

## "A Heavenly Outlook."

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At the commencement of another year we are faced with the undeniable fact of the rapidity with which things in the world are moving; every sphere is marked by an acceleration which is at once remarkable and alarming. The tremendous advance in scientific research has opened up new spheres of discovery, and whilst this has resulted in providing much for men's ease and pleasure, it has, alas, also provided more occasion for his pride and self-exaltation, with a consequent greater disregard for the things of God. Further, the new discoveries man has made have unleashed powers, hitherto unknown, over which man has no real control, and we find all around us a present answer to the Lord's own words in Luke 21: 26, "Men ready to die through fear and expectation of what is coming on the habitable earth," (New Trans.). The full import of these words awaits a coming day.

We may thank God that He has given to us the light of another scene, a heavenly scene, where neither the pride nor the fear of man can intrude.

In the first verse of the Bible we have the words "the heaven and the earth," and that order, which gives prominence to "heaven," persists throughout Scripture. How well it would be for us if we allowed *heavenly* things to have the first place in our affections; then both the glamour and the fear attaching to "things on the earth" would have less weight with us.

It is a matter of great comfort that, in spite of man's pretension and disregard of the rights of God, "the heavens *do* rule," (Daniel 4: 26). Nebuchadnezzar, whose power and dominion reached greater heights than men of today, whose greatness reached "unto heaven" and whose dominion spread itself "to the end of the earth," had to learn this, and in so doing his pride was broken to pieces. In the 11th chapter of Matthew the Lord Jesus, speaking to His Father, addressed Him as "Lord of heaven and earth." Again in Hebrews 8: 1, we read of "the throne of the majesty in the heavens." Once more in Acts 7: 49, we have the words "Heaven is My throne." The light and power of this had evidently entered the mind of Paul and it found a place in his testimony to the men of Athens, "God . . . is Lord of heaven and earth," (Acts 17: 24).

Many other Scriptures would confirm the thought that the "heavens *do* rule," and we may thus be assured that everything is under the control of God.

In the prayer which the Lord Jesus taught His disciples we find the expression "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth," (Luke 11: 2). In a coming day of persecution and distress God's earthly people will cry this prayer from their anguished hearts, but how blessed if we are in the moral good and truth of it *now*. As coming into the blessings of the compassions of God through the gospel, it is our privilege and our responsibility to yield ourselves to God, and as being set free from conformity to a world which is opposed to His will, we are able to "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." Thus whilst still here on earth we may find our affections in alignment with that heavenly sphere where His will is supreme. It is a matter which should surely touch our hearts that the Lord Jesus, "gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil world, *according to the will* of God and our Father," (Galatians 1: 4). The second Psalm speaks of the agitation amongst men rising up against God and Christ, but the previous Psalm brings before us the blessedness of the man who meditates constantly in the law of the Lord. Both are noted in heaven, the one held in derision in view of wrath; the other treading a path known of God, a path of prosperity

and fruitfulness.

In Luke, chapter 10, the disciples were filled with joy at the result of their successful service, demons themselves being subject to them through the Name of the Lord. The Lord Jesus did not seek to lessen their joy, but in His answer He showed to them, and to us, that no service on earth, precious and successful as it may be, can be compared to the inestimable joy of having our "names written in heaven," a privilege belonging to that company spoken of in Hebrews 12, "the church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven." If verses 22 and 23 of that chapter are read we shall see something of the elevation to which we, as believers, *have already been brought*, a position morally superior to anything upon earth.

In Philippians 3, we are told that our "conversation is in heaven." Not only are our names enregistered there, but there also is our "commonwealth" or circle of interest. The things of heaven, its atmosphere, its joys, the glory that pervades its courts, and above all the blessedness of the One who is enthroned there, are the true interests of the believer. Our affections are not to be "on things on the earth," but we are to "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God," (Colossians 3: 1). "Things which are above" are not undefined, they are found concretely and permanently in Christ.

All our resources are in heaven; our Saviour is there (Acts 5: 31). He is there too as Priest, as Advocate and as Head. The goal is there, "the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus," (Philippians 3: 14, New Trans.), an objective before which the ambitions and honours of earth fade into insignificance. Our Hope is laid up there (Colossians 1: 5); our "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled," is reserved there (1 Peter 1: 4).

Finally, it is from heaven that "we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory," (Philippians 3: 20, 21. New Trans.). Earth can offer nothing to compare with this!

As we move through this world of sadness, unrest and gloom, may the joy, the peace and the light of heaven fill our hearts, and may we ever manifest the features of those who have "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven," (1 Thessalonians 1: 9, 10).