Prayer Study #433

THREE HEAVENS?

First Love Ministries of Perry, Georgia

THE INERRANT WORD OF GOD

We believe that the Bible in the original languages of Hebrew and Greek is inerrant and Holy Spirit inspired (2nd Timothy 3:16 - *All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness)*. Sometimes the various translations are not completely accurate, but a Strong's Concordance can help us determine what is accurate. The King James Bible is one of the most accurate of the translations, although we are not *King James Only* people, and some of the King James English is archaic and out of date. We look at several translations to get a clear picture of what is being said by the Holy Spirit.

To preach the WORD should be the mandate of every pastor and minister (2nd Timothy 4:2-*Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all long- suffering and teaching*. The Apostle Paul writes in 2nd Corinthians 10:4-5: *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal* [of human devising], *but mighty through God to the pulling down* [demolishing] *of strongholds* [fortresses], *casting down imaginations* [arguments, vain reasoning and analyzing] *and every high thing* [high mental thought or thing] *that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God* [THE WORD], *and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*

My friend, Pat Carver, now with the Lord, wrote: "We believe God's WORD and know it is TRUE. Jeremiah 1:12 says that God watches over His WORD to perform it, and Isaiah 55:11 says His WORD will not return to Him void but will accomplish what it is sent to do. Knowing this, we can pray the WORD about a situation and expect God-kind of results. The person we pray for has a free choice whether to accept what God has for him or her, and by praying the WORD on their behalf, we give them the benefit of choosing either life or death, blessing, or cursing, going God's way or their own way (Deuteronomy 30:19). As we confess His WORD, believe it, read it, speak it and act on it we begin to merge with it, and it becomes our way of life. As we live the WORD, His strength, His ability, His peace, His love, His joy, His confidence, and His faith become ours. As we pray His WORD, the weary

ones, the weak ones, the deceived ones, the sick ones will be ministered to, protected by, and brought greatly to our Good Shepherd."

At First Love Ministries, we believe, neither the doctrines of men nor the positions of denominations, unless they are based the Word of God. That does not mean that we do not sometimes miss the interpretation or that we know all the answers of scriptural exegesis. We must always be open to correction or fresh revelation from the Holy Spirit.

MORE THAN ONE HEAVEN?

Having said all of this, we find 2nd Corinthians 12:2-4 a rarely taught truth from the Word of God: Paul writes the Corinthians: *It is expedient for me, doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ some fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell. God knoweth), such an one caught up in the* ***third heaven.*** *And I knew such a man (whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth), how he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words, which is not lawful for a man to utter.*

We should not be surprised at there being more than one heaven because of the Word. The Hebrew word for "heavens" is s*hamayim.* It is found in the first verse of the Bible: Genesis 1:1: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*, although it is most often translated, incorrectly I believe, *heaven* instead of *heavens*, because in the Hebrew the word is plural. Next, we see Genesis 2:1: *Thus, the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.* So, God did not make another heaven after this time but was finished.

Throughout the Bible, the word *heavens* is used. I will give just a few examples: Genesis 2:4: *These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and heavens….* 2nd Chronicles 6:18: *But will God really dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less than this house which I have built.* Psalm 8:3: *When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon, and the stars, which thou hast ordained…* Matthew 24:29: ***Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give its light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.***

(I believe these are demonic powers in the 2nd heaven that are being referred to here by Jesus.) Ephesians 4:10: *He that descended is the same also that ascended up far about the heavens, that he might fill all things.* There are over 130 times when the word *heavens-heaven in the plural-* is used in scripture.

THE THIRD HEAVEN

Paul wrote in 2nd Corinthians 12:24 of being caught up in the third heaven. There is no place that I am aware of in scripture that gives a number for the number of heavens, except this one. The traditional view is that this third heaven refers to what we, as Christians, normally refer to as Heaven of Paradise. It is the place where we will go when we die in the Lord. It is where Jesus is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty and will stay until God the Father, (using His people on earth, I believe) makes His enemies His footstool (Psalm 110:1, Matthew 22:44, Mark 12:36, Luke 20:43; Acts 2:35, Hebrews 1:13, Hebrews 10:13). It is where God is.

THE SECOND HEAVEN

Scripture is not specific about the second heaven. The traditional view from scholars, such as Scofield, J. Vernon McGee, Dakes, and others, is the second heaven is an area beyond what we can see, even with a telescope, in outer space, or what they call the place of the stars.

I believe that this is a place between the visible heavens or sky and Paradise, and a place where Satan stands, when he is not roaming the earth like a roaring lion seeking whom he can devour, accusing the brethren before the throne of God. Remember that Satan came to present himself before the throne of God in the book of Job. Job said that he had been going to and fro in the earth and walking up and down on it. Then he left the presence of God to attack all that Job had (remember that Satan is not omnipresent and can only be in one place at a time). Job 1:6-7: *Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came among them. And the LORD said unto Satan, "From where comest thou? Then Satan answered the Lord and said, "From going in and fro in the earth and from walking up and down in it."* Most likely this 2nd heaven is from where Satan was talking to God, who Himself was in Paradise or the third heaven. I find it unacceptable to think that he would have had access to Paradise after his fall

from there. It is sort of like going to see the President of the United States and having to stay outside the fenced-in area of the White House and talking to him by television cameras.

The second heaven is, most probably, a place of tremendous spiritual warfare. Luke 10:18 tells us that when Satan was kicked out of heaven (the third heaven or Paradise), Jesus saw him fall like lightning out of heaven (*And he said unto them, **I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven***. He took a third of the angels with him (Revelation 12:3-4: *And there appeared another wonder of heaven; and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and did cast them to the earth; and the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to be delivered, to destroy her child as soon as it was born*. Thus, Lucifer became Satan, and the fallen angels became demons.

Satan does roam the earth at times, tempting humans to sin. We know he tempted Eve in the garden, incited David to conduct a census, and entered the heart of Judas, to give just a few examples. He stand in the second heaven and acts as a kind of heavenly prosecuting attorney before God's heavenly throne, bringing charges against God's people (Psalm 109:6, Zechariah 3:1-2, and Job chapters 1 and 2). The only we way we learn about Satan is through the Bible. Satan hates the Bible because it blows his cover. He has tried his best to destroy it. He has not been able to do that, so he has started religious movements which change the Bible message. (Key biblical passages concerning Satan are Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28, Job 1 and 2, and Revelation 12.)

We know that Satan has already lost his war with the Lord (1st Corinthians 15:54-57; Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:12-15; Revelations 1:8), but he still attacks us. His demon hordes try to keep you out of church (Hebrews 10:25), get Christians back into the world (Hebrews 6:4-6; Hebrew 10:26-39, and 2nd Peter 2:20-22), render Christian useless (1st Corinthians 5:1-13; 1st Timothy 1:19-20; 1st Timothy 5:14-15; 2nd Timothy 2:17), disrupt or corrupt worship and doctrine (2nd Corinthians 2:17; Galatians 1:6-10; 2nd Peter 2:3); cause trouble and division among brethren (Proverbs 6:14 & 19; Romans 16:17; 1st Corinthians 1:10-13).

In this study we do not have the time to go into the organization of Satan's kingdom (Ephesians 6) and with what each of these levels' deals. But

we must mention principalities because of their dominance in the 2nd Heaven. These are very powerful demonic forces usually over large areas of land and sometimes, I believe, over ministry groups. These princes are the strongman over an area and influence religion, lust, suicide rates, murders, etc. Anywhere there is an obvious spiritual problem, you can be sure there is a strong demonic prince over that area behind the problem. San Francisco, for example, obviously has a principality associated with lust and homosexuality over the city. They are powerful, and yet we, as a body, are to wrestle them to the ground and although we cannot cast them out, we can subdue them through corporate prayer. It is unwise to attempt to subdue them on your own, but there is power in the prayer of agreement.

We see these demonic princes clearly illustrated in the Book of Daniel. Daniel 10:2-21 - *In those days, I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three full weeks were fulfilled. And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which is Hiddekel, then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz; his body also was like the beryl, and his face like the appearance of lightning, and his eyes like lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet in color like to polished bronze and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. And I, Daniel, alone saw the vision; for men that were with me saw not the vision, but a great quaking fell upon them so that they fled to hide themselves. Therefore, I was left alone and saw this great vision and there remained no strength in me; for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I restrained no strength. Yet heard I the voice of his words, and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep toward the ground. And behold an hand touched me upon my knees and upon the palms of my hands. And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee and stand upright; for unto thee am I now sent. And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling. Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel; for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words. But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days; but, lo, Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me; and I*

remained there with the kings of Persia. Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days; for yet the vision is for many days. And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb. And behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips; then I opened my mouth and spoke and said unto him who stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. For how can the servant of this, my lord, talk with this, my lord? For as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me. Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, and said, O man greatly beloved, fear not. Peace be unto thee; be strong, yes, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me. Then said he, Knowest thou why I come unto thee? And now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia; and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Greece shall come. But I will show thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth; and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael, your prince.

The angelic being, in coming to answer Daniel's prayer about the last days, had to call the archangel [and there is only one archangel is scripture. Lucifer was *not* an archangel and was identified in scripture as a cherub-Ezekiel 28:11-19] Michael to fight the Prince of Persia before he could get through, and the heavenly being stated that he would have to deal with the Prince of Grecia on the way back. I think that it is interesting that Gabriel is coming with information from the throne of God about the last days, and he first encounters the Prince of Persia (Iran), which is symbolic of Islam, who was between Paradise and the earth realm. Then he says that on the way back he will have to fight the Prince of Grecia. Grecia is symbolic of the Greek system which was based on humanism and philosophy and an acceptance of homosexuality. These two principalities stand in the second heaven and are the demonic powers behind the things we will be dealing with more and more in these last days.

If the Body of Christ could get a revelation about Principalities, we could change whole areas and bring forth righteousness and peace through the power of prayer.

THE FIRST HEAVEN

The first heaven is the visible sky that we see when we walk outside and look up in the sky.

CAUTION

The Lord warned us of deception in the last days: Matthew 24:24 - ***For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders, to deceive, if possible, even the elect.*** Today many claim to have been to the third heaven. Some claim to frequently go there. We cannot deny their experience as being outside of the realm of Biblical possibility, but we can judge the reality of these claims with the Word of God. First, and foremost, what is the fruit that comes from these claims? Is such an experience causing these men and women to walk in a new measure of holiness and humility and love and repentance, or is the claimed experience promoting men and their egos? Secondly, is the focus on Jesus and lifting Him up and bringing Him glory or is the focus on the individual? Remember that Paul was so overwhelmed by the experience that he did not speak of it for fourteen years. Nor did he cheapen it by a look-at-me attitude. He would not even say that he was the man whom he was referring to, but we believe he was.

Because deception and demonic signs and wonders will be so common in the Last Days, I want to give you some antidotes for deception:

a. The Truth of the Word of God: Galatians 3:1- *O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been openly set forth, crucified among you?*

b. The Gift of Discernment: 1st Corinthians 12:10-*...to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.*

c. The Witness of the Spirit: Romans 8:16-*The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God…*AND 1st John 5:9: *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.* AND Hebrews 10:15a-*But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us…*

d. The Multitude of Counselors: Proverbs 11:14-*Where there is no counsel, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety.*

e. Proper Spiritual Authority: Hebrews 13:17-*Obey them that have rule (guide) over you and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as them that must give account, that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you.*

f. Walking in the dunamis power of God: 1st Corinthians 2:4-8-*And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power [dunamis] of God. However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery; the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*