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Volume 42
Issue 1048

The Celestial Realm: Seeing the Unseen

A Study of Our Real Enemy

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Part 1 of 3

by – Stephen Hill

In a beginning, Elohim created the Heavens and the Earth (Genesis 1:1, CV).

Key Points:

Creator God is the God above all gods.....	8806	Satan's temptation of Jesus, where he offered "all the kingdoms of the world," was a legitimate and difficult temptation.	8807
Next to Christ, Satan is God's greatest servant.....	8807		

Did you catch the few surprises that exist in this sentence – the first verse of the Bible and collection of a mere ten words that sets the stage for all that's to follow?

Nearly all people have this verse memorized (albeit with a couple of errors stemming from poor translation), but so few take the time to consider the magnitude of what they read in the short, opening line of Scripture.

First, we discover that Genesis 1:1 is describing *a* beginning as opposed to *the* beginning, which suggests that there's more to the story.

Second, we read that Elohim ("God," or *El*, plural) did the creating.

Third, we learn that there are multiple Heavens (plural) that were created along with the Earth, and it should come as no shock that the Earth is minuscule in comparison to the vast Heavens. Because we currently live on the Earth and have our experiences here, we naturally focus almost entirely on this small



piece of the puzzle while neglecting the much larger pieces (again, plural) nearly altogether. That's a mistake, and to say that it's a big one would be a gross understatement.

I've discovered, after studying the celestial realm and its myriad beings, that we get much wrong when we don't have a grasp of – and a focus on – the rest of the cosmos which makes up a huge and important part of God's dealings. So much about our Creator's plan, the work of Christ, the nation of Israel, our own experiences, and even salvation is missed without a proper grasp of the Heavenly places and entities, and my goal is to shed light on those truths to better equip fellow believers with a more complete and edifying understanding.

Before we get into the "meat," I feel compelled to stress that much of the information I'll be sharing is likely to be shocking to many ([continued on page 8805](#))

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Men Do Not Really Make Up Their Minds
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Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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Scripture education in a weekly format!

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3-4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the universality of death and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:21);
- the unique gospel of Paul – which he calls "my gospel" (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 13-28; Acts 20:24);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past" (Romans 16:25);
- the epistles of the present Secret Administration being Ephesians & Colossians (Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the One Body (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the One Body (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);

- union in His death, burial and resurrection and ascended seated position among the celestials (Ephesians 2:6);
- adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of ordinary men intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God's storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

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

We are always open for discussion, but never for disputation. – André Sneidar

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readers. In fact, some of it may seem borderline blasphemous – that is, until I explain exactly what I mean and with plenty of Scripture to support what I've now come to see as so obvious.

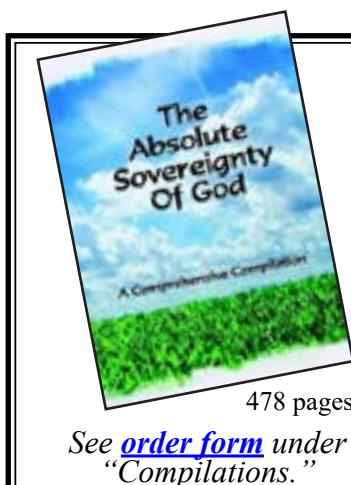
Like most truth, what I'm going to share is essentially foreign to orthodoxy, and it requires a sanitizing of one's mind to clear away years of faulty religious teaching before the path is paved for fuller comprehension.

I'll begin with a few questions, and I ask that you read and consider each one carefully:

1. You likely know that Christ is referred to as "*the King of kings*" and "*the Lord of lords*," but did you know that the Father is referred to in Deuteronomy 10:17 as the "*God of gods*"?
2. The typical view of "Heaven" brings to mind a place of perfection, beauty and abundant joy, but are you aware that Job 15:15 declares, "*The Heavens are not clean in His [God's] sight*" and that, according to Isaiah 34:4, "*All the host of Heaven shall rot away*"?
3. Did you know that, after Jesus was tempted in the desert by Satan, messengers (angels) came to minister to Him because the ordeal was so difficult for Him to endure (Matthew 4:11)?
4. Why, after being so well acquainted with the God of Israel and knowing Him as "*the Most High God*," did Solomon turn to other "gods"? Bear in mind when seeking to answer this question that

Solomon was full of wisdom.

5. Speaking of the term "*Most High*," why is this particular title so often used in reference to God throughout Scripture, and what does it really convey?
6. Are you aware of the significance surrounding Caesarea Philippi, where Peter acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah, and have you questioned how gates could "*prevail*" against anything Jesus built?
7. Did you know that the archangel (chief messenger), Michael, dared not "*blaspheme*" Satan (Jude 1:9), and that Satan is referred to in II Corinthians 4:4 as "*the god of this world [age]*"?
8. Do you understand that no human being is your real enemy? Equally important is the question of whether you know who your real enemies are and how to fight them.
9. Have you studied the scriptural meaning of the terms "*demon*" and "*demonic*"? What do you think of when you hear these words?
10. What, exactly, is a "*spirit*," and how does it relate to the soul?
11. Are you aware that Daniel 4:26 declares, "*The Heavens do rule*," and that the Earth mirrors the Heavens?
12. Do you realize that Jesus' crucifixion was much more than just His death for sin, and that His "*triumph*" over the powers of darkness had a very



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specific and powerful meaning to early believers?

The first question is undoubtedly surprising if you haven't already encountered Deuteronomy 10:17 and taken a moment to ponder the simple, yet profound implications of its meaning.

Scripture plainly states that there are other “*gods*” (with a lower case “g”) and that the Creator God is *their* God. At first glance, this seems like a proof for polytheism, but it is vital to understand that the Father is entirely unique. He is the *only* God through Whom all has been created and has its being, and *all* are subjected fully to Him. This is why Psalm 86:8 declares, “*There is none like You among the gods, O Lord,*” why Psalm 96:4 says that God is “*to be feared above all gods,*” and why we read in Psalm 97:9, “*for You, O Lord, are most high over all the Earth; You are exalted far above all gods.*”

The term “*most high*,” therefore, is not a mere title of exaltation; it is a validation of the eternal hierarchy in which God is the highest and mightiest among the other lesser, created gods.

The famous theologian, N.T. Wright, said, “We have very few examples of pure monotheism anywhere, including in the Hebrew Bible,”¹ and he wasn’t wrong. The God we worship and are now privileged to call

1. *The New Testament and the People of God*, N.T. Wright, page 258.

“Daddy” (*Abba*)² is the God of other gods, and those lesser gods have played a vital role throughout history.

It is essential to understand here that “god” is a title and not a name. The Hebrew *El* simply means “sub-jector” or “placer,” and many beings apart from Almighty God do just that. None of them, however – no matter how powerful – can even begin to compare with the One Supreme God Who has created all and is “*operating all in accord with the counsel of His will*” (Ephesians 1:11).

The archenemy, Satan, is referred to as a “god” by Paul (II Corinthians 4:4) and is called “*the prince of the power of the air*” in Ephesians 2:2.

When God sent the final plague upon Egypt prior to the exodus, He declared that He would execute judgment upon all of the gods of Egypt (Exodus 12:12). Note that He did *not* say that He would execute judgment upon Pharaoh and the slave masters of Egypt, despite the fact that we could easily recognize those men as the chief villains worthy of judgment in the biblical account.

When providing Moses with the Ten Commandments, God insisted in the first that the Hebrews have no other gods “*beside*” Him (Exodus 20:3, *BES*). The preposition “*beside*” is important here, because

2. Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6.

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the Hebrew 'al^b' is often mistranslated as "before" when, in fact, the Most High was saving the place *beside* Himself for His Son!

In any case, these scriptural axioms beg several crucial questions. Were the "gods" of Egypt real? Was Paul blaspheming when he called Satan a "god"? The correct answers to these questions are "yes" and "no" (respectively), and confusion over these answers stems from centuries of faulty tradition and improper, dichotomous thinking that has pervaded Christendom since long ago.

Contrary to what nearly all Christians assume, the heavenly realm is not currently a utopia with a clear delineation between benevolent and malevolent spirit beings. Like the Earth, the Heavens consist of a mixture of varying degrees of righteous *and* unrighteous beings, and their level of authority is established based largely on their *job description*, not only their goodness.

Just as Adolf Hitler was the supreme leader of Germany and recognized by other world leaders as a powerful and influential figure before and during the Second World War, Satan too is a dignitary of the Heavens, *despite* his ongoing opposition to the supreme God. That is not, of course, to say that Satan is full of "dignity" but that he is a very high-ranking and important figure in the cosmos. In fact, next to Christ, Satan is God's greatest employee. He is better at performing his God-given job than all other heavenly beings, apart from Christ, our Savior and Lord.

3. SEC, H5921.

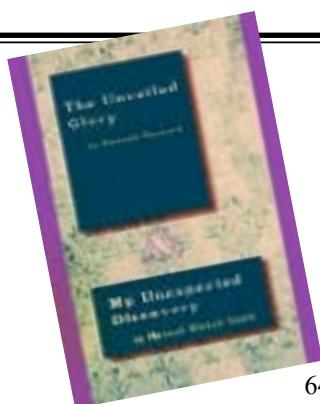
It is for this reason that Michael, the archangel, mildly rebuked Satan but dared not blaspheme (or bring a railing accusation against) him when they were disputing over the body of Moses (Jude 1:9). Michael by no means worshipped Satan and knew his motives were wicked, but he recognized and even respected his lofty position among the highest-ranking celestial beings comprising God's staff.

When Satan tempted Jesus and offered Him "*all the kingdoms of the world*" (Matthew 4:8-9), the offer was fully legitimate – and Jesus knew full well what it was, and was, in fact, *actually* tempted. That undoubtedly sounds blasphemous at first, but the temptation only qualified Christ to assist others through temptation (Hebrews 2:18) because He overcame an *actual* temptation that was appealing to the point that it would be entirely irresistible to anyone else.

Jesus' victory over Satan was an unbelievably difficult one, and He prepared for it by intentionally weakening Himself by first fasting in the desert for forty days and nights. Had the temptation been easy for Jesus, He would have no great victory qualifying Him as fully worthy at the beginning of His ministry.

Furthermore, the fact that Jesus was actually tempted and overcame the temptation is an amazing defeat over sin and a feat worthy of much glory, whereas no great accomplishment would have been achieved if the temptation had been easy to ignore, as most believe.

In fact, the majority of Christians think nothing of the temptation of Jesus and regard it as a mere walk



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Hannah Whitall Smith (1832-1911) was the author of the classic work, *A Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*. Both famous Christian authors discuss their coming to see and embrace the salvation of all.



in the park, thus disregarding one of the Son of God's most incredible victories. He entered the wilderness, which was a place associated with wickedness, venomous creatures, harshness and despair, and He did so with extreme physical weakness and vulnerability, knowing that the impending trial would be agonizing but necessary.

Was Jesus tempted? Without question; and being tempted only aligned Him more with the rest of humanity. But being tempted is not a sin, and avoiding such an enticing temptation proved His perfection all the more.

While Satan is an important figure in the larger picture, though, he is by no means the only being we contend with in the cosmos. A vast, untold number of other beings exist, whom we generally cannot yet see, and it is these celestial beings we truly contend with and are destined to reconcile to the Father in the future after we have been resurrected, perfected and made immortal.

Paul reminds us in Ephesians 6:12 that,

It is not ours to wrestle with blood and flesh, but with the sovereignties, with the authorities, with the world-mights of this darkness, with the spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials.

Peter echoes the importance of knowing our real enemy when he warns in I Peter 5:8,

Be sober! Watch! For your accuser, the Adversary, is walking about as a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.

Many passages make mention of various celestial

beings; and while certain facts are rather clear, others have to be inferred from the insights provided throughout Scripture.

One thing that is abundantly clear is that the hierarchy of celestial beings is political and governmental in nature. The types of spirit beings listed are endowed with varying degrees of authority and power, and their position or rank determines who they rule over, as well as who they are subjected under.

The hierarchy I am about to present may well not be fully accurate, but it is likely very close to the true ranking structure that exists among the unseen forces.

GOD'S THRONE

This is undoubtedly the highest-ranking seat among the cosmos. Christ is now physically seated at the right of this throne (in a real, geographical location in the Universe), and this throne is surrounded by 6-winged seraphim from above and cherubim and living creatures on its sides. We, as “*members of His Body*,” are seated there with Him (Ephesians 2:6) over all other celestial powers and above all Heavens, although our full manifestation of that reality is yet future.

THRONES

24 elders sit on thrones surrounding God's throne, and these very high-ranking rulers have been granted celestial *subjects* who *serve* them. These elders are similar to earthly kings, presidents and prime ministers, as they are primary leaders among the largest celestial groups, and the rank below is fully subject to them and tasked with serving them.

The True Basis of Fellowship

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

So settled is the supposition that creed is the basis of fellowship, that no one seems to think it necessary to consult the Scriptures on the subject. Doctrine is not the basis of fellowship; there is a divine unity which we should preserve, and the best way to break this unity is to try to make it.

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DOMINIONS

AUTHORITIES

This term can be more easily thought of as lordships or “masterdoms,” and dominions rule over *slaves* who are *bound* to them. These beings are similar to cabinet officials and joint chiefs who are subject to higher ranking leaders but are, themselves, the rulers of many. Just as a Joint-Chief serves the president but simultaneously rules with strictness over countless, lower-ranking and fearful soldiers, so too does a dominion serve an elder while simultaneously ruling over a myriad of beholden beings whose obligation to obey without question may easily be equated to slavery.

SOVEREIGNTIES (PRINCIPALITIES)

These beings have superior rank within their own sphere of the massive heavenly host and are similar to military generals, admirals and colonels who answer to joint chiefs but lead entire military branches. Michael is an arch (chief) messenger and ranks higher than many celestial beings but lower than those already listed. On Earth, military commanders who outrank the highest ranking branch officers are politicians, first and foremost, who are generally free from danger and responsible for making policy related decisions, while the generals, admirals and colonels are more frequently “part of the action” and leading real-world operations. The same is true of sovereignties or principalities who answer to dominions but are engaged in more of the detailed, hands-on leading when important operations are underway.

Probably the lowest ranking of all celestial beings, authorities must be given (delegated) the *right* to act beyond just having the ability, and could be equated with lower ranking officers and enlisted soldiers. Most heavenly messengers (angels) fall into this category, as do demonic spirits, although demons are *not* “fallen angels” and do not wield the degree of power Hollywood would have us believe. In fact, the most prevailing beliefs about demons have almost no scriptural basis whatsoever – including the commonly held belief that Satan is a demon or the head of a legion of fallen angels who have been banished from Heaven.

(continued next issue)

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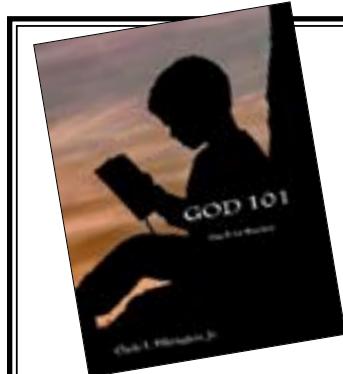
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Minor: Caesarea Philippi; Gates of Hell; Michael, the Archangel; Spirit; Triumph

MEN DO NOT
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ITS CURRENT.

A.E. KNOCH (1874-1965)



God 101: Back to Basics

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Sadly, there are some who would teach of a god who somehow does not know all things, is not all powerful, is not sovereign, and is always changing his mind. This may be a god of religion, but it is not the God of Scripture. This work goes back to the basics, back to a scriptural foundation of the True and Living God.

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