos” the place of God’s abode. While these words and their meanings are similar, they are also very different.

And here, in the “heavenly places, we see those “spiritual activities” taking place, angelic activity, both good and bad. From their place there in the “heavenly places” the angels, both the good angels and the demonic angels are able to reach over into and influence you and me over in our realm. And especially, we know that the demonic angels corrupt and control a great deal of the human events in our natural world.

But thankfully also, we find in Ephesians 1:20 that the “risen Christ” also lives and has a throne there in those realms. And by His power, He restricts those demonic angels from being any worse than they are. Those words again,

19 . . . These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His (God's) might 20 which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 21 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 one to come. (Ephesians 1:19-21)

Again, as we are clearly told here, we can rest knowing that Jesus has power and authority and rule over and above all creatures within those heavenly places, whether they be "good angels" or "demonic angels".

But may we take strong warning concerning these inhabitants of the "spiritual realms". Because of our inability to see and to comprehend those creatures of the spirit realm, we mostly only have our imagination and the imaginations of Hollywood writers to paint us a picture of who they are and the things they do. And both we and those writers in Hollywood need be very careful with our imaginations and with who we foolishly "mess with". Those creatures "mean business", especially the demonic ones.

The spirit world is completely unknown to us and it will remain that way. We'll never see it, or hear it, or touch it. However, because the Bible clearly tells us that it exists and speaks about it much in the same way it speaks about the visible world, so also must we accept its presence and its moment by moment influence and interaction with us and with our circumstances of life. For that reason, we must be careful to take it into account in everything that we think and say and do.

We have only a few moments left before we close and we still have much to consider, so Lord willing, we will pick back up on these thoughts next week, especially to consider what those creatures of the "spiritual realms" do and don't do. But before we close, may I ask what we have learned today and why have we learned it?

First, we know that yes, these "heavenly places" really do exist and are very real. Though they be in a "spiritual realm" and completely unseen by us who live in the visible realm, they are still just as real as our visible realm.

And within those "spiritual realms" there are inhabitants of many kinds! Christ Himself is there! And though we have not spoken about them here today, we know that the souls of many saints who have gone on before us are also there. We hope to speak more about those dear ones next week.

And in those "spiritual realms", there are also angels, both good angels and demonic angels. And those demonic angels are waging a war against you and me who live in

this visible realm, a war that we are unable to fight and win using only our own fleshly abilities. We need a special armor, one that is provided by God and one that we must “put on” to protect ourselves.

The Lord willing, next week we will study further into the nature and the activities of these creatures of the darkness. But until then, may we rest in the assurance that Christ our Savior and Lord who lives within those “heavenly places” will guard and protect our souls as we yield to Him!

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. 11 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

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