

HEAVENLY REALMS



John Edmiston

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Introduction: The Heavenly Realms

This book is a collection of articles published in Eternity Online Magazine between 1995 and 1998. The magazine went offline after some major technical troubles in December 1998 when both the main site, mirror site and hard-drive all crashed in the same week. Now e-book technology has emerged at a low cost and I am able to put the articles together in small book length publication.

The books, in the main, are solid bible teaching from an evangelical/charismatic perspective. I have a few characteristics in the way I write. Firstly, I tend to work from the raw data of Scripture and from bare facts and first principles. I rarely quote other people and my books are not an assembling of what other people have taught or thought. My books cut their own path. My articles are clear and straightforward with few illustrations or stories. People often say "my brain hurts"! Well I do hope that these articles bless you, challenge you and stretch your knowledge of God and the Heavenly Realms.

About "The Heavenly Realms"

I have titled this book "The Heavenly Realms" because that is the term Scripture uses. The alternative term - "the spirit world" has slightly pagan overtones and hints at dualism as if God and Satan were part of the same realm. No! They are the "heavenly realms" and are controlled from the throne room of Heaven! The book starts with an article on The Ascension of Jesus Christ and it is important that you start the book here as this gives us our place in respect to the heavenly realities and without this it's all either mystifying or terrifying.

Next we move onto showing the Christian's victory over evil. This starts with "Demons Defeated", a study in spiritual warfare (read this in "page view" as the table at the end is quite wide) that is quite comprehensive. Then "Satan – The Doomed Angel" tackles his origins, destiny, nature and activities. Then "Spiritual Discernment" looks at how we can tell the difference between God and the Devil. This is followed by "The Occult - What's Wrong With Exploring The Other Side?" which shows the Bible's view of occult activities.

Chapters 6-11 focus on the invisible realm with articles on Eternity, The Kingdom of God, Heaven, Hell and Judgment, and the Parousia. We then move on to how this concerns the individual Christian in chapters 11-13. The inner man may seem a strange topic for a book like this unless we realize that the inner man is a spiritual being, and our eternal identity, and the "part of us" that participates in these realities most fully. The article, "In The Spirit," shows how our inner man can best relate to the spiritual realm through the Holy Spirit.

Now obviously this book does not cover everything about the Heavenly Realms; that would be a very ambitious task. However, it does give an introduction to the topic and cover some of the main issues for our Christian lives. May you be blessed as you read it. Yours in Christ Jesus,

John Edmiston

The Ascension of Jesus Christ

The consequences of the ascension of Jesus Christ are so amazing that they changed the whole way that people prayed and worshiped God and participated in Him. Jesus took apart the heavenly realm when He ascended and removed the power of the evil principalities and powers to dominate the life of those who believed in Him (Ephesians 4:8-13, Col 2:13-13). Furthermore, He took us with Him on His journey into the heavenly realms so that the believer in Jesus Christ is now a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20), a resident of the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12: 22-24) and is seated with Christ in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 2:6) with a graciously given heavenly status that was previously impossible for any human to achieve under the Law (Matthew 11:11-13; Ephesians 2:4-10). Jesus' ascension also resulted in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (John 7:39; 16:7; Acts 2:33) and the giving of spiritual gifts to the church (Ephesians 4:8-13).

Perhaps the best starting point is the purpose statement given in Ephesians by Paul. This is the "why" of the Ascension and of Pentecost. (Eph 4:8-13 NKJV) Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men." {9} (Now this, "He ascended"; what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? {10} He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) {11} And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, {12} for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, {13} till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Now Paul's purpose statement lists a number of reasons behind the ascension-outpouring. The ultimate reason for the ascension is that "He might fill all things"(Eph 4:10). See Col 1:15ff for more on that. What does he want to fill all things with? Himself! What then is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit about – filling ALL believers with Jesus! Being filled with the Spirit of Jesus is the purpose of Pentecost and the ascension.

This connects with the other great purpose expressed in this passage. That believers may come to a unity of faith and become "a perfect man" in the stature and fullness of Christ. That is the objective we see most clearly now. To build up Christians God sovereignly gives the ability to edify His body to certain people as a gift.

On the way to do this Jesus takes "captivity captive" spoiling the demonic world of its spiritual powers.

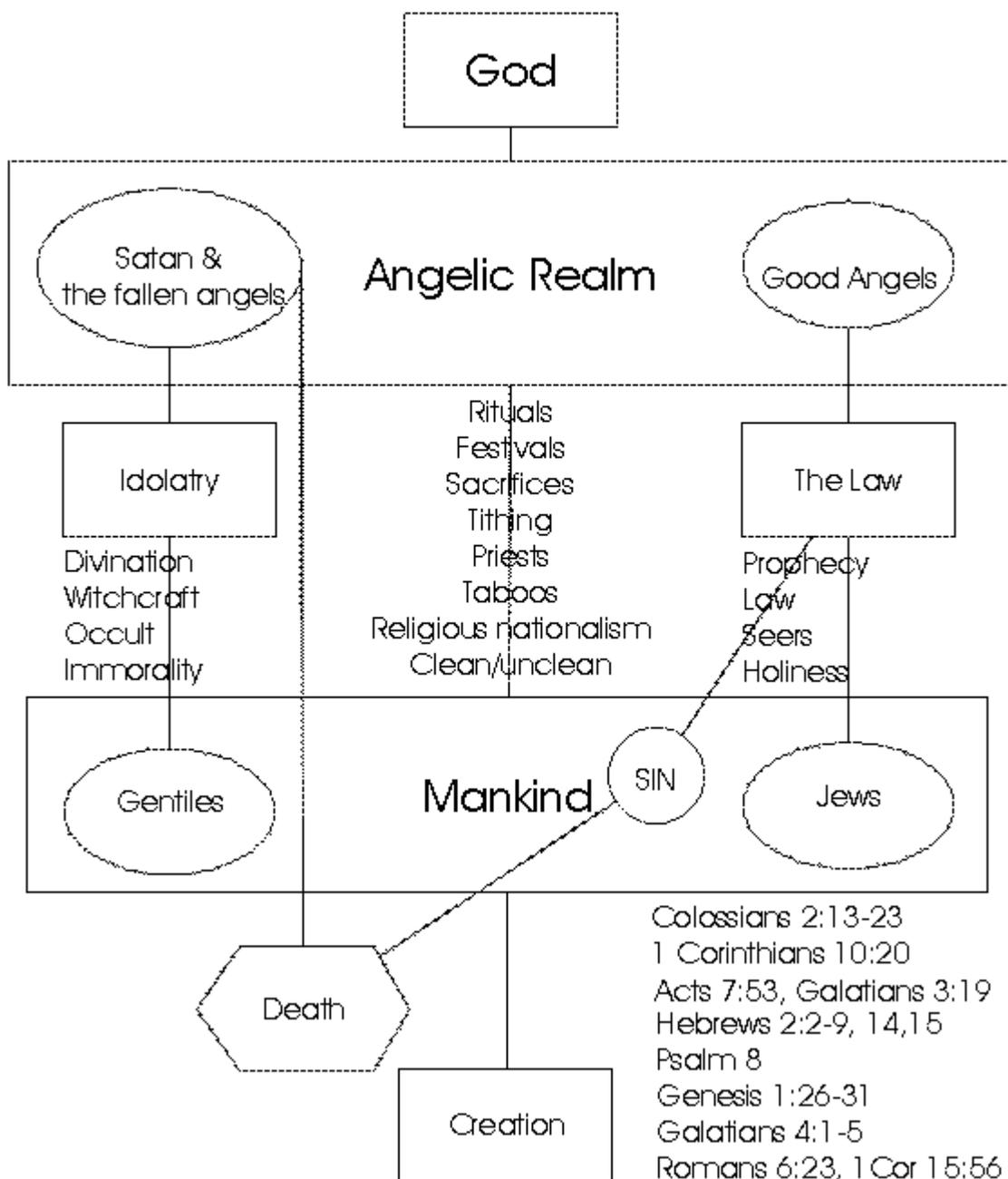
Like the conqueror He is, He then distributes spiritual gifts to men. They include the five-fold ministries and the gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost, and the various spiritual manifestations necessary for the building up of the body of Christ. So we see that the purposes behind the ascension-Pentecost are - that Christ might fill all things, that captivity would be captured, that spiritual gifts might be given to the church, which would then become like Christ. The purpose of Pentecost is Spirit-filled and empowered images of Jesus Christ.

Taking Captivity Captive

The following is a schematic diagram of how things were in Old Testament times. It shows how much both Jews and Gentiles were captives. The Jews were captives under the Law and the

Gentiles captives under their demonic religions. Quite obviously not everything can be fitted onto a single diagram and it is not to scale or meant to be theologically normative but it will, I hope, help us to grasp what the state of things was.

The Old Testament



Let's look at what it is trying to tell us. There are four levels - God, the angelic realm (inhabited by both good and evil angels), mankind and creation in general. Mankind rules creation, the angelic realm is more powerful than mankind and God rules over all. It is the middle portion of the diagram that is the most interesting. We can see from Acts 7:53 and Galatians 3:19 that the

Law was given through angels. 1 Corinthians 10:20 also tells us that the Gentile religions were the work of demons and that the worshipers worshiped demons and not God. So we see that before Christ both Jewish and Gentile religion was under the direct control of the angelic realm. The good angels mediated the Jewish religion and the demons mediated the innumerable Gentile religions. Both systems were somewhat similar (though the Law was vastly superior) and listed in the middle of the diagram are some of the similarities.

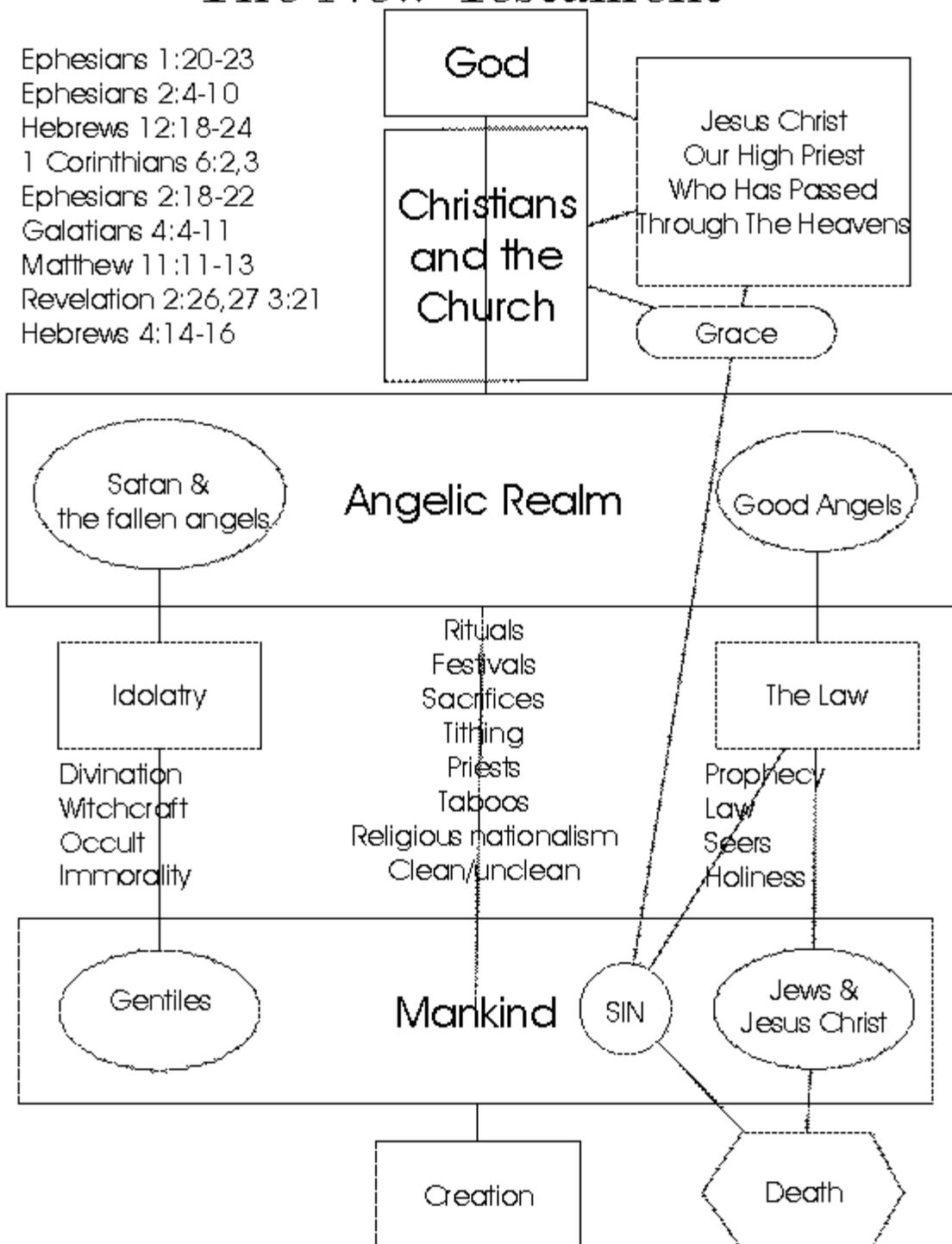
Both Jewish and Gentile religions had temples and priests and sacrifices and tithes and offerings and dietary restrictions and special days and festivals and various taboos and categories of clean and unclean things. Though the Jewish religion was much holier and more moral, it operated with much the same basic external structure as the Gentile religions. They had the same externals - though the internals were very different. Judaism, however, did not resort to witchcraft, divination, sorcery or magic which are exclusively in the domain of Satan. In both Colossians and Galatians Paul calls these external things - the taboos, festivals etc. the "elementary principles of this world" or the "stoichea".

Thus mankind in the Old Testament was ruled by religions based on the exact performance of rituals and the keeping of numerous laws and taboos. Relationship to God was through a priestly caste and involved sacrifices. Except for a very few individuals there was no ongoing relationship with God. Sin led to death which, at that stage, was under the power of the Devil (Hebrews 2:14,15). The general experience of both Jewish and Gentile believers was one of fear and bondage (Hebrews 2:14,15). All this was to change with the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

After Jesus' Work On The Cross, Resurrection and Ascension

Again we have a diagram - the main change being the creation of the Church and its high status in the heavenly realms.

The New Testament



Let's look at some of the changes and seek to explain them. Death moves out of Satan's control (Hebrews 2:14,15) into that of Jesus Christ who now has the keys of Death and Hades (Revelation 1:18). The accusing power of the law over us is broken (Colossians 2:13-15) because it is nailed to the cross. Jesus has been raised up above every power and principality

in the heavenly realms and we - who are "in Him" - are of course seated where He is. (Eph 1:20-23 NKJV) which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, {21} far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. {22} And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, {23} which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

The Church contains you and me so the exaltation of the Church is the exaltation of the believer. Thus the fact that the Church has been made to be the "fullness of Him who fills all in all" has amazing consequences for the believer. Paul continues to show how we have been raised "from the guttermost to the uttermost"... (Eph 2:6-7 NIV) {6} And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, {7} in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.

Thus we see that we have (past tense) been raised up with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus (verse 6 above). This was done not because we were good but because of God's great grace which Paul calls "the incomparable riches of His grace...". Thus we have been taken from being sinners (Romans 3:23, Ephesians 2:1-4) and made into people who are "seated in the heavenly realms". We are now given a status and authority far beyond anything we deserve so that God may show just how gracious He can be.

This new spiritual status of the believer, this citizenship of heaven, is absolutely central to Paul's teaching. So much so that Paul is quite astonished when Christians do not grasp that we are to rule the world and judge the angelic realm.

(1 Cor 6:2-3 NKJV) Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? {3} Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?

To Paul it is just a gospel basic that Christ has triumphed and that we share His triumph and ruler-ship as inheritors of the Kingdom. Christ has ascended above the angelic realm and we have also done this "in Him". Therefore, we have been invested with an authority greater than that of the angels and will one day judge them. (Note: Authority is different from strength; Napoleon was probably not the physically strongest member of his army but he had authority. So Christians do not have the power of angels yet, but we do have position and authority and the right to be in command.) Thus Christians can exorcise demons because we are now at a higher level of authority than that of the fallen angels.

Since we are above the angels we are above their systems or the "stoichea". Thus Christians are not to observe taboos, festivals, days, months, years, Sabbaths, make sacrifices, or worry about tithes, offerings or priests. Let's look at this because it has been a stumbling block to so many believers.

(Gal 4:1-10 NKJV)...{3} Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world ("stoichea"). {4} But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, {5} to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. {6} And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" {7} Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. {8} But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. {9} But now after

you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? {10} You observe days and months and seasons and years.

Thus the religious observance of "days and months, and seasons and years" is a sign of being in bondage to the "elements of the world". These external observances are no longer a part of the Christian faith. You can use a calendar - but you must not attach any religious significance to the dates on it! Faith, not festivals, is what makes us closer to God.

Paul amplifies this at length in Colossians chapter 2, and I will only quote a portion of it here. Firstly, He shows how the cross disarmed the principalities and powers and took away their legal right to enforce their taboos.

(Col 2:13-23 NKJV) And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, {14} having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. {15} Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

Then Paul carefully goes through the consequences of being forgiven and of no longer being under the power of laws, taboos and ceremonies.

{16} So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, {17} which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. {18} Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, {19} and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

The radical nature of our freedom from these "basic principles of the world" is described as a "death". Just how many responsibilities does a dead person have? None! So the Christian no longer has any obligatory responsibilities to cultural taboos, festivals, Sabbaths or dietary regulations. Paul continues...

{20} Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations; {21} "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," {22} which all concern things which perish with the using; according to the commandments and doctrines of men? {23} These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. To put it simply, all "religiosity" has been put behind us when we enter into the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Freedom

We have freedom, we do not have to live in fear as if we serve a God who will be angry over the smallest error. It's a bit like sending someone to mow the lawn and they come back nervously asking "Which blade of grass do I mow first?" and you say "Start anywhere as long as it gets done". God has given us tremendous freedom and we don't have to live in a spirit of slavery worried about getting everything "just right" – about which blade of grass to mow first. Such is the spirit of religious fear. It is akin to the pagan dread of the spirits – if the ceremony is not done "just so" then curses would come forth. The "spirit of fear" produces people who cringe

before God over every tiny detail. However, with the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ that is done away with. The situation now is one of love and sonship.

(Rom 8:15-17 NKJV) For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." {16} The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, {17} and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

We are beloved sons of God living in freedom. As sons of God, above the angels, we are going to inherit a kingdom prepared for us since the foundation of the world. We are heirs. In that Kingdom we will be seated on thrones with Jesus (Revelation 3:21), we will rule over the nations.

(Revelation 2:26,27), we will judge the world and even angels (1 Corinthians 6:2,3), we will become beings with immortal and imperishable bodies (1 Corinthians 15:45-55) and dwell safely in amazing wealth, peace and freedom (Revelation 21 & 22). When this occurs what it means to be a "son of God" will be revealed. At the moment it is, at best, vaguely understood. When this occurs the meaning of our being seated in heavenly realms with Christ Jesus will become absolutely clear. Christ will take up His authority over all creation through us and amazing changes will occur. The whole world will be set free! Paul continues on in Romans 8 to say...

(Rom 8:18-22 NKJV) For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. {19} For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. {20} For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; {21} because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. {22} For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.

Thus the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ was the critical turning point that has ensured the total freedom of all creation! Creation, now in bondage, will move into "the glorious liberty of the sons of God". God is in the business of setting all things free. He desires liberty - not cringing enslavement - for all! However, it is a two-step movement. Firstly, there is freedom from the old religious system, our coming out from domination by the elementary principles of this world and from sin and death. Then step two is not anarchy - but having God's moral code written on our hearts through the Holy Spirit. (Hebrews 8:10) We are freed to become who we were always meant to be - righteous, holy, spirit-filled beings of love. (Galatians 5:16-24) This is the work of the Holy Spirit and why the ascension of Jesus Christ is also strongly associated with the sending of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit and the Ascension of Jesus Christ

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. (John 14:12 NKJV)
Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. (John 16:7 NRSV)
And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you have heard from Me; {5}"for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."(Acts 1:4-5 NKJV)

Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, 'He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption.' {32} This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. {33} Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear. (Acts 2:31-33 NRSV)

"And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. {16}
 "Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'" (Acts 11:15-16 NKJV)

During the Last Supper Jesus clearly indicates that when He "went to the Father" something would happen to the disciples that would enable them to do great works of power equivalent to His own (John 14:12). Later on in the upper room discourse He reveals this to be the sending of the Helper, the Holy Spirit which could only be sent after His departure. (John 16:7) In his last conversation with His disciples He termed this empowerment the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4,5) and promised them they would receive it soon and that it would make them powerful international witnesses to Him (Acts 1:8). On the day of Pentecost, it was poured out in a manner that was both visible and audible (Acts 2:32-33) and likewise during the Gentile Pentecost at Cornelius' place where it is also referred to as "the baptism in the Holy Spirit" (Acts 11:15,16).

The heavenly realms are now occupied by Jesus and since we are in Him, we have been seated with Him in these realms (Eph 2:6). Therefore we can have confident access to God and unhindered participation in the things of the Spirit with Whom we have been baptized (1 Cor 12:13). This does not mean that we all have all gifts or that all will have one particular gift. God is sovereign in how He distributes the gifts of the Spirit. (1 Cor 12:7-11) Within His sovereignty there is evidently some room for us to ask for particular manifestations of the Spirit. (Luke 11:13, 1 Cor 12:31, 14:1)

To sum up... The purpose of Pentecost is Spirit-filled and empowered images of Jesus Christ. The Pentecost event is known as the baptism in the Holy Spirit which was received by the Jews (Acts 2:32,33), the Gentiles (Acts 11:15,16) and the Christians at Ephesus (Acts 19:1-6) and Corinth (1 Cor 12:13). It is for all the Church. The outcome of the Pentecost event is power for ministry (Acts 1:8) through the Holy Spirit "coming upon" people (Acts 2:32,33) and sovereignly giving spiritual gifts for the edification of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:1-7). The Holy Spirit is not a mere "experience". He is Christ coming to fill all things. (Eph 4:10,5:18) He wants to fill you with Jesus and transform you into His image. (Eph 4:8-13, Rom 8:29-31) He also wants to empower you to be a witness for God. (Acts 1:8) You may ask for Him and God will gladly give the Holy Spirit to you (Luke 11:13) (in new ways...it's a puzzle, we have Him but we can still receive His power) though you should ask for "the greater gifts" to be used in love for the edification of the church (1Cor 12:31; 14:1).

Conclusion

The ascension of Jesus Christ to "fill all things" was the end of religion as it is generally conceived and the beginning of a Spirit-filled and joyous relationship with God. The main thing that Jesus wants to fill is you! To that end He has sent His Holy Spirit into this world to dwell in the hearts of believers, sanctifying them to be like Him and empowering them to do good works. He has also created a new thing - the Church, which is distinct from the world and angels and which will rule over both. He has placed believers in the heavenly realms with Him and freed

them from the innumerable fear-filled obligations of the old religious systems. He has brought us into sonship and membership of the household of God. This church is to consist of "images of Jesus Christ," indwelt by His Spirit and living in direct personal relationship with God.

Therefore, there is no longer any need to observe new moons, Sabbaths, tithing, religious festivals, to have a church building, a priest, or to abstain from alcohol, red meat, pork or certain types of seafood. There is no need to be celibate, be involved in rituals of self-abasement or penance or to punish oneself. That is all gone. What has replaced it is a life that flows from being indwelt by God, a life that is characterized not by solemnity and punctilious observation of fearful rituals but by freedom and love and joy and peace.

(Gal 5:22-23 NKJV) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, {23} gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Demons Defeated - Spiritual Warfare For The Totally Afraid

Demons are variously caricatured as "naughty spirits" and even portrayed as "sources of wisdom" in some New Age teachings. The Bible however, sees demons as truly evil and deceptive beings arrayed in rebellion against God, and whose fate will be eternal torment imprisoned in a lake of fire. This latter view is far closer to the reality experienced by demon-possessed people and those who have dealt with demons in others.

A demon possessed person is often deeply deceived - thus showing the deceptive nature of demons, a demon-possessed person often engages in activities that display a lack of conscience toward others or a delight in the evil and the bizarre. This betrays the evil, amoral and actively wicked attitude of the demonic. A demon-possessed person is often angry at ministers, scornful of Scripture, fearful of communion, mocking at morality and may hold bizarre views of Christ. Christian praise and worship can cause strong negative reactions. This displays the demonic hatred of God and rebellion toward His legitimate authority over this Earth that He made. Those who deal with demons sometimes find that demons are both aware of and terrified of the eternal fate that awaits them. They believe in the lake of fire even if some theologians do not. This article will look at what the Bible says about demons, their fate, and how we can stop them hindering our Christian life.

Let's start with the positive...

Jesus' Triumph Over The Demonic Realm

(1 John 3:8 NKJV) He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 4:4 NKJV) You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

(1 John 5:18 NKJV) We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.

The book of 1 John was probably written when the persecutions of the emperor Diocletian really began to bite. Satan and his instrument - the pagan Roman Empire seemed to be in an indefinite ascendancy over the church, God and all the forces of good. 1 John is thus a very radical and bold epistle in its claims to victory in Christ. There are three realities described here:

1. The reality of Christ's mission, in particular, His incarnation. The reason Jesus Christ was manifested in human form was so that He could tackle Satan on his own turf and destroy all his

works. Like a hand-grenade exploding in the Devil's face, the incarnation brought the awesome power of the Son of God into proximity with evil so that it might completely destroy it.

2. The reality of Christ in us, the hope of glory. He who is in us is He who came to destroy the works of the devil. Jesus overcame the world then, and now He is in us, and continues to overcome the world.

3. The reality of the indestructibility of our real eternal selves which are based on Christ in us. A person who has been born again has a new self that is created on a new order and a higher plane. It is eternal, imperishable and indestructible, it cannot be defiled. It is sinless and cannot sin. It is born of God and partakes of the very principles of the nature of God (but on a much different scale). (1 John 3:9 NKJV)

Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. This new self battles with the flesh in a life long struggle for dominance (Galatians 5:16-18) so Christians still do sin, but this sin is not a part of them that will still be with them in Heaven. There will be no need for Purgatory, the new self has been sinless from the "new birth". This new self cannot be "touched" by the evil one. The person we will be for the next ten million years cannot be affected by sin, defilement or temptation, and it has already passed out of the judgment of God (John 5:24, Romans 8:1,2). While Satan can destroy your flesh (1 Corinthians 5:5) he cannot touch the real eternal you. (See article on the Inner Man for more detail)

These three powerful realities mean that even though Satan and his demons are at times quite formidable foes they ultimately cannot harm us. They are defeated rebels whose rebellion will come to nothing in the end. Jesus Christ came to destroy ALL the works of the devil and through His church that task is being completed and will be finally climaxed at the return of Christ. Let's look at how the devil lost the weapons from his armory.

(Hebrews 2:14 NKJV) Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.

The incarnation gave Jesus the flesh and blood He needed so that through death He could defeat Satan's ability to wield the power of death, keeping the world in fear and abject slavery.

(Colossians 2:13-15 NKJV) And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, {14} having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. {15} Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

(For further expansion on this verse see the article The Cross In Colossians) These verses in Colossians indicate that the weapon of accusation has been removed. Satan has been disarmed by the forgiveness we have received. He no longer has any basis for accusing us. The Charge sheets are all nailed to the Cross.

Satan's ultimate defeat will be an ignominious vanquishing (Revelation 20:10 NKJV) The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

The Christian's Power And Authority Over The Demonic Realm

The Christian's power and authority over the demonic realm is not based on having more "might" than the demonic realm (I do not know of any Christian with the spiritual might anywhere near that of Satan) but on authority. The distinction is important. Joash became king of Israel when he was 7 years old. Though physically puny and intellectually hardly a match for bad queen Athaliah, he had more authority than her or any of his rivals. He was king. Similarly, even a "baby Christian" has more authority in the spiritual realm than the biggest baddest demon on the block. As a small child is more important than the largest fiercest lion so God has deemed that even the least Christian outranks the mightiest power and principality. The authority comes because of their position in the heavenly hierarchy. In God's household we are the "sons," and angels, even the mightiest of them, are just servants of God. And sons outrank servants.

(Hebrews 1:14 NKJV) Are they (i.e. angels) not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

(1 Corinthians 6:3 NKJV) Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?

We have undergone a spiritual transformation as a result of the gospel. In the Old Testament we were "a little lower than the angels", we were like children who, in their minority, have less status than say the butler and are expected to treat the household servants with respect. But with the gospel we have come of age and are now full-fledged sons of God

(John 1:12 NKJV) But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name:

(Galatians 3:24-26 NKJV) Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. {25} But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor. {26} For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus.

This transformation means that a huge change in status has occurred so that inhabitants of the Kingdom of God are truly awesome spiritual beings.

(Ephesians 2:6-7 NKJV) and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, {7} that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

(Ephesians 1:20-21 NKJV) which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, {21} far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

(Matthew 11:11-13 NKJV) "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

We have been raised up with Christ and seated at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all principalities and power and might and dominion so that Jesus could say of us that the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than the mightiest of the Old Testament saints. This is "amazing grace" and is God displaying His kindness for all the world to see.

Wielding Our Weapons

With this in mind, let's look at the authority we have been given and how we are to wield it.

(Luke 9:1 NKJV) Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases.

(Luke 10:1, 17-24 NKJV) After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to... Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." {18} And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. {19} "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. {20} "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." {21} In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. {22} "All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him." {23} Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; {24} "for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it."

Jesus commissions the twelve and then the seventy to have power over evil. In these verses we discover three things:

1. The power we have over the demonic realm is a gracious gift from Jesus "I give you..." to equip us for ministry (it is in the context of a ministry trip).
2. This power is both offensive, "I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy;" and defensive, "and nothing shall by any means hurt you."
3. That our operating principle is not to be power consciousness but instead humble gratefulness for the grace of God. "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

Binding and loosing...

The Apostle Peter

(Matthew 16:18-19 NKJV) "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. {19} "And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

Christians in general

(Matthew 18:18-20 NKJV) "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. {19} "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My

Father in heaven. {20} "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

Binding Satan and his demons

(Matthew 12:27-29 NKJV) "And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. {28} "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. {29} "Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.

(Luke 11:19-22 NKJV) "And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. {20} "But if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. {21} "When a strong man, fully armed, guards his own palace, his goods are in peace. {22} "But when a stronger than he comes upon him and overcomes him, he takes from him all his armor in which he trusted, and divides his spoils.

Thus we see that the power to bind and to loose has been delivered over to God's church (Matthew 16:18-19) and can be exercised by any two or three Christians coming together in agreement before God (Matthew 18:18-20). Because of the authority we have been given on the basis of the completed work of Christ we can come against Satan as "someone stronger" and overpower him, binding his activities (Matthew 12:29), neutralizing his weapons (Luke 11:22) and taking back the things he claims ownership of. (Luke 11:22).

In The Name Of Jesus

(John 14:13-14 NKJV) "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. {14} "If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.

(John 15:16 NKJV) "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

(Luke 10:17-19 NRSV) The seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, in your name even the demons submit to us!" {18} He said to them, "I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning. {19} See, I have given you authority to tread on snakes and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing will hurt you.

(Acts 16:18 NRSV) {18} She kept doing this for many days. But Paul, very much annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.

The name of Jesus is the delegated authority of the Son of God. In the Gilbert and Sullivan opera "The Pirates of Penzance" the pirates are arrested and the police say "We charge you yield in Queen Victoria's name...". They confront the pirates in the delegated authority of Her Majesty Queen Victoria. When we come against Satan and his demons we can say "We charge you yield in the name of Jesus Christ the Son of the Living God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords". The "name that is above every other name" is the ultimate source of authority. Say the pirates in the opera had answered...we resist in the name of the Pirate King...then there would have been a clash of authority (in fact they said "we love our Queen...it was very sarcastic...") In such a clash of authority it is the "highest name" that wins. A queen outranks a count who outranks knights of the realm that outrank commoners etc. So it is in the heavenly realms. Such

is the privilege of Christians that we are allowed to use "the name that is above every other name" when we challenge demonic authority. We come bearing the highest authority in the Universe.

(Philippians 2:8-11 NKJV) And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. {9} Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, {10} that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, {11} and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

So to use the name of Jesus in prayer is a declaration of authority. Even Jewish exorcists found it had enormous authority until it was challenged (Acts 19:13-18). They were operating on "bluff", they were not converted and had no right to use the authority of Jesus name in exorcism. The basis of praying in Jesus name is, first of all, being converted. Jesus' name can be used in two ways. First in declarative mode, "In the name of Jesus I command..." e.g. when Peter healed the lame man at the Gate Beautiful

(Acts 3:6 NKJV) Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk."

Secondly it may be used to request things from God e.g., in the verses from John's gospel above "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.". The difference between command mode and request mode is that we command lesser beings but request greater ones. So when addressing a demon, a disease or a mountain or a storm we operate in command mode as sons of God proudly bearing the authority of Jesus name. When addressing the Father or Jesus we do not presume on the authority we have been given, but we come humbly as expectant children with every right to ask and to receive, but always in wonder and awe, for we have a majestic God.

Go boldly into the battle armed with the name of Jesus Christ.

Tearing Down Strongholds

(2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NKJV) For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. {4} For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, {5} casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,

Strongholds are built out of thoughts (Gk. noema). When Satan builds a stronghold in a human heart, a church, a nation or across a whole planet he uses thoughts. Thoughts of fear, hatred, envy, enmity and strife. Thoughts that create jealousy and distrust. Thoughts that turn people against God. Thoughts that entice to pride and rebellion. Greedy thoughts, lustful thoughts, evil and cruel thoughts. Brick by brick, thought by thought, constellating together into a demonic aggregate, a wall that blocks out the light and keeps a world in darkness. Note that they are described as "arguments and every high thing that exalts itself".

A spiritual stronghold is often characterized by a form of pride known as hubris that exalts itself against God. Herod in the book of Acts is an example of this when he accepted worship from men and was struck dead by God. (Acts 12:21-23) The Gnostic heresies of Colossae (Colossians 2:8, 18-23) the bizarre "knowledge" of Corinth (1 Corinthians 8:1-3) and the

"teaching of The Nicolaitans" (Rev 2:6,15) seem also to fit this category. Those with religious delusions are nearly always full of pride and impossible to reason with. That is why Paul calls it a "stronghold". Bible-based apologetics has its place here on demolishing the "lofty arguments" and replacing them with truth. Jesus' confrontations with the Pharisees and Sadducees and His teaching on the Sermon On The Mount were real "stronghold busters" (You have heard it said...but I say to you...).

Thoughts control emotions and actions. If your doctrine tells you that you are no good, then you will feel worthless. If your doctrine demands perfection you will feel constantly guilty. This will lead to actions based on your thoughts and feelings e.g. a life of constant striving. A stronghold can become so intense that the person loses touch with reality. To see this in action we need only look at the severely demon-possessed with their destroyed thought life, shattered emotions, lack of contact with reality and constant fear (Mark 5:1-20). Satan controls us to the extent that he can control our thinking. Yet God has given us weapons against this that are "mighty in God for the pulling down of strongholds" so there is no problem with our weapons! Let's learn to use them. The weapons are listed in Eph 6:10-18.

(Ephesians 6:10-18 NKJV) 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. {13} Therefore, take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. {14} Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, {15} and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; {16} above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. {17} And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; {18} praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints.

The strongholds of Satan are pulled down by people whose lives show moral integrity and faith and who know the word of God and can pray in the Spirit at all times. It is a soldierly combat. For example, say Satan has established a stronghold of lustful thoughts in your mind. You need to pull down those lustful concepts about the opposite sex through a thorough study of God's word and knowing what the human body is, and is not, meant for, (see article Your Body Is A Temple Of The Holy Spirit) then you need to fill your mind with things that are noble and lovely and true (Phil 4:8) praying in Jesus name for God to demolish this stronghold in your life.

If the stronghold is in your church - say a spirit of parsimony and greed, then you may need to teach on generosity and giving, prayerfully wielding the sword of the Spirit until the false concepts of stewardship have come tumbling down and the church is renewed in faith. If the stronghold is in your nation you may need to debate publicly, use the media and refute the lies that keep people bound, while guarding yourself and your own life from the counter-attacks that will come. As I said earlier our weapons are "mighty in God" they are amazing weapons if wielded rightly. Do not be intimidated by the authority of Jesus and the "big guns" of God's weaponry, they are on our side.

A Tactical Armory

The following table summarizes the ways Satan attacks and the way we should respond to these attacks. I have called it a tactical armory since it tells us which weapon to select for the

battle. You may notice that many of the Scriptures for Satan's tactics also contain the remedy for it close by or in the same verse! God is wise.

How Satan Attacks	Scripture References	How We Should Respond
Steal, kill, and destroy.	John 10:10	Take hold of the abundant life in Christ
Pride leading to condemnation.	Timothy 3:6,7	Be wise. Appointing of those in spiritual authority
Accusation.	Rev 12:10,11	The blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony... testifying to what the blood of the Lamb has done for you.
Temptation through misapplied Scriptures that seem to validate fleshly desires for physical appetite, specialness to God and power.	Luke 4:1-13	Knowing the Scripture so well that you can spot the lie and counter it with a more appropriate Scripture.
Deceptive false teachings.	1 Timothy 4:1-7	Reject fanciful tales, teach the Scripture, sound doctrine, thankfulness, prayer
False assurance of salvation.	James 2:17-26; Matthew 7:15-28	A godly life of good works based on Jesus teaching is evidence of having true faith.
Ensnarement in the occult, divination, astrology, and the worship of false gods.	Deut 7:25; 18:10-13; 32:7; Lev 19:31; Isaiah 47:13; Acts 19:19; 1 Corinthians 10:14	Destroy all objects associated with it. Complete disassociation from it.
Strongholds made of thoughts that oppose God – especially prideful thoughts and unbelief. These thoughts can control the life and emotions of a person, church or country.	2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 6:10-21; Romans 8:4-6; 12:1,2; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 3:1-4	Biblical apologetics, renewing the mind. Setting the mind on the things of the Spirit. Use of our spiritual armor combined with faith, the word of God, prayer in the Spirit and humble submission.
Blinding the minds of unbelievers. Especially those who stubbornly refuse Christ.	Matthew 23:17,19,24,26; Luke 4:18; John 9:39; Romans 10:7-10,25; 2 Corinthians 3:14-17, 4:3,4; Ephesians 4:17-24; 1 John 2:10,11	Turning to Christ. Having a willingness to accept the light and seek it further. Renewal of the mind. Loving your brother in Christ. Good teaching and intercession can “open the eyes of the blind”.
Religious ceremonies that appear “cultural” but are in fact demonic.	1 Corinthians 10:14-22	Awareness of the spiritual realities that under-gird such

		things. Not participating in them.
Unrestrained Satanic activity. Spiritual wickedness in the heavenly realms. Spiritual "strong men" occupying a person, place or nation.	Matthew 12:27-29; 16:19; 18:18-20; Luke 11:19-22	Binding and loosing in Jesus name which may often have corporate dimension to it.
Disease caused by demons (not all disease is meant).	Matthew 9:32-34; Luke 13:11-16; Matthew 8;16,17; Mark 9:14-29	Healing. Prayer and fasting. Faith. Use of command prayers in the Name of Jesus.
Demon-possession.	Luke 10:17-19; Acts 16:16-18; Mark 5:1-20; 9:14-29 Luke 11:20-26; Acts 5;16, 8:7	Use of the name of Jesus with authority. Command the demons to leave. Sometimes it may help to identify the demons. Then the delivered person must live a Holy Spirit filled life. Faith and prayer are necessary and sometimes fasting.

Conclusion

I hope you are feeling a bit more confident in spiritual warfare by now. Please answer the following revision questions. They will help you learn the material.

What was one of the purposes in Christ's coming as a human being? (1 John 3:8, Hebrews 2:14)

What victories did He win? (Eph 4:8; Colossians 2:13-15, John 16:33, 1 John 5:4)

What change took place in the heavenly status of believers between the time of John the Baptist and the day of Pentecost? (Mt 11:11-13)

Are Christians greater or lesser than angels in authority? (1 Cor 6:3, Heb 2:14, Eph 2;6,7)

What is the importance of authority in spiritual warfare? (See section on the power and authority of the Christian)

What are strongholds made of? How do we combat them? (2 Cor 10:3-5)

What are the two ways of using the name of Jesus? (Acts 3:6; 16:18; John 14;13,14; 15:16)

What is meant by binding and loosing? (Matt 12:27-29; 16:19; 18:18-20)

Why can the demonic realm "not touch us"? (1 John 4:4, 5:18)

What is the right tactic for combating involvement in the occult? (See diagram above)

Satan - The Doomed Angel

Satan is no joke. He is the baddest and saddest figure ever. Never has anyone been demoted as many times or gone from glory to the gutter quite the way Satan has. And Satan wants to take as many people as possible with him. He will bribe you, threaten you, or cajole you into joining him in his reluctant headlong plunge into perdition. Many of the bible references in this article were taken from the very helpful section on the doctrine of Satan in the back of the Ryrie Study Bible (Moody Press, Chicago) though the arrangement and interpretation of them (and any errors in them) are mine alone.

Existence

There are some that deny the existence of an evil spiritual power. However, the existence of Satan can be seen in some of the more irrational and evil acts of man such as the massacres in Rwanda or tangibly felt in the presence of voodoo or occult practitioners. There is spiritual darkness as well as spiritual light and the Bible teaches this. Seven OT books and every NT writer speak of Satan. Jesus Christ himself taught about Satan (Matthew 13:39, Luke 10:18,11:18). Satan is not a mere "dark force" he possesses intellect (2 Cor 11:13) emotions (Rev 12:17) has a will (2 Tim 2:26) and is treated as a morally responsible person (Matthew 25:41). Neither is he an aspect of God but is summoned before God as an inferior being who is under His control (Job 1& 2, Zechariah 3).

Origins and Destiny

Before we look at what the Bible says about Satan and his realm we need to understand where Satan has come from and where he is going. He came from what the Bible calls "the third heaven" in the presence of God (2 Corinthians 12:2) where he was an anointed cherub and the highest of all angelic beings (Ezekiel 28:12-14). However, sin, pride and the ambition to be above God – (1Timothy 3:6, Isaiah 14:12-20) was found in him and he was "cast down" (Ezekiel 28:11-19) to the mid-heaven where angels fly and do battle (Revelation 14:6; 12:7; Daniel 10:1-20). In Eden Satan was stripped of his glory and humiliated and told of his eventual defeat through the "seed of the woman" Jesus Christ (Genesis 3:14,15). This initiated a period of war against mankind particularly those God favored such as the Jews and Job (1 Chronicles 21:1; Job 1 and 2; Daniel 10).

During the ministry of Christ Satan "fell from heaven like lightning" at least over the area where the 70 went out and preached (Luke 10), possibly paving the way for the revival in Judea and Samaria later on. After the cross, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ Satan is cast down again "now is the ruler of this world cast out" (John 12:31) and found in "the first heaven" –

which is the air above us. Paul now calls him "the prince of the power of the air". (Ephesians 2:2) That is where Satan is now. He is not in Hell – yet. He can visit earth as that is beneath his authority and under his control (1 John 5:18,19). Satan will try to get his place in the second heaven back and will rise up against Michael the archangel to claw his way back through the heavenly realms once more (Rev. 12:7-9). He will lose that battle and be cast to earth where he will incarnate as the Antichrist.

(Revelation 12:12 NASB) "For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time".

Revelation 13 - the next chapter after the battle in Rev 12:7-9 describes this Hell-On-Earth Antichrist in detail. His campaign on earth will be thwarted by the return of the Lord and he will be cast another level down into the Pit for one thousand years (Rev. 20:1-3). After which he will emerge and try to claw his way back up again, this time trying to take authority on earth and preparing the world for war against God (Rev 20:7-10). He will lose (Rev 20:10) and finally be cast into the lake of fire from which there shall be no escape and he will dwell in torment forever. (Rev 20:10) Thus Satan is on a long losing streak that will end in perpetual torment. He is doomed because of his evil nature. He has fixed the attitude of his heart to rebel against God and thus destroy himself. His vaulting ambition and repeated attempts to climb higher and higher have been his downfall.

Nature

Satan (Rev 20:2) means "Adversary" and this is his basic nature as an opponent of God and all that is of God. His other titles are Devil (Rev. 20:2 slanderer/besmircher), Lucifer (Isaiah 14:12 Son of The Morning – probably his title in the third heaven), Beelzebub (Matt 12:24 Lord of the Flies alluding to ownership of the swarms of demons and should be compared with Jesus' title – Lord of Hosts) and Belial (2 Cor. 6:15 or base one, indicating his animal or bestial nature). His titles include the Evil One (1 John 5:19), Tempter (1 Thess 3:5), Prince of This World (John 12:31), God of This Age (2 Cor 4:4) Prince of the Power Of The Air (Ephesians 2:2) and Accuser of the Brethren (Rev 12:20). He configures himself variously as a Serpent (Rev 12:9), a Dragon (Rev 12:3), and an Angel Of Light (2 Cor 11:4). He can take human form and possess Judas' body during the betrayal (John 13:27) and will finally incarnate as the Antichrist (Rev 12:10 to the end of Rev 13).

Activity

Satan's "mission statement " is in John 10:10 "steal, kill and destroy" and contrasts with that of the Good Shepherd - that they may have life abundantly. He is a murderer from the beginning (John 8:44) and a liar (John 8:44) he is a confirmed sinner (1 John 3:8) an accuser and slanderer (Zech 3; Job 1&2; Rev 12:10) and an adversary (Rev 20:2; 1 Peter 5:8). He is thus a toxic and destructive spirit who is opposed to everything good. Those deceived by him go to their doom (Rev 20:8-15) because their minds are blinded (2 Cor 4:4) and the Word of God has been snatched from their hearts (Luke 8:12) and they have become opponents of the work of God (Rev. 2:13). His opposition to Jesus Christ and those connected with Him is absolute, total and ancient, stemming at the very least from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:14,15). He tried to murder Jesus from birth (Matthew 2:16), tempted Him in the wilderness ((Matthew 4:1-11) opposed Him at every turn (John 8:44, Matthew 16:23) and possessed Judas' body during the betrayal (John 13:27). His aim is to overthrow God and he wars against Him (Rev 16;13-14; Rev. 20:7-10).

With Respect To The Christian

Amazingly, Christians are able to withstand this mighty Prince of Darkness equipped in the "armor of God" (Ephesians 6:11-19). They can resist the devil and he will flee from them (James 4:7) and Satan is called "the fleeing serpent" (Job 26:13; Isaiah 27:1). Despite this we are not to be contemptuous of Satan in our speech (Jude 8 and 9) rather we are to be on guard since he can and does devour the unwary (1 Peter 5:8). Satan attempts the destruction of Christians by tempting them to lie (Acts 5:3), accusing and slandering them (Rev 12:10), hindering their work (1 Thess 2:18) tempting them to immorality (1 Cor. 7:5) inciting persecutions against them (Rev 2:10) and sending his demonic hordes to attack them spiritually (Eph 6:11-12). Finally, he sows false believers in amongst true believers to frustrate the work (Matthew 13:38-39; 2 Cor 11:26). However, the weakness we sense as a result of these attacks only rebounds the glory of God because when we are weak He is strong and His grace is sufficient for us (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

Knowing the Difference - Between God and the Devil

Spiritual manifestations tend to alarm and puzzle us unless we have some way from sorting out the good from the bad from the indifferent. This is actually a Christianized version of an in-service I took a few years ago when I spoke to the psychiatrist and staff at Townsville General Hospital about demons, exorcism and religious ideation. I'm afraid some medical terms have been left in and it may sound a touch clinical. I was very well received by them and enjoyed the hour or so we had together.

Good Writers

That may help with an understanding of spiritual perspectives - Rev. Dr. Martin Israel (Lecturer Pathology, Royal College of Surgeons) and author of *Summons to Life, Precarious Living, The Pain That Heals, Smoldering Fire and The Spirit of Counsel*. Dr. Paul Tournier Swiss -based physician and counselor author of *The Meaning of Persons, The Strong and The Weak, Guilt and Grace, A Place for You, Marriage Difficulties, et. al.* and a leading exponent of the "medicine of the person" movement. In North America Dr. John White -Christian Psychiatrist - author of *The Fight, Eros Defiled, The Shattered Mirror et.al.* On the Australian scene Dr. William Wilkie - Christian psychiatrist author of *Understanding Psychiatry, Understanding Stress Breakdown* and Dr. Kath Donovan, *Growing Through Stress*, present credible combinations of Christian insight and medical practice.

Helpful Bible Passages

The Temptation of Christ in the Wilderness - Mark 1:12,13, Matthew 4:1ff, Luke 4:1 ff

Jesus and the Gadarene Demoniac - Mark 5:1-20

The 144,000 - Revelation 7:1-8, 14:1-5

The Two Witnesses (Prophets) of Revelation - Revelation 11:1-14

The Psychic Servant Girl - Acts 16:16-21

The Unpardonable Sin - Matthew 12:30-32, Mark 3:29,30, Luke 12:8-10

The Ill and the Demonized - Matthew 4:24

Exorcism: Matthew 8:16, 12:22 ff., Acts 19:13ff, Mark 9:17-27

Authority: Luke 9:16ff, Matthew 10:17

Not just mental illnesses: Luke 13:11

Results of demonic influence (Obsessiveness etc.): I Timothy 4:1ff

Tests for demonic influence: Matthew 7:16-23, 1 Corinthians 12:3, 1 John 4:1-6

Sorting out the possibilities

(A) If the person has been involved: in the occult or an extreme sect, or in gross sexual promiscuity, in drugs or alcoholism.

(B) And can speak in a voice other than their own or know a language they have not been exposed to.

(C) And find great difficulty in prayer or Bible-reading and react strongly against Christianity.

Then classical demonization is a possibility. Seldom are healthy, normal people obsessed or possessed by the demonic. As a rule of thumb there must be some preexisting instability.

Bizarre conduct is insufficient evidence.

Voices and visions are insufficient evidence.

Violent fits are insufficient evidence.

Intractable guilt is insufficient evidence but frequently accompanies it.

Absence or presence of reaction to treatment/medication is inconclusive.

Real guilt disguised as demonization

The person comes from a religious background. They have not been involved in the occult, speak in voices other than their own, can still pray and read the Bible. However, they hear voices and claim demonization. Generally, it is sexual sin, either premarital sex, adultery or masturbation that haunts them and which they cannot resolve. Often they cannot admit to themselves their character flaw.

Depression and religious ideas

Those from a Christian background can, during bouts of depression, turn to Scriptural passages on judgment, Old Testament prophecies and the book of Revelation being favorites along with "the unpardonable sin". It generally will pass with the depression. It can be very acceptable to guide them to new beliefs consistent with their faith e.g. if a person with depression has the belief "I am utterly worthless...", the it is quite acceptable to guide them to "for you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God" (1 Peter 2:9). Countless other examples are possible.

Schizophrenia

Wilkie (see references at start) sees schizophrenia as a form of minimal brain dysfunction and in the majority of cases I find this argument convincing. Most people with schizophrenia do not speak in other voices, neither are they hostile towards the things of God though they may be confused, sometimes terribly confused in this area. Some seem to be especially sensitive to demons and are preyed upon by them though not actually possessed.

What the cure has to say about the disease

If a patient hearing voices is cured by normal treatments, then we can say that no occult subjection was involved. If, however, a pastoral interview, with thorough confession, renunciation and a trusting appropriation of salvation, leads to a wonderful liberation then we can say occult subjection was involved (procedure from Dr. Lechler).

When is it God?

Jesus was often accused of being demon possessed (e.g. Matthew 12:30, Mark 3:29) and many great men of God - the prophets and mystics - have seen visions and had special revelations, hearing voices. The following are indicators of whether a person's experiences are from God or from an inferior source. As a preliminary note it is best to make these observations over time.

The following is a checklist that can help determine whether a person is hearing from God or from "inferior source" such as a demon or a repressed and split-off part of their own personality.

Area	From God	From Inferior Source
Freedom	Increases	Decreases becomes obsessive
Need for control	Gradually lessens	Increases dramatically
Quality of work	High – benefits society	Indifferent, often socially deleterious
Personality	Integrates, Peaceful	Course, Claimant
Social	Increasingly loving	Increasingly divisive
State between visions	Healthy, disciplined	Desperate, addicted to visions
Grandiosity	No	Often
Predictions	Fulfilled	Not fulfilled
Selfishness	Lessens	Distressingly ego-centered
“Correction” they give	Specific-aims to bring healing	Vague, mere condemnation
Integration	Increases	Decreases
Creativity	Often very creative	Exacts conformity
Money	Not important	Frequently demanded
Food	To be enjoyed	Lists of forbidden foods
Marriage	To be enjoyed	Sex seen as sin, often forbidden or perverted
Salvation	Of all who believe	Of the leader and his chosen
Fear and dependency	Decreases	Increases
Magic/superstition/idols	Not allowed	Sometimes used

This is by no means a total treatment of the topic but I hope it has given you "a few things to think about" and a few tools for working out when a person is demonically subjected, when they are just having a bad time with their body chemistry and when they might be one of the Lord's more unusual servants.

The Occult - What's Wrong With Exploring The "Other Side"?

People are fascinated by the occult - the dark, the mysterious, the X-files, the tarot cards and the Ouija boards. But "the truth is out there..." - is a falsehood! The truth is in Jesus who said "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no-one comes to the Father but by Me" (John 14:6). Participating in the occult is very dangerous - not just because of what may or may not occur - but because it brings God's anger down on you and your children for up to three or four generations. (Exodus 20:4-5 NKJV) "You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; {5} you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me.

When Israel was about to go into the promised land Moses gave these warnings against being involved with idols, images or occult practices. (Deuteronomy 7:23-26 NKJV) "But the LORD your God will deliver them over to you, and will inflict defeat upon them until they are destroyed. {24} "And He will deliver their kings into your hand, and you will destroy their name from under heaven; no one shall be able to stand against you until you have destroyed them. {25} "You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire; you shall not covet the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it is an abomination to the LORD your God. {26} "Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it is an accursed thing.

Notice the penalty for bringing an object of occult worship into one's house "lest you be doomed to destruction like it... for it is an accursed thing". Idols carry the curse of God on them as do Ouija boards, tarot cards, things used in Satanic rituals, crystal balls, magic books, divination instruments etc. When these things are present in the home, alcoholism, mental illness, chronic diseases and even suicide soon follow.

But you don't have this stuff in your house - you just "get your cards done", have your palm read, read your horoscope etc... (Leviticus 20:6 NKJV) 'And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people.'" Consulting mediums and spiritists was so serious that it resulted in God's wrath falling in a particularly severe form - banishment forever from Israel.

Here is a catalog of verses about the occult.

The Torah

(Leviticus 19:26-31 NKJV) {26} 'You shall not eat anything with the blood, nor shall you practice divination or soothsaying. {27} 'You shall not shave around the sides of your head, nor shall you disfigure the edges of your beard. {28} 'You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the LORD. {29} 'Do not prostitute your daughter, to cause her to be a harlot, lest the land fall into harlotry, and the land become full of wickedness. {30} 'You shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I am the LORD. {31} 'Give no

regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the LORD your God.

(Leviticus 20:6 NKJV) 'And the person who turns to mediums and familiar spirits, to prostitute himself with them, I will set My face against that person and cut him off from his people.

(Deuteronomy 7:5 NKJV) "But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire.

(Deuteronomy 7:25,26 NKJV) "You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire; you shall not covet the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it is an abomination to the LORD your God. "Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it is an accursed thing.

(Deuteronomy 18:10-14 NKJV) 10 "There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter pass through the fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a soothsayer, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer,¹¹ "or one who conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead.¹² "For all who do these things are an abomination to the LORD, and because of these abominations the LORD your God drives them out from before you. 13 "You shall be blameless before the LORD your God.¹⁴ "For these nations which you will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the LORD your God has not appointed such for you.

Old Testament History

(2 Kings 17:17 NKJV) And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.

(2 Kings 21:6 NKJV) Also he made his son pass through the fire, practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft, and consulted spiritists and mediums. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.

(2 Kings 23:24 NKJV) Moreover Josiah put away those who consulted mediums and spiritists, the household gods and idols, all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD.

(2 Chronicles 33:6 NKJV) Also he caused his sons to pass through the fire in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom; he practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft and sorcery, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.

Old Testament Prophets

(Isaiah 8:19 NKJV) And when they say to you, "Seek those who are mediums and wizards, who whisper and mutter," should not a people seek their God? Should they seek the dead on behalf of the living?

(Jeremiah 14:14 NKJV) And the LORD said to me, "The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart.

(Jeremiah 27:9 NKJV) 'Therefore do not listen to your prophets, your diviners, your dreamers, your soothsayers, or your sorcerers, who speak to you, saying, "You shall not serve the king of Babylon."

(Ezekiel 12:24 NKJV) "For no more shall there be any false vision or flattering divination within the house of Israel.

(Ezekiel 13:6-7 NKJV) "They have envisioned futility and false divination, saying, 'Thus says the LORD!' But the LORD has not sent them; yet they hope that the word may be confirmed. {7} "Have you not seen a futile vision, and have you not spoken false divination? You say, 'The LORD says,' but I have not spoken."

(Ezekiel 13:18 NKJV) "and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "Woe to the women who sew magic charms on their sleeves and make veils for the heads of people of every height to hunt souls! Will you hunt the souls of My people, and keep yourselves alive?"

(Ezekiel 13:20 NKJV) 'Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Behold, I am against your magic charms by which you hunt souls there like birds. I will tear them from your arms, and let the souls go, the souls you hunt like birds.

(Ezekiel 13:23 NKJV) "Therefore you shall no longer envision futility nor practice divination; for I will deliver My people out of your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD." "

(Malachi 3:5 NKJV) And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness Against sorcerers, Against adulterers, Against perjurers, Against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, And against those who turn away an alien; Because they do not fear Me," Says the LORD of hosts.

New Testament

(Acts 19:19 NKJV) Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.

(Revelation 21:8 NKJV) "But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

(Revelation 22:15 NKJV) But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.

What Should I Do?

The early church used to have as part of the baptismal formula "I renounce all the works of the devil" and those becoming Christians were required to destroy any idols or charms or magic books that they owned (see Acts 19:19 above for an example). Because the sins of idolatry, witchcraft, and involvement in magic or the occult are "abominations" that are very offensive to

God - then they must be confessed and sometimes using a prayer for spiritual cleansing can be a big help. Here is a procedure for dealing with any occult involvement.

1. Do a personal inventory of both your involvement and your families involvement in the occult - could your grandmother tell fortunes, did you have an uncle who was a magician (not tricks - real magic), were your parents members of an organization like "The Spiritualist Church". remember the punishment for these sins goes down the generations and could be affecting you. Confess all these that you know of to God and ask His forgiveness.
2. Burn everything that is associated with the occult - jade Buddhas, temple wind chimes, tarot cards, magic books, demon masks, even the "dark" kind of heavy metal music, things with pentagrams on it (the five pointed occult star), astrology books, love magic, charms, books from cults such as the Jehovah's Witness or Mormons, when in doubt destroy it. Many people are trapped by the value of these items as they can be covered with gold or silver or be "old and rare books" etc. The Ephesian Christians burnt 50,000 drachmas (about 5 million dollars' worth) of magic books when they became converted. The Bible tells us (Deut 7:25) that we are not to covet the silver or the gold that is on them - it's tempting but it's dangerous.
3. Set yourself a program of bible reading and prayer and ask God to renew you spiritually and be Lord of your life (John 3:1-17).
4. Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit so you can know the true spiritual power that is from God and serve Him.

What is Eternity - Struggling For a Description of The Beyond

Imagine a child's school ruler lying in the midst of an infinitely large billiard table. The ruler is straight, measured, calibrated and predictable. It is like Time as we know it. Year follows year, minute follows minute as surely as the measurements on a child's ruler follow a regular and orderly succession. Then consider an ant walking along the edge of the child's ruler and finding this vast green land that has no graduations, where you can go backwards as easily as forwards and which has no beginning or end. This land of the billiard table is what we call Eternity. It encompasses Time and yet goes far beyond it. Time - as we know it, rests on Eternity for its existence and orderliness.

Time is a very controlled portion of Eternity. Even if we could go back for millions or billions of years we would not find eternity. Even a billion years ago, one minute would follow the next in orderly succession and our watch would still give order to our days. The past would still be the past and the future as opaque as it is today. We live "on the ruler" where there is past, present and future, where actions are either complete or incomplete, where the future is opaque to mortal minds, where there is a thing called causality where if A causes B then A must "come before" B in Time. However, some humans are like that ant, they wander off the ruler and experience Eternity. They are often called mystics, prophets or madmen. They come back with a terribly muddled sense of time. They come back with God's calendar and announce that "He is coming soon..." and He is!

The next great event in Eternity, the next "day" in Heaven is the day of the Lord! For with God Time is different. For Him one day can be as a thousand years. That one day when Jesus hung on the cross was prepared for and thought over for thousands of our years. That one day for God contained as much meaning and power as a thousand years of ordinary history would. Each day of Creation saw events unfold at blistering pace as God worked and at His pace 1000 years' work could be done in a single day. At other times 1000 years of Australian history, or the rise and fall of governments and empires is of little moment, just ripples in the pond. Just another ordinary day in glory. The prophets of God are taken by God into His realm and they look down on that small ruler that begins at Creation and ends at the judgment. They see it for what it is, a fragment, just one of many ages, just one aeon, in all that God is doing. It floats there like a piece of driftwood on a vast ocean or a dry stick in a vast desert. Eternity towers all around it and everything else cries "Glory!". They gain a great sense of transience and they grasp that our "true life" is the life we have in Christ.

The life we now live in the flesh, while it is good, is a mixture of the "real you" and the "passing away you". For instance, you battle with sin, you experience a struggle between "two natures", you wonder who you really are some days. But the "real you" (if you are a Christian) is hidden in Christ with God (Phil 4:1-3) and is seated in the heavenly realms with Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6,7). John the apostle humbly admits that much of what we are is hidden from us but he is confident that it will be revealed when Christ returns. (1 John 3:1-4). Paul makes it a constant theme of his writings that this new self is glorious, immortal, imperishable, undefiled and perfectly sinless. In fact, the "real you" is just like Jesus (1 John 3:1-2). I sense that when we get

to heaven and find out who we really are that this eternal being will be both wonderfully strange yet we will recognize him/her as having been there all along, our true and better self.

And here is the key to our experience of Eternity - we walk by faith, not by sight. As long as our eyes are glued to the ruler, that piece of flotsam, then we perish with it. But when we receive and believe the words of those who have glimpsed Eternity - the prophets, and especially the Word of Him who came from Eternity as the fullness of Deity in bodily form (Colossians 2:9), Christ Jesus, then we find life. Your life, the True Life, the life that is in Eternity, your Eternal Life, is lived by faith. We grasped hold of Eternal Life as we grasp hold of the Word of God through participating faith. Faith does not just agree with God's Word, or sentimentally gush over how nice it is, faith acts on God's Word. Faith participates in the promises of God by taking appropriate and obedient action. That action may be as gentle as a prayer or as bold as David fighting Goliath. Men and women of faith are men and women of obedient action.

And here we come to a mystery. Eternity clothes itself in Time. Jesus clothed Himself with human flesh and transformed it into a glorious body. The principles and actions and rule of Eternity want to be lived out here on Earth in the lives of believers. While this life is in some senses not particularly important it is paradoxically very important. It is the stage on which we demonstrate God's love and justice and where the Kingdom of God is made real in the midst of great evil, hatred and injustice. We can give people a glimpse of Eternity in our actions here and now. The faith of Abraham was not content with contemplation; it was a journeying active faith. The faith of David was not just a faith of writing Psalms and singing songs but of battles and overcoming and falling and being forgiven and striving for God with a whole heart to build a holy Kingdom. The faith of Jesus did not just teach but healed, and withstood pressure, and resisted temptation and He set His face like flint to go to Jerusalem and endure death. It was a sacrificing active strong muscular faith.

The faith of Paul drove him, constrained him to preach and to suffer. The faith of Noah caused him to build Noah's Folly - a great huge boat parked on dry land. And it caused him to endure scorn for 120 years until he was proved wise and faithful and became the ruler of the new world after the flood. When we grasp hold of Eternity, through faith we become as silly as a prophet, as mad as Noah, as presumptuous as David fighting Goliath, as weak as Paul and end up as defeated as our Lord. And that's not a bad way to be! But it doesn't make sense if your world is a child's ruler - ordered and predictable and safe. Eternity is a dangerous place for mortals. But all who are in Christ are immortals. Our real self will live forever because of righteousness, though our bodies will perish because of sin. (Romans 8:10-14) It is like this - you are an inhabitant of Eternity and your citizenship is in heaven.

(Philippians 3:20 NIV) But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.

(Hebrews 12:22-24 NIV) But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, {23} to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, {24} to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Our link with Eternity is our spirit. (1 Corinthians 15:50 NIV) I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Our mortal bodies do not participate in the Kingdom of God though they are subject to it. They will be raised as spiritual bodies. (1 Corinthians 15:42-44 NIV) So will it be with the resurrection

of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; {43} it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; {44} it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

It is "in the Spirit" that prophets and apostles get their revelation of what Eternity is like. (2 Peter 1:21 NIV) For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. Here are just a few examples:

(Revelation 4:2 NIV) At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it.

(Revelation 17:3 NIV) Then the angel carried me away in the Spirit into a desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast that was covered with blasphemous names and had seven heads and ten horns.

(Ezekiel 11:5 NIV) Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon me, and he told me to say: "This is what the LORD says..."

(Acts 7:55-56 NIV) But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. {56} "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

The spirit within us is formed by God for communication with Him (Zechariah 12:1 NIV) ... The LORD, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth, and who forms the spirit of man within him, declares... (Job 32:8 NIV) But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding.

And it is the spirit that knows our innermost thoughts and represents our true self and personality. (Proverbs 20:27 NIV) The lamp of the LORD searches the spirit of a man; it searches out his inmost being. (1 Corinthians 2:11 NIV) For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

So we see that Eternity is revealed to us - or more precisely to our inner selves, our spirit, by means of God's Spirit which can discern the thoughts and intentions of the heart and reveal God's truths to us. This is explained in detail by Paul in 1 Cor 2:10-16 which we will take a moment to look at:

(1 Corinthians 2:10-16 NIV) but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. {11} For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. {12} We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. {13} This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. {14} The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. {15} The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: {16} "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

(1) God reveals Himself to us by means of the Holy Spirit who is given to us that we might understand what God has freely given us. (verses 10-12) The gospel would be nonsense unless the Spirit made sense of it to us. He is our supreme teacher on all spiritual matters (John 14:26, 1 John 2:20,27).

(2) The Spirit's teaching is specific - down to the very words to be used. (verse 13)

(3) Eternity is inaccessible and incomprehensible to those who do not have the Spirit. (verses 14&15).

(4) Because of what Christ has done on the cross we are given "the mind of Christ", best translated "the mental framework" of Christ. Our new mind needs to be matured and renewed in the image of its Creator (Col 3:11) but it is full of life and peace because it is fixed on the Spirit and inherited from Christ. (Romans 8:6) As we - that is our new nature - matures we can grasp more and more of Eternity through the eternal Spirit (Hebrews 9:13) which we have received (1 Cor 2:12).

Eternity then is that realm beyond the "twelve-inch ruler of Time" where God is ever-present and which is accessible to Christians through Christ and which we perceive (yet dimly) through the revealing work of the Holy Spirit to our spirits. For those who cleave to Christ are one spirit with Him (1 Cor 6:17).

Word Study - The Kingdom (of God)

As the world draws close to the year 2000 and Christians ponder the meaning of a "New World Order" the Bible teaches us of a far more radical and truly ideal New World Order - the Kingdom of God, brought in through the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ of Nazareth and inaugurated in power on the day of Pentecost. This word study will help bring this powerful doctrine to light and give you confidence and hope as you face the future - no matter what the political outcomes are. This article draws heavily upon from G.W. Bromiley's "Theological Dictionary of The New Testament".

The two main Greek words are "basileus" a King, and "basileia" a Kingdom. Ancillary words are "basileuo" to be king, to reign and "symbasileuo" to reign together with. The main phrases we will be concerned with are "basileia tou theou" Kingdom of God and "basileia ton ouranon" Kingdom of Heaven.

The "king" is the legitimate ruler. In both Greek and Hebrew thought the King derives his authority from God and is the source of all law in the land. For us this means that Jesus Christ is the authoritative governor of the heavens and the earth. It is His laws ultimately that must be obeyed. Even the kings, princes and tyrants of this world, the city state despots, the Jewish Sanhedrin and Caesar himself are accountable to the "royal law"(James 2:8) handed down by Jesus Christ. Thus Jesus is truly the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (1 Tim 6:16) before whom every knee will bow to the glory of God the Father. (Phil 2:9-11)

Christ is king in the NT. He is, first, "king of the Jews" (Mt. 3:2; Mk 15:2, etc.), accused as such (Lk. 23:2-3), but also treated as a pretender (Jn. 19:12). The people want him as king in a political sense; hence he resists their pressure (Jn 6:15). Yet in a true sense he is indeed the promised "King of Israel" (Mt. 27:42; Mk.15:32). He enters Jerusalem as such (Zech. 9:9; Mt. 21:5), and as such will conduct the last judgment (Mt. 25:34). Outside the Gospels the NT seldom refers to Christ as King of the Jews or of Israel (though cf. Acts 17:7). John offers a christological definition of the kingdom in 18:37, and Revelation gives the royal title a cosmological dimension. I Tim. 6:16 gives Christ the same title as Revelation: "King of kings and Lord of lords:" I Cor. 15:24 implies the kingship of Christ when it speaks of the subjection of all other rule, authority, and power until at last the kingdom is handed to the Father

There are three "ideal Kings" in Scripture - Melchizedek, David and Jesus Christ. Melchizedek is a priestly King who received tithes from Abraham. David was the great earthly King of Israel who, though flawed, walked with God, and Jesus Christ is the Messiah, Redeemer and God. These three kings are important for our understanding of the Kingdom of God. The constant theme of the prophets is that the Kingdom of the Messiah would be a better version of David's reign (Isaiah 9:6,7; 16:5; 55:3-5). A more ideal version where peace would be more profoundly experienced. (Jer 23:5-8) It was as if we were to look at the Davidic kingship as the closest human approximation to the Kingdom of God. When Jesus came His messiahship and the nature of His Kingdom was acknowledged by the title "Son of David" as well as "King of the Jews". Hebrews expands on the idea of a priestly Kingdom with its exposition of the role of Melchizedek in chapters 6 and 7 and the vision of the heavenly Zion in Hebrews 12. The

Kingdom of God is a kingdom of believer-priests (1 Peter 2:5,9; Revelation 1:6) with Jesus as the High Priest (Hebrews 8:1,2; 9:11).

The Kingdom of God/Kingdom of Heaven/Kingdom of The Father/Kingdom of Christ

These four expressions refer to slightly different aspects of the one reality. The Kingdom of Christ is the realm where Jesus Christ is the Messiah King, this Kingdom will put an end to all earthly Kingdoms (Rev. 11:15). Its present aim is stated in a difficult portion of 1 Corinthians 15, verses 24-25 "Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet." Thus we see that Christ's Kingdom, while it "has no end" (Luke 1:33) gains its continuity from becoming the "Kingdom of the Father". As the purified and holy Messianic Kingdom it stands between the present evil age and all the ages to come. Thus wrongdoers will have to be gathered out of it by angels and the last judgment (Matt 13:41) and it will come while this earth is in its present form and some will see the Son of Man in His Kingdom (Mt 16:28). It was inaugurated at the cross, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ - most particularly through the ascension. The thief on the cross realized that Jesus was in the process of entering into His Kingdom (Luke 23:42). Christ's Kingdom is "not of this world" John 18:36 and is not gained by force or militant discipleship (Jn 18:36). It is clearly linked with Christ's appearing (2 Timothy 4:1) and we are to be saved for it (2 Tim 4:16). Entrance into it is for Christians, especially those committed to spiritual growth (2 Peter 1:11). Christ's Messianic Kingdom will have no place for evil, and sinners will have no inheritance in it. (Ephesians 5:5). This verse also tells us that the kingdom is "the kingdom of Christ and of God". (Ephesians 5:5 NKJV) For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.

The kingdom of heaven emphasizes the nature of the Kingdom as being "from above" and both transcending and interpenetrating earthly Kingdoms just as heaven both transcends and interpenetrates our present reality. It is a term chiefly used by Matthew. It is clearly a reign of God that is not arrived at by human effort but which is graciously given "from above". The term "Kingdom of the Father" (Matt 13:43, 26:29, 25:34, Luke 12:32) It is His Kingdom that we are to pray for in the Lord's prayer (Luke 11:2) and His kingdom in which the righteous shall shine like the sun (Matt 13:43). The relationship between the various levels of Kingship (god, Christ and believers) is summed up in Luke 22:29,30. "And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." God bestows a kingdom on Christ who then bestows a kingdom on His followers so that they become "kings and priests to our God" (Rev. 1:6, 5:10). We are twice called co-rulers with Christ (1 Cor 4:8, 2 Timothy 2:12) but this information is not given to us so that we may be filled with inordinate pride as the Corinthians seemed to be (1 Cor 4:8) but so that we will be encouraged to endure in service with patience and obedience (2 Timothy 2:12). However, the concept of us reigning with Christ is of fairly broad application (Rev. 20:6) and Billheimer in his book "Destined For The Throne" has suggests that part of the reason for us learning to pray is so that we will "know the ropes" of Kingdom rulership when we take up our prepared places in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 2:7).

The major reference is of course to the "Kingdom of God" which is unshakeable ((Hebrews 12:28), heavenly (2 Tim 4:18) and eternal (2 Peter 1:11). Here are 12 short notes on the Kingdom:

1. God gives the Kingdom as a gift (Luke 12:32) to those who seek it above all things (Matt 6:33) God calls us to it (1 Thess 2:12), sets us in it (Col 1:13), and makes us worthy of it (2 Thess 1:5).

2. The Kingdom belongs to the poor in spirit, the persecuted and the "child-like". (Matt 5:3,10; 19:14)

3. The unaltered natural ("flesh and blood") man cannot enter the Kingdom of God (1 Cor 15:50). The Kingdom is entered by being "born again" (John 3:3) through irrevocable commitment (Luke 9:62) producing a new man in Christ Jesus (2 Cor 5:16,17).

4. The Kingdom is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).

5. The Kingdom of God is accompanied by real power (Mark 9:1; 1 Cor 4:20) and is the most powerful kingdom of all (Revelations 11:15).

6. This Kingdom power is manifested in healings, miracles, exorcisms and raising of the dead (Matthew 4:23,24; 10:7,8; 12:28; Luke 9:2; 10:9).

7. It is a "glorious kingdom" - it will surpass all other kingdoms in wisdom, beauty, power, and wealth (1 Thess 2:12; Mark 10:37; Matt 6:13; 2 Tim 4:18; Rev. 21:10-22:5).

8. The Kingdom has small and humble beginnings - but grows! (Matt 13:31-32).

9. The Kingdom of God interpenetrates the structures of this world with an almost "invisible influence" (Matt 13:33; Luke 17:20-21) and is spiritually discerned (Mark 4:11; John 3:3; cf 1 Cor 2:14). Eventually it will be made manifest or obvious to all (Matthew 25:31-34; Phil 2:9-11; 2 Tim 4:1,18), the structures of this world will collapse, (Rev 11:15; 18:1-19:7) the heavens and earth depart (2 Peter 3:10) and only the Kingdom of God remain (Hebrews 12:26-29; Luke 1:33).

10. The kingdom is brought into being by being proclaimed – this proclamation can be to individuals or to entire communities. The gospel is this proclamation (Mark 1:14; Matt 4:23; Luke 4:43; Acts 8:12).

11. The kingdom is "a living thing" and participates in the properties of living things such as growth, vigor and having a "time of harvest" (Matthew 13:24-33).

12. The Kingdom of God requires some diligence to enter in. Like a prized pearl or treasure it must be sought and valued above all things (Matthew 13:44, 45), and a certain spiritual alertness and readiness of heart is always required of believers (Matt 25:1ff). Radical steps may be necessary if we are to fully enter it and leave the hindrances of those world behind (Matthew 5:29-30; 19:12). Temporary enthusiasm is insufficient (Luke 9:62) and the cost must be counted (Luke 14:28) and sometimes the supreme sacrifice be paid (Matt 10:37-39).

The kingdom, and entering it, are so important for us that we must be diligent to enter in. Some interpretations of grace minimize this aspect of diligence. Sin is the greatest hindrance and certain sins will ensure that we are outside of the kingdom. The intent of the process of sanctification and washing with the blood of Christ is to remove these sins from us. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NKJV). Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals,

nor sodomites, {10} nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. {11} And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

Wealth is another great hindrance to inheriting the Kingdom of God. (Matthew 19:23-24 NKJV) Then Jesus said to His disciples, "Assuredly, I say to you that it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. {24} "And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." As are a preoccupation with worldly things (Luke 9:20ff), spiritual lethargy (Matthew 18:23ff; 25:1ff), and absorption into a self-centered lifestyle (Matthew 25:31-46). People can be hindered from entering by legalistic teachings (Luke 11:52) or released into it through the apostolic proclamation of Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God (Matthew 16:19).

Word Study on “Heaven” in the New Testament

I will divide this word study into two parts. The first is an extract from "Vines New Testament Dictionary" which is in the public domain to the best of my knowledge. This resource can be obtained from most Christian bookstores and is available as part of many Bible search programs and on CD's such as The Bible Library. The second part will be a few comments by yours truly and some applications. For the purists an apology for using "transliterated " Greek but I haven't figured out how to put Greek characters on the Web yet as fonts are still very restricted.

Vine's New Testament Dictionary

[1] Topics: HEAVEN, HEAVENLY (-IES)

Strong's Number: 3772

Transliterated: ouranos

Text: Probably akin to ornumi, "to lift, to heave," is used in the NT (a) of "the aerial heavens," e.g., Matt. 6:26; 8:20; Acts 10:12; 11:6 (RV, "heaven," in each place, KJV, "air"); Jas. 5:18; (b) "the sidereal," e.g., Matt. 24:29, 35; Mark 13:25, 31; Heb. 11:12, RV, "heaven," KJV, "sky"; Rev. 6:14; 20:11; they, (a) and (b), were created by the Son of God, Heb. 1:10, as also by God the Father, Rev. 10:6; (c) "the eternal dwelling place of God," Matt. 5:16; 12:50; Rev. 3:12; 11:13; 16:11; 20:9. From thence the Son of God descended to become incarnate, John 3:13, 31; 6:38, 42. In His ascension Christ "passed through the heavens," Heb. 4:14, RV; He "ascended far above all the heavens," Eph. 4:10, and was "made higher than the heavens," Heb. 7:26; He "sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens," Heb. 8:1; He is "on the right hand of God," having gone into heaven, 1 Pet. 3:22. Since His ascension it is the scene of His present life and activity, e.g., Rom. 8:34; Heb. 9:24. From thence the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost, 1 Pet. 1:12. It is the abode of the angels, e.g., Matt. 18:10; 22:30; cf. Rev. 3:5. Thither Paul was "caught up," whether in the body or out of the body, he knew not, 2 Cor. 12:2. It is to be the eternal dwelling place of the saints in resurrection glory, 2 Cor. 5:1. From thence Christ will descend to the air to receive His saints at the Rapture, 1 Thess. 4:16; Phil. 3:20, 21, and will subsequently come with His saints and with His holy angels at His second advent, Matt. 24:30; 2 Thess. 1:7. In the present life "heavens," is the region of the spiritual citizenship of believers, Phil. 3:20. The present "heavens" with the earth, are to pass away, 2 Pet. 3:10, "being on fire," v. 12 (see v. 7); Rev. 20:11, and new "heavens" and earth are to be created, 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1, with Isa. 65:17, e.g. In Luke 15:18, 21, "heaven" is used, by metonymy, for God. See AIR. Notes: (1) For the phrase in Luke 11:13, see Note on B, No. 2 (2) In Luke 11:2, the KJV, "as in heaven," translates a phrase found in some mss.

Comments and Application.

It seems that there are at least three heavens. Paul was taken up "into the third heaven" where God dwells. The angel in Revelation flies in the "mid-heavens" and the birds of the air dwell in the first heavens. While there is general agreement that the "first heaven" being where the birds fly and the third heaven being where God dwells, the nature of the second heaven has become

a subject of some discussion. Conservative scholars tend, like Vine's, to assign the second heavens to "outer space" and term it the "sidereal heavens".

Pentecostal scholars see it as the scene of spiritual warfare where angels and demons do battle as in Daniel 10. It was this "second heaven" that Christ conquered during His ascension when He "took captivity captive". The answer to Daniel's prayer was immediate in the "third heaven" but delayed by conflict in the second. This is not the place to answer the debate but both sides have considerable merit. My personal approach is to use whatever interpretation makes most sense with the passage I am looking at at the time.

Once Christians were accused of being "too heavenly minded for any earthly use". This is seldom the case today. Heaven is less than fashionable and few Christians place much stock in it. However, we should. During times of suffering a "heavenly perspective" on our troubles enables us to endure "as seeing Him who is unseen". The name "Eternity Online Magazine" arrived after I went through a very dark patch in my life during which my main sustaining thought was the realization that eternity was there, was good and awaited me if I was faithful to Him who had called me. Out of sheer gratitude to God for this one sustaining thought I called the magazine "Eternity" to remind myself and others of the importance of a "heavenly" mindset.

As citizens of heaven we need a bit of civic pride. We are seated with Christ in the heavenly realms though we are scarcely aware of it. We have come to Mt Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem and we keep the company of the godly. To see ourselves this way subtly changes our sense of identity and purifies us. Sin seems quite incompatible with a citizen of glory - which we are. As we catch a vision of Christ descending from heaven with a shout and us returning with Him to judge the world or rising to meet Him in the air, let's live it out. Let's live like heaven matters. It's real, it's there, it's worth living for. Heaven is not a story or a fairy-tale. It is not Never-Never Land. It is the cosmic center of all creation and we shall dwell there as co-regents with Christ in heavenly glory. Make a mental note of the status of the believer. Do not forget it any more than you would if you were given a peerage. You are a peer of the realm, and that realm is heaven.

The Bible's View on Death, Hell and Judgment

Introduction

Hell is a cartoonist's delight. "Far Side" cartoonist Gary Larsen regularly caricatures Hell in his cartoons, as do many others. Hell is painted as comic, inoffensive and a bit like a debauched sauna with a touch of brimstone. On the other hand, the Bible is quite clear about Hell - it is for real, forever and fearful. Jesus speaks about Hell more clearly than any other person in Scripture, painting it as a place of such torment that even self-mutilation is preferable to entering Hell. Mark 9:47,48 "And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched."

The point of view of this article is "the Bible's view", I am not trying to prove Hell from philosophical first principles. That would take too long. Temporarily put aside any objections to the Bible you may have and read the following with an open mind.

Firstly, why are we in danger of Hell?

For two basic reasons, the first reason is that we have all not honored God as God but instead lived life the way we want to. This attitude of spiritual anarchy is called sin and the actions that result from our telling God to go jump and not bother us any more are called sins (Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God).

The second reason is that our lives are judged after we die (Hebrews 9:27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment). It is at this judgment that our sin gets us into deep trouble because sin is the spiritual equivalent of treason and receives the same punishment - spiritual death in Hell. (Romans 6:23... For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.) This spiritual death is referred to in Scripture as "the second death" and is the death that the wicked suffer, as we shall see later it is more than mere annihilation. (Revelation 21:8 "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.")

1. Is Hell for real? Yes, absolutely.

Luke 12:5 "But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him!"

2 Peter 2:4 "For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of deepest darkness to be kept until the judgment;"

2. Does Hell last forever? Yes, absolutely.

Revelation 14:11 "And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and its image and for anyone who receives the mark of its name."

Isaiah 66:23-24 From new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, says the LORD. {24} And they shall go out and look at the dead bodies of the people who have rebelled against me; for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.

3. Does Hell involve torment and judgment? Yes, absolutely.

Luke 16:23 "In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side."

Revelation 20:10 "And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

Revelation 20:11-15 Then I saw a great white throne and the one who sat on it; the earth and the heaven fled from his presence, and no place was found for them. {12} And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books. {13} And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and all were judged according to what they had done. {14} Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; {15} and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

The Bible states clearly that the Devil and all his angels are tormented for eternity. However, there is some dispute in Christian circles about how long unbelievers feel the flames for. There are basically three theories 1. Unbelievers are tormented forever. 2. Unbelievers are instantly extinguished. 3. Unbelievers undergo a long period of torment based on the depth and nature of their sin and are eventually extinguished. It is the third theory that I hold to. Let's see if it holds up. The question is "How long are they tormented for?"

1. Certainly it is not instantaneous extinguishment ala Jehovah's Witness as it is quite clear that torment occurs and for a substantial period of time.

2. There is never any indication of a "way out" as in Purgatory.

3. There is some indication that they eventually become "dead bodies" worm infested and burned by fire. How much sentience these dead bodies have is not said.

4. There is a justice problem with eternal torment for all as eternity is ETERNITY which would render all torments equal, the least sinner would receive the same as the greatest as all would be punished eternally. Horrible torment for a very long time followed by eventual extinguishment and eternal disgrace seems to be what Hell is about.

Edmistonian analogy...

Hell is the most perfectly closed thermodynamic system available. I see Hell as a mini-Universe totally isolated from the rest of Creation, totally closed to input or output, isolated, cast off,

rejected. Not even the Presence of God will enter after judgment day. It is utterly and totally away from His presence. 2 Thessalonians 1:9 "These will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might,". With no energy leaving and being a totally confined "space" like a vacuum flask it will always remain hot. [The Universe cooled only because it expanded] Hell will be constant in temperature. Hence, "their fire will not go out". The eternal fires will never extinguish. Even worse news - entropy increases in a closed thermodynamic system - things decay, disorder increases. What will happen is that the unbelievers will continue to decay more and more. Hence, "their worm will not die". Bible language for unending decay. On top of this, in such a hot, disordered system, everything would be constantly moving and swirling "and they shall never rest, day or night".

Basically... don't go there, sulfur stinks.

Word Study on "Parousia"

It's Greek To Me!

Parousia is a Greek word used 24 times in the New Testament to mean "coming, arrival, personal presence". It is most often used to indicate the second coming and the arrival of the Son of Man, though it can also indicate a visit by a Christian worker, apostle or even the "man of lawlessness". In the Greek world of the New Testament it meant among other things a) A State visit or b) The presence or appearance of a deity during worship e.g. by divine fire. It has a range of meaning to that of the archaic English word "visitation". Here is a definition from Strong's concordance:

Definition

3952. parousia, par-oo-see'-ah; from the pres. part. of G3918; a being near, i.e. advent (often, return; spec. of Christ to punish Jerusalem, or finally the wicked); (by impl.) phys. aspect: -- coming, presence.

There are six uses of the word to describe a visit by a person or their personal "presence" (1 Cor 16;17; 2Cor6:6, 2Cor 6;7; 2Cor 10:10; Phil 1:26; 2:12) this combination of "arrival" plus "personal presence" gives the flavor to the word even when it is being used theologically. The Parousia of Jesus Christ is both His arrival and the manifestation of His "presence" to all mankind. We shall concentrate on this aspect for the rest of the word study.

Jesus' use of "parousia"

The word is only used 4 times in the gospels - all in Matthew chapter 24 the "Little Apocalypse" when Jesus discusses the signs of His coming. The references are Matthew 24:3, 27, 37 and 39. In verse 3 the disciples ask "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, (parousia) and of the end of the age? Jesus then replies:

(Matthew 24:27 NKJV) "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

(Matthew 24:37-39 NKJV) "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming (parousia) of the Son of Man be. {38} "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, {39} "and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming (parousia) of the Son of Man be.

Jesus' emphasis is that His return will be sudden and surprising. It will be as sudden as a lightning flash and it will catch a preoccupied and self-centered world quite unawares. It is preeminently a sudden dramatic divine intervention in history for salvation of the elect and judgment of those who have rejected God's rulership over their lives.

Parousia as the hope and goal of the Christian life

The apostles seem to have had a single minded devotion to the return of the Lord. As a child I waited for Christmas with single-minded tenacity, wanting to be good and to be rewarded for it. And Christmas seemed such a long way away each year. But it was certain and it was wonderful. This is a pale but accurate reflection of the apostolic hope which was a certain hope of a glorious reward. There are 11 main passages and they can be grouped under four headings:

i. Resurrection and blessing 1 Cor 15:23; 1 Thess 4:15.

(1 Corinthians 15:23 NKJV) But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.

(1 Thessalonians 4:15 NKJV) For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.

ii. Holiness /Christian character 1 Thess 2:19,3:13; 5:23; 1 John 2:28.

(1 Thessalonians 2:19 NKJV) For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? (1 Thessalonians 3:13 NKJV) so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. (1 Thessalonians 5:23 NKJV) Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(1 John 2:28 NKJV) And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

iii. The destruction of the wicked 2 Thess 2:8,9; 2 Peter 3:12.

(2 Thessalonians 2:8-9 NKJV) And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. {9} The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,

(2 Peter 3:12 NKJV) looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?

iv. The patient endurance of the saints 2 Thess 2:1; James 5:7,8; 2Peter 3:4.

(2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 NKJV) Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, {2} not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

(James 5:7-8 NKJV) Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. {8} You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

(2 Peter 3:3-4 NKJV) knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, {4} and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."

For the Christian the Second Coming will be a joyous royal visit. It is "The day" for which we strain forward with eager anticipation. For the wicked it will be when God arrives in fire and declares His personal Presence to a rebellious world which will then be under the deception and dominion of a man of lawlessness inspired by Satan. This man of lawlessness will be destroyed and God's Kingdom rulership declared. Christians will be gathered up to be with God and resurrected from the dead to receive an eternal reward. The elements will melt with the heat and the universe as we know it will perish. This is also the only day that matters for the Christian – it is the day for which we are keeping ourselves holy, pure and blameless. It is the end of the race when we receive the prize. If we abide in Christ we will have no reason to be ashamed on that day. (1 John 2:28) The manifest Presence of God will reorder all Creation and we are to wait for this with patient and certain expectation similar to that of a farmer waiting for his crop to mature. We are not to be like the mockers who deride the second coming as due to God being tardy or non-existent. Rather we are to "hasten the day" this may mean that we are to engage in a mission, for it is when the gospel has been preached to all the nations that the end will come, and this, in Matthew 24, is the preeminent sign Jesus gave of His coming. (Matthew 24:14 NKJV) "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Conclusion

Jesus warns of a sudden end to this age that will be as final as the closing and locking of a door. (Matthew 25:1-13) He meant this to give an urgency to our days so that we would not be caught up in serving our appetites rather than our God. While most Christians agree that the end of this age may soon be upon us, few are living diligently in the light of that information. As Christians we should cease arguing over trivial details of eschatology and start living as if it was true. This means that we should:

- a. Live holy lives abiding in Christ (1 John 2:28) and perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2 Cor 7:1)
- b. Rejoice in hope knowing that we have a Savior who will certainly appear and all our work for Christ will not be in vain but abundantly rewarded (1 Cor 15:58).
- c. Be alert to the various deceptions that Satan will launch against the church in those days. (2 Thess 2:8,9; Matthew 24:11).
- d. Engage in radical simplicity knowing that all our material possessions will be just fuel for the fire on that day (1 John 2:15-17; 2 Peter 3:10-14,).
- e. Be awake to God not "asleep in the light". (Matthew 25:1-13) This means we are to have a sense of perpetual readiness and anticipation and in constant spiritual growth. The attitude that "I will get right with God just before Jesus comes back" is "foolishness" and imperils the joy that the believer can enter into.
- f. Wait patiently for the coming of the Lord without giving in to skepticism about the apparent delay (James 5:7-8, 2Peter 3:3-4) or alarmist panic (2 Thess 2:1,2) concluding that He has already come.
- g. Hasten the day by engaging in world mission and Kingdom activity (Matthew 6:33; 24:14; 2 Peter 3:12).

Who Is "The Inner Man"? And What Is He Like?

Let's start this journey with three of the most perplexing passages in the whole of Scripture.

(1 John 3:9 NKJV) Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.

(Romans 7:14-25 NKJV) For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. {15} For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. {16} If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. {17} But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. {18} For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. {19} For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. {20} Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. {21} I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. {22} For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. {23} But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. {24} O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? {25} I thank God; through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

(Matthew 11:11-13 NKJV) "Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. {12} "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. {13} "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.

The Eternal You

Ah you say...the editor has flipped! How can he possibly string these three passages into anything coherent? Well, let's try! Firstly, we will look at what it means to be "born of God". 1 John 3:9 tells us that when something is "born of God" it receives a nature that does not sin. In fact, the "inner man"/"new nature" is unable to sin. In the spiritual realm the "new man" is a product of God, produced from His "seed" (Gk. "sperma") and bearing His likeness and thus behaving like Him. That which "behaves like God" does not sin. The "new man" is "created in righteousness" and is righteous. It does not sin. This makes sense – that which is exactly like God in nature - will not and cannot sin. The "bit of you" that will inherit a resurrection body and that I will talk to in the Zion above in ten thousand years' time - that part of you, is sinless and always has been. The "real you", the "eternal character", that is you in Christ – is sinless. Let me be clear - I am not talking about sinless perfection. The inclusion of the Romans 7 quote above should give you a clue to that. I am not saying that true Christians do not sin, they do. I am saying that Christ in you does not sin. He didn't sin on earth and He doesn't sin now. The apostle John is no "sinless perfectionist", he knows his charges better than that!

(1 John 1:7 NKJV) But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin."

So we see that John did not believe in "sinless perfection" - the believers still needed the cleansing of the blood of Christ! However, he saw the glory of the "seed of God"- the new nature that was being formed in them.

The Mystery

Though John writes extensively about the incorruptibility of our new natures he admits to having very little idea of what the end product would be like... John says...

(1 John 3:1-3 NKJV)" Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore, the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. {2} Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. {3} And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

The apostle John admitted "it has not yet been revealed what we shall be". The full knowledge of who we really are in our "eternal character and destiny" is hidden from us. It is a marvelous and tantalizing mystery that awaits the Second Coming for its full revelation. There is one known amongst all the unknowns and John states it as "when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is". That is the purifying hope that frees us from the love of this world. John is not alone in his assessment of things. Paul reaches a similar conclusion when he says:

(Colossians 3:1-4 NKJV) "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. {2} Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. {3} For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. {4} When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory." Paul says that for now our true selves, our "life " is "hidden" - in Christ with God and that we shall only find out what it will be like when Christ returns and we appear with Him in glory.

Giving The Spirit The Whip Hand

In the Romans 7 quote at the beginning of this article Paul says " Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.". He distinguishes between "himself" and his "sin" in what for years appeared to me to be a bit of a "cop-out". How could someone dare to say "It is no longer I who sin but sin that dwells in me." It sounded like a theological excuse for a lack of self-control. But Scripture is not like that - and everything is for a purpose. Paul is revealing to us here the difference between his flesh which was "born of woman" and is passing away with its lusts and the spirit which is "born of God" and abides forever. Paul concludes that "in my flesh is no good thing". The flesh, while not in its intrinsic nature corrupt, has become thoroughly corrupted by sin and become a dwelling place for sin. Our bodies, and our minds are huge data storehouses of multi-megabytes of sin, sinful thoughts, sinful habits, sinful actions and so on. The growing and forming Christ within us is opposed by the worldly treachery of the flesh in a two-way tussle (Galatians 5:16-18) This tussle is the subject of Romans 6-8. Romans 6 boldly states that we are "dead to sin".

(Romans 6:10-12 NKJV) "For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. {11} Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin,

but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. {12} Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts."

The new nature" in us is "dead to sin". It does not communicate with sin. Just as a person sleeping heavily is said to be "dead to the world" so the new man, who has died and risen with Christ, is "dead to sin" and not influenced by it. We are to reckon this as our true self. We are to write in the ledger of our minds, "The real, eternal me is dead to sin". We are to do our spiritual calculations as if we are dead to the influence of sin and living forever. Therefore, we are not to let sin reign in our mortal body so as to obey its lusts. We are to give the whip hand to the new man. Instead of letting our flesh dominate our spirit we are to enforce the spirit's righteous lifestyle with its outcome – eternal life. When sin tries to tell us that we are its slave and must do its commands we are to look in God's ledger and reckon ourselves dead to sin. We are to call sin a liar! Sin can claim to be our master - but it is not. It was, and we still fear its voice. But we are a "freed slave" we can walk away without fear. We have a new master to obey.

(Romans 6:20-23 NKJV) For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. {21} What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. {22} But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. {23} For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Freedom From Condemnation

Romans 7 analyzes the desperate battle between the mind which wishes to obey God and the "body of death" indwelt by sin, that opposes it and ends with the cry "who will deliver me from this body of death"? Romans 8 supplies the answer (Romans 8:1-2 NKJV) "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. {2} For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." The inner man is not under condemnation at all. Our true selves are free from guilt and free from any participation in the sins of the body. There is no "guilt by association". The new nature is holy even if the flesh is corrupt. (Romans 8:10 NKJV) And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. Romans 8 then develops the theme of how to maximize our life in Christ.

The Role Of Our Thoughts

The mind is critical to the success of this venture as it is our "contact point" with the Spirit. (Romans 8:5-13 NKJV) For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. {6} For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. {7} Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. {8} So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. {9} But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. {10} And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. {11} But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. {12} Therefore, brethren, we are debtors; not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. {13} For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.

"Born Of Woman" vs. "Born Of God"

This leads us to the third of our opening bible passages – Matthew 11:11-13. John the Baptist who was the greatest of those "born of women" and the last of the prophets. Yet Jesus said that "the least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he..." At first sight the proposition that some of the more annoying Christians we have met could be greater than John the Baptist is, to say the least, astonishing (your editor has a cynical streak). But consider...those "born of women" can have the Spirit upon them, worship God and be prophets but they are not "new creations". There is a huge qualitative difference between a "born again believer" and John the Baptist. The born again believer is "born of God" (not merely "born of women") and has a God-conceived nature that is eternal. They are not necessarily "better than" John the Baptist as viewed from outside. But when viewed from inside or from above they are "greater", inasmuch as the nature conceived within the Christian is far greater and can be said to dwell in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 2:6.7). This nature is Christ in us (Colossians 1:26-29 NKJV). the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. {27} To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. {28} Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. {29} To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.

The Maturing of Christ In Us

Notice Paul's concerns here - Christ in you is the hope of glory. It is the glorious indwelling nature, born of God, Christ in us, that gives us the hope of being sinless, immortal, imperishable and inheriting a resurrection body fit for "the saints" (hagioi- holy ones). Paul works hard to see that Christ in us is "perfected"(Col 1:28, above). It seems that Jesus Christ grows in us. Paul writes to the backslidden Galatians:

(Galatians 4:19 NKJV) My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you. This at first, may seem paradoxical. How can one have Christ and still need Him to be "formed"? Just as Jesus grew in wisdom and stature during his earthly ministry so it seems Christ in us "grows" into a "mature man" through the disciplines of the faith and the word of God. This forming of Christ in us involves ministering to one another and edifying one another.

(Ephesians 4:13-15 NKJV) "till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect (teleois - mature) man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; {14} that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, {15} but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head; Christ".

Particularly important to this is "being filled with the Spirit" and encouraging one another in the Word.(Ephesians 5:18-20 NKJV) And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, {19} speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, {20} giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" and (Colossians 3:16-17 NKJV) Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. {17} And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Suffering also seems to play a part in this. During His "earthly years", Jesus Christ was "perfected" through suffering. (Hebrews 2:10 NKJV) "For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all

things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." and naturally this applies to us as well. (1 Peter 5:10 NKJV) But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.

The Old Man Is Dead, Live Like The New Man You Are

Paul called Christians holy because they were. Their inner nature, born of God, is holy just as God is holy. All that is inconsistent with this holy and new nature must be shed. Paul develops this at some length in both Ephesians and Colossians e.g.

(Colossians 3:1-10 NKJV) If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. {2} Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. {3} For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. {4} When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. {5} Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. {6} Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, {7} in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. {8} But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. {9} Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, {10} and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,".

Enemies Of Your Soul

Finally, to return to where we began in 1 John.

(1 John 2:15-17 NKJV) "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. {16} For all that is in the world; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; is not of the Father but is of the world. {17} And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."

John lists here three decisive hindrances to the formation of Christ in us – the love of the world manifested as "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life;". The lust of the flesh centers us on that part of our nature that is mortal, indwelt by sin and perishing when we die. It's a sweaty word "epithumia" and denotes the inordinate possessive desires in our flesh that war with God and holiness, these include sexual lusts, anger, alcoholism, drug addiction, gluttony and laziness. The "lust of the flesh" sees the world as appetites to be satisfied and things to be consumed.

The lust of the eyes relates to greed, self-gratification, money and material acquisition, getting, grabbing, cheating and coveting. The desire is generated by the material world outside and enters into the soul "through the eye gate." In the midst of Jesus' discourse on God and Mammon there is an "apparent interruption"

(Matthew 6:22-23 NKJV) "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. {23} "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"

The lust of the eyes' is the basis of materialism and is a great danger to the development of Christ in us. It is so directly opposed that Jesus can say categorically that "You cannot serve both God and Mammon" and Paul calls the love of money "the root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim 6:10).

The last of the enemies of the soul is "the pride of life" - status seeking, selfish ambition, "megastar behavior", concern about the pecking order, opulence, the sins of power and ruthless competition. The Christian caught up in the "pride of life" sees the world as consisting of empires to be built and monuments to be made. Unfortunately, this can easily be channeled into building "Christian empires" and "Christian monuments". All these things are passing away. (see the article on the Kingdom of God in this issue). They will be of absolutely zero value to us after our death. Christ in us is not formed by glorious human achievements.

The epistle of James seems particularly directed at rebuking the "pride of life". Here are a couple of examples:

(James 4:4-7 NKJV) Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. {5} Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? {6} But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." {7} Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

(James 1:9-11 NKJV) Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, {10} but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. {11} For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits."

Stand Firm

The eternal part of us does not benefit from all our consuming, acquiring and achieving. To grow in Christ, you must forsake these three enemies of your soul - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. You must ask God for a renewed mind (Romans 12:1,2). This renewed mind will have a mindset that is fixed "on things above" (Colossians 3:1-4) which are of the Spirit - not the flesh (Romans 8:5-8). The outcome will be life and peace, a "harvest of righteousness" and the evidence of being a new creation in Christ Jesus.

The epistle of 1 John ends with encouragement and an exhortation – (1 John 5:18-21 NRSV) We know that those who are born of God do not sin, but the one who was born of God protects them, and the evil one does not touch them. {19} We know that we are God's children, and that the whole world lies under the power of the evil one. {20} And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. {21} Little children, keep yourselves from idols." And with that encouragement and exhortation I will finish as well.

In The Spirit On The Lord's Day

(Revelation 1:9-10 NKJV) I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was on the island that is called Patmos for the word of God and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. {10} I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, and I heard behind me a loud voice, as of a trumpet.

John was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day". This says a couple of things. (1) That a Christian can be "in the Spirit" and (2) that there is a state called "in the Spirit" which is different from normal living and is which involves a deeper level of communion with the spiritual realm and with God. The phrase "in the Spirit" is used three other times in the book of Revelation. Here they are:

(Revelation 4:2 NKJV) Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne.

(Revelation 17:3 NKJV) So he carried me away in the Spirit into the wilderness. And I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

(Revelation 21:10 NKJV) And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

"In the Spirit" in Revelation means a state of heightened spiritual perception. It enables the apostle to move among spiritual realities and to behold things that he could not behold under normal physical limitations. It also involves "translation" to heaven, to a wilderness and to a high mountain. In chapter one though, no "translation" is implied. Let's see how else the term is used in Scripture. The first reference is in Ezekiel at the beginning of the chapter on the Valley of Dry Bones.

(Ezekiel 37:1 NKJV) The hand of the LORD came upon me and brought me out in the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; and it was full of bones.

This seems very similar to John's experience. It is the only OT reference to the phrase. In the New Testament we find the phrase used 24 times and in a number of different ways. (numbers taken from occurrences in the NKJV translation, it may be different in other translations) It can mean...

In the Spirit in contrast to in the flesh e.g. Romans 8:9, Gal 3:3

In the Spirit in contrast to in the letter e.g. Rom 2:29

In the spirit and power of Elijah - that is "in the nature of..." e.g. Luke 1:17

In the spirit of your mind e.g. Eph 4:23

From the deepest parts of one's being e.g. John 11:33, Acts 19:21

In the spirit as "inspired", "under the power of the Spirit" often involving an ecstatic/worshipful state we see this in the following references:

(Matthew 22:43 NKJV) He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying:

(Luke 10:21 NKJV) In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.

(Acts 20:22 NKJV) "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,

(1 Corinthians 14:2 NKJV) For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries.

We need then to ascertain whether or not this state is exceptional or is normative for mature Christians. John on Patmos writes as if it was normal for him to be "in the Spirit on the Lord's day". Another reference in Philippians suggests this may be the case.

(Philippians 3:3 NKJV) For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,

Two more verses suggest that our worship is to be impelled by the presence of the Spirit of God.

(Ephesians 2:22 NKJV) in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

(Ephesians 6:18 NKJV) praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints;

These verses indicate that the Christian is a Holy Spirit-indwelt person and that being indwelt by God should have a profound impact on us from time to time. I am not advocating that we should expect the heavens to be opened to us each Sunday. I am suggesting that we should be more conscious of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit and there should be times when we are so thoroughly immersed in Him that we can say of ourselves "I was really in the Spirit then."

I know I try to avoid ecstatic states as much as possible. I am a person who likes to be in control. I like leading, thinking, writing, teaching. I am less than comfortable with feeling, perceiving, experiencing and sensing. My background is in Inorganic Chemistry. I like facts and equations and precise measurements - the stoichiometry of life. I am uncomfortable with the book of Revelation and with the spirituality of John the apostle. Yet I cannot lightly dismiss it. It is there. Along with Daniel, Paul, Zechariah, Moses, Ezekiel and Isaiah. There is an enormous tradition of ecstatic experiences among great men of God.

Being "in the Spirit", as in under the control of the Holy Spirit with an increased spiritual sensitivity, is found in David when he composed the Psalms, Elisha when he prophesied and in many others as they received their words from God. At Pentecost the one hundred and twenty spoke in tongues glorifying God under the inspired influence of the Holy Spirit. This started a tradition of ecstasy that was continued in Caesarea Phillipi (Acts 10:44-47), Ephesus (Acts 19:6)

and Corinth (1 Cor 14:1-5) amongst others. The New Covenant contains a promise of increased intimacy with God and a veritable flood of "in the Spirit" type experiences to the point where all Christians from the greatest to the least would participate to some extent in them.

(Acts 2:17-18 NKJV) 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. {18} And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy.

Being "in the Spirit" does not necessarily mean speaking in tongues for it is clear that not all speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 12:30). It may mean that you compose a song to God, or teach with exceptional clarity and power or administer the church with exceptional wisdom. (1 Corinthians 12:28-30 NKJV) And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. {29} Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? {30} Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?

It seems clear to me then that we should ask the Holy Spirit to make our Christian lives such that we can say that we have definitely been "in the Spirit". This may not suit some people but the Holy Spirit is God. To tell God that we don't want His workings in our lives is dangerous stuff indeed. Let's ask God to so move in our lives that we can be found "in the Spirit on the Lord's Day".

Prayer

"As we worship this Sunday let it be an "in the Spirit" time for us, Lord Jesus, when You reveal Yourself to us in majesty and glory and love. Amen."

Bible Study – Angels

The Spiritual Realm

"Heaven is a wonderful place, full of glory and grace..." so the song goes. What is it like? What sort of beings dwell there? What is happening there now? Let's look at just a few of many possible Scriptures. As we look at each text, write down the most prominent characteristics of the spiritual realm as described in that particular passage.

Revelation chapter 4

Hebrews 12:22-24

Isaiah 6: 1-6

Ezekiel 1:1-3:15

What are some things that seem to be in common between these very different passages?

How did reading them make you feel?

What do you think the spiritual realm is like?

Angels

What are they? (Hebrews 1:14, Revelation 22:8,9)

How do we relate to them? Psalm 8, 1 Corinthians 6:3

From the references in the first few examples what sorts of angels are there?

What about guardian angels? (Matthew 18:10, Psalm 91:11-13, Daniel 10:13, 20,21)

According to Daniel what is happening in the spiritual realms? (Daniel 10:1-21)

What attitude do angels have toward Jesus? (Revelation 5:8-14, Hebrews 1:4 ff)

What attitude are we to avoid concerning angels? (Colossians 2:16-22, Revelation 22:8,9)

The power of angels (Revelation 7:1; 8:4,5; 9:15; 10:5, Isaiah 37;36)

What are some of the functions of angels?

Genesis 16:7-11

Genesis 24:48

Genesis 31:11

Exodus 14:19,20

Exodus 23:20-23

Numbers 22:22-25

2 Samuel 24;16 ff

1 Kings 19:5ff

Psalms 34: 7

Daniel 5:28

Zechariah 3:1-6

Matthew 28:2

Luke 1:19

Luke 2:23

Luke 22:43

Acts 12:7-11

1 Corinthians 10:10

Matthew 13: 47-50

Revelation 14:14-20

Luke 16 :19-31

Revelation 18:1-3

Revelation 20:1-3

Practical Pointers

How has this study changed the way you think about God, Heaven and angels?

Do you feel that "God is on your side" and sending angels to help you?

Did you know that we can ask God to send angels to help us in times of need?

(Matthew 26:53) Point - praying to angels is wrong, praying for God to send them to minister to you (which is their function) is O.K.

Discuss what you have learned tonight, share a point each that has impressed you, then break into groups for prayer.