



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

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

Volume 37
Issue 902

Among the Celestials

by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

Who blesses us with every spiritual blessing, among the celestials, in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

The Word of God opens with a significant division of the universe into two distinct realms: the Heavens, and the Earth.¹ Apart from a special purpose in this distinction and a desire to emphasize the celestial realm, the natural introduction would have embraced all in one term, and we would have read of the creation of the Universe as a whole. As the account of creation proceeds, we soon see that it is practically confined to the Earth. The sun, moon and stars are mentioned, but only as they are related to the main theme of the passage.

Throughout subsequent revelation, apart from occasional glimpses, such as the celestial session at the commencement of the book of Job, the Scriptures to the Circumcision are concerned with the Earth. Only as celestial beings visit, or Satan and his hosts invade, the lower realm, are we apprised of their existence. Prophets and apostles are all concerned with the restoration of the Earth and anticipate a place in the Millennial Kingdom and the New Creation. None of them hint at a celestial destiny; they know nothing of “going to heaven.” David did not and will not ascend above, but will have his allotment in the land (Acts 2:34).



The blessings promised to the Earth are, to a large degree, physical and soulish. The climate will be made comfortable and salubrious, the soil will be fertile, so that the vine, the fig and the olive will flourish, and food will be plentiful. Disease will be banished and death almost unknown. The land will be allotted to the saints of the Circumcision, and Israel will rule the nations for God and bring them to God. They will be a Kingdom of priests. No blessing will come to the nations directly; all will flow through redeemed Israel.

Inasmuch as the rendering “*among the celestials*” is different from that usually given, it behooves us to examine the evidence on which it is based. The AV has “*heavenly places*,” which Newberry changes to “*heavenlies*” in the margin. There is nothing to indicate that *places* are intended. The gender is usually given as neuter, but both the article “*the*” and the adjective have this form in the masculine as well. It may refer to celestial people as readily as to celestial places, so far as the grammar of the Greek is concerned.

In Greek a single connective, *en*, does duty for *in* and *among*. As a rule it should be rendered “*in*” with the singular and “*among*” with the plural. The AV recognizes this by rendering it “*among*” quite frequently in such phrases as “*among the people*” (Matthew 4:23, etc.), and “*among the soldiers*” (Acts 12:18), for the

1. [Editor:] Originally the author used “realm” and “sphere” interchangeably. We prefer the word “realm,” and therefore for consistency have so edited the text. For more information on the two realms, see:
— Article: “The Two Realms” (Bible Basics #4), Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr., [Bible Students Notebook #847](#);
— Video: [“The Two Realms” \(Bible Basics #4\)](#), Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

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essential meaning of *in* and *among* is the same. The difference is entirely a matter of usage.

I suppose that all translators are agreed that *ouranios*, the adjective of *ouranos*, “heaven,” is correctly rendered “heavenly.” Four times it is applied to God as the “heavenly” Father (Matthew 6:14, 26, 32; 15:13), once to the “heavenly” host at the birth of our Lord (Luke 2:13), and once to the apparition on the road to Damascus (Acts 26:19). This evidence is sufficient to prove that “heavenly” or even “heavenly places” is inadequate in our text, for there the word has the prefix *ep-* (ON-) before it. What can be meant by the *ON-heavenlies*?

In three contexts *ON-heavenly* is set in contrast to *ON-earthly* (John 3:12; I Corinthians 15:40; Philippians 2:10). It is evident that, in every case, that which is *ON-earthly* is actually *on* the Earth, so that the prefix may be taken literally, and means *terrestrial*, as it is rendered in I Corinthians 15. So, likewise, *ON-heavenly* may be taken quite literally as that which is *on* the heavenly bodies. There is no English word with this precise thought, so the best we can do is to use *celestial*

in this sense. In the singular it is little more than an alternative for *heavenly*, but in its plural form it comes very close to the meaning and usage of the Greek.

Our blessings, then, are indeed in heavenly *places*, but far more than that, they are among celestial *beings*, that is, those who are on the heavenly bodies as we are on the Earth. This is most suggestive, for the highest blessing does not consist in being in a *place*, however glorious it may be, but rather in a position of beneficence toward others. Our blessings among the celestials will correspond with the exalted opening strain of this epistle. We will be blessed because we will bless. We do not look for languorous luxury or magnificent “mansions,” but to be the means of making others happy.

If, then, our blessings do not consist in a selfish enjoyment of our riches in Christ but in dispensing our wealth to others among the celestials, we are confronted with a consideration of the problem which science still seeks to solve: that is, the habitability of the planets of the solar system, or, indeed, of any of the stellar systems which are scattered over the Heavens. Science is limited to the realm of human sen-

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Scripture education in a weekly format!

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

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- 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 (Romans 6; 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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For definitions of abbreviations/acronyms, see the [online key](#).

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sation. It seeks physical evidence of the existence of beings in the Heavens.

Reverent students of the Scriptures are quick to question the teachings of science, especially when its tenets seem to conflict with the Bible. So many of the theories of science, such as evolution, the geological ages and uniformitarianism (which rejects the great cataclysmic crises of the disruption² and the deluge, which have disturbed the Earth's crust), clash with God's Word, that it should lead us to be careful in accepting anything not in close accord with what is written in the Scriptures of Truth.

But not all science is theory. Not all is false. Not all is contrary to God's revelation. The practical benefits derived from it during the past century give evidence that man is actually becoming acquainted with the physical universe. Indeed, more progress has been made in the realm of nature than in the investigation of Scripture. Let us not reject anything simply because it is called science. Above all, let us make sure what the Scriptures actually teach before proclaiming their conflict with the knowledge of nature.

Many different cosmological theories have been presented to me for confirmation from the Scriptures, and I have examined the evidence presented with much care. I can state only my present conviction that God is "hanging the Earth upon nothingness" (Job 26:7, CV). This is the only explanation which needs no further elucidation. It is more scientific than anything science has to offer. It corresponds with every test which our senses can apply. It is the

only cosmology which seems to harmonize with the celestial destiny set before us. Heaven is not a small enclosure, shut off from all else. It includes the whole Universe, apart from the Earth.

It is not in the least likely that mankind, as *at present constituted*, could live anywhere else in the Universe. But God is not limited in His creation to the making of men. Even on Earth we have a vast variety of forms of animal life very different from man, though they also are flesh. Birds can fly in the air and fishes can live in the depths of the sea. Why cannot God create for each realm a creature suited to its environment? We have His definite statement that there are bodies celestial as well as terrestrial, and that these are *different* (I Corinthians 15:40-41).

Judging from the few celestial beings who have come to visit us, the difference between a celestial and a terrestrial body consists largely in the lack of the very limitations which confine us to the earth. How can a messenger or angel, such as Gabriel, fly across the void of interstellar space without being able to overcome the force of gravitation? The larger planets or still larger stars could easily be peopled by creatures not in the least hampered by weight which would glue us to their surface.

The same is true of temperature. Few human beings could long endure exposure to the chill of an Arctic or Antarctic winter. But we are told that there is nothing else so severe as the cold of interstellar space. How could these celestial visitors withstand this, to us, unendurable frigidity? They have celestial bodies, which are like the stars, to which they are often compared. They are independent reservoirs of light and heat and power. We are absolutely dependent on

2. [Editor:] For more information about "the disruption," see:
– [The Disruption of the World](#) (see [order form](#) under "Compilations").



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the sun for life and all its factors. They are diminutive suns themselves, and do not need its ministrations.

Again, how could a human being survive the absence of all of those elements which sustain his bodily frame, such as air, water and food? At present we could not. But it is not at all impossible that celestial bodies could dispense with these essentials. They are only a form of that power or energy which comes to us from the sun. So the ultimate source of physical life and activity is not the earth, but the sun, whose rays pervade the whole solar system. Even if a celestial body is dependent on the sun as ours is, it is not difficult to imagine that that power could be absorbed directly, instead of through the ingestion of physical substance as at present.

Among the interesting, physical experiments of the co-founder of this magazine, Vladimir Gelesnoff, was one by means of which he managed to extract electrical energy directly from sunlight. It was, in effect, an electric battery, consisting of certain chemicals, which could be charged by merely exposing it to sunshine. Such solar cells are now in use on the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway. They are absorbing solar energy by day and powering a flashing amber traffic light by night. This illustrates the point before us. There exist, in all parts of the solar system, and probably in all of the universe, sufficient stores of power for the use of any body equipped to utilize it.

But it is by no means proven that the power of celestial bodies is dependent on the sun or stars. If something similar to atomic energy could be made available, it would supply all of the power needed to transform us all into celestial beings capable of

overcoming all the forces of gravitation and able to endure any extreme of temperature and sustain life without the air or the products of the soil. The power is already provided. All that is needed is a body so changed that it can utilize it.

The greatest and grandest exhibition of the powers of a celestial body is seen in the ascension of Christ. More than that, it shows how a human body, once weary with a few hours' walk (John 4:6), once hungry for a few figs (Matthew 21:18), once too weak to carry the cross to Golgotha (Luke 23:26), can be gloriously changed so as to rise without effort from the Earth to vanish in the sky, and, to all appearances, leave behind it every opportunity of nourishment or repose. Cannot such a body be at home in any part of God's Universe?

We may conclude then, that both nature and revelation demand the presence of celestial creatures and that these are to be found on the heavenly bodies which gleam above us in the vault of Heaven. Furthermore, though now we are tied to Earth, weak, inglorious vassals of the ground, wearing the image of the soiled, we shall wear the image of the celestial and, with bodies changed, we shall rise to meet our Lord in the celestials and henceforth be released from the thrall of Earth to wend our way at will among the starry hosts.

Once we realize that the Universe is not a barren waste, created only to afford material for human speculation, but was formed to be inhabited by creatures made by God for His own glory, there is much we would like to know about them. Are there many or few? What are they like? Why are we not given a complete account of them in the Scriptures?

The Prayers of Ephesians: We in Christ – Christ in Us

by — E.W. Bullinger

The Epistle to the Ephesians contains two long prayers plus a shorter concluding one. The two longer prayers have a common subject: Jesus Christ and Believers. The first prayer concentrates on Christ's purpose for us, whereas the second focuses on what God has made us in Christ. In other words, the first asserts "We in Christ," while the second proclaims "Christ in Us." The first prayer deals with God's power which He wrought in Christ, while the second one deals with God's power which is at work in us.

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57 pp., PB



These and many other questions press for answers. It is evident that very little, indeed, is said concerning the celestials in the Scriptures. There are several good reasons which suggest themselves. First, there is our innate inability to understand what is not human. The language of mankind is not a fit vehicle for celestial things. Our Lord gave voice to this in His interview with Nicodemus.

If I tell you of the terrestrial and you are not believing, how shall you be believing if I should tell you of the celestial? (John 3:12).

This is often exemplified by those who seek to define the Earth's relation to the Heavens by earthborn phraseology. They do not realize its inadequacy.

It is not God's plan at present that we should know much of the affairs of the celestials, but rather that they should learn the lessons of His dealings with us. The Earth is the stage on which the tragedy of the eons is enacted. No other place can claim a Golgotha. No other realm has sunk so low in sin or has received such rich grants of grace. The apostle claims that he is a theater, not only to men, but to messengers (I Corinthians 4:9). Peter tells us that they are yearning to peer into the salvation of the Circumcision (I Peter 1:12). Paul makes it evident that the sovereignties and authorities among the celestials are even now aware of the grace which is ours in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 3:10).

The fact that most of the celestial beings who have visited the Earth are called *messengers* has led to the

idea that all of the celestial host are "angels." They are only the couriers between the Earth and the Heavens. Those who were gazing at Paul certainly brought him no message, so we may rest assured that their message was about Paul, and was delivered to those who sent them. It seems as though the heavenly hosts took a livelier interest in Paul and his experiences than did his fellow men on Earth.

The significance of human events is better known in the Heavens than on the Earth. Until the heavenly host apprized the shepherds, men paid no heed to the birth of the Savior. Such prophecies as are found in Daniel were mostly communicated through the medium of messengers. The "messenger of Yahweh" was the regular channel through which He sent word to His people.

In the Hebrew Scriptures we may learn quite a little concerning "messengers" or "angels," and their superhuman powers. Often, they appear in the form of men and do nothing out of the ordinary. At other times they are invisible, or manifest themselves in miraculous ways. A quaint and curious example comes before us at the time of Israel's wilderness journey. Balaam is confronted by the messenger of Yahweh in invisible form, but so real and substantial was his sword and the arm that wielded it, that he assured Balaam if his jenny³ had not interfered, he would have slain him (Numbers 22).

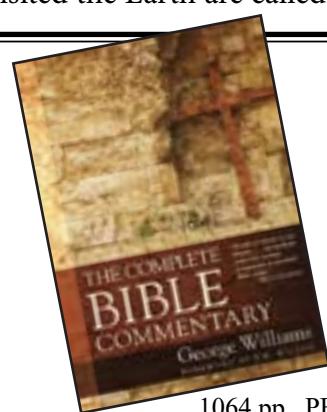
Matter is not necessarily visible to human eyes. Many hard substances not only transmit light, but are so

3. [Editor:] female donkey.

The Complete Bible Commentary

by — George Williams (1850-1928)

Originally published as The Student's Commentary on the Holy Scriptures in 1926, this volume is one of the most informative, insightful, single-volume, whole-Bible, dispensational commentaries available. It includes an introduction to each book of the Bible as well as helpful comments on the book's history and themes. Individual words and phrases throughout the text are explained with the aid of the author's extensive knowledge of Hebrew and Greek.



1064 pp., PB Williams was born in Dublin, Ireland, and ministered throughout Ireland and Europe, where his proficiency in French, German, Italian, and Spanish allowed him to preach directly to many.
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"[The Book of Acts] records the offer of the Kingdom to Israel, and not, as is popularly believed, the formation of the church revealed in the epistle to the Ephesians." (Page 820)

nearly invisible to creatures such as we are that they deceive us. Many a bird has lost its life by flying full force against a pane of glass. Even living creatures, as some jellyfish, are practically invisible, especially in water. Celestial messengers are normally invisible to human eyes. Elisha was guarded by an invisible army which appeared as fire to the opened eyes of his servant (II Kings 6:17). But transparent substances have not the power of becoming opaque at will. Another illustration will show this.

We may not be able to explain this invisibility, but even our present restricted knowledge of nature supplies evidence as to its possibility and may even give a clue as to the manner in which it may be accomplished. We may learn a lesson from the propeller of an airplane. When at rest or turning slowly it is easily seen, but as it turns faster and faster the eye refuses to follow. When in flight the propellers can seldom be discerned; they move too swiftly for human sight.

It takes *power, speed*, to elude the human eye. This is probably the secret of angelic invisibility. They can apply the power they possess to their bodily frames in such a way as to become unseen at will. Our Lord's resurrection body possessed this power. To become seen He did not need to "materialize" as some have suggested, for He had the same body which had suffered death. He did not vanish by going away or dematerializing, but simply by becoming unapparent to them (Luke 24:31). He was there, but invisible to the human eye.

The messenger of Yahweh did another wonderful thing when he came to Manoah and his wife (Judges

13:19-20). He ascended in the flame of the altar, thus demonstrating his defiance of the force of gravitation and his ability to bear with extremes of temperature which would end the life of one such as we are now. The same is evident in the army that hovered about Elisha, for their chariots were of fire.

To be told that our blessings are *among the celestials* without any previous preparation would invite incredulity and skepticism, as the idea of the resurrection did in Corinth (I Corinthians 15:35). In answering the question, "*With what body are they coming?*" the apostle prepares us for the heavenly destiny. He does not content himself with making the resurrection body incorruptible, glorious, powerful and spiritual, but insists on a still greater change than these words suggest. It will no longer be soilish, but celestial. It is no longer to be a terrestrial body. We are to wear the image of the celestial (I Corinthians 15:39-52). This much he made known to the Corinthians long before the secret of Ephesians was revealed.

Since we have such a destiny it is natural that we should wish to learn as much as possible of the celestial beings and even gain all of the information we can concerning the heavenly bodies. For this we are still largely dependent on the telescope. For the former we have recourse to a microscopic examination of the Scriptures.

As we are to rule in the celestial realms, they are introduced to us in terms which describe various forms of government. There are sovereignties, authorities, powers and lordships (Ephesians 1:21). In

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this regard the celestial realms are like the Earth. The same terms can be applied to both. Government so highly specialized as these words indicate assures us of the presence of rational, intelligent, yet insubordinate creatures, with a capacity for the enjoyment of God, but evidently not sufficiently acquainted with Him to be left without creature restraint.

Like those of Earth, the celestial rule and influence is apportioned to various grades. The highest are called sovereignties. These are first-rate powers or empires. The term “*principality*,” if taken in its literal sense of *principal*, would be a good English equivalent, but it is now used of small or subordinate princedoms. Thus, Wales is a principality, but Great Britain is a “sovereign” power. The “sovereignty” is the highest form of celestial government.

The celestial domains, like those of Earth, are divided into lesser jurisdictions. The authorities at the head of these dependencies possess delegated power similar to the governor of a province. Pilate is an apt example of such power exercised in behalf of Caesar.

The companion terms, power and lordship, seem to be close synonyms of the first pair, sovereignty and authority. Power, or ability to enforce its will, is characteristic of sovereign states, so that they are frequently called “powers.” The Greek word for lordship is similarly related to authority. It comes from a root meaning “sanction,” so that an authority is such, not because of its power, but because it has the sanction of its superior sovereignty.

These celestial beings must never be confused with the “messengers” or “angels.” It is certainly a crude

concept of Heaven which peoples it with nothing but messengers. Earthly courts have their couriers to keep them in contact with distant realms; but no one ever imagines that whole kingdoms are composed of couriers because one has come on a visit. The fact that a celestial visits the Earth in itself constitutes him an “angel.” No other would be sent.

No one would presume to tell us the number of the stars. Only a very few, comparatively, are visible to the unaided eye. Even the observer at the most powerful telescope sees only a small fraction of those known to exist. The photographic lens reveals millions invisible to human gaze. But it is most wholesome to know that their number is so vast, for the great God Who made them all is greatly magnified by His handiwork.

Neither can anyone presume to take a census of the starry realm, but enough is told to us to show that their number is beyond all human computation. We are given a hint as to the number of messengers. In the last book of the Bible (Revelation 5:11) we are told that ten thousands of ten thousands and thousands of thousands surround the throne. There are evidently more than a hundred million of them. Each one could readily represent the same number of celestials, so that there may easily be billions on billions in the celestial realms. Let it suffice us to know that we are not to be the channel of blessing to a few angels, but to numbers of celestials so vast that, even if we knew the figures, they would be beyond our mental comprehension.

Let us revel in our privileges and prospect. The Heavens are higher than the Earth and we are highest in



The Bible and the Cross

by — Dr. G. Campbell Morgan (1863-1945)

A greatly neglected Morgan book is his 1909 *The Bible and the Cross*. In this work you will see for yourself that Dr. Morgan clearly taught the reconciliation of “*all things*,” indeed of “the whole creation.” Adlai Loudy learned from Dr. Morgan about the five *Aions* (or Ages) and the twelve administrations and dispensations of the Scriptures. Loudy had many private sessions with Dr. Morgan and received many illuminating helps on his inquiries concerning the many perplexing questions that overwhelmed him.

130 pp, PB

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the Heavens. The lowest in this celestial exaltation would not exchange with John should he be granted the seat at the right hand of Christ in the Kingdom. Messengers, whose majesty and might would make us quail and quake at present, will be beneath our sway in the celestial realms. The highest dignitaries in the universe will gladly bow before the members of Christ's Body, which will have the place supreme, not only in rule, but in the dispensation of God's favor and in the reconciliation of the celestial hosts to

Him. We who were last have become first. Such is the potency of grace! **BSN**

— [Rooted and Grounded in Love \(Studies in Ephesians\)](#), Chapter 11 (see [order form](#) under "Knoch")

(edited)

TOPICS:

Major: Celestials; Ecclesia; Spirit World

Minor: Creation; Mystery; Resurrection Bodies



I can't help but feel so happy and content with God! What I do, what my relationship becomes, who we meet, and what we choose as a profession, is all up to him! ... I simply feel so at peace! – *Netherlands*

Thoroughly enjoying your [Bible Basics](#) YouTube videos with hand graphics! Excellent. Well done! – *TX*

I admire that you have risen above the attacks on your teaching. – *TN*

I am a widow. I can't get what I need from church. I survive reading your material. Thank you for being there. – *IL*

[Tom L. Ballinger's [Elijah: The Chief of Israel's Restoration](#)] was one of the most interesting and thought-provoking BSNs that I have read in a long time. Things I had never thought about. – *PA*

Congratulation with having taken a step forward, writing the new book [Ephesians-Colossians: Scripture for the Present Administration](#)!¹ I don't think I have seen anyone else out there who has come to the fore with that subject! It is about time someone did!

I hope many will read it and adjust their thoughts. People often resist taking in new knowledge that their old beliefs in many things do really get stuck in their minds. It is rather tragic that most are totally in confusion with what God really gave us in the free grace revealed to Paul for us. They keep on in error, with water baptism, Holy Communion, confessing of sins, laying on of hands for getting healed, so-called "tongues" and prophesying ... It is totally crazy. – *Norway*

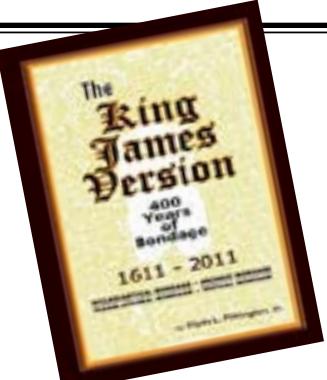
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1. See [order form](#) under "Clyde Pilkington."

The King James Version – 400 Years of Bondage

1611-2011

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.


72 pp., PB

1611 was not a high spiritual mark in the history of the church, the Body of Christ. Instead of being a grand year of the pinnacle of preservation or perfection of God's Word, it was rather the sad depths of the subtle corrupting of God's Word by the historic union of governmental and ecclesiastical politics.

An excellent book! – *NC*

Quite an eye opener to say the least! Very good! – *NM*

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