

Blessings Among The Celestials

(Essay No. 12)

One may well ask: Why blessing among the celestials? It is because the prison epistles open up the details which have regard to a sphere other than the earth. At first, it may not be readily appreciated why this should be so, or what necessity there is for such a change. The patient reading of these epistles by the believer leads to an increasing measure of realization concerning their contents. It becomes plain that, here is information in regard to a wider field than that of which the Scriptures have hitherto spoken, in any detail.

That God's operations have an interest in creatures other than humans becomes evident as this group of epistles is pondered. Meditation makes clear that matters which elsewhere may be but casually spoken of, barely mentioned in fact, these have come to be given a more distinct light. They merit consideration amidst the fresh aspect, and with an earnestness equal to that which has been accorded elsewhere.

In this paper we are venturing to express thoughts and conclusions which seem distinctly implied by statements made in these epistles. The lack hitherto imagined to exist, because there did not appear to be a direct statement, this seems to have become filled out, and in a manner almost equal to a distinct statement. Moreover, there is opened up the reason for the allotment accorded to Christ Jesus among the celestials, and the reason for His headship, as well as the basic position for the ministry of the ecclesia which is His body, the complement by which He will be completing All in all.

To speak of the celestials, a sphere is intimated in which Christ is to achieve glory, and to this no reference of this kind had been made hitherto. The present administration is providing the complement necessary for that ministry through which Christ will complete the reconciliation of the universe. The celestials have a real interest in the purpose of the eons. Not alone are humans concerned in the purpose. It will become evident as we proceed that estrangement existed and characterized the celestials long ere humanity were created.

Invisibility and Unapproachability

Invisibility is a description of God, absolute and unrevealed. Prior to Him Who is the Image of the invisible God, the invisibility was an absolute manner. So too, with the entrance of sin and estrangement, there arose the contrary feature of unapproachability. This gave circumstances which, in a sense, dimmed the visibility of God. God's Creative Original, He alone was fully intimate with His God and able to approach Him. Such thoughts are basic, for their reference indicates the purpose which lies in the eons. It is to reveal God to an estranged creation.

Before the World is

In His prayer to His Father, in John 17, the Lord made reference to the glory which was His before the world is. The words of the prayer give us a glimpse back into the past, when God's Son was alone, that is, He was the Firstborn of creation. The actual point is ere creation was created "in Him" as well as ere it was created "through Him" (Col. 1:16). The prayer comes to be because the world casts out its Chief, for the world has nothing in Him (see John 12:31).

It is in regard to His rejection that we should consider the matter of head-ship. Truly, in His preeminence in creation, as the Firstborn, and the His exaltation to be the Image of the Invisible God, a position equivalent to headship was His. Yet due to creature insubjection, circumstances become such that it is now required that He prays to His Father concerning the glory which was His with the Father ere the world is. To accord with the prayer of the Lord Jesus, headship is affirmed of Him, and His death fitted Him to take it from His Father. Headship reestablishes that preeminence which He had with the Father, and so He becomes the Firstborn

from among the dead. Thus He is Sovereign (Col. 1:18) both in reference to the earth and the heavens, for, amidst creation's insubjection, all is subjected under His feet (Eph. 1:22).

Before the Disruption

In moving our study to the point to which the Lord in His prayer makes reference, in John 17, we are obviously back before any possibility of the disruption of the world. We are also prior to any question of the existence of the jurisdiction of darkness. Yet there was a point, mentioned in Job 38:6,7 when the sons of God, termed stars of the morning, jubilated for joy at the occasion when the cornerstone of the earth was shot into its place. Evidently this is a matter subsequent to the point to which the Lord refers in His prayer, and it is also prior to the occurrence of the disruption.

Is it not clear that the Scriptures, in giving us the information in this prayer, indicate that the jurisdiction of darkness did not then exist? So too must we say in regard to the Adversary, that he was not then in being. There must be a definite relation between the jurisdiction of darkness and the beginning of the office of the Adversary.

The Proverbs Confirm Job

To find a parallel of the details of Job 38:6,7, we need to place them alongside the statements of Proverbs 8:23-26. These verses in Proverbs, like the verses in Job, give information concerning matters which attach to the first verse of Genesis one, for both precede the chaos and darkness of the second verse of Genesis one, which overtook the earth.

Yet Proverbs 8:27-29, like Job 38:8-11, has reference prior to the work by which the readjustment was effected, as enumerated in the remaining verses of Genesis one. Into the readjusted conditions, humanity was installed. To Job all these matters were evidence of leu's glory, whether connected with the original position of Genesis 1:1 or not. Equality Proverbs 8 makes plain that all, both first matters and those subsequent, were directed in wisdom.

Whence Darkness

There is need to make the jurisdiction of darkness a first consideration, for it will give us the right aspect of the eons. Whence does darkness arise? What promoted it, since God is Light? How came darkness to be instituted in His universe, for that universe was created in His Son, Who thus became the Image of the invisible God? At a later point He Who had become the Image of the invisible God, He came to acquire glory which did not reside in His original glory, nor yet in the frame which that glory gave to him.

The jurisdiction of darkness is certainly authority which is opposed to God, and equally it resists subjection to God. It is the sway of enemies, and actively resists the Subjector. What led to its institution? Is the factor which caused darkness at all comparable to the function of the tree of knowledge of good and evil? If so, then the creation of the Adversary is the factor immediately prior to the coming of darkness, and its corresponding event, the disruption of the world. The disruption becomes God's first recorded act following creation.

From the foregoing considerations, our thoughts are being guided to perceive that darkness did come to be in the universe, and also that the darkness had the proportions which are said to have dominion. It was not due to an intruder, grasping authority without consent or reason. Its importance is too great to admit such thoughts, and so we will find it related to an event in the eons. This event comes to give character to the eons, and directs their course during three eons.

We will be assisted in our enquiry when we regard the Adversary as created at a point when the earth had come into existence. Other celestials were also in being. The Adversary would perceive that the Son of God's

love was already the Firstborn of creation, and exalted to be the Image of the invisible God.

It was evidently due to the creating of the Adversary that the disruption became possible and necessary. It must surely occur and correspond with the counterworker taking up his office, for at once does his work bear his character. At this point came the initial effect of the jurisdiction of darkness. Out of it follows all the features that lead to the death of the cross, as well as the present activity of the Adversary amongst the worldmights of this darkness, the stratagems of which operate to systematize the deception of the end time (Eph. 4:14 and 6:11).

Whence the Disruption ?

It is certain that the disruption was not an unplanned matter. It did not come about at the caprice of a creature. The patient gleanings of our studies in the Scriptures have come to give us the equivalent of a direct statement in respect of the disruption. We have the very express statement that the disruption involved the slaying of the Lambkin. Such Language can only be related to the entrance of sin. It gives cogent reason for it. In the case of humanity, there was adequate cause for the entrance of sin and estrangement. It lay in the tree which God planted, the fruit of which was forbidden to them. This prohibition the Adversary employed to delude the woman and confuse her conscience. Forthwith did leue Alueim intimate to the woman and to the man that there was need for sacrifice for sin.

We thus reach the equal position in regard to the Adversary that, because he was the Adversary, this promoted the disruption. The exercise of his office would be the minimum necessity to sow seeds of estrangement, and the disruption of the world, and it even carried with it effects amongst the celestials.

Estrangement is then a very definite matter in the circumstance of the celestials. It gives reason why they need to be cleansed, and also why they have need for a divine service. Estrangement certainly comes within the broad meaning of missing the mark, and, by looking particularly, we see offence as a major matter from which is the need for conciliation. This gives us the angle of matters around the celestials.

The Jurisdiction of Darkness

The jurisdiction of darkness must have ensued from the point when the Adversary entered upon his office. The Adversary must produce darkness even when it is a simulation of light. In effect, the jurisdiction of darkness denies concord. It indicates cleavage and division in the universe. Of necessity, this cannot affect God, but it must cast shadows and effects into elements of God's creation, for even those of the ecclesia, chosen amidst the light of the original creation, they come to need to be rescued from the dominion of darkness (Col. 1:13).

The reality of the Adversary's authority was attested by the Lord Jesus. When arrested in the freehold of Gethsemane, a garden on Olivet, He made the observation to the chief priest and officers on the sanctuary: This is your hour and the jurisdiction of darkness (Lu. 22:53). To the same authority reference is made in Col. 1:13, and the Son of God's love is shown as the Sovereign Who will yet bring the jurisdiction of darkness to an end, replacing it by the light of His kingdom. In this we see something of the glory and value of the blood of His cross.

The degree to which darkness spread in creation is part of the question before us, and the main point is to perceive what can reverse the jurisdiction of darkness. Headship, placed in the hands of One Who is able to receive such an office, this will reverse that authority. God's Son is well able for this task, for His love transcends knowledge, and He will operate the glories of His cross and effect them. He is the Effulgence of God's glory and the emblem of His assumption. The Son's preeminence will be shown in every respect and relationship. He is able to carry on the eons. His title is Alue, and in this activity, He will lead all back to Him whose activity is defined by the title, Al ("El" supreme, Gen. 14:18-19).

It thus becomes evident that the activity enshrined in the title, Alue, TO-Subjector, was planned long before the point when the office of the Adversary was instituted. Such give point and purpose and reality to the many matters which correct cutting of the word of truth, together with a pattern of sound words, have made clear and sure to us amidst our faith in the word of our God.

Light Counters Darkness

With the occurrences of the disruption, unapproachability came to exist in regard to God, for that event introduced estrangement. This state of unapproachability continued until the cross. In fact, the readjusting of the earth, and the placing thereon of humanity could not be carried forward apart from the slaying of the Lambkin as a definite prospect. That slaying, as to effect, undoubtedly corresponded with the fiat: Let there be light, in Genesis 1:3. God could never work in the dark. This He intimates in this way. In fact, His work has the same value as Himself, for God is light. Light was not confined to the physical, for the physical bears some intimation of the spiritual. The slain Lambkin provided the light in which the readjustment of Genesis 1 was really possible.

The Eons Required Darkness

The eons were made through God's Son, and had in view the working out of all the problems related to the darkness which was to ensue at an early point in the course of the first eon. Moreover, the eons were to fully restore the Light which revealed God in the face of Jesus Christ. To the event which prompted and corresponded to the darkness, the Scriptures give the term "disruption", and to it are referred the planned details of God's ways. Some of these are said to be "before" and others "from" the disruption. So that this event is a most notable key, for it furnishes the reason for the darkness, and so moves the cause of darkness out of the will of the creature.

"Chosen Before the Disruption"

This is a heading corresponding to the earliest of the circumstances of the eons, and the words "in light" describe the character thereof. Amidst that light, the saints of the present administration are said to be chosen in Him (Eph. 1:3). This choice was made when there existed no outward cause or reason to make it. There was no immediate need for the choice. God's will and intention proposed the choice. No outside circumstance required it. Darkness did not exist to call for the choice.

These facts ought to be meditated. In God's intention, the choice anticipates those later happenings, yet they gave the need amongst the celestials, which required the allotment, in light, made to the Son of God's love. To this allotment is related that kingdom which will eventually displace the jurisdiction of darkness.

The Celestials need Light

The celestials were first in the darkness. Their need for the cross existed long before before humanity was created. In fact, the making of Adam was with a view to the cross, for humanity's existence provided the position whereby Jesus could be made "some bit inferior" to messengers. Thus became possible the sufferings of death. The necessity existed prior to humanity, and for reasons, in the first analysis, outside humanity. Yet they were reasons truly related to our God and His revelation of Himself to His universe.

Humans and Celestials have the same Interest

Amidst the descendants of Adam, leue brought forth His only begotten Son. In faith and obedience the Son carried forward the ways of His God and Father. So that, the creating of humanity was in order that Jesus might taste death for the sake of everyone. It is clear that through the blood of His cross, peace is effected for

all, those on the earth and those in the heavens. It becomes obvious that celestials really have an interest in the multifarious wisdom of God which accords with the purpose of the eons. In a very real sense, the celestials stand in need of the blood of the cross. Darkness first came out on the celestial side, ere it was on the earth. Yet darkness also involved the earth, and so events ensue thereon which bring to light God's glory in both spheres.

All to be Headed up in Christ

The foregoing thoughts require the celestials to come to understand that the Subjector is really subjecting. Though He is now conciliated, yet conciliation in His part is an element and factor in His subjecting. With this understanding in mind, the objective of the final administration becomes clear: to head up all in Christ, that in the heavens and that on the earth (Eph. 1:10-11). This is the great work in which the ecclesia, which is His body, is associated with Him. The ecclesia is His complement for that work.

This intention parallels with His kingdom "in light". All is subjected to Him, and in token thereof, all is subjected under His feet (Eph. 1:22). These matters are the indications of His headship. Yet, of His body, He is already Head, for those of this ecclesia should be holding the Head. The ecclesia ought to be shod with the readiness of the evangel of peace, for that is the feature which they are to effectively minister amongst the celestials.

Headship

Headship is the original glory exclusive to God's Son. It now sums up to require all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge which God has concealed in Him, in order to round out His purpose. By His headship it is affirmed that in Him the entire complement of the Deity dwells bodily. Darkness cast its shadow upon Him Who was the Image of the invisible God, for darkness required His entry into the realm of death. Yet headship restores His glory, for His rousing from the dead has accorded His sovereignty (Col. 1:18) and by it He will be completing all in all.

"Not Holding the Head"

Such words do not express that which is a casual matter. Rather do they speak of continual failure, and it may well be refusal, to accord to Christ the glory He has acquired. The words express the glory which must issue to the point when all bow the knee, acclaiming that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Headship refers to the universe, and not alone to His body. His body should be in the vanguard in regard to His headship. They are called to that position. Since headship is as wide as the universe, then "Not holding the head" is a hint as to the lack and failing around the celestials. The celestials learn via the ecclesia. Christ's allotment, in which His ecclesia are joint participants, is to displace the jurisdiction of darkness. His headship will reverse and take away the authority of it for an indefinite period. It must give place to light.

The implication is that darkness was opposed to light. The eons started in light, and they must work forward and unfold the features that dispel the darkness which has entered into their course, and into creation and its creatures. The counterworker is the one around whom the darkness clusters.

To refuse to acknowledge the headship of God's Son does not cancel His glory. Yet there is present the refusal of it, both in earth and among the celestials; in fact, some of the celestials continue to be quite successful in their stratagems against the ecclesia and its accord with its Head, Jesus Christ. Apart from this aspect, there is still on earth refusal to accord Christ His headship, as also to some degree among the celestials. On the earth, in the forth eon, such will be effected by His rule through Israel. Of the celestials, they preceded humanity in the creation, and they had earlier knowledge, before the earth. The celestials will miss the forth eon, even as humans missed the first eon. The forth eon seems only to relate to the earth.

The complement of the eras, that is, the eon of the eons, is especially in point in leading forward to the glory of Christ's headship. In that eon all in the heavens and all on the earth will be headed up. It will be headed up in Christ. This is the superlative situation reached in that eon. Light will then pervade the whole of our Father's creation, and His creation will know well both His Love and His righteousness. No longer is creation estranged or held at arm's length, but it is clasped by the Father through His son who has laid it at His feet.

Conclusion

In the foregoing we have intimated the implications which lie around the question of the Adversary as to the effect upon God's ways and plan. That God created the Adversary, as such, and with a view to promoting His own glory through His Son, whereby God's Love and righteousness may come to be known and enjoyed by all the creatures of His universe, this afforded much insight into the ways of our God. Herein is set forth matters which it seems must follow from the fact that the counter worker aids God's ways, and from the fact that they accord with those things which had been kept secret in the course of the eons.

Meditation upon the details of the prison epistles brings to the surface the purpose which resided in the secret of Christ. The reason why it should be made known to the sons of humanity becomes increasingly intelligible. The contribution of that secret to the ministry of universal reconciliation becomes more definite, for the allotment of Christ must come to the measure of His glory. We learn too where the secret of the evangel fits in – providing the peace to those who will yet engage, as associates, with Him who is their Head, in conciliating the celestials.

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