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**THE**  
**BIBLE STUDENT**

New Series  
Vol. XXII. No. 1

JANUARY  
1951

*"The Entrance of THY WORDS Giveth Light"*

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*Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD*

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**A Quarterly Devoted to the Supreme Interests of that  
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of the Bible**

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**Make all cheques and M.Os.** payable to Mr. W. J. Redwood, at the Office address. Please do NOT use the *name* of the Magazine on *cheques*.

ALL COMMUNICATIONS should be addressed to :

“THE BIBLE STUDENT” Office,  
18, Hall Road, Fraser Town Post office  
BANGALORE 5, INDIA.

BRITISH AGENTS: The C.S.S.M., 5 Wigmore Street, London, W.1.

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# The Bible Student

Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

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NEW SERIES

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## IN THE HEAVENLIES

BY THE EDITOR

"God . . . hath raised us up together, and made us sit together, *in the heavenlies* in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:6).

This is the *third* occurrence of the term we have been studying. It indicates the believer's *present exaltation and session with Christ*. So that we have "the heavenlies" described thus far as a place of blessing, a place of power, a place of rest—all to be enjoyed in the present.

Note, first, the connection between this reference and the last considered in the first chapter. There the thought brought before us was the Resurrection and Exaltation of Christ—"far above" all created intelligences, and yet in close relationship with the Body, the Church, which is "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." This latter point must be kept well in mind. The Resurrection must be related to the Church, and not treated as an isolated fact. This thought is contained in that wonderful expression three times used of Christ—"the Firstborn." He is "*Firstborn among the dead*" (Col. 1:18). This does not mean He was the first to rise from the grave; but He is the first, the preeminent Representative Man, Head of a new creation born out of death. He occupies this exalted position not only as Creator, and not merely because of the Incarnation but through the mysterious process of *death and resurrection*—"declared to be THE SON OF GOD with power" (Rom. 1:4), in order to our adoption and regeneration. He is also "*Firstborn among many brethren*" (Rom. 8:29). His resurrection is the prophecy and promise of *our* resurrection. "We shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is." Our bodies will be changed "like unto His body of glory" (R.V.). There will be "many brethren" in that vast assembly of untold number who shall acclaim the Lamb upon His throne; hence the term "the assembly of the firstborn ones"

(Heb. 12:23). His death and resurrection have brought Him into the place of Preeminence and the place of Union.

Then we note the believer's *participation* in this process of death and resurrection which He voluntarily passed through for our sakes. He found us "dead in trespasses and sins," as this same chapter tells us, but the moment we turned to Him and He saved us, virtually we became dead *to sin* (Rom. 6:2), dead *with Him*\* (Rom. 6:8). That is the first of a wonderful series of great facts, rising higher and higher, until they lose themselves in the glories of the heavenlies.

The next step is that we are "*quicken*ed (made alive) together with Christ" (verse 5 R.V.). "This act of grace is an act of Divine power and might, not a mere judicial declaration" (Beck). Not merely delivered out of death; but positively, made partakers of a new life bestowed, implying a constant and ever deepening sense of union with Christ. As A. Monod expresses it: "The entire history of the Son of Man is reproduced in the man who believes in Him, not by a simple moral analogy, but by a spiritual communication which is the true secret of our justification as well as our sanctification, and indeed of our whole salvation." His own promises are: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." "Because I live, ye shall live also." We are *alive in Christ!*

Following closely on that thought comes the next, "raised up together *with Christ*." This is a step in advance. It was so with Christ. When God raised Him up it meant more than the removal of the penal sentence of death which He endured and exhausted. It implied a positive acknowledgment of Him as the obedient Servant—it was His 'justification', the divine and absolute recognition of His finished work. It is so with us. It is our justification with Him, the acknowledgment of our standing in Him in a new life. "Raised up together with Him, you are welcomed by God, His Father and your Father, as having not only the same deliverance from death, but the very same title to life, in the favour and fellowship of God, as your representative, Christ has made good for Himself and you together" (Candlish).

The final step is *enthronement*—"made us sit together in the heavenlies." The apostle says elsewhere: "Ye died and your life

\* We say *virtually*, though the enjoyment of it experimentally may be put off owing to some carnal hindrance.

is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). The Christian's life is not a mechanical routine of religious observance, but first of all an "inward" experience, for "the secrets of holiness are as invisible to natural sight as is Christ Himself, in Whom they reside." "With Christ in God" is only another way of saying, "sit together in the heavenlies in Christ"—it spells Union, mystical yet real.

Now this exaltation with Christ in the heavenlies in the present implies at least four things:

1. It implies a life of intimate nearness to God our Father, in Jesus Christ our Saviour, by the energy of the Holy Spirit our Sanctifier. "Open the door," says the waiting Christ outside, "and I will *come in* to him and *will sup* with him, and he with me." Again: "If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and *we will come* unto him, and *make our abode* with him." This is communion, fellowship, intercourse. The world, or even the worldly Christian, knows nothing of such experience, or what it implies. It is in "the secret place of the Most High" He discloses to His own the secrets of His counsels and of His will. How much do we know of that place; what time do we spend there? No one can spend time there and come away without his fellows, and he himself, knowing it!

2. It implies a life of increasing maturity of spirit, and growth into the image of Christ. This is the great, presiding purpose of God: for "whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." It is in this place most truly we, "with unveiled face, reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed (transformed) into the same image from glory unto glory even as by the (or, from the) Lord the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18, R.V.). As Moses came down from that awe-inspiring intercourse on the mountain top, his face shone with the glory of it. If we live in the heavenlies we shall likewise bear the impress of the Ineffable, and men shall take note that we have "been with Jesus."

3. It implies a life of victory over all foes, seated as we are in a place exalted above all principalities and powers of the air. On this aspect we shall deal more fully later, but here it must be recognised. The only place where we can command victory is in the heavenlies. For, though principalities and powers may be allowed to intrude therein, they can only do conflict as already conquered foes; they cannot harm us, for our life *there* is "hid with Christ in God."

4. Lastly it implies a life of both rest and fruitfulness in service. "Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me and ye shall find rest to your souls." The fret and corrosion and fussiness of fleshly activity are absent from one who spends time in the heavenlies.

This "inward quietude" (as Upham calls it) is not cessation of energy, a mere blank stoppage of all the normal functions of mind and heart (as the Buddhist teaches). It is rather the *harmonious* working of all the faculties in perfect and glad conformity to the gracious will of God. There is no jar, no clash of wills, no element of unrestrained and inordinate desires or affections. In the most intense activity there is a pervasive peace.

"There is a place of rest,  
The sweetest and the best,  
The saints have found it down the ages hoary!  
Life that is hid in Him  
Is full right to the brim  
Of love, and peace, and ecstasy, and glory."

There is also fruitfulness. Notice the argument in 2 Pet. 1: 4-8. There are "given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these *ye might be partakers of the divine nature.*" This is exactly the point we have dealt with—union with Christ. From this flows the exhortation to *build* upon this fact—"giving all diligence, *add to . . .*", and then the consequence of it all—"ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful." We are also reminded of our Lord's words, "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit." If we are to abide in Him, we must abide in the heavenlies where Christ now is.

Hence the apostle exhorts the saints at Colossae, first to "seek those things which are above," and then, "set your mind on (literally, 'think on') things above". We speak of being "heavenly minded"—there is only one "sphere" in which that gracious temperament can be cultivated and that is "in the heavenlies", in the constant enjoyment of His fellowship in everything!

Finally, "when Christ your life shall be manifested—shall leave the place of His present glory to return to His own—then shall ye also with Him be manifested in glory". And the ultimate objective is, "that in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."

It is worth questioning our own hearts—"Do we know *experimentally* this place of secret intercourse and strength?"