COGMA

Church of God Mission Academy

STUDY GUIDE 81

Exposing the Myth of Satan's Fall

STUDY GUIDE 2 OF 5:

The Fall From Heaven

An overview of fulfilled judgement and Christ's present victory.



Equipping and empowering for effective service

2 Timothy 2:2

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE STUDENT

My Study Plan

Preparing a Study Plan before starting this Study Guide will assist you in completing it within a designated timeframe. It also helps in developing the discipline required for studying God's Word effectively.

Proverbs 16:3:

> *Commit thy works unto the LORD, and thy thoughts shall be established.*

My Study Guide Journal

Keep a record as you progress through your Study Guide, including the Personal Responses for each section, for future reference and goal setting.

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Important Points

- COGMA does not claim to be infallible or the authority.
- Infallibility and authority belong only to God and His Word.

COGMA therefore strongly advises that you prayerfully study the content of each Study Guide with the heart of a Berean (**Acts 17:10–12**).

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PREFACE

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The words of Jesus in **Luke 10:18** have often been read as the history of an angel who rebelled against God before mankind existed. Yet Jesus spoke these words when His disciples returned from a mission in which evil spirits had been subject to them through His name. The setting directs our attention to the authority of Jesus Christ and the overthrow of the enemy's power.

Jesus said in **Luke 10:18**:

> *"And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."*

This Study Guide examines the fall Jesus described, the comparison with lightning and the meaning of heaven in the surrounding Scriptures. It will distinguish the visible heavens, God's eternal dwelling and the spiritual realm in which people receive revelation and encounter spiritual opposition. These distinctions help us understand why heavenly language does not always describe physical movement through the sky.

The central truth is practical as well as doctrinal. When a person hears the Gospel, believes and is born again, Jesus Christ brings deliverance from the dominion of darkness. The enemy no longer holds the position of master, because the believer possesses the life of Christ within.

We will also consider judgement, humility, spiritual discernment, time and eternity. Our purpose is not to replace one religious story with another, but to examine the words of Scripture in their setting and receive the truth they establish. Victory belongs to Jesus Christ, and His indwelling life is the believer's present strength.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must Jesus' words about Satan falling be read with the seventy disciples' report?

Personal Reflection

What fear about the enemy has taken attention away from Jesus Christ and His present authority?

Action Step

Think of a fear about Satan that has influenced your decisions. How will you respond differently by trusting the present authority and indwelling life of Jesus Christ?

INTRODUCTION: BEWARE OF FALSE PROPHETS

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People may sincerely desire to honour Jesus Christ while accepting teachings that do not agree with His Word. Sincerity does not remove the need for discernment, and familiarity does not turn an inherited belief into truth. We should show compassion towards people who have been misled while remaining alert to teaching that leads them away from Christ.

Jesus warned that false prophets would not always appear openly hostile. Their influence would often depend upon a religious appearance that concealed their true purpose. He therefore taught His disciples to look beyond the disguise.

Jesus said in **Matthew 7:15**:

> *"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."*

The Nature of the Disguise

The Greek word translated *"ravening"* is HARPAX. It describes what is ravenous or grasping and carries the thought of seizing for oneself; used of a person, it can describe a robber or extortioner. Jesus' comparison exposes the contrast between an appearance of harmlessness and an inward desire to take from others.

A teacher may use spiritual language while seeking money, influence, recognition or control. The outward manner can appear gentle, but the teaching draws trust away from Jesus Christ and towards the teacher. The danger is not the personality alone; it is the falsehood that gains acceptance through that personality.

False prophets mix truth with error. They may repeat familiar Scriptures, speak warmly about faith and appear devoted to religious service, while weakening the authority of God's Word. This mixture makes their teaching harder to recognise than an open denial of Christianity.

The spirit of error works through such deception. Where personal advantage governs ministry, people can become merchandise and spiritual influence can become a means of gain. The resulting confusion harms the fellowship, faith and purity of those who receive the teaching.

Jesus' warning therefore calls for watchfulness rather than fear. His children are to remain prayerful, rooted in His Word and willing to examine what they hear. The life of Christ within the believer must govern both discernment and the manner in which truth is spoken.

Following the Berean Example

A faithful teacher welcomes examination by Scripture. The believers at Berea did not treat the reputation of a preacher as a substitute for the authority of the Word. They received the message willingly and searched the Scriptures to test it.

Luke wrote in **Acts 17:11**:

> *"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."*

The Bereans were neither careless hearers nor people who refused to learn. Their readiness to receive the Word stood alongside their diligence in examining it. Both qualities are necessary: a closed heart resists instruction, while an uncritical heart may accept error.

COGMA likewise directs the student to Scripture rather than claiming an authority above it. God and His Word remain the final authority. Every explanation must be tested by what the Scriptures actually say, the people addressed and the setting in which the words were given.

This examination is not an invitation to despise those who have taught us. A person can be thankful for help received while still recognising that a particular explanation needs correction. Humility allows the Word to correct us without turning the correction into hostility towards others.

The subject of Satan's supposed fall requires this same approach. We must distinguish the familiar religious account from the meaning of the verses commonly used to support it. As we examine the teaching, our confidence must remain in Jesus Christ, not in the age, popularity or reputation of an interpretation.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How can a religious appearance hide teaching that draws trust away from Jesus Christ?

Personal Reflection

How willing are you to receive correction without becoming hostile towards a teacher who has helped you?

Action Step

When a respected teacher makes a doubtful claim, how will you examine it in the Bible without becoming hostile? Describe one change you need in your attitude or response.

THE POISON OF FALSE DOCTRINE: SATAN'S MOST SUBTLE DISGUISE

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False doctrine is a spiritual poison because it corrupts truth while often retaining a religious appearance. Its beginning may be a small suggestion that questions, adds to or distorts what God has said. When that suggestion is accepted, confidence moves away from the Word of God and towards human reasoning or tradition.

Deception and Personal Gain

Peter warned that false teachers would arise among those who professed to serve God. His warning joined destructive teaching with covetousness and the use of carefully fashioned words. The danger was not an innocent difference over a minor detail, but corruption that undermined the authority of the Lord.

Peter wrote in **2 Peter 2:1–3**:

> *"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not."*

The expression *"make merchandise of you"* identifies exploitation. People become a means of securing money, position or influence for the teacher. Religious language conceals an inward motive that agrees with Jesus' warning about ravening wolves.

False teaching also harms people who receive no material advantage from it. A person can become deeply attached to an inherited belief because family, friends or respected leaders

accept it. Admitting error may appear costly, so the familiar explanation is defended instead of examined.

It is our experience at COGMA that some people continue to defend false teaching even when Scripture has exposed the error. Are we willing to receive correction when God's Word challenges our own understanding? Personal reputation, financial gain or a position of influence must never become more important than the truth.

This is why correction requires honesty of heart. Once the Word exposes a belief as false, reputation and convenience cannot become reasons for preserving it. The desire to honour Jesus Christ must be greater than the desire to protect a religious position.

Spiritual captivity develops when people become dependent upon the teacher's authority rather than the truth of Christ. Their confidence is weakened, and the freedom of life in Him is obscured. Sound teaching serves the believer's life in Jesus Christ; it does not make the believer dependent upon human control.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does making merchandise of people show a ministry moving away from Christ's truth?

Personal Reflection

How could protecting your reputation make it difficult to admit that a belief needs correction?

Action Step

Consider a responsibility where recognition or advantage attracts you. What motive needs correcting, and how will you serve without using others for personal gain?

Religious Customs Must Be Tested

The same principle applies to religious customs. A practice does not become a Gospel requirement because people associate it with a biblical event. The event must be distinguished from customs attached to it, and both must be examined according to Scripture.

The modern Easter celebration joins the truth of Christ's resurrection with ancient fertility symbols such as eggs and rabbits. This mixture hides the pure gospel message under the cloak of tradition. It also denies the sign of Jonah that Jesus gave concerning His resurrection—that He would be *"three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."* Yet many continue to celebrate a *"Friday"* crucifixion and *"Sunday morning"* resurrection, which does not match the clear record of Scripture.

Jesus said in **Matthew 12:40**:

> *"For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."*

The sign concerns three days and three nights, not simply the naming of Friday, Saturday and Sunday. A customary timetable cannot replace the words Jesus used. The truth of His resurrection must remain distinct from a chronology accepted without examination.

Christmas likewise arose from pagan celebrations rather than apostolic teaching. It was linked to existing sun festivals such as:

- Dies Natalis Solis Invicti — “The Birthday of the Unconquered Sun”
- Saturnalia — a Roman festival of feasting and gift-giving
- Yule — a northern European festival of winter renewal

When the Roman Empire became outwardly *“Christian,”* these festivals were given Christian names and meanings to make conversion easier for the people. In doing so, tradition replaced revelation, and the worship of Christ was mixed with the customs of the world.

The issue is the authority by which worship is governed. Customs can become so familiar that people defend them more strongly than they examine Scripture. Our devotion belongs to Jesus Christ, and His Word must govern what is taught as Christian faith and practice.

Other Teachings That Require Examination

The belief that Satan was once a holy angel belongs within this wider concern about inherited explanations. It directs attention to a supposed event in God's celestial heaven rather than the enemy's work of deception in human lives. The Scriptures must establish what happened, rather than being arranged around a story already assumed to be true.

Another explanation claims that Jesus went to hell after His death to wrest control from Satan. The words He spoke to the dying man beside Him give a different testimony. His promise was personal and definite.

Jesus said in **Luke 23:43**:

> *“And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”*

Jesus promised paradise, not a further conflict in hell needed to complete His saving work. His death must not be represented as leaving redemption dependent upon another victory that Scripture has not described in those terms. The sufficiency of His completed work remains central.

Claims about spiritual experiences must also be tested. Acts 2 describes real languages that both the speakers and the hearers understood, through which the wonderful works of God were proclaimed. Emotional intensity or an impressive religious display cannot be accepted as proof that an experience agrees with Scripture.

The Holy Spirit is not another divine Person whom a believer must receive after first receiving Jesus Christ. At the new birth, the believer receives Christ Himself as Spirit and is complete in Him. Holiness, love and obedience express that life; an emotional display cannot produce it or complete salvation.

Trinitarian doctrine states that there is one God in three distinct persons. However, the expressions *“God the Father”*, *“God the Son”* and *“God the Holy Spirit”* can be used in a way that leaves listeners with the impression of three Gods. Our concern here is the way God is spoken of and understood, not a claim that the formal definition of the Trinity teaches three Gods. COGMA teaches that Jesus Christ is the one true God, and the Holy Spirit is His own Spirit.

The expectation of a future physical return to establish an earthly thousand-year kingdom likewise conflicts with the present New Covenant reality taught here. Jesus Christ returned at

Pentecost in A.D. 31 as the Holy Spirit. His Kingdom is spiritual, and His children now live under His authority through His indwelling presence.

These examples identify the need for careful examination, not a reason to turn this Study Guide into a complete treatment of every disputed teaching. Our particular subject is **Luke 10:18** and the fall from heaven. The lesson drawn from the examples is that familiarity must never be allowed to replace the authority of Scripture.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must religious customs and impressive experiences be tested by the Bible rather than accepted as Gospel requirements?

Personal Reflection

What does Christ's complete saving work help you consider when an impressive religious experience is presented as necessary?

Action Step

Have you felt that a religious experience or ceremony must add something to your salvation? What belief will you reconsider in the light of being complete in Christ?

THE FALLEN-ANGEL BELIEF

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The belief being examined says that Satan began as a holy angel in heaven, became proud and rebelled against God. According to that account, his expulsion from heaven made him the devil. Some versions add that he led heavenly worship or served as an anointed cherub covering God's throne.

Those additional details are not accepted by every tradition that teaches an angelic fall. The important question is not whether the account is familiar, but whether the Scriptures used to support it establish that history. A collection of similar expressions does not automatically become one continuous account.

Seven Scriptures Commonly Joined Together

Isaiah 14:12 contains the expression *"fallen from heaven"*, while **Ezekiel 28:11–19** describes the splendour and downfall of the king of Tyre. These two prophecies are often combined to supply the supposed identity and former glory of Satan. Their named human subjects, however, must not be displaced by an assumed angelic history.

Luke 10:18 records Jesus speaking of Satan falling as lightning. Second Peter 2:4 refers to angels that sinned, and **Jude 1**:6 speaks of angels who did not keep their first estate. **Genesis 6:2** describes the sons of God taking wives from the daughters of men, while **Revelation 12:9** describes the great dragon being cast out.

These seven Scriptures occur in different settings and serve different purposes. The person addressed, the surrounding teaching and the form of language must be examined in each case. One verse cannot be assigned the meaning of another simply because both mention heaven or a fall.

One Supposed Fall or Different Settings?

Isaiah, Luke and Revelation each contain language associated with falling or being cast down. If these are all treated as literal expulsions of Satan from God's dwelling, the interpretation must explain their relationship. It cannot assume that the historical circumstances and purposes of the different accounts are identical.

If these descriptions all refer to Satan being expelled from God's heaven, how many times did he fall? After his supposed earlier fall, how did he return to heaven in order to fall again? We must answer these questions from the context of Scripture rather than accept an assumed explanation.

The word heaven does not always identify the same realm. Scripture uses it for the visible heavens, God's eternal dwelling and spiritual position or authority. Recognising those uses is necessary before deciding what a fall from heaven means in a particular setting.

The present examination therefore begins with Jesus' words in Luke 10. The detailed teaching about the angels that sinned and the great dragon belongs to the following Study Guides. Here we will consider what Jesus said, why He said it when the seventy returned and how His words reveal present victory through His authority.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why do seven references in different settings need more than similar words to establish one history of Satan?

Personal Reflection

How willing are you to question a familiar explanation when its connection between verses has only been assumed?

Action Step

Choose a claim that links several accounts of Satan's fall. How will you check their different settings before accepting or repeating it, even if you once defended the claim?

LUKE 10:18 — A LITERAL EVENT?

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The wording of **Luke 10:18** deserves attention before an inherited explanation is attached to it. Jesus named Satan and compared his fall with lightning. He did not describe an unnamed holy angel who fell and then became Satan.

Jesus said in **Luke 10:18**:

> *"And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."*

The expression *"as lightning"* introduces a comparison. It communicates the force and suddenness of the fall Jesus described, but it does not supply the traditional account of Satan's former heavenly service. The identity and nature of the event must be understood from the surrounding teaching.

A Figure of Speech: Simile

A simile compares one thing with another, commonly using the words like or as. Scripture uses such comparisons to make spiritual instruction understandable through familiar pictures. The comparison has meaning without requiring a person to become the object used in the illustration.

The Psalmist wrote in **Psalm 1:3**:

> *"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."*

The righteous person is compared with a fruitful tree. The teaching concerns stability, nourishment and fruitfulness, not a human body changing into wood and branches. The natural picture serves the spiritual instruction.

Jesus said in **Matthew 10:16**:

> *"Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."*

The disciples were not natural sheep, and the people opposing them were not natural wolves. Jesus described the conditions His messengers would encounter and the wisdom and innocence required in their conduct. The comparison communicates a real danger through figurative language.

Jesus, by using the figure of speech *"simile"* in **Luke 10:18**, was making a comparison, not describing a literal event. Just as you are not a literal tree bearing fruit, or a literal sheep among wolves, so Satan was not literally falling from God's heaven.

In the same way, the comparison with lightning directs attention to the defeat Jesus was describing. We must read it together with the disciples' report that devils were subject to them through His name. The context, not a picture supplied by tradition, establishes the spiritual meaning of the fall.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does the comparison with lightning communicate a real spiritual victory without describing physical movement from God's dwelling?

Personal Reflection

What has Jesus' comparison with lightning changed in your understanding of Satan's defeat?

Action Step

When a frightening account about Satan troubles you, what will you do instead of allowing fear to rule? Explain how Christ's victory will guide your response.

Recognising Biblical Forms of Language

Scripture contains direct statements, historical accounts and many forms of figurative language. The following overview identifies the forms used in this study and provides

examples for recognition. The labels help us read carefully; they do not replace examination of the actual verses.

Form of language	Meaning	Biblical example
Parables	Short stories that communicate spiritual or moral truth.	The sower and the seed; **Matthew 13:3–9**.
Similes	Comparisons using like or as to explain one thing through another.	The Kingdom compared with a mustard seed; **Matthew 13:31**.
Metaphors	A direct comparison in which one thing is spoken of as another.	Jesus as the bread of life; **John 6:35**.
Literal statements	Words read in their direct, factual sense rather than as symbols.	The creation account and its six days; **Genesis 1:1–31**.
Symbolism	Objects or images used to represent spiritual realities.	The beast with seven heads and ten horns; **Revelation 13:1**.
Dreams	Revelations received during sleep, sometimes expressed through symbols.	Joseph's dream of sun, moon and stars; **Genesis 37:9**.
Visions	Revelations presented to a person, often through significant imagery.	Isaiah's vision of the Lord upon His throne; **Isaiah 6:1**.
Typology	Earlier people, events or objects pointing forward to spiritual fulfilment.	Abraham's offering of Isaac and the sacrifice of Christ; **Genesis 22:1–14**.
Allegory	An extended account whose parts convey connected spiritual meanings.	The vine and branches describing relationship and fruitfulness; **John 15:1–8**.
Hyperbole	Deliberately heightened language that emphasises a serious truth.	The warning about an offending eye; **Matthew 5:29**.
Personification	Human actions or qualities attributed to things that are not human.	Mountains and hills breaking into song; **Isaiah 55:12**.

Form of language	Meaning	Biblical example
Irony	Words whose intended meaning contrasts with their outward expression.	Elijah's challenge to the prophets of Baal; **1 Kings 18:27**.
Metonymy	Naming something closely connected with the actual subject.	Moses named when his writings are read; **Acts 15:21**.
Synecdoche	A part representing the whole, or the whole representing a part.	Daily bread representing necessary food; **Matthew 6:11**.
Apostrophe	Direct address to someone absent, or to something addressed as a person.	The Psalmist addressing his soul; **Psalm 16:2**.
Paradox	An apparent contradiction that expresses a deeper truth.	Losing life in order to find it; **Matthew 16:25**.
Anthropomorphism	Human language used to communicate something about God.	The eyes of the LORD describing His knowledge; **Proverbs 15:3**.

A biblical writer may use more than one form of language in the same account. An historical event can contain a vision, a direct statement can contain a comparison, and a parable can convey several connected spiritual truths. Recognising a form is the beginning of interpretation, not its completion.

The distinctions also prevent an opposite mistake. Figurative language does not mean that the teaching is unreal or that nothing happened. The seventy genuinely returned with a report of authority over evil spirits, and Jesus' words explained the spiritual significance of that victory.

The Comparison Must Remain With the Context

A literal reading of every image can move attention away from the subject being taught. Sheep, wolves, trees and lightning are familiar objects, but the meaning of each comparison comes from the relationship the speaker establishes. We must ask what the illustration is showing rather than turn every detail into physical history.

The statement in **Luke 10:18** belongs to Jesus' response to His disciples. Their testimony concerned the submission of evil spirits through His name, and His following words concerned power over the enemy. The account directs us towards the overthrow of Satan's authority, not the supposed transformation of a holy angel into a devil.

This leaves the spiritual seriousness of the verse intact. Jesus was not describing an imaginary victory or offering a decorative expression without substance. He was making known the defeat of the enemy as His authority was exercised through those He had sent.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does recognising a simile help explain **Luke 10:18** *without making the disciples' victory unreal?*

Personal Reflection

Has reading Jesus' comparison in its setting changed how certain you feel about a familiar explanation? Explain.

Action Step

Think of someone who believes **Luke 10:18** *describes a literal fall from heaven. How could you explain Jesus' comparison and the disciples' report with patience and confidence in His Word?*

SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE IN THE WORD OF GOD

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Jesus used familiar things to communicate spiritual truth. His hearers encountered seeds, trees, sheep, lamps, households and harvests in ordinary life, yet the teaching carried them beyond those natural objects. Understanding required attention to His meaning rather than attachment to the illustration alone.

Salvation Is Offered to Those Who Believe

The call of the Gospel is not restricted to people with academic training or social standing. Salvation is offered through Jesus Christ to those who believe. The invitation is sincere, and the life He gives is not obtained by intellectual achievement.

Jesus said in **John 3:15–16**:

> *"That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."*

The word *"whosoever"* keeps the invitation open to those who will believe. No human teacher owns access to Jesus Christ or possesses the power to create spiritual life in another person. The hearer must receive the Gospel, believe and be born again through God's saving work.

Receiving that life and growing in understanding must nevertheless be distinguished. A person does not understand every spiritual truth at the moment of the new birth. The believer possesses Christ Himself and learns to walk in the light of His Word.

Light and Obedience Belong Together

Spiritual understanding is not detached from our relationship with Jesus Christ. The world cannot receive the Spirit of truth while remaining in its rejection of Him. Jesus explained the coming indwelling relationship to His disciples before His departure.

Jesus said in **John 14:17**:

> *"Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."*

Jesus spoke of the Spirit who was then with them and would be in them. That promise was fulfilled at Pentecost, when He came as the Holy Spirit to dwell within His children. It does not describe a second saving experience to be sought by someone already born again.

John also connects knowing Christ with keeping His Word. A claim of spiritual knowledge cannot be separated from the life being expressed. The truth received is to govern the believer rather than remain a collection of religious statements.

John wrote in **1 John 2:3–6**:

> *"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked."*

Obedience does not purchase salvation or supply what is missing from Christ's completed work. It expresses the life of the One who already dwells within the believer. The believer does not copy Jesus from the outside; His life within governs the walk.

This is why refusal of known truth obstructs understanding. A person cannot deliberately reject Christ's instruction while treating spiritual insight as a possession independent of Him. The heart must remain humble and willing to receive what His Word reveals.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must the gift of Christ's life be distinguished from growing in understanding and obedience?

Personal Reflection

Where does the connection between knowing Christ and keeping His Word challenge your own response to known truth?

Action Step

Is there a command of Jesus Christ you understand but have been reluctant to follow? What will change in your conduct as you depend on His indwelling life?

The Call to Study

The gift of spiritual life does not remove the responsibility to study. Diligence is necessary because Scripture must be read with attention to its words, context and harmony. We are not called to accept whatever interpretation first appears convincing.

Paul wrote in **2 Timothy 2:15**:

> *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."*

The workman is to handle the Word of truth rightly. This requires more than collecting familiar expressions or repeating an explanation heard from another person. The student must examine what the Scriptures say and how their teaching belongs together.

Solomon wrote in **Proverbs 2:3–5**:

> *"Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God."*

Solomon describes a sincere desire for knowledge and a willingness to search. The comparison with silver and hidden treasure shows the value attached to understanding. People who value God's Word give it attention rather than expecting truth to be absorbed without thought.

Study should therefore be prayerful as well as careful. We read, compare and examine, while depending upon the Spirit of Christ to give understanding. Human effort does not replace divine revelation, but spiritual language must not become an excuse for neglecting the Scriptures.

The Danger of Spiritual Laziness

The demands of ordinary life can occupy our time until study is continually postponed. Work and family responsibilities are real, but they do not remove our need to know God's Word. Neglect leaves the mind dependent upon whatever religious explanations are most readily available.

Is that an excuse? No. We must give God's Word its proper place, even when the demands of life make study difficult.

Joshua charged Israel in **Joshua 22:5**:

> *"But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul."*

Joshua's words belonged to Israel under the Law of Moses. They express the seriousness of wholehearted devotion to God, not a reason to restore Old Covenant ceremonies as Gospel requirements. Love for God must not be confined to a profession that leaves the heart indifferent to His instruction.

Paul wrote in **Romans 12:11**:

> *"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;"*

Spiritual diligence is part of faithful service. It is not a restless attempt to earn God's acceptance, but the willing attention of children who belong to Him. Christ's life within moves us to value His truth and serve in the responsibilities He has entrusted to us.

Jesus said in **Mark 12:30**:

> *"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment."*

The command embraces heart, soul, mind and strength. Our attention and understanding are not excluded from loving God. We honour Him by receiving His Word seriously and allowing it to correct our thinking and conduct.

The Promise of Understanding

Jesus encouraged His hearers to ask, seek and knock. His words do not commend passive dependence upon another person's conclusions. They encourage the sincere approach of someone who desires to receive from God.

Jesus said in **Luke 11:9–10**:

> *"And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."*

What is opened to us? Understanding. Jesus calls us to seek God sincerely instead of depending entirely upon someone else's explanations.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 1:16–18**:

> *"Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,"*

Paul prayed for believers to receive wisdom, revelation and enlightened understanding in the knowledge of God. He was not asking that they receive another divine Person or another saving work. He desired a clearer understanding of the life and calling already theirs in Jesus Christ.

The proper response to symbolic language is therefore neither careless literalism nor uncontrolled imagination. We seek understanding through the Word, remain obedient to the light received and depend upon Christ within. That approach prepares us to return to Luke 10 and follow the conversation in which Jesus spoke.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do careful study, prayer and obedience work together as a believer seeks understanding?

Personal Reflection

What does the connection between receiving truth and obeying it lead you to consider about a response you have postponed?

Action Step

Identify one distraction that has repeatedly kept you from studying God's Word. What practical change will you make to give prayerful Bible study its proper place?

THE CONTEXT OF LUKE 10:18

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The setting of **Luke 10:18** is supplied by the chapter itself. Jesus appointed seventy disciples and sent them ahead of Him into the places He intended to visit. Their later report must be read as the return from that mission, not as the beginning of an unrelated account of events before mankind existed.

Luke wrote in **Luke 10:1**:

> *"After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come."*

The disciples went under Jesus' authority. They were sent to proclaim the nearness of the Kingdom and minister in His name. Their authority did not arise from their natural ability, personal status or independent spiritual power.

The Seventy Returned With Joy

The report of the seventy supplies the immediate reason for Jesus' answer. They were astonished that evil spirits had been subject to them. Their own words identified the One whose authority had brought the victory.

Luke wrote in **Luke 10:17**:

> *"And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name."*

The expression *"through thy name"* is central. The disciples did not present the victory as something they had achieved apart from Jesus Christ. Their joy arose from what had happened as they ministered under His authority.

Jesus answered in **Luke 10:18**:

> *"And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."*

Jesus was describing the defeat of Satan in connection with the work they reported. The enemy's hold was being broken as His messengers carried the truth and exercised His authority. The fall was a loss of power and dominion, not the disclosure of a former holy angel's name and history.

These events occurred during Jesus' earthly ministry. They must not be confused with the later fulfilment at Pentecost of His promise to dwell within His children. The authority displayed in that mission points to the victory through Jesus Christ that the Gospel brings into the lives of those who are born again.

Capernaum: Exaltation and Humiliation

A few verses earlier, Jesus used the language of heaven when speaking about Capernaum. The named subject was an earthly city. Its exaltation did not mean that its buildings and inhabitants had been physically transported into God's dwelling.

Jesus said in **Luke 10:15**:

> *"And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell."*

Was Capernaum literally lifted into God's heaven and then physically thrust down? No. Jesus was speaking about an earthly city, using heavenly language to expose its exaltation and approaching humiliation.

Capernaum had received great privilege through the presence and ministry of Jesus Christ. Yet privilege had not produced the required response to His words. Jesus' warning joined exaltation with accountability and the judgement that followed rejection.

The language of heaven and hell expresses the contrast between an exalted position and a terrible downfall. It does not change Capernaum from an earthly city into a celestial being. The subject supplied by the conversation governs the meaning of the image.

This helps us read Jesus' words concerning Satan in the same chapter. A reference to heaven does not automatically identify God's eternal dwelling as the scene of a physical expulsion. The surrounding teaching concerns spiritual authority, response to truth and the overthrow of the enemy.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do the seventy disciples' report and the warning to Capernaum help explain the heavenly language in Luke 10?

Personal Reflection

How should the words 'through thy name' change the way you regard success in Christian service?

Action Step

Remember a success in serving others. Did you seek praise for yourself? How will you acknowledge that the authority and power belong to Jesus Christ?

Nehemiah: Scattering and Restoration

The prayer recorded by Nehemiah provides another example of heavenly language applied to people whose circumstances belonged to the earth. It recalls God's promise concerning those scattered because of disobedience. The promise calls them to return to Him.

Nehemiah recorded in **Nehemiah 1:9**:

> *"But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there."*

The Israelites were not living in God's celestial heaven or returning from a journey through the sky. They had been scattered among earthly peoples, and their scattering expressed judgement upon disobedience. Their former privilege did not protect them when they turned from God's Word.

The promise also revealed mercy. Those who returned to God were not beyond His power to gather them, however far they had been scattered. The spiritual lesson concerns the loss of favour through disobedience and restoration through returning to Him.

This comparison does not make Nehemiah's circumstances identical with the seventy disciples' mission. It helps establish that language involving heaven can concern people, their standing and God's dealings with them on earth. Each example must remain within its own setting while contributing to our understanding of biblical language.

Hearing Christ Through His Messengers

Jesus also explained the seriousness of receiving those He had sent. The hearer's response was not simply an opinion about the messenger. Receiving or rejecting the Word carried a relationship to the One whose message it was.

Jesus said in **Luke 10:16**:

> *"He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me."*

The authority belongs to Jesus Christ. A messenger does not become the source of truth or take His place, but faithfully carries His Word. The person who receives that truth is confronted with Christ Himself, not simply with a human speaker.

This explains why the defeat of the enemy is connected with the proclamation of the Gospel. His deception is exposed, his rule is challenged and the hearer is called to receive Jesus Christ. In the new birth, the person is delivered from darkness and brought under Christ's lordship.

When we receive Jesus Christ through the Gospel, the enemy is cast down from the throne room of our hearts. He no longer occupies the exalted place of master, for Christ Himself dwells within everyone who is born again. Does our daily conduct express His rightful rule over our lives?

After His resurrection, Jesus again placed belief and unbelief in direct contrast. His words show the seriousness of the response people make to the Gospel. The call is to receive His saving life rather than remain in rejection.

Jesus said in **Mark 16:16**:

> *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."*

The saving baptism is God's spiritual work of bringing the believer into Christ. An outward ceremony cannot produce the new birth or give the life of Jesus Christ. Those who believe and are born again receive the Person; those who refuse Him remain outside that saving life.

The setting of Luke 10 therefore remains consistent. Jesus sent His messengers, they ministered through His name, the enemy's power was overcome and people were confronted with His authority. His words about Satan falling belong to that victory and prepare us to consider the responsibility of acknowledging Him as Lord.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How does receiving Christ through the Gospel differ from depending upon an outward ceremony or a human messenger?

Personal Reflection

What does Christ's rightful authority mean for a choice in which you want your own way?

Action Step

Have you relied on a ceremony, minister or religious reputation more than on receiving Jesus Christ? What understanding or trust needs to change?

EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW

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The authority of Jesus Christ is not dependent upon human recognition. People may receive His Word or reject it, but their response does not determine whether He is Lord. It reveals their relationship to the One whose authority is already supreme.

The Gospel therefore brings judgement into our present lives. Truth exposes our condition, calls us to repentance and makes known the life offered in Jesus Christ. We are accountable for our response while we can still hear and answer that call.

Paul wrote in **Philippians 2:10–11**:

> *"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."*

These words declare the universal acknowledgement of Jesus Christ as Lord. They do not teach that every person will eventually receive salvation. Acknowledging His authority and receiving His saving life must not be confused.

Judgement Now and the Settled Outcome

During this physical life, people can hear the Gospel, believe and be born again. God's judgement is not absent until after death. His Word already reveals the difference between faith and unbelief, truth and deception, life in Christ and bondage to sin.

Physical death brings the earthly opportunity to its end. The person who dies in Christ remains His and is with Him beyond this physical life. Those who die in rejection of Christ enter the torment of hell; this is not another opportunity to receive salvation.

The distinction between present judgement and the final sentence is therefore important. Judgement confronts us while we can still respond, whereas the final sentence confirms the condition in which we leave this life. The end of earthly opportunity must not be presented as the beginning of another period in which salvation can be obtained.

For the redeemed, acknowledgement of Christ's lordship is joyful. They honour the One whose saving life they already possess. For those who reject Him, the acknowledgement of His authority after death does not undo their refusal or turn the consequences of unbelief into salvation.

Humbling Ourselves While We Can Respond

God calls us to bow willingly before Him now. Humility admits our need and receives His Word without defending the pride that resists correction. It does not consist simply of lowering our outward manner while preserving our own will as the final authority.

James wrote in **James 4:10**:

> *"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up."*

The promise directs our confidence to God. We do not lift ourselves into spiritual life by our own strength, nor do we gain standing through religious achievement. He gives grace to those who receive Him and brings the believer into the life found in Jesus Christ.

This humility also governs the believer's continuing walk. Correction is not an injury to our dignity when it brings us into clearer agreement with the Word. Christ's life within enables us to receive truth, confess wrong and serve without defending self-exaltation.

Refusing the Gospel does not preserve independence. A person who will not bow to Christ remains under the dominion from which Christ alone delivers. The seriousness of that choice should lead us to respond now, not postpone faith until a more convenient time.

Reigning in Life Through Jesus Christ

The Gospel offers more than the ending of condemnation. Jesus Christ brings those who receive Him into a life no longer governed by the mastery of sin. The authority of darkness is broken through the saving work of God.

Paul wrote in **Romans 5:17**:

> *"For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."*

Notice that the righteousness is a gift, and that those who receive grace *"shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."* The power does not arise from human self-confidence. The believer's liberty and strength are found in the life of the One received.

Reigning in life does not mean ruling over other people or obtaining an earthly position of importance. It concerns deliverance from the mastery of sin and the faithful expression of Christ's life within. His righteousness, love and truth now govern the believer.

These truths connect directly with Jesus' description of Satan's fall. The enemy loses his position as master when a person is brought into Jesus Christ. The proper response is therefore willing faith and humility, acknowledging the Lord now and living through the life He gives.

Three Questions for Personal Examination

These truths call each person to examine their response to Jesus Christ. Three questions bring their meaning into our present lives.

Are we willing to humble ourselves before God while we can still respond? Will we receive Jesus Christ and allow Him to cast the enemy out of his place of rule in our hearts, so that we may reign in life through Him? Or will we reject His grace and be compelled to acknowledge His Lordship after death, when the opportunity for salvation has passed?

The opportunity to receive salvation is now, during this physical life. Those who are born again already possess Christ and reign in life through Him; their obedience expresses that life rather than completing salvation.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does every knee bowing to Christ not mean that everyone will eventually be saved?

Personal Reflection

What does the end of earthly opportunity mean for your willingness to receive correction now?

Action Step

Are you postponing a response to Jesus Christ or to a correction from His Word? What will you do now while you have the opportunity to respond?

THE MEANING OF SATAN'S FALL

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Jesus' declaration of Satan's fall bears witness to His authority over the enemy. The seventy had ministered through His name, and evil spirits had been subject to them. The spiritual significance of that victory must remain connected with what they had actually reported.

The account includes genuine deliverance from evil spirits. It should not be reduced to a claim that every reference to a devil means only an incorrect thought. At the same time, the meaning extends to the enemy's loss of dominion when people receive the truth of Jesus Christ.

Satan is a spirit of opposition and deception, working through the carnal mind, not a personal being who once dwelt in God's celestial heaven before being expelled. This does not deny the reality of evil spirits, which were subject to the seventy through Jesus' name. It directs attention to the way the enemy's rule is broken when a person is born again through Jesus Christ.

From Servants of Sin to Life in Christ

The wider issue is spiritual mastery. Without Christ, people can be governed by sin while considering themselves free. Jesus exposed that bondage by connecting the practice of sin with servitude.

Jesus said in **John 8:34**:

> *"Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin."*

A person does not escape this bondage simply by adopting religious language. The sinner needs the saving life of Jesus Christ. Through the new birth, the believer receives that life and is delivered from the dominion of darkness.

The defeat of the enemy is therefore more than an outward change of circumstances. Jesus Christ takes His rightful place as Lord within the believer. What formerly ruled the life is no longer its rightful master.

This does not mean that temptation disappears. It means that temptation no longer comes to a person who has no deliverance from its power. The believer belongs to Christ and can resist through the strength of His indwelling life.

Submit to God and Resist the Devil

The call to resistance begins with submission. Spiritual authority is not a personal power that we exercise independently of Jesus Christ. We stand in His truth and refuse the deception that would draw us away from Him.

James wrote in **James 4:7**:

> *"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."*

The order is clear: submit to God, then resist the devil. A loud command, religious display or confidence in ourselves cannot replace a heart yielded to Christ. The believer resists because the Lord's Word and life govern the response.

Christ gives strength to overcome temptation, refuse the desires that would rule the flesh and stand against the enemy's lies. Self-control and purity are not produced by pretending temptation has no attraction. They are expressed as the believer walks according to the life already received in Him.

The instruction to resist also prevents carelessness. Victory is not permission to neglect truth, entertain false teaching or surrender the mind to whatever influence appears. Jesus Christ has given life, and that life is to be expressed in a faithful walk.

The Continuing Application

The meaning of **Luke 10:18** is not confined to an interesting event in the disciples' experience. The authority of Jesus Christ remains the source of deliverance throughout the Gospel Day. Every person who hears the Gospel, believes and is born again is brought out of darkness into His life.

Each faithful refusal of temptation bears witness to the power of the Lord who dwells within. The believer does not create salvation again with every act of obedience. Obedience is the fruit of Christ's life, not the price of possessing Him.

This is the continuing meaning of the enemy being cast down from an exalted place in human lives. His lies are no longer the governing truth, his rule is broken and Jesus Christ is acknowledged as Lord. We can now examine more closely the heavenly language through which Scripture describes this spiritual relationship.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does resistance to the devil begin with submission to God rather than confidence in personal spiritual power?

Personal Reflection

How should deliverance from sin's mastery change your response to a recurring temptation?

Action Step

Think of a temptation you face repeatedly. What will submission to God require of you before you resist that temptation in the strength of Christ?

THE MEANING OF "HEAVEN" IN THE BIBLE

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The meaning of heaven must be established from the setting in which the word is used. Scripture speaks of the natural heavens, the eternal dwelling of God and spiritual position or authority. Treating every occurrence as the same physical location produces confusion before the explanation has begun.

For clarity, we distinguish the firmamental heaven, the celestial heaven and the ecclesiastical or spiritual heaven. These expressions help identify the different uses under consideration. They are not three physical storeys that can be reached by travelling farther above the earth.

The Firmamental Heaven

The firmamental heaven is the visible creation above us, including the sky and the heavens in which the sun, moon and stars appear. Genesis introduces this natural creation directly. Its language establishes the created realm in which earthly life unfolds.

Moses wrote in **Genesis 1:1**:

> *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."*

Moses wrote in **Genesis 1:6–8**:

> *"And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day."*

This use of heaven concerns the created expanse. It must not be confused with every later use of heavenly language, especially where a writer is describing spiritual life or authority. Genesis itself goes on to connect the lights in the firmament with the measurement of earthly time.

Moses continued in **Genesis 1:14–18**:

> *"And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good."*

The sun, moon and stars belong to this natural creation. They mark days, seasons and years and give light upon the earth. These are physical functions, and the account should be understood according to the subject it is describing.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must the visible heavens in Genesis be distinguished from spiritual position or authority?

Personal Reflection

When you see God's creation, are you moved more by wonder or by taking it for granted? Explain.

Action Step

When looking at the heavens God created, what will you do to express gratitude and humility rather than treating His works as ordinary or unimportant?

The Celestial Heaven

The celestial heaven refers to God's eternal dwelling. This is not simply a distant part of the visible universe that could contain or confine Him. Solomon acknowledged that even the heavens could not contain the God to whom he prayed.

Solomon said in **1 Kings 8:27**:

> *"But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded?"*

Solomon had built a house associated with the worship of God, but he did not suppose that the building enclosed the divine presence. God was greater than the Temple and greater than the natural heavens. His majesty was not limited by the structure devoted to His worship.

Solomon continued in **1 Kings 8:30**:

> *"And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place: and when thou hearest, forgive."*

The prayer joins God's heavenly dwelling with His attention to people on earth. He hears, forgives and deals with those who seek Him. Heavenly majesty does not mean that God is unable to reach the heart or is indifferent to earthly life.

Solomon wrote in **Ecclesiastes 5:2**:

> *"Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."*

This instruction teaches reverence. We must not speak before God as though our words place Him under obligation or our knowledge makes us equal with Him. His authority is supreme, and our proper response is humility.

God's eternal dwelling must nevertheless be understood together with His presence in His children. The one God does not become a different divine Person when He dwells within believers. Jesus Christ personally dwells within those who are born again as Spirit.

Zion as God's Dwelling Place

Scripture also identifies Zion as God's chosen habitation. Under the Old Covenant, Zion and Jerusalem were connected with the worship of God among Israel. These earthly names carried a significance that reached beyond geographical location.

The Psalmist wrote in **Psalm 132:13–14**:

> *"For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it."*

The words emphasise God's choice and His desire to dwell. Zion was not important simply because of the strength of its walls or the location of its buildings. Its significance arose from God's relationship with His covenant people.

The Psalmist wrote in **Psalm 76:1–2**:

> *"In Judah is God known: his name is great in Israel. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion."*

Salem is an ancient name for Jerusalem and is used here in connection with Zion and God's dwelling among Israel. The names direct attention to the place associated with His habitation and worship. They do not require us to imagine a second God in Jerusalem while another God remains in heaven.

In the New Covenant, the spiritual reality is revealed through the people in whom Jesus Christ dwells. His habitation is not confined to a natural city or religious building. Zion is the Church of God, the born-again family whose life is in Christ.

The Heavenly Jerusalem Is Present Spiritual Fellowship

The writer of Hebrews describes believers as having already come to Mount Sion and the heavenly Jerusalem. The statement is addressed to people living upon the earth. It therefore establishes a present spiritual relationship rather than a future journey into an architectural city.

The writer of Hebrews wrote in **Hebrews 12:22–23**:

> *"But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect,"*

Notice the words *"ye are come"*. The writer joins Mount Sion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem and the Church of the firstborn. These descriptions belong to the spiritual assembly centred in God, not to separate saving communities.

The Church is composed of those who are born again. A person does not enter this spiritual city through natural ancestry, institutional membership or residence in Jerusalem. The life of Jesus Christ establishes the believer's place within His one body.

John wrote in **Revelation 14:1**:

> *"And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads."*

The vision presents the Lamb with His redeemed upon Mount Sion. The city and mountain language must remain connected with the people who belong to Him. The picture directs attention to redemption, divine ownership and God's abiding presence.

God's eternal majesty and His dwelling in His Church are not opposing truths. The one Spirit who cannot be contained by the heavens personally dwells within His children. We should not reduce His presence to the limitations of physical buildings or human geography.

The Third Heaven

Paul also used heavenly language when describing visions and revelations. His subject was not an ordinary journey through the atmosphere. He spoke of an experience whose manner he could not fully explain.

Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 12:1–2**:

> *"It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above 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 to the third heaven."*

Paul begins with *"visions and revelations of the Lord."* He also acknowledges the limits of what he can say about the experience, while declaring that God knows. We should preserve that distinction rather than invent physical details he did not supply.

The third heaven is understood here as the spiritual realm of revelation and fellowship with God. It is not another visible layer of the sky. This understanding connects with Paul's teaching about believers who are already seated in heavenly places in Jesus Christ.

Heavenly Places in Christ

Paul describes the spiritual position of believers in language of raising and heavenly seating. His words address what God has already accomplished for those who belong to Jesus Christ. Their bodies remained upon the earth while their life and standing were found in Him.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 2:6**:

> *"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus:"*

The English word *"places"* supplies a noun to express the thought of the heavenlies. The statement concerns the believer's spiritual position *"in Christ Jesus"*, not a physical seat somewhere above the clouds. The Person determines the meaning of the position.

This heavenly life is not produced by joining a congregation or accepting a human title. It belongs to those whom God has made alive in Christ. Through the new birth, they receive His Spirit and become part of His body.

A Realm of Revelation and Conflict

Paul uses related heavenly language when describing spiritual conflict. The enemy's opposition cannot be understood simply as a struggle against other human beings. The believer confronts spiritual darkness and deception through the truth and authority of Christ.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 6:12**:

> *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."*

The conflict is real, but its nature is spiritual. People may act as instruments of deception, yet hostility towards human beings does not defeat the spirit of error. Truth must be received, falsehood refused and the believer's life governed by Jesus Christ.

This is the ecclesiastical heaven, the spiritual realm associated with the Church, revelation and the conflict between truth and error. Calling the conflict spiritual does not place Satan within God's eternal dwelling or make him part of Christ's body. It identifies the realm in which the truth is made known and opposed.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 3:10**:

> *"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,"*

The Church makes known the manifold wisdom of God because her life and teaching belong to Jesus Christ. Human organisation cannot produce that spiritual wisdom. The born-again body bears witness through the Word and through the life of Christ expressed in its members.

This realm is active during the Gospel Day. Believers receive understanding, encounter opposition and stand in Christ while they continue their earthly lives. Heavenly language can therefore describe present spiritual activity without referring to movement into the natural sky.

The Exalted Place in a Person's Life

The same teaching can be brought into the personal circumstances of the hearer. Each person lives under a governing influence, and the question of spiritual mastery concerns the heart. The expression *"personal heaven"* describes that exalted place of rule, not a private portion of God's celestial dwelling.

When a person remains in unbelief, the enemy's deception has authority in that life. When the person hears the Gospel, believes and is born again, Jesus Christ brings deliverance. Satan loses the position of master, and Christ reigns within the believer.

Paul wrote in **Colossians 1:13–14**:

> *"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."*

The movement is from *"the power of darkness"* into the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. It is a spiritual deliverance accomplished by God, not a journey from one geographical place to another. Redemption and forgiveness are found in the Person who gives life.

This personal application does not mean that an unbeliever belongs to the Church simply because spiritual influences operate in that person's life. The Church consists of those who are born again. The wider conflict reaches people outside Christ and brings them to the call of the Gospel.

The Prince of This World Cast Out

Jesus also described the overthrow of the ruler of this world in connection with His own saving work. His words place the defeat of the enemy beside the drawing of people unto Himself. The centre of the declaration is Christ's authority and victory.

Jesus said in **John 12:31–32**:

> *"Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."*

The prince of this world is not equal with Jesus Christ. His rule is the dominion of darkness from which Christ delivers those who receive Him. He does not possess an authority that can prevent the saving work of the Lord.

Paul wrote in **Ephesians 2:2**:

> *"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:"*

Paul describes the spirit working in the children of disobedience. This helps us understand the enemy's rule in human lives without turning him into a fallen celestial servant of God. His influence is displaced as people receive the Gospel and are brought into Christ.

The heavenly language now comes together. Natural heaven concerns the created sky; celestial heaven concerns God's eternal dwelling; and ecclesiastical heaven concerns spiritual life, revelation and conflict. In Luke 10, Satan's fall declares the overthrow of his authority through Jesus Christ, not a physical journey from God's eternal home.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How can believers share heavenly life in Christ while still living on earth and facing spiritual opposition?

Personal Reflection

How should belonging to Christ's spiritual body change your treatment of another believer?

Action Step

Identify a believer you have overlooked or treated as less important. How will you show that person practical care as one who shares the life of Christ?

POWER OVER THE ENEMY

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When Satan is cast out of the exalted place in our lives and Christ is lifted up, the believer receives power to live in victory. Jesus did not finish with the statement that He had seen Satan fall. He continued by describing the authority given to His disciples over the enemy. His words must be read together so that the promise explains the victory they had reported.

Jesus said in **Luke 10:19**:

> *"Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you."*

This is not an instruction to demonstrate faith by treading on natural snakes or scorpions. Neither is it a promise that the believer will never face hardship or physical suffering. The words declare spiritual authority through Jesus Christ over the powers that oppose His truth.

Serpents and Scorpions in Scripture

The imagery of scorpions already appears in the teaching given through Ezekiel. God sent him to people who were rebellious and resistant to the Word. The comparison explained the character of the opposition he would encounter.

Ezekiel recorded in **Ezekiel 2:3–6**:

> *"And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day. For they are impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them. And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briers and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house."*

The named subjects are the children of Israel, described as a rebellious house. God tells Ezekiel not to fear their words or be dismayed at their looks. The reference to scorpions therefore concerns the harmful opposition of people who resist His message.

A scorpion's sting supplies a vivid picture of the injury rebellious words and attitudes can cause. The messenger is not told to overcome that resistance by sharing its spirit. He is to remain faithful to the Word God has given him.

The Psalms also use the serpent's poison to describe wickedness. The comparison exposes falsehood and the refusal to hear truth. The words are directed towards the conduct and character of the wicked.

The Psalmist wrote in **Psalm 58:3–4**:

> *"The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear."*

The reference to speaking lies identifies wilful wickedness, not the conscious speech of a newborn child. The description is poetic and must not be used to cancel the innocence of children. Its immediate point here is the comparison between poisonous deception and a serpent that will not hear.

False teaching can work in the same way. It harms through words that sound convincing while resisting the correction of Scripture. When people close themselves to truth, their confidence in error can become a source of injury to others.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do Ezekiel's scorpions and the Psalmist's serpent imagery help explain harmful opposition to truth?

Personal Reflection

Have you ever trusted a confident religious claim before checking it? Explain what the warning about deceptive words helps you understand.

Action Step

Have you repeated a confident but unchecked religious claim? What will you verify in the Bible, and how will you correct your words if necessary?

Jesus Applied the Image to Religious Leaders

Jesus also addressed religious leaders with the language of serpents and vipers. His warning concerned hypocrisy and opposition to God's truth. He did not identify their natural bodies as reptiles.

Jesus said in **Matthew 23:33**:

> *"Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"*

The image exposes the danger concealed beneath religious position. Outward authority can coexist with inward resistance to Christ, and a respected position does not remove accountability. His words call the hearer to recognise the spiritual condition rather than be impressed by the religious appearance.

This helps explain the serpents and scorpions of **Luke 10:19**. They represent rebellious and deceptive influences that oppose God's Word and work through human lives. Christ's authority is greater than those influences, and His children are not left without strength to resist them.

Those who yield their personal heaven to such spirits become possessed, meaning ruled and influenced by the enemy. This does not mean that everyone influenced by deception is literally possessed by an evil spirit; Scripture also records actual cases of demonic possession and deliverance. The warning calls us to examine what we allow to govern our thoughts and conduct, and to stand in the truth and life of Jesus Christ.

The believer must nevertheless keep the nature of the victory clear. Spiritual authority does not authorise contempt, intimidation or violence against another person. It is exercised through submission to Christ, faithfulness to His Word and refusal of the enemy's deception.

Treading Down the Works of Darkness

Malachi connects the coming light of righteousness with deliverance and victory. The picture is one of life, healing and the overthrow of wickedness. Its spiritual meaning agrees with the authority Jesus gives through His name.

Malachi wrote in **Malachi 4:2–3**:

> *"But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts."*

The Sun of righteousness brings light and healing. Those who receive that light are not called to remain under the dominion of the darkness from which they have been delivered. The image of treading down the wicked declares the superiority of God's truth over the power that opposed it.

The believer's victory is therefore not secured by imitating the enemy's methods. Deception is overcome through truth, and the mastery of sin is broken through the life of Christ. His children stand in the liberty of belonging to Him rather than seek power over people for themselves.

This authority reaches into daily conduct. A believer may resist a dishonest suggestion, refuse a teaching that contradicts Scripture or remain faithful when pressure encourages compromise. Such obedience bears witness to the life and authority of Jesus Christ already within.

The promise of **Luke 10:19** is consequently an encouragement to faithfulness. The enemy may oppose, accuse and deceive, but he is not the believer's rightful master. Christ's life within gives strength to stand in truth and overcome the influences that would lead away from Him.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does Christ's authority over serpents and scorpions give strength for faithfulness rather than power to intimidate people?

Personal Reflection

What does Christ's victory mean for your attitude towards someone who opposes the truth?

Action Step

Think of a person who disagrees strongly with your beliefs. What will you change so that your words remain truthful without being harsh, threatening or proud?

THE TRUE MEANING OF LUKE 10:17–19

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The three verses can now be read as one connected account. The disciples reported what had happened through Jesus' name; He described Satan's fall; and He declared His authority over the power of the enemy. Nothing in the conversation requires the history of an angel becoming Satan before the creation of mankind.

Luke recorded in **Luke 10:17–19**:

> *"And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name. And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you."*

The report, the answer and the promise belong together. Jesus' words reveal the spiritual victory taking place under His authority. The enemy is cast down as his hold upon human lives is broken through the power of Christ.

The same authority is present in the Gospel Day. Those who are born again are delivered from the power of darkness and brought into the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. They possess His life within and are called to walk faithfully in the truth they have received.

Why Misunderstanding Continues

An inherited interpretation can remain familiar even after its weaknesses are exposed. People may continue to repeat it because they have not examined the verses personally, because they trust a religious tradition or because correction appears costly. These influences must be recognised without assuming that every mistaken person has the same motive.

Spiritual laziness leaves a believer dependent upon someone else's conclusions. The call to study in **2 Timothy 2:15** remains necessary, even when a teacher is trusted and respected. No human messenger replaces the believer's responsibility to receive the Word thoughtfully and prayerfully.

Do we expect the minister to prepare every portion of spiritual food and spoon-feed us every answer? Such dependence leaves a student unprepared to recognise error. Faithful teachers can help us, but each of us must search the Scriptures and personally receive the truth of Jesus Christ.

Tradition can also become an authority that resists Scripture. A person may defend an explanation because it is customary rather than because its meaning has been established. Jesus warned against allowing the commandment of God to be displaced by religious practices.

Jesus said in **Mark 7:7–8**:

> *"Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do."*

The warning concerns worship that preserves human teaching while laying aside God's commandment. Familiarity cannot excuse that exchange. Truth must govern tradition, not be forced to agree with it.

The refusal to walk in received light creates a further obstacle. Spiritual understanding is not a possession detached from fellowship with Christ. The believer is to continue in the light rather than resist what the Word has already made clear.

John wrote in **1 John 1:7**:

> *"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."*

Fellowship, cleansing and walking in the light belong together in the life of Christ. Obedience does not manufacture His life or complete an unfinished salvation. It is the faithful expression of the life already dwelling within the believer.

The answer to misunderstanding is therefore not dependence upon a more forceful personality. It is humble return to Scripture, careful study and a willing response to the truth of Jesus Christ. His promise to those who ask, seek and knock encourages diligence rather than passive acceptance.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do tradition, neglect of the Bible and refusal of received light allow misunderstanding to continue?

Personal Reflection

How willing are you to let God's Word correct a belief you have publicly defended?

Action Step

Have you defended a belief because admitting error would be uncomfortable? What will you examine in God's Word, and how will you respond if correction is needed?

A Thought on Time and Eternity

The distinction between the heavens also raises the question of time and eternity. The visible creation belongs to the order in which we count days, seasons and years. God's eternal life is not measured by that earthly calendar.

How do the second and third heavens relate to eternity when earthly time is no more? This is a question worth considering as we distinguish the temporary creation from the spiritual life fulfilled in Jesus Christ. We must follow the Scriptures rather than imagine details God has not revealed.

The Gospel Day belongs to the present course of time. Within it, people hear the Gospel, believe and are born again, while believers live through Christ's indwelling presence. The visible heavens and earth will pass away, but God's spiritual life is not destroyed with the temporal creation.

The spiritual heavens are not destroyed but fulfilled in Jesus Christ. His redeemed people already possess His life and belong to His heavenly family, and that relationship continues beyond the end of the visible creation.

Physical death ends a person's earthly opportunity, but it does not remove Christ from the believer who belongs to Him. The redeemed do not enter eternity as people still lacking the Lord they received. Their life in Him continues beyond the limits of this physical existence.

Eternity must not be pictured as another earthly calendar in which the redeemed wait through centuries for a future physical return. There is no past or future as measured by earthly time; the redeemed are gathered in God's eternal presence. We should preserve this distinction without claiming a knowledge of eternal existence that Scripture has not explained.

Those who reject Jesus Christ also face an enduring outcome beyond this life. The end of earthly time does not turn unbelief into salvation or provide another opportunity to receive Him. This is why the present call of the Gospel remains urgent.

John wrote in **1 John 3:2–3**:

> *"Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure."*

John begins with a present relationship: *"now are we the sons of God."* The believer already belongs to God's family, although the full experience beyond this physical life is not yet visible. The hope of seeing Him as He is belongs to those who already possess His life.

This hope does not require another physical coming to the earth. It is consistent with Christ's fulfilled return at Pentecost and His abiding presence in the born-again believer. The expectation strengthens a pure and faithful walk through His indwelling life now.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why does the believer's present life in Christ continue beyond earthly time without requiring another saving work?

Personal Reflection

What hope does belonging to Jesus Christ give you when thinking about physical death?

Action Step

How does your hope of life with Jesus Christ beyond physical death affect one decision you face now? Identify a response that expresses purity, trust or faithfulness.

CONCLUSION: THE FALL FROM HEAVEN

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Jesus' words in **Luke 10:18** belong to the setting in which the seventy returned with joy. Evil spirits had been subject to them through His name, and He declared the fall of Satan in connection with that victory. The account concerns the authority of Jesus Christ and the defeat of the enemy, not a holy angel becoming the devil in a rebellion before mankind existed.

The comparison with lightning must be read within that conversation. Biblical figures of speech communicate real spiritual truth, but they must not be turned into a physical history that the writer has not supplied. The words of Jesus, the disciples' report and the promise of authority in the following verse establish the direction of the teaching.

The different uses of heaven are also important. The visible heavens belong to the natural creation; celestial heaven speaks of God's eternal dwelling; and ecclesiastical heaven concerns spiritual life, revelation and conflict. The language of an exalted place in a person's life describes spiritual mastery, not a private residence beyond the clouds.

Capernaum and Nehemiah help demonstrate that heavenly language can concern earthly people, privilege, judgement and restoration. The teaching about Zion and the heavenly Jerusalem shows God's family already sharing a spiritual relationship in Him. Believers are raised and seated in Jesus Christ while they continue living upon the earth.

The enemy's defeat is consequently of present importance. A person who hears the Gospel, believes and is born again is delivered from the power of darkness. Christ dwells within that person, sin is no longer the rightful master and the believer receives strength to resist deception and temptation.

This truth calls for humility, discernment and faithful living. We must not exchange the authority of Scripture for religious custom, personal reputation or an impressive spiritual display. Sound doctrine serves the life of Jesus Christ within His children by making His truth clear and protecting them from error.

Satan's fall is not the believer's reason for fear, but a testimony to Christ's authority. The Lord who overcame the enemy gives complete salvation and dwells within those who are born again. All glory belongs to Jesus Christ, whose life is the present reality of His Church and the abiding hope of His children.

Personal Response

Key Truth

How do the disciples' report, Satan's fall and Jesus' promise of authority together reveal His present victory?

Personal Reflection

What difference should Christ's indwelling life make when deception or temptation challenges your confidence?

Action Step

Name a present fear or temptation in which you have given the enemy too much attention. How will you place your confidence in Jesus Christ and respond according to His Word?

IN THE NEXT STUDY GUIDE

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In the next Study Guide, we will examine **2 Peter 2:4**, **Jude 1**:6 and **Genesis 6:2**. We will consider the identity of the angels that sinned, what is meant by their first estate and habitation, and who the sons of God were. The war in heaven recorded in Revelation 12 will also be examined later in this module, allowing each Scripture to be understood within its own setting.

Personal Response

Key Truth

Why must the angels that sinned and the dragon be examined in their own settings rather than added to an assumed history?

Personal Reflection

How willing are you to say that you have not yet established something from the Bible? Explain.

Action Step

Before you teach another person about the angels that sinned or the dragon, what verses will you examine in context? What will you do if the Bible does not support your earlier assumption?

SUBMISSION TO COGMA FOR APPRAISAL

Instructions

Complete this section after you have finished the Study Guide. It must be completed online.

The link is located at the bottom of the online Study Guide — https://cogma.com.au/study-guides/

Your answers should reflect your understanding, your personal response, and how you intend to live by the truth you have studied. Answer honestly and be specific.

1. Main Truth

How do the seventy disciples' report and Jesus' words about Satan falling belong together in **Luke 10:17–19***? Use the verses to explain the victory He described.*

2. Understanding

How do Capernaum, Nehemiah and believers seated in Christ help explain different uses of heaven? Distinguish the visible heavens, God's dwelling and spiritual position.

3. Personal Reflection

What has the warning about religious disguise and personal gain led you to reconsider about trusting teachers or customs? Explain how you could receive correction without hostility.

4. Response to Truth

How does Christ's victory differ from the story of a holy angel becoming the devil? Explain what His deliverance from sin's mastery means for your own need for Him.

5. Action Step

James says to submit to God and resist the devil. What does this mean to you when pressure could lead you to speak dishonestly or unkindly? Is there a response you want to reconsider?

6. Early Response

Have you already reconsidered how you speak under pressure in the light of submitting to God and resisting the devil? If yes, explain what you did or now understand more clearly. If not, explain what you are still considering or what has made it difficult to begin.

7. Ongoing Practice

What could help you keep testing religious claims by the Bible and responding to truth you already understand? Explain how prayer, careful study and obedience belong together.

8. Doctrinal Clarity

Why does every knee bowing to Christ not mean everyone will be saved after death? Explain the difference between present judgement, the end of earthly opportunity and continuing life in Christ.

9. Living the Truth

Someone uses **Luke 10:19** *to justify intimidating others or handling natural snakes. How would Ezekiel's scorpions and Jesus' words to religious leaders help you answer with truth and respect?*

10. Final Response

How do Satan's loss of mastery and present heavenly fellowship in Christ explain the fall from heaven? Describe what has become clearer to you and why other verses about angels and the dragon still need their own setting.