



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting every man mature in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 43
Issue 1070

Heaven Is Not Happy or Perfect - Not Yet

[Click here to listen to this article](#)

by — Collin Jones

Key Points:

Christian tradition often misrepresents Heaven.....	8981	Spiritual warfare is still ongoing in Heaven.....	8988
The Current Heaven is not perfect or peaceful.....	8987	Perfection is coming – but only at the end.....	8988

For millennia, Christian doctrine has claimed that Heaven is happy and perfect. So happy, in fact, that its perfection only awaits our immediate arrival upon passing from this life.



Some of the most amazing paintings made by Christian hands have depicted Heaven as a place of pure bliss, where harp strings are continuously plucked, and cherubs endlessly meander through the sky.

A.E. Knoch (1874-1965) writes,

Most men imagine that Heaven is a synonym for happiness. If we only had not lost contact with the angels, they think we would still be living in the garden of Eden. All they want at death is to be carried above and with the angels dwell, and play their harps the praise of God to swell.

But what do the Scriptures *really teach* about the state of Heaven right now?

Job gives us a big clue.

There was a day when the sons of Elohim would come to station themselves before Yahweh, and the Adversary came also in their midst (Job 1:6, CV).

The Adversary, Satan, was able to do so because he was counted among the entities that had access to Yahweh – in Heaven. And while there, Satan makes his pitch against Job, arguing that the man from the land of Uz has not been properly tested (Job 1:7-12).

Despite this, the Adversary's presence is suspiciously absent from Christian portrayals of Heaven. Why is this the case? Could it be that tradition, Christian tradition, has whitewashed the current state of Heaven in exchange for a depiction that appeals to our *soulish* desires?

There's no doubt that the Heavens are beautiful, and awe-inspiring. You only need to glance up at the stars on a clear night, or look at the wondrous images captured by NASA's James Webb Space Telescope.

One of the joys of my life was, while living for a short

([see HEAVEN, page 8987](#))

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Bible Student's Notebook™

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 saints 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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My Story

"We also believe, and therefore speak." Testimonies of Believers #15

A Journey of Faith: Darson Buckner's Testimony

(as interviewed by Steve Martin)

[Click here to listen to this article](#)

Darson Buckner's spiritual journey is a testament to the profound impact of questioning, seeking and ultimately embracing a deeper understanding of faith. From his early days in the Baptist and Methodist churches to his current convictions, Darson's path is marked by a relentless pursuit of truth and a transformative shift in his beliefs.

Darson's religious upbringing was steeped in the traditions of the Baptist and later, the Methodist church. He recalls, "I grew up in a Baptist church from the time I could remember. Later in life, I was in a Methodist church and remained there well into my adult life." His involvement in these communities was not passive; he actively engaged in teaching Sunday school, leading youth programs, and immersing himself in biblical study. "I studied the Bible a lot,



taught Sunday school, and led adult classes. Anytime you've taught, you end up learning more than anybody else in the room," he reflects.

Despite his extensive study, Darson began to experience a sense of dissonance. The more he delved into the Scriptures, particularly through the lens of the *King James Version*, the more questions arose. "Things just started to not make a lot of sense," he says. His exploration revealed discrepancies between the *King James Version* and original manuscripts, leading to confusion and a realization that his understanding needed to be reexamined.

Darson emphasizes that this journey was gradual and multifaceted. "There wasn't any one big question. It was more about the accumulation of insights that didn't align with what I'd always believed," he explains.



Rightly Dividing Israel's Prophetic Kingdom – With Special Emphasis on the Overlooked Pre-Millennial Kingdom of the Heavens (A Comprehensive Compilation)

Editors: Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., André Sneidar

There are enormous amounts of prophecy that were given to Israel in the Hebrew Scriptures that are yet to be fulfilled. Most believers simply follow some version of Christendom's eschatology, futilely attempting to force the enormity of Israel's prophetic scene into a few extremely abridged time periods. From this shallow vantage point, it is believed that more time has passed in God's ages than remains. This couldn't be further from the truth. Multiplied millennia remain, more than have yet transpired, for the fulfillment of all of the glorious plans that God has revealed in His Word. Far from being near the "end" of something prophetic, the span of God's eonian plan is immense, and our placement is early in its timeline. Much more of God's prophetic program remains than man's feeble eschatologies allow.

342 pages
1st Ed., A4 (8.3" x 11.7"), 87 chapters, with charts and appendices, from 22 authors.

See [order form](#) under "Compilations."

The intention herein is to present an alternative view to the confusing message of the traditional Evangelical concept of prophecy, thus opening the door to a consideration of the idea of a Pre-millennial Kingdom as the fulfillment of many of God's promises to Israel to have their kingdom in the Earth.

All of the material in this book, taken together, is a wonderful resolution to the confusion of the conventional religious theology that has muddled the minds of sincere Bible students for centuries. While we may live in the Secret Administration, that doesn't necessarily mean that God's Word regarding His plans for Israel must be a mystery to us.



A significant turning point was his reflection on the word “all” in the Bible. “In the New Testament, ‘all’ appears almost a thousand times. In the Old Testament, it’s used nearly 4,000 times. God talks about ‘all’ not just a few. This understanding shifted my perspective significantly.”

This revelation was profound for Darson, challenging the divisive mindset of “they and us” that pervades much of societal and religious discourse. “It’s not they and us. It’s all of us. We’re all children of God,” he asserts. This newfound understanding fostered a deeper compassion in him, enabling him to see others through the lens of God’s love and sovereignty.

Witnessing his parents’ deaths further reinforced these beliefs. “Watching my mom and dad pass, especially my father at the beginning of the pandemic, made me realize what truly matters at the end of life. People live like they’re going to live forever, but they’re not,” Darson observes. This stark reality has prompted him to focus on what is genuinely important: compassion, understanding and a recognition of God’s sovereignty.

One of the most challenging yet liberating aspects of Darson’s journey has been accepting God’s complete sovereignty. He recounts, “The idea of God’s sovereignty was hard for me to grasp. We’ve been conditioned to believe we have control, but the reality is we don’t.” This realization reshaped his entire worldview. “The Bible tells us that man makes his plans, but God designs his steps. Understanding this has brought immense peace and freedom.”

Darson draws parallels to the story of Eve in the Garden of Eden, where the temptation was the promise of being like God, essentially having control. “We’ve walked through life thinking we have control, but we don’t. The jail is full of people who thought they were in control. The graves are full of good people who thought they were in control,” he reflects.

Darson’s journey is ongoing, characterized by a continual pursuit of truth and a willingness to question and learn. He is particularly influenced by scholars like Clyde Pilkington, whose comprehensive approach to biblical study has been invaluable. “Clyde includes a variety of authors and perspectives in his work. He’s genuine and not trying to inflate himself,” Darson says.

Tools like the *Bible Student’s Notebook* and resources from Tentmaker Ministries have also been instrumental in his study. “*The Bible Student’s Notebook* is incredible. It’s a wealth of knowledge, and I refer back to it often,” he shares.

Attending conferences and engaging with like-minded individuals has provided Darson with a sense of community and validation. “Living in the Bible Belt, if you believe the way we do, you’re on an island. The recent conference in Johnstown, PA, was incredible. It was a safe haven where you could share ideas without judgment,” he recalls.

One of the highlights for Darson was hearing testimonies from others who have experienced similar journeys. “Mike Owens’ testimony, in particular, was powerful. He’s a great storyteller and has come through tragedy with such strength. It was very impactful,” Darson notes.

As Darson looks to the future, he remains open to where God will lead him next. “I wake up every morning thinking about what God has planned for me today. I used to think it was my job to evangelize the world, but now I realize God’s doing that. I just need to be aware and see what He has on the agenda for me today,” he says.

This approach allows Darson to live with a sense of peace and purpose, focusing on being present and grateful for each moment. “Relax and enjoy your life. Be thankful for every day and every moment with your loved ones. God’s got the future taken care of,” he advises.

Darson Buckner’s testimony is a powerful reminder of the importance of seeking truth, embracing God’s sovereignty, and living with compassion and gratitude. His journey encourages others to question, learn and grow in their faith, trusting that God has a plan for each of us. As Darson says, “We’re all children of God, and to Him be the glory.” **BSN**

[Note:] Watch the full interview on the Biblical Resources channel on YouTube:

<https://youtu.be/8n98WaJDbiY?si=hP76kxlEVmWKb0l6>

TOPICS:

Major: My Story; Sovereignty; Testimonials

Minor: Believer’s Walk; Salvation of All





Tidbits of Truth #80

“Tidbits” is a column dedicated to short comments, thoughts, studies and excerpts.

I suppose that all who do biblical research wish at times that they could set forth fragmentary and unfinished ideas in printed form without people thinking that a final and definitive conclusion has now been chiseled into imperishable granite which shall stand forever as the final word on the subject dealt with. Any such conclusion will be far from correct. — Otis Sellers (1901-1992)

Context of I Thessalonians 4:15-17

[To J.C.:] Let's review what we know.

I Thessalonians 4:15-17 is a prophetic event related to Israel's expectation. It was written during the Acts period while Paul taught “*nothing outside of what both the prophets and Moses speak*” (Acts 26:22, CV), and while Paul's expectation was “*the expectation of Israel*” (Acts 28:20, CV).

Both “*nothing outside*” and “*the expectation of Israel*” set the parameters of Paul's pre-Acts 28 ministry. These provide the context of his teaching during that time. However, this does not mean, of course, that he did not *expand* upon the theme of the prophets and Israel's expectation. He certainly made advances

on prior revelations during his Acts-period ministry (e.g., justification, reconciliation).

During Christ's earthly teaching ministry, He revealed *additional* information related to “*the prophets and Moses*.” These were termed “*the secrets of the Kingdom*” (Matthew 13:11; Luke 8:10, CV). They were *expansions* upon the themes and foundations of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Likewise, the risen, exalted Christ *continued* to reveal more advanced Kingdom information through Paul during the Acts period. Of course, as you have pointed out, none of this had anything to do with Paul's final revelation, the secret “*concealed from the eons in God*,” (Ephesians 3:9).



The Celestial Realm: Seeing the Unseen (A Study of Our Real Enemy)

by — Stephen Hill

God's creation is infinite and unfathomable, and the grandeur of the universe leaves us in awe and with many questions as we live our lives on earth and seek out answers about our future, celestial home. Are we alone in the universe? Is there any merit to the notion of other gods and religions? Are Hollywood's depictions of Satan and demons accurate? Is there more to the meaning of salvation and Christ's victory than we've been led to believe?

These questions and more are answered in this book, which reveals much about the celestial realm that comprises the vast majority of the Father's creation and awaits us as our true and final habitation. You are likely to be both challenged and enlightened as you read through this short book, and the end result will be a much greater understanding of the cosmos, the “big picture,” and your own role as a participant in The Most High's plan.

See [order form](#) under “Hill.”



In I Thessalonians 4:15-17 we read details concerning Christ's *Parousia* (i.e., Second Coming). The *Parousia* takes place after "the Day of Christ," where Christ rules the Earth from His exalted position "far above all Heavens." During Christ's *Parousia* ("the Day of the Lord") He returns to Earth to rule physically and literally for 1000 years. Paul declares that what he writes in I Thessalonians 4:15-17 was by "the Word of the Lord" (λόγος κύριος, :15).

"The Word of God" (λόγος τοῦ θεός) appears 38 times in the *Concordant New Testament* (Matthew-Revelation). Yet, "The Word of the Lord" appears only 13 times in the *Concordant New Testament*, and interestingly enough, it is found in only three books: Acts, I Thessalonians, and II Thessalonians (Acts 8:25; 13:44, 48; 49; 14:25; 15:35, 36; 16:32; 19:10; 19:20; I Thessalonians 1:8; 4:15; II Thessalonians 3:1).

The "Word of the Lord" is prophetic, and founded upon prior revelation. So, for example, in I Thessalonians 4:15-17 we have,

"the Presence [Parousia] of the Lord" (I Thessalonians 4:15, CV) - the *Parousia* of prior revelation

of Matthew 24:27, 30 (i.e., "The Word of the Lord").

"the Chief Messenger" (I Thessalonians 4:16, CV) – Michael, "the great chief" over Israel (Daniel 12:1-2 CV; cf. Revelation 12:7).

"the trumpet of God" (I Thessalonians 4:16, CV) - the prior revelation of Matthew 24:31 (i.e., "the Word of the Lord").

"in clouds" (I Thessalonians 4:17, CV) – the prior revelation of Matthew 24:30 (i.e., "the Word of the Lord").

Concerning I Thessalonians 4:15-17, Charles Welch accurately wrote,

Daniel speaks of two companies, one living in the time of trouble and delivered out of it, the other sleeping in the dust of the Earth and awakened. Daniel knew that he himself would "rest" and would "stand in his lot at the end of the days" (Daniel 12:13), but he neither affirms nor denies the precedence either of the living or of the dead. Paul, however, does affirm that these two compa-

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Mike is the author of "[The Fallacy of Post Mortem Punishment in Light of a Successful Savior](#)".

De L. Trefethen

De is the author of various articles in the *Bible Student's Notebook*.

Darson Buckner

Darson was the host of our recent conference in Knoxville, TN.

Ken Ehrenfeld

Ken is a long-time supporter of this work and has an ongoing ministry of sending copies of [Nothing Will Be Lost](#) to universities and colleges.

André Sneidar

André Sneidar is the Executive Editor of *Bible Student's Press* and the weekly periodical [Bible Student's Notebook](#).

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Mark Vogt

Since 2020, Mark has faithfully been Associate Editor of the [Bible Student's Notebook](#). He also serves as the Director of Curriculum for "Bible Student's Courses."



nies go "together," and we understand, therefore, that this is *implicit* in Daniel, though *explicit* only in Paul. This does not mean, however, that Paul is saying something more than the Law and the Prophets *allowed*. It was all within the framework of the Old Testament and was by no means a secret "hidden" in God. – "None Other Things"

— Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

His Fingerprint in the Glaze

A good friend of mine, near my place in the country, has been a potter for fifty years. I have several hundred pieces of his work that do not meet his standard. They are the ones I prefer because they have his fingerprint in the glaze.¹ The Fingerprint I want in my life is from God, even as an unworthy vessel that I am.

— James T. Burson

Angelic Immortality?

If any will persist in speaking of the angels as "immortal," it must be in the weakened sense of being

1. [Editor:] A "fingerprint in the glaze" refers to the impression of the potter's fingerprint left on a ceramic piece while the glaze is still wet, which then gets fired into the glaze, permanently leaving the fingerprint detail on the finished product. Sometimes this is done intentionally, creating a unique and personal touch on the pottery.

HEAVEN (continued from front page)

time in Pemba, Mozambique, sitting on the beach and looking up on clear nights. The galactic disk of the Milky Way was visible, slashing through the night sky. Millions, billions, of stars glittering against the black expanse.

The beauty and grandeur I witnessed on those evenings were beyond anything I had ever experienced.

But it would be an error to mistake the beauty I witnessed for happiness or perfection. The Heavens, or space, is also the scene of unimaginable destruction. Stars explode, collapse and fold into black holes, devouring everything that comes near. Planets smash into one another, sending shards of rock tumbling through space, only to collide with

conditionally so, as they are in the same state regarding life and death as Adam was in before the fall. Adam, apparently, could have kept on living as long as he continued in the paths of obedience, by virtue of the Tree of Life. Yet, as with sin, so also with death, both were ever possible to him. He was, therefore, at best "conditionally immortal" ...

The life which Adam on Earth, and "the sons of God" in the Heavens possessed, was not inalienable. Theirs was a dependent existence, and while their life (not necessarily having to be forfeited) approximated the idea of deathlessness, or immortality, still it was a conditional one.²

BSN

— Alan Burns (1884-1929)

"The Sons of God," *Unsearchable Riches* Volume VI;
The Writings of Alan Burns, Bible Student's Press, Chapter 15.

TOPICS:

Major [Context of *I Thessalonians 4:15-17*:] Rapture; Parousia; *I Thessalonians 4:15-17* [Angelic Immortality?:] Immortality [*His Fingerprint in the Glaze*:] Identification

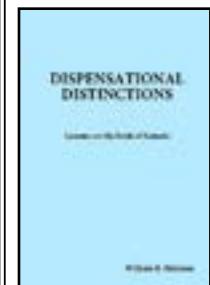
2. [Editor:] Despite the often suggested implications of Luke 20:36, perhaps their mortality is addressed by Isaiah: "All the host of the Heavens **shall decay** and rolled up as a scroll are the Heavens, and all their host **shall decay** as decays the leaf from the vine, and as a decaying leaf from the fig tree" (Isaiah 34:4, CV). – CLP

other celestial bodies.

The magnitude of this material destruction mirrors the unrest mentioned in Revelation 12:7-9, which precedes the Millennial Kingdom:

And a battle occurred in Heaven. Michael and his messengers battle with the dragon, and the dragon battles, and its messengers. And they are not strong enough for him, neither was their place still found in Heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, the ancient serpent called Adversary and Satan, who is deceiving the whole inhabited Earth.

Again, we are told the Adversary and his messengers were in Heaven before being "cast out." But this has ►



Dispensational Distinctions: Lessons on the Book of Genesis
by — William B. Hallman (1903-1985)
246 pages, PB (See [order form](#) under "Hallman.")

not yet happened, meaning the Adversary *is still in Heaven*. Consequently, Heaven is in disarray, just as Earth is. No one is euphorically plucking harps in Heaven, or waving at cherubs as they zip through the air.

If Heaven and all of its spiritual entities were already perfect, as Christendom says, there would be no reason for Paul's declaration that members of Christ's Body put on the "*panoply of God*," to defend against the wiles of the "*spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials*" (Ephesians 6:11-17, CV).

Although the Adversary and his messengers continue to heckle Heaven and Earth, everything is progressing perfectly, according to God's will, and will be made anew at the Consummation (I Corinthians 15:24).

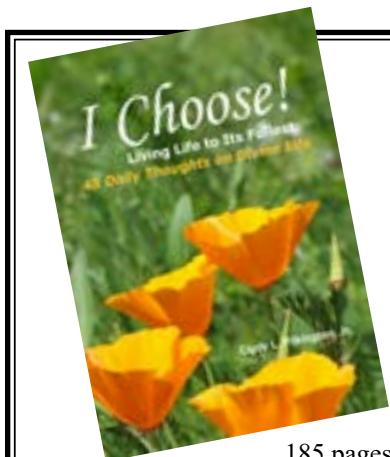
But not a second before. [BSN](#)

TOPICS:

Major: Celestials; Christianity; Consummation; Heaven; Tradition
Minor: Adversary; Disruption; Panoply; Satan; Sovereignty

WE ARE NOT
CONTENDING FOR A
MERE DOCTRINE. WE ARE
CHAMPIONING THE REVEALED
CHARACTER OF GOD. THE
GLOOMY CLOUD OF THEOLOGY
HAS OBSCURED HIM FROM US FAR
TOO LONG. ITS CHILLING MISTS
HAVE COOLED OUR ENJOYMENT
OF HIS POWER AND HIS WISDOM
AND HIS GRACE. ITS LIBELS AND
ASPERSIONS ON HIS NAME HAVE
REPelled THE INSTINCTIVE RE-
SPONSES OF OUR HEARTS SO THAT
WE COULD NOT FULLY AND UN-
RESERVEDLY JUSTIFY HIM. NOR
WERE WE ABLE TO DEFEND HIS
HONOR IN THE PRESENCE OF HIS
ENEMIES. BUT NOW ALL THIS IS
GONE. WE ARE ABLE TO VINDI-
CATE HIM IN ALL HIS WAYS BE-
FORE ALL HIS CREATURES.

A.E. KNOCH (1874-1965)



185 pages
See [order form](#) under "Clyde Pilkington."

I Choose! Living Life to Its Fullest

Forty-Eight Daily Thoughts on Divine Life

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

You are alive! Yet not just alive, but alive with the very life of God! Don't allow your "What if ..." imaginations of the past or the future to lay claim to the present that God has given you. Allow the objective, unchanging truth of who God has made you in the Lord Jesus Christ to transform your mind and life as you take this spiritual journey of "*I Choose.*"

These "choices" are not to be confused with so-called "free will." At the close of the book the author will reveal that our "choices" are nothing short of God's sovereign decree in our lives.