

Heavenly Places

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ ..." (Eph. 1:3). The sentence in verse three which calls for a blessing to God for His blessings to us in Christ is a lengthy one, concluding finally in verse twelve. This blessing which God deserves is for blessing us with every spiritual blessings in the *"heavenly places."* This is the first occurrence of this phrase in this letter but will be followed four times more: 1:20; 2:6; 3:12; 6:12. Let us look at each verse where this expressions is found.

"Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but in the world to come ..." (1:20).

"And raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus ..." (2:6).

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in heavenly places might be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God ..." (3:10).

"For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rules of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (6:12).

What does this phrase *"in heavenly places"* mean: does it refer to the same thing in all its appearances in this letter? The phrase does not mean the same thing each time it appears. As one looks at 1:20 Jesus is said to be *"at the Father's right hand in the heavenly places,"* yet in 6:12 Christians are told that we war against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places. Surely we are not engaged in a war with Christ! It should be apparent to all that although the phrase is the same, it does not have reference to the same place in these two citations.

It appears that 1:20; 2:6 and 3:10 are all a reference to heaven. God is in heaven and when Christ sat down at His Father's right hand, it would necessarily be in heaven but it is called *"heavenly places."* Ephesians 2:6 again is an apparent reference to Christ *"sitting"* -- thus a reference again to heaven. The principalities and powers in heavenly places of 3:10 appears to be a reference to angels and other heavenly beings, and they are in heaven as well. Thus in each reference there is an actual or implied reference to heaven. Since we know that 6:10 is not heaven, this leaves only 1:3 to consider, the

first of these five passages. God blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. Since these spiritual blessings are "*in Christ*" and to be in Christ, is to be in his body, his church, "*heavenly places*" in 1:3 is an apparent reference to the church Jesus bought with His blood.

Actually, in all these instances the word "*places*" is a supplied word. Literally the passage reads "*in the heavenlies.*" "*Heavenly places*" in these verses refers to spiritual things and spiritual regions. The church, heaven and spiritual realms where Satan has his domain are not physical entities. The three are different, of course, but all three share a common denominator: all exist in spiritual realms or regions. It is with spiritual blessings we are blessed within spiritual regions. To share those blessings; forgiveness, sonship, fellowship and hope, we must occupy a spiritual place in Christ. Even though we dwell on earth in physical bodies, we, because we are in Christ, sit with Him in heaven. How important it is then, to be in Christ. And, because we cannot be in Christ unless we are in His body, His church, it is equally important that we be in His church. NEXT: "In Christ."

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