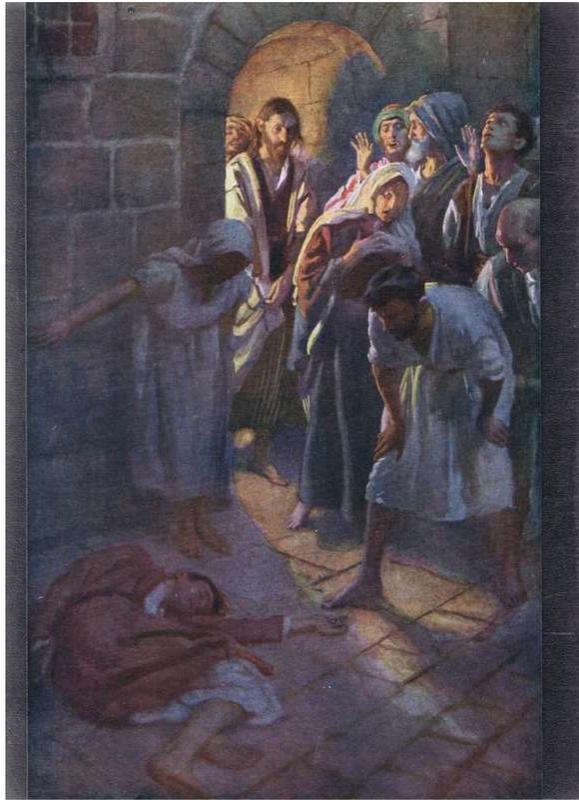


Some Thoughts on the Healing of Eutychus
(Acts 20:7-12)



- 1) The Baylor University article.
 - 2) The third floor and the Triple-Decker Universe, James Jordan
 - 3) The third floor and the third heaven of 2 Corinthians, James Jordan, lights and lamps etc.
 - 4) More About the Possible “Third Floor”/“Real” Heaven Connection
 - 5) Connection Between Lights/Lamps and Teaching
 - 6) Acts 20:7-12 as Part of A Structural Chiasm in Acts
 - 7) The Passover connection!
 - 8) Nights of Watching and Lamps
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- Appendix

1) Baylor University Article by Andrew Arterbury

I think this article provides a lot of useful material for a helpful “sensible” sermon on Acts 20:6-12 I mention it here as it forms a strong and sound

exegetical basis for some of the more typological, intertextual and frankly speculative aspects presented here! The article is called “A Warning to the Wise: Learning from Eutychus’s Mistake” and can be found at:

www.baylor.edu/content/services/document.php/239228.pdf

2) The Third Floor and the Triple-Decker Universe

The third floor in Acts 20 is the upper chamber where the meeting in Troas was held. James Jordan in “Through New Eyes” describes the “Triple-Decker” universe Biblical cosmology in which the uppermost level is the “earthly” heavens of Genesis Ch. 1 which contains the heavenly lights—sun, moon and stars. If the building where the meeting was held is a little picture of the created universe, then the many lamps (Acts 20:8) would correspond to these heavenly lights set in the firmament of heaven. The little gathering would therefore be, figuratively speaking, set in the heavenly places, as further suggested in the next paragraph. James Jordan’s excellent book can be freely download from:

www.biblicalhorizons.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Through-New-Eyes.pdf

The Genesis 1 account uses the same word, heaven (or the heavens) to refer to the “real” heaven where God dwells (in v. 1) and to the “firmament” heaven (in v. 8) where the heavenly lights (v.14) are located. Thus, the firmament heaven “points to” the real heaven, and this is presumably the same real heaven where we are described as “being seated with Christ in heavenly places” (Eph. 2:6).

3) The Third Floor and the “Third Heaven” of 2 Cor. 12:2

In 2 Corinthians 12:2 Paul speaks about the “third heaven”, and this reference comes to mind when we think about the third floor from which Eutychus fell in Acts 20. This raises the question, “What is the third heaven”? This expression is not explicitly found elsewhere in Scripture.

Here I wish to put forwards two suggestions for the possible meaning of “the third heaven” in 2 Cor 12:2, and its possible link with the third floor of the Eutychus account.

1st Explanation

I suppose I had in the past sort of thought that the creation account in Genesis 1 provided us with a basis for “three heavens” - the sky heaven of clouds and birds etc., the heavens of the sun, moon etc. and then the “real” heaven of Genesis 1:1 where God dwells. This is actually one of the “accepted” explanations for the “third heaven”. (The first two heavens are sometimes referred to (e.g. by John Gill) as the “airy” heavens and the “starry” heavens respectively.) On re-reading Genesis 1, and also James Jordan’s description in *Through New Eyes* e.g. p.45, I have to admit defeat since only two heavens appear to be mentioned—the sky heaven populated with birds, clouds, sun, moon stars etc. and the “real” heaven where God dwells.

There is one interesting feature of the Hebrew word for heaven however: it is a dual noun. Thus, it is not strictly speaking singular, but plural of a particular type denoting a “double” aspect. The “dual” form is often used for things that are doubled such as eyes in Hebrew. This dual form is used in both Gen 1:1 and also 1:8 where the firmament is called heaven. This, then might be seen as part of the justification for the division of the lower “firmament” heaven into “airy” (or aerial) and starry components.

2nd Explanation

Another explanation for the third heaven, which I have found in the commentary on 2 Corinthians by David Garland, is suggested by the triple reference to the heavens in 1 Kings 8:27 (and similar OT verses): “the heaven(s) and the heaven(s) of the heaven(s) cannot contain Thee”. David Garland suggests that this may be part of the basis for the “three-heaven” schema in Jewish writings such as the Testament of Levi which describes three “heavenly spheres”. This may be related to Paul’s “third heaven”.

However, the “heaven(s) of the heaven(s)” is a Hebrew idiom meaning the highest heavens or the highest heaven, so it is not clear that three heavens are being described—perhaps the heaven is the “sky heaven” and highest heaven is the “real” heaven (of Genesis 1:1) where the throne of God is.

The “Testament of Levi” and some other Jewish writings to which David Garland draws attention do indeed speak of a first, second and third heaven. (Testament of Levi 2:7-10 and 3:1-8.) It is only the third heaven that is described as the “holy of holies”, which presumably depends on the relationship between the holy of holies in the tabernacle/temple and the “real” heaven where God dwells. If these Jewish writings form part of the

background for Paul's reference to the third heaven, then Paul was admitted to the very presence of God. The other two heavens in the Testament of Levi are rather obscure, at least to me! The first heaven for example, is not really what we would naturally think of as heaven, as it contains snow, ice and fire, and is gloomy or dark being associated with punishment of injustices, and the second heaven is associated with the heavenly angelic messengers. It is not clear to me what relation these two "levels" of heaven might have to the "firmament" heaven(s) of Genesis Ch. 1.

I don't think that we can *a priori* rule out the possibility that Paul's "third heaven" was connected with such conceptions of "levels" within heaven. However, it seems to me that Paul is free to use the expression "the third heaven" to refer to the highest heaven and the very presence of God (just as the Testament of Levi does) without necessarily identifying the first two heavens in the same way as the Testament of Levi or endorsing that view.

Perhaps Paul sees the first two heavens in the same way as the 1st explanation of the previous section of this article, as suggested in the next paragraph.

In Ephesians, Paul speaks of "the heavens" (where he uses the Greek root word *epouranos* which may not be quite the same as *ouranos*) as containing principalities and powers which are to be wrestled against, and he also speaks of the prince of the power of the air. These references might possibly infer a "post-Fall" aspect of the "airy" and "starry" heavenlies described in the Genesis account (which describes conditions before the Fall). There is a really helpful Ph.D. thesis by M. Jeff Brannon on "The Heavenlies in Ephesians" which provides much useful information on what can be inferred from Ephesians (and other parts of Scripture) regarding Paul's "cosmology". We are very fortunate that this thesis can be freely downloaded from the University of Edinburgh website at:

www.era.ed.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1842/4501/Brannon2010.pdf?sequence=2

It is possible too that Paul's cosmology may even draw upon aspects of Greek or Graeco-Roman cosmogony. There is a book by G. H. van Kooten called *Cosmic Christology in Paul and the Pauline School* which considers this topic. Parts of this can be downloaded from the internet. (As can be gathered from the title, the author does not hold to the conservative Evangelical view regarding authorship of some of the Pauline letters.)

The language used by Paul to describe all these truths is however

“restrained”, and it is hard to build up a comprehensive picture of these mysteries, particularly for a complete non-expert like me!!

4) More About the Possible “Third Floor”/“Real” Heaven Connection

The presence of many lamps in the upper room in Acts 20 does suggest, as we have discussed, a connection with the starry heavens. In *Through New Eyes*, James Jordan discusses at length the symbolism of the tabernacle/temple and, (as is widely understood in the typology of the tabernacle) he sees the seven lamps of the Holy Place as corresponding to the heavenly lights of the firmament. Please see for example Diagram 15.3 on p.209 of *Through New Eyes* (The number seven corresponds to the seven “moving” lights in the heavens—the sun, moon and the five visible planets). This heaven is symbolically separated by the presence of God in the Holy of Holies by a veil.

Now, we know from Hebrews and the corresponding passages in Exodus that the tabernacle was patterned after heavenly realities. When John enters heaven in Revelation however, we find these heavenly realities. For example, in Rev. 4:5 we see the seven lamps of fire burning before the throne which are the seven Spirits of God. However, unlike the tabernacle, there is no “graded ascent” to the Holy of Holies and no veils—the things associated with the firmament—the lights, the rainbow, thunders and lightnings are all in the immediate presence of God. The similarities and differences between the tabernacle/temple and the “real” heaven where God dwells are therefore significant. In the “real” heaven, the veil separating the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies in the tabernacle/temple does not exist.

Peter Leithart’s superb commentary on Revelation expresses it this way:

“Though John is in a heavenly temple, there are several anomalies. Features and furnishings from several different zones of the earthly temple are crunched together in one place. In Solomon’s temple, the throne is in the Most Holy Place or *debir*, behind carved doors, the lamps are in the Holy Place or *heykal*, and the sea is outside in the court. John sees all these furnishings in one heavenly space.”

Perhaps we could say that in the real heaven, the Holy of Holies has “expanded” to fill what corresponded to the Holy Place of the tabernacle. In Revelation, the “Holy of Holies” - the very presence of God and of Christ - eventually expands to fill the entire New Heavens and New Earth.

(Zechariah also speaks of this expansion of holiness when says that the bells of the horses (an unclean animal!) will have “holiness to the Lord” inscribed on them—words associated in the Old Covenant with the forehead of the high priest! Ex. 28:36-38).

So, if the “many lamps” in Acts 20 correspond to the seven lamps before the throne, then the third floor corresponds to the presence of God. In Ephesians we read that “we are *seated* with Christ in the heavenly places” (Eph. 2:6) Is it significant that we are specifically told that Eutychus was *seated* in the window? Even though Eutychus fell, he was restored—so this is an encouraging message for when we fail: the work of Christ is powerful enough for this too!

We can also remember that Jesus walked among the seven golden lampstands that represented the seven churches in Revelation, and Christ Himself is the Light of the World, and the righteous shine as stars (Daniel 12:3) so the lights in the upper room appear to have several typological interpretations.

5) Connection Between Lights/Lamps and Teaching

Paul did a lot of teaching in the upper room! I think that there is a connection between the many lamps and the much teaching. For example, in Ps. 119 we read, “The entrance of Thy word giveth light” (v. 130) and “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path” (v. 105). Jesus, as the Word, is also light (John Ch. 1). In Ps. 19, the Psalmist connects the light of the sun in the first part of the Psalm with the Law and statutes of the Lord.

One of the most intriguing possible connections here, which brings together lamps, teaching and the temple/tabernacle is Zechariah Ch. 4. In this, admittedly “difficult” chapter, Zechariah sees a candlestick with seven lamps—which points to the candlestick in the holy place of the tabernacle (Ex. 25:37). However, in keeping with the greater glory (despite outward appearances!) of the restored temple (Haggai 2:9) each lamp has seven “lips” - so each lamp is actually seven lamps in one! This is a lot of lamps, and, like much of Zechariah, presumably has a greater fulfilment in Christ and the Church, and also points to the heavenly reality of the Spirit described in Revelation Ch. 4:5—please note the mention of “the Spirit” in Zech. 4:6. Furthermore, the interpretation of the lamps is given in Zech. 4:6 in terms of “the word of the Lord . . .”! So, the presence of many lamps in the upper room in Acts 20 is perhaps also associated with Paul’s “much teaching”!

An aside!

The presence of olive trees in the temple in the Zechariah prophecy is part of the significance of olive trees and olive oil which James Jordan looks at in an extremely interesting biblical horizons article:

www.biblicalhorizons.com/biblical-horizons/no-84-christ-in-the-holy-of-holies-the-meaning-of-the-mount-of-olives/

6) Acts 20:7-12 as Part of A Structural Chiasm in Acts

This is a really, really exciting topic that I found in one of my books, *Literary Patterns, Theological Themes and the Genre of Luke-Acts* by Charles H. Talbert. One of the many structural aspects in Luke and Acts is the symmetrical, chiasmic structure of Acts 15:1—21:26.

I've copied the relevant pages from the book below and on the next two pages of this article.

Acts 15:1—21:26

We have seen that the architectonic scheme of Luke-Acts involves a balancing of one series of persons and events off against another, as for example, the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem in Luke is paralleled by Paul's journey in Acts. We have also seen that this tendency to balance corresponding persons and events extends to the practice of using a similar architecture for corresponding sections of the Lucan work, as for example, the two halves of Acts correspond to each other in a way similar to the way the two main sections of Luke correspond. In this light, since the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem in Luke is arranged in a chiasmic pattern, it would be in line with the

I don't think the descriptive passages here are particularly helpful to our purpose, but here, I think, is the "basic message" with regard to the "Eutychus event":

In the first part of the chiasm, Paul crosses from Troas to Philippi where at midnight he saves a sleeping man (the Philippian jailer) from death. Lights are brought and a meal is held. Everyone in the jail is safe, and it is only the man who is outside (the jailer) who is at danger from death.

In the second part of the chiasm, Paul crosses from Philippi to Troas where there are many lights and at midnight he saves the sleeping Eutychus from death and a meal is held. Everyone inside is safe—it is only Eutychus who is outside who is at danger from death.

Lucan stylistic tendency to find Paul's journey which ends in Jerusalem arranged in a similar way. Close examination of Acts 15:1—21:26 reveals that this is exactly what the author of Luke-Acts has done. This section falls into two parts which correspond to one another in an inverted order, that is, they form a chiasmus. The following list should enable this pattern to be seen at a glance.¹¹

Acts 15:1—18:11

- 15:1-29 Paul and others go to Jerusalem. On the way they report on the Gentile mission and the report is well received. They are welcomed on their arrival to Jerusalem. Jewish Christians raise the issue of the law and circumcision. There is a meeting involving Paul and James over the matter. The decision of James is sent in a letter (abstain from things sacrificed to idols; from unchastity; from what is strangled; and from blood).
- 15:30—16:15 Paul returns to the cities where he had earlier preached the gospel.
Paul is forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak in Asia. The Spirit does not allow him to go into Bithynia. A vision calls him to Macedonia.
- 16:16-40 We hear of an exorcism by Paul; of a riot; of Paul's saving the jailor's life.
- 17:1-15 Synagogue debates.
- 17:16-34 The Athenians who are already religious are taught accurately about true religion by Paul.
- 18:1-11 Paul argues in the synagogue. Reference is made to the ruler of the synagogue. God promises Paul: "No harm shall befall you in this city."

Acts 18:12—21:26

1. 21:15-26 Paul and others go to Jerusalem. They are received gladly. Their report on the Gentile mission is well received. The issue of Jewish Christian concern over the law and circumcision is raised. There is a meeting involving Paul and James over the matter. The earlier decision of James which was sent in a letter is echoed (abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols; from blood; from what is strangled; and from unchastity).
2. 20:13—21:14 The Ephesian elders sorrow because they will see Paul no more.

The Holy Spirit warns against going to Jerusalem. There is a warning of bondage and suffering.
3. 19:11—20:12 We hear of Jews who try to imitate Paul's exorcisms; of a riot; of Paul's saving Eutychus' life.
4. 19:8-10 Synagogue debates.
5. 18:24—19:7 Apollos and twelve disciples who are already on the way to being Christians are taught accurately about true religion by Paul and his helpers.¹²
6. 18:12-23 Paul argues in the synagogue. Reference is made to the ruler of the synagogue. God's promise to Paul that no harm should befall him in Corinth is fulfilled.

Here as elsewhere in our investigation of the architecture of Acts we are confronted with the completely unsettled question of the sources behind Luke's narrative.

If we assume that the "we" sections (16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1—28:16) go back to the diary of an eyewitness,¹³ either that of the author of Acts or someone else, it could hardly be said that the parallels which are listed above are due to such a source. Of all the similarities listed above, only

21:4, 11 (part of number 2 in the list above) and 20:7-12 (part of number 3 in the above list) come from material in the "we" sections. The others would have to be due to Luke's selection, arrangement, and adaptation of supplementary material. Hence, assuming a "we" source, the parallels must be due to the author of Acts.

If we assume an itinerary lies behind Acts 15:36—21:16,¹⁴ that is, a report of halting places on the journey, most probably containing brief information on the foundation of new communities and the success of the mission, it is impossible to credit the arrangement of Acts 15—21 to such a source. This is true for the following reasons. (1) Chs. 13—14, which would belong to the itinerary according to Dibelius,¹⁵ do not belong to the chiasmic structure described above. Also, if the source is thought to run on through ch. 28, as Trocme thinks,¹⁶ then these chapters are outside the chiasmus too. (2) Acts 15:1-29 does not go back to such an itinerary but it is crucial for the parallels. (3) Acts 16:25-34 (parallel 3); 17:22-31 (parallel 5); 19:14-16 (parallel 3); 20:7-12 (parallel 3); 20:18-35 (parallel 2); are all certainly not parts of any itinerary but are certainly crucial for the chiasmic structure described above. Hence, the arrangement must come from the hand of the author of Acts if we assume an itinerary source for these chapters.

If we think in terms of a number of traditions and/or notes plus Luke's own contributions making up Acts 15—21 as Haenchen does,¹⁷ then the chiasmic arrangement is inevitably due to the author's selection, shaping, and organization of the material. From the point of view of any one of the three major types of source theories for Acts 15—21, the present arrangement of the text in a chiasmic form is due not to the author's sources but to his own hand. It would appear that the architectonic scheme of the author of Luke-Acts demands that a chiasmic journey in the Gospel be balanced by a chiasmic journey in Acts. The architecture of Luke-Acts, therefore, seems to be built upon a basic stylistic principle, that of balance.

In addition to the architectonic patterns treated up to this point, there are two more examples of the Lucan architecture of a similar nature that are worthy of note: (1) the correspondences between the end of Luke and the beginning of Acts and (2) the correspondences between Luke 9 and Acts 1. These two examples will now be examined in the order in which they are listed here.

Brilliant or what!!!

7) The Passover Connection

The danger to Eutychus occurs at midnight, and happens when he leaves the room. Furthermore, Luke has very specifically related Paul's time in Troas with the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Acts 20:6). The Feast is now past, but nevertheless, this feast, together with the sea crossing might

move our thoughts towards Exodus and the Passover and the death of the First-born sons at midnight.

We are told in Exodus that the Passover was a time of watching during the night, (Ex. 12:42) and this Eutychus failed to do. The Children of Israel were to stay indoors—otherwise they would suffer the fate of the Egyptian first-born sons.

8) Nights of Watching and Lamps

Lights/lamps are also symbolic of watching and staying awake. The parable of the wise and foolish virgins is particularly relevant here—also the parable in Luke 12:35-40 about the servants who stay awake—both these parables feature burning lamps!

We are also reminded of the night of Jesus' betrayal where the disciples could not stay awake, and perhaps also of the Transfiguration where the three disciples also slept (Luke 9:32).

Well, we are in the New, better, Covenant now, and even though Eutychus, and also the disciples, failed, he and they were restored—so Christ, the New Covenant, (“I have made Thee a covenant to the peoples”) is superior to the Old Covenant.

Paul also goes on to tell the Ephesian elders to “watch” - Acts 20:31.

9) Other Healings

The healing of the widow of Zarephath's son by Elijah (1 Kings 17) has a number of connections with the healing of Eutychus, and these are surely important. Also, Elisha's raising of the Shunamite's son (2 Kings 4), as well as Elisha's final miracle in 2 Kings 13:21. (Elisha does twice as many miracles as Elijah!)

In the New Testament, Luke seems to structure events in the ministries of Peter and Paul sort of “in parallel” and they both also both parallel the Lord's ministry. Therefore, we can relate the raising of Eutychus with Peter's raising of Dorcas in Acts Ch. 9, where there is also an “upper chamber” connection. The raising of Jairus' daughter in our Lord's ministry also corresponds.

10) Troas and Troy!!

A final and controversial thought! Troas is very close, both in terms of its name, and geographically, to the ruins of Troy—the famous city of Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey. The ruins are actually just a few miles away. from Troas It is possible that Luke himself was from Troas, (based on the “we” passages in Acts) and if so he would have known all about this connection.

This got me wondering whether there might be a connection between Eutychus and events from the stories from classical Greek literature. I remembered from many years ago of a book, which I never got round to reading, called *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark* by Dennis R. McDonald. Anyway, I was delighted to find that this author had subsequently written about Eutychus and the many connections between Eutychus and a young man called Elpinor who falls to his death from an upper floor and is subsequently helped in his burial by Odysseus. (Once again, we see the superiority and power of Christianity over the stories of classical myths since Paul actually raised Eutychus). Elpinor is mentioned (quite briefly) in Books 10, 11 and 12 of the Odyssey, and at one point he actually describes himself as “unlucky” - although he uses a different Greek word from the one on which Eutychus’ name is based). Dennis McDonald’s article can be downloaded from

www.depts.drew.edu/jhc/mcdonald.html

The existence of Greek legends which may form “types” for biblical truths raises some important questions!! Is it possible that God has providentially allowed some genuine truths, even in an imperfect form, to be preserved in the literature and culture of the various civilisations of the world? On a couple of occasions Paul quotes a secular poet and a secular philosopher to corroborate his message, but recognising that the Odyssey may point to truths about events in Mark or Acts seems a step beyond this however! Nevertheless, the contrast between Elpinor/Odysseus and Eutychus/Paul is instructive, and sort of correlates with the contrast between the Passover in the OT and Eutychus/Paul—both showing the superiority of the Gospel over the Old Covenant and over the best of Greek literature. Whereas Elpinor falls to his death and goes to the underworld, a fate partly ameliorated by subsequently being given an honourable burial by Odysseus, Eutychus does not fall to Hades, and is brought back to life at the hands of Paul. Also, sea journeys form the backdrop to both accounts.

The story of Elpinor would resonate particularly at Troas, since the Od-

yssey describes the journey home of Odysseus (Ulysses) and his companions following the Trojan War. I suggest that, despite all the difficulties, we should consider the possibility that, just as man in his fallen condition still bears the image of God, and just as the creation bears witness to God's character, so it is possible that the "artefacts" of men can act as pointers to God's truth, and the Greek literature of the classical period is universally rated as amongst the highest artistic achievements of Western civilisation. (As a final aside, it seems to me that Plato's "theory of forms" is something like a secular version of biblical typology—but I'm no philosopher!) Anyway, I welcome all help and correction on this difficult topic!!

Appendix

On the next page is another proposed view of Paul's cosmology, based on information in Ephesians. (from www.bcresources.net)

Explanation

First Heaven (Material Cosmos) — Eph 1.10; 3.14-16; 4.9-10

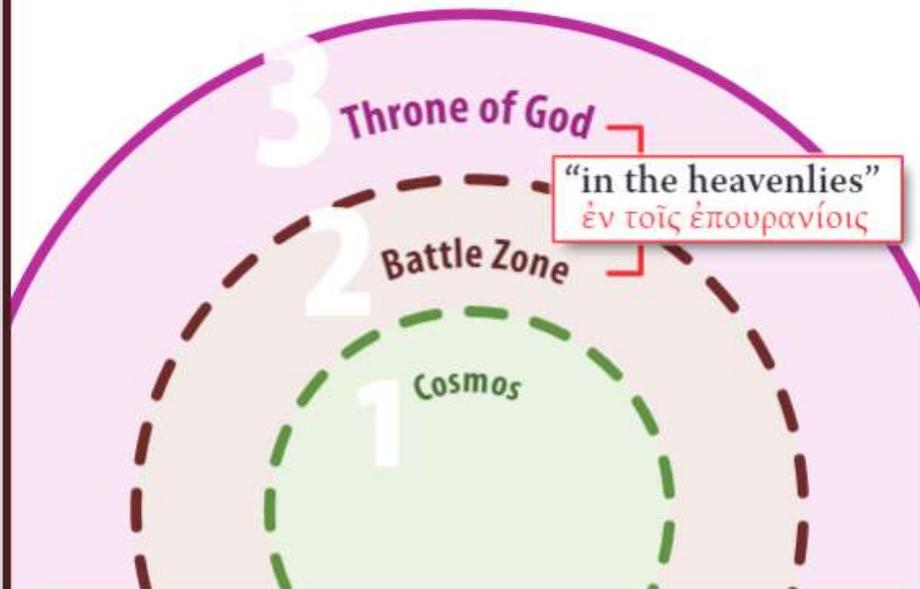
Second Heaven (Battle Zone with Spiritual Forces) — Eph 3.9-10; 6.10-12

3. **Third Heaven** (Throne of God; Paradise) — Eph 1.3; 1.20-21; 2.5-7

Referring to **the Second and Third Heavens**, Paul consistently uses the phrase "**in the heavenlies**" (cf. Greek; with prefixed preposition).

Referring to **the First Heaven**, the material cosmos, Paul consistently uses "**heaven(s)**" (without prefixed preposition) in conjunction with "earth."

Cosmology of Paul in Ephesians



Third Heaven (Throne of God; Paradise)

- 1.3 "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places (ἐπουράνιος) in Christ"
- 1.20-21 "seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places (ἐπουράνιος)"
- 2.5-7 "seated us with Him in the heavenly places (ἐπουράνιος) in Christ Jesus"

Second Heaven (Spiritual Forces)

- 3.9-10 "to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places (ἐπουράνιος)"
- 6.10-12 "against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (ἐπουράνιος)"

First Heaven (Material Cosmos)

- 1.10 "things in the heavens (οὐρανός) and things on the earth (γῆς)"
- 3.14-16 "every family in heaven (οὐρανός) and on earth (γῆς)"
- 4.9-10 "descended into the lower parts of the earth (γῆς)? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens (οὐρανός)"