



# Bible Student's Notebook™

## *The Herald of His Grace*

*Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus.* Colossians 1:28

Volume 24  
Issue 596

## *Three Spheres of Glory*

by — E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913)

There is still something more to learn concerning the Dispensations before we can rightly understand the unique position and wonderful teaching of the later Pauline Epistles written from the prison in Rome.

These Dispensations are commonly spoken of as two, the old and the new, but we must bring them, as all else, to the bar of the written Word to see whether we have learned from man or from God, from tradition or from revelation. To some extent we shall all agree.

### THE FIRST SPHERE OF GLORY:

#### *Earth*

We shall all be agreed that the great subject of the Old Testament prophecies is a restored Israel and a re-generated earth (Matthew 19:28). It is surely unnecessary to quote the many prophecies which tell of the time when the earth shall be full of the knowledge and glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Numbers 14:21; Psalm 72:19; Isaiah 6:3; 11:9; Habakkuk 2:14).

We are at one with all of our readers in taking these prophecies in their literal meaning; and in not attempting to explain them, or rather fritter them away, by any spiritualizing interpretation which deprives them of all of their truth and power.

We all look forward also to the time when *“He that scattered Israel will gather him”* (Jeremiah 31:10); when they *“shall all be taught of God”* (John 6:45;



Isaiah 54:13); when *“the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ”* (Revelation 11:15); and when the earthly Jerusalem shall be restored in more than all of its ancient glory.

That kingdom and sphere of blessing and glory will be on the earth, and the new Israel, with a heart of stone changed to a heart of flesh and with a new spirit, will bring forth *“the fruits of righteousness”* (Ezekiel 36:24-36; Matthew 21:43). This will be the regeneration (or *paliggenesia*) when the apostles will be seated *“on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel”* (Matthew 19:28). This will be the first and lowest sphere of blessing. It will be on earth, and under the whole heaven. These are the *“people of the saints of the Most High”* (Daniel 7:27). All of the nations of the earth will share in this blessing according to God's original promise to Abraham.<sup>1</sup>

### THE SECOND SPHERE OF GLORY:

#### *Heaven*

Abraham and his spiritual seed are *“the saints of the Most High”* as distinct from *“the people”* (of these saints) on the earth (Daniel 7:18, 22, 25), and occupying a distinct place in the heavenly sphere of this same kingdom. These, according to the Lord's words in Luke, are *“equal to the angels,” “sons of the resurrection”* (Luke 20:34-36), raised in the *“first resurrection”* before the thousand years of earthly blessing for Israel and for the nations *“under the whole heaven”* (Deuteronomy 4:19; Revelation 20:4-6). These ►

1. Genesis 12:3-4; 17:4; Psalm 22:27-28; 67:4; Isaiah 2:4; 11:10, 12; 42:1, 6; 49:22; 52:15; 55:5; 60:3, 5, 11; 66:12, etc.

belong to “that great city, the holy Jerusalem,” which John saw “descending down from heaven, having the glory of God; and her light like unto a stone most precious.” This “holy Jerusalem” is fully described in Revelation 21:9-27. It is the “city which hath THE foundations” for which Abraham had been taught to look (Hebrews 11:10) when he “saw Christ’s day and was glad” (John 8:56); for, as “faith cometh by hearing,” Abraham must have heard, and this “hearing” must have come “from the [spoken] Word of God” (Romans 10:17).

This is the “inheritance” of those who, as Peter declares to the believers of the Dispersion, “have obtained like precious faith with us.” That “inheritance” is “incorruptible, and undefiled, and fadeth not away, reserved in HEAVEN for you.” The Greek, by the figure *Homoeoteleuton*, emphasizes this “inheritance” as being not earthly, but *aphtharton*, *amianton*, *amaranton* (I Peter 1:4).

The inhabitants of that heavenly city are declared to be “the bride, the Lamb’s wife” (Revelation 21:9).

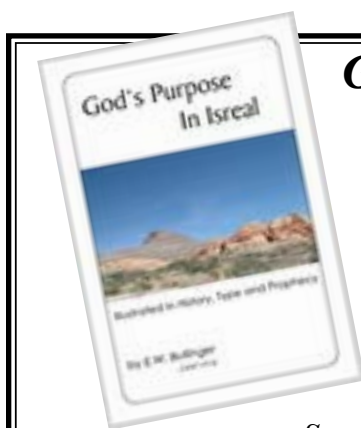
From the call of Abraham there have ever been these two seeds, the earthly and the heavenly. The one was likened by Jehovah to “the dust of the earth” or “the sand of the sea” (Genesis 13:16; 22:17); and the other was likened to “the stars of heaven” (Hebrews 11:12; Genesis 15:5). Both expressions suggest multitude, but the former is especially associated with earthly blessing, while the latter points to “the partakers of a heavenly calling” (Hebrews 3:1), who, like their father Abraham, looked for a heavenly portion and a heavenly blessing, for the city “which hath the foundations.”

*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things make it manifest that they are seeking after a country of their own. And if indeed they had been mindful of that country from which they came out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better country, that is a HEAVENLY; wherefore God is not ashamed of them to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city (Hebrews 11:13-16, Revised Version).*

Where and what could that city have been if it was not the city which John was shown “descending out of heaven from God,” the foundations of which are specially described in Revelation 21:19-20? Through the ages these were “partakers of a heavenly calling.” They formed “the congregation of the Lord,” and are continually spoken of as such.

Not all of Israel were tabernacle and temple frequenters and worshippers. Not all carried out the laws given by Moses, or offered the prescribed sacrifices, attended “the feasts of Jehovah,” or carried out the ordered ritual. Those who gathered to the stated worship of Jehovah are called the “assembly” or the “congregation.”

The Hebrew word for “congregation” is from *kāhal* (from which doubtless we have our English word “call”). The verb means *to call*, assemble, gather together; and the noun is used of any assembly thus called. Seventy times in the Septuagint version of the Old Testament it is rendered *ekklēsia* (the word for



## ***God's Purpose in Israel: Illustrated in History, Type and Prophecy***

by — E.W. Bullinger

Starting with the call of Abraham, progressing through Jacob and his twelve sons, and continuing through the rest of the Old Testament and much of the New, Bullinger does an excellent job of tracing God's Purpose in Israel. If the importance of a subject can be measured by the amount of space given to it by God in the Scriptures, then this is one of the most important. Indeed, in order to have a good overall understanding of the Bible we must have some appreciation of God's Purpose in Israel.

36 pp., BK

See order form.

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“church” in the New Testament).<sup>2</sup>

It is actually used in the expression “*the ekklēsia* [or church] of the Lord” in Deuteronomy 23:1-2, 3, 8; I Chronicles 28:8; Micah 2:5. In Nehemiah 13:1 it is “*the ekklēsia* [or church] of God.” It is this *ekklēsia* (or church) that is referred to as “*the congregation*” in Psalm 22:22; 26:12; 35:18; 40:9-10; 68:26.<sup>3</sup> In Psalm 22:25 it is spoken of as “*the great ekklēsia or congregation*,” and in Psalm 149:1 as “*the ekklēsia of the saints*.” This is what David means in Psalm 22 when he says, “*In the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee*” (:22), and “*My praise shall be of Thee in the great congregation*” (:25).

This is the usage of the same word in the Gospels when the Lord said, “*Upon this rock will I build My ekklēsia*” (Matthew 16:18). He did not, when addressing Israelites, use the word in the new, exclusive and special sense in which it was afterward to be used in the revelation of “*the secret*” in the Prison Epistles, but in the larger and wider Old Testament sense which His hearers would understand as embracing the whole assembly of Jehovah’s believing and worshipping people who were “*partakers of a heavenly calling*” (Hebrews 3:1).

When the Spirit by Stephen speaks of “*the ekklēsia in the wilderness*” (Acts 7:38), He means this congregation of devout worshippers – those who were kept secure “*under the shadow of the Almighty*” during the thirty-eight years of penal wanderings in the wilderness (see Psalm 90-91).

2. The Hebrew word is rendered “*congregation*” eighty-six times; “*assembly*,” seventeen times; “*company*,” seventeen times; “*multitude*,” three times.
3. In Numbers 16:3 and 20:4, the Hebrew *kāhal* is rendered in the *Septuagint* *sunagōgē* = synagogue. In the *R.V.* this is rendered “*the assembly of the LORD*.”

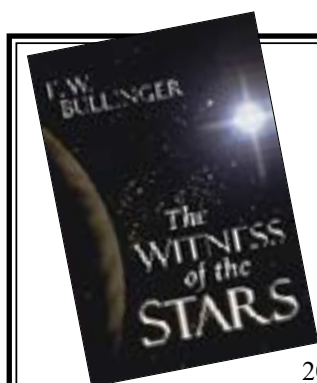
When the Lord added to the *ekklēsia* such as were being saved (Acts 2:47) after Pentecost, He added them to the hundred and twenty who before Pentecost assembled together in the upper room, and who continued daily in the temple [no longer offering sacrifices and partaking of the food furnished thereby], but breaking bread [or eating, as in Luke 24:30, 35 and Acts 27:35] at home, with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people.

*And the Lord added to the church [ekklēsia] daily such as were being saved* (Acts 2:46-47).

When Paul says he “*persecuted the ekklēsia of God*” (I Corinthians 15:9; Galatians 1:13), he does not use the word in a sense of which he had at that time never heard, or had even the remotest idea. His words must be understood in the same sense in which he then used them; and we must not read into any passage of Scripture that which was the subject of a subsequent revelation, especially when the sense is perfectly plain and clear as it stands.

The word *ekklēsia* in the Gospels, Acts and the earlier Pauline Epistles must be taken by us in the sense of its Old Testament (*Septuagint*) usage as meaning simply the congregation, or assembly, or company of Jehovah’s worshipping people, “*partakers of a heavenly calling*,” having a heavenly hope, a heavenly sphere of blessing, and looking for their part in the “*resurrection unto life*.”

It had been revealed of old that there would be a resurrection (see Job 19:25-27; Hosea 13:14; John 11:24); but it was subsequently revealed also that there would be two resurrections: one to life, and one to judgment. Paul testified of the former as be- ►



## *The Witness of the Stars*

by — E.W. Bullinger

An in-depth study of the constellations and principle stars as they pertain to prophetic truth. More than forty charts and diagrams are included.

205 pp., PB

*See order form.*

ing the hope of those who were worshippers of God (Acts 24:14-15); David hoped for it (Psalm 16:9-11;<sup>4</sup> 49:14-15); so did Daniel (Daniel 12:1-3).

The Lord plainly spoke of the former as “*the resurrection of the just*” (Luke 14:14), and as “*the resurrection of life*” (John 5:29). “*By the Word of the Lord*” was revealed a further hope, or rather, an expression of the hope, in John 11:25-26. There was not only the hope for those who should have part in the “*first resurrection*,” but for those who should be “*alive and remain*” when that event should take place. The “*Word of the Lord*” first mentioned it, and the Holy Spirit by Paul expands it in I Thessalonians 4:16-17.

It concerns the Lord, not only as to His being “*the Resurrection*,” but as to His being “*the Life*” also. He says,

- c | I am the resurrection
- d | and the life.
- c | He that believeth in Me, though he die, he shall live [again]. [To him] I will be “*the resurrection*”
- d | and everyone who [is] alive, and believing in Me shall in nowise die, for the ages. [To him] I will be “*the life*” (John 11:25-26).

This was the hope for all who are “*partakers of a heavenly calling*” (Hebrews 3:1). Many of these were to be found when Messiah came. They were those who:

4. Though the Psalm refers to Messiah (Acts 2:27-31; 13:35), we may not exclude David himself, though his expectation is “*not yet*” (see Psalm 49:15).

*waited for the consolation of Israel* (Luke 2:25);

*looked for redemption in Jerusalem* (Luke 2:38);

*trusted that the Lord was He Who should have redeemed Israel* (Luke 24:21);

*waited for the kingdom of God* (Mark 15:43; Luke 23:51);

[were] *as many as received Him* (John 1:12);


*gladly received Peter’s or Paul’s word* [on the Day of Pentecost and after] (Acts 2:41; 8:14; 11:1; 17:11);

*received the Word in much affliction* (I Thessalonians 1:6);

*when they received the Word, accepted it not as man’s word, but even as it is truly, God’s Word which worketh effectually in you that believe* (I Thessalonians 2:13);

*received not what was promised* [but who believed and embraced it by faith] (Hebrews 11:39).

Which of us has not been in difficulties as to those we speak of as “the Old Testament saints”? Well, here they are seen all through the Old Testament as being “the church [or assembly] of God,” “partakers of a heavenly calling,” possessing a heavenly hope, and looking for a heavenly sphere of blessing.

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## THE THIRD SPHERE OF GLORY:

### *The Highest Heavens*

This brings us to another sphere of blessing, the highest in glory. It had been kept secret “*from ages and from generations.*” It is the eonian “*purpose*” of God, made “*before the disruption of the world.*” It was a secret not relating to Israel on the earth, nor to the “*partakers of a heavenly calling,*” but to Christ and the elect members of His Body.

The Prison Epistles, following immediately after the proclamation of Israel’s judicial blindness and hardening (recorded in Acts 28:25-26), have for their one great subject the revelation of the final sphere of blessing and glory which stands in special relation to *Christ and His Body*.

- This sphere is not on the earth;
- It is not over the earth;
- It is in the highest heavens.

Hence it has nothing to do with earthly “*signs and wonders*” that would follow those who in happy obedience believe what is there written. Such surpassingly exalted language has never before or since been spoken of human believers. The very glory of that sphere is inconsistent with any earthly signs or manifestations however wonderful, or ordinances however once significant.<sup>5</sup>

5. It may even be that they are appropriate for the “*partakers of*

The Prison Epistles view the believer of them not with “*signs following,*” but they view him as “*dead*” to this world and all earthly associations and connections, and as having jointly suffered, jointly died, jointly risen and being jointly seated with Christ in the highest heavens. Even the “*affections*” and “*thoughts*” are not to be concerned with the things on earth; they are to be centered on “*the things above,*” where Christ is already seated at the right hand of God.

Hence we do not read in the Prison Epistles about the coming of Christ to the earth, but rather about our being removed to be with Him where He is; not about His *parousia*, or presence on earth, or “*in the air,*” but about our presence and manifestation with Him in His Own glory; not about *anastasis* (or “*resurrection,*” which is the subject of the earlier Pauline Epistles), but about an *exanastasis* (*i.e.*, the out-resurrection, Philippians 3:11), and “*the calling on high*” (:14<sup>6</sup>) which is the subject of the later Epistles; not about any personal happiness which we may have, but about Christ’s personal glory, in which we have the wondrous privilege of sharing.

In this connection we would call attention to one word which, in our judgment, is the real key-word of the Prison Epistles, and of the highest sphere. It is a remarkable word, found in this form, only here ►

*a heavenly calling,*” although they may be unthinkable by those who realize their position as described in Colossians 1:12-14; 2:20.

6. It is quite incorrect to render the Greek *anō* as “*high,*” as though it was an adjective qualifying the character of that “*calling,*” because it is an adverb, denoting its direction.



72 pp., PB

See order form.

## *The King James Version – 400 Years of Bondage 1611-2011*

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

1611 was not a high spiritual mark in the history of the church, the Body of Christ. Instead of being a grand year of the pinnacle of preservation or perfection of God’s Word, it was rather the sad depths of the subtle corrupting of God’s Word by the historic union of governmental and ecclesiastical politics.

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in the New Testament. It occurs once before in Romans 13:9, but there it is in the Present Passive voice (*anakephalaioitai*), and means “is summed up.” However in Ephesians 1:10 it is the Aorist Infinitive of the Middle voice (*anakephalaiosasthai*). This difference is ignored both by the *Authorized* and the *Revised Versions*, which read the Middle voice of Ephesians 1:10 as though it were the Active. This is an almost unpardonable oversight, in the interest of the ordinary Bible reader, who has an undoubted right to a correct grammatical rendering from such a quarter.

Translated correctly, the word and the entire passage emphasize the underlying fact that in all things there revealed, our Heavenly Father has, *for Himself*, purposed what is here stated, *viz.*, that,

*according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Himself, in order to a dispensation of the fullness of the seasons, TO-SUM-UP-FOR-HIMSELF, everything in Christ: things in heaven and things on earth, even in Him, in Whom we were taken as an inheritance, being foreordained according to the purpose of Him Who worketh all things according to the council of His Own will, that we should be to the praise of His glory who have before hoped in Christ.*

This will be enough to show us that the *kosmos*, as shown in Colossians 1:15-16, is a larger, higher and greater degree than that of earthly glory, or that of the glory reserved for those who are “*partakers of a heavenly calling*.”

The Old Testament, the Acts and the earlier Pauline Epistles deal with the *lower* sphere of glory, but the later Epistles reveal a sphere of headship and heirship *above* the earth or the heavens. I Corinthians 15:40 tells of “*terrestrial*” glory and of “*celestial*” glory, which differ the one from the other; but there is a sphere of *cosmical* glory (if we may use the word in this connection) *high above all* created beings, whether principalities, or powers, or might, or thrones, or dominions, which are mentioned (though not defined or explained) in Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 1:16 in relation to Christ, Who shall be “*Head over all*.”

— *The Foundations of Dispensational Truth*, Chapter 22 (*Bible Student's Press*™)  
(abridged & edited)  
(see order form)

**Editor's Note:** This is the first in a series of articles, regarding these three spheres, which we will run in future issues.

### Bible Student's Notebook™

*Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal*

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This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the “*preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past*” (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 1:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:

- total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
- union in His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6);
- adult sonship position (Galatians 4).

We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any “church,” “denomination,” “movement,” “organization,” “mission,” “creed,” “meeting,” “school,” “conference” or “fellowship.”

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