

The Book of Ephesians
Ephesians 1:15-23
Session Eleven A1: Positions of Governmental Authority

Ephesians 1:20 Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,²¹ Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

Notice the positions of authority that are mentioned by name in Ephesians 1:21: principality, power, might, dominion and every name that is named.

Ephesians 1

Principality
Power
Might
Dominion
Every name

We will talk about this again later, but I do believe that in the HP, there is a hierarchy in place. That is to say, some positions are higher than others and have authority over lesser positions. Even so, I do not take Ephesians 1:21 to be listing the positions of authority in order of their rank. You will see why momentarily.

Now, to set our thinking in a context, Ephesians is about God's devotion to us, what He has done for us – the spiritual blessings He has provided for us in Christ. Colossians is more about our devotion to Him and Christ in us. Honestly, Colossians is for sons and daughters who are serious about Christ being formed in them. These are joint-heirs with Christ and they take their sonship education as the most important thing they can engage in.

Now, with that in our thinking, think back to Ephesians 1 and look at vs. 21.

Which positions does Paul mention in Ephesians? Principality, power, might, and dominion, and every name that is named.

But when we look at Colossians, Paul mentions something that is not in Ephesians and he leaves out something that is in Ephesians.

Colossians 1:16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be **thrones**, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:

<u>Ephesians 1</u>	<u>Colossians 1</u>
Principality	Thrones
Power	Dominions
Might	Principalities
Dominion	Powers
Every name	

In Colossians, Paul lists “thrones” which is something that was not back in Ephesians 1. In fact, this is the only place in Paul’s epistles where “thrones” is mentioned.

When we run across these kinds of words, understand that they can refer to territories or they can refer to those who hold those positions. Just as there is a man who is the President of the US, there is also the office of the President which exists no matter who the president is. So, president can be a person, or an office.

In the same way, a principality can be a particular territory, or it can refer to the one who rules that territory. The context and the way the term is used tell which one is being referred to. Here, it is referring to the positions, not the ones holding the positions.

Now, I would like for us to turn to Ephesians 6.

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.

<u>Ephesians 1</u>	<u>Colossians 1</u>	<u>Ephesians 6</u>
Principality	Thrones	Principalities
Power	Dominions	Powers
Might	Principalities	Rulers
Dominion	Powers	Spiritual Wickedness
Every name		

Here in Ephesians 6:12, we have four positions listed: principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world, spiritual wickedness in high places.

I realize that outside of Paul's epistles, there are other categories, like in 1 Peter, where he lists "authorities."

1 Peter 3:22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and **authorities** and powers being made subject unto him.

But for now, we are going to limit our discussion to just these three passages in Paul's epistles.

Notice that everything in Ephesians 1 is singular, everything in Colossians 1 is plural and everything in Ephesians 6 is plural. Just have that in mind for now, we will come back to it. But, in Ephesians 1, Paul is giving you the whole list of every position that Jesus has been elevated over; "far above all principality, power, etc."

The obvious one that Ephesians overlooks is "thrones" and I will tell you in a minute why I think he left it out. The "key" here is the phrase "far above."

Okay, now I want to say something here at the start, which I hope to prove as we continue through the study. So, until such time as we confirm it in the scriptures, just consider this to be my opinion, (unless you already know about these things).

I believe there is a hierarchy in these positions of authority, just as there is in any governmental structure. Some positions outrank other positions. There are top level positions, mid-level positions, and low level positions of administration.

I believe that Colossians gives us that hierarchy, as it is not just listing all of the positions which Christ has been exalted "far above" as in Ephesians 1, but it is a ranking of positions. I also think that the Ephesians 6 list is in an order of ranking.

If I am correct, then the power ranking is as follows:

Thrones

Dominions

Principalities

Powers

Might – Rulers – Spiritual Wickedness

That last line of "might, rulers and spiritual wickedness" are all on the same level, in that, they do not have power over each other, but are in charge of different aspects of the PoE. Later, as we go through the study, we will outline what the job of each position is.

If I am right about this order, then Colossians tells us two things: 1) thrones is the highest of the positions. We are about to go into the proofs of this, and I don't think we are going to get through all of them as I had originally planned.

Before we get started on "thrones," I want to make a statement.

Supposing that I am right about Colossians giving us a ranking of those first four positions, then the 2nd thing Colossians is telling us is that the rebellion that joined Lucifer started at the principalities level and goes down from there.

That is in accordance with everything Paul writes.

So far (let me say that), I have found nothing in Paul's epistles that tells me that any beings which occupied thrones or dominions joined in Satan's rebellion. And if we understand these positions properly, then that tells us that no beings or positions of thrones or dominions rebelled against God.

When it comes to the principalities, I still hold to my long-standing belief that only 1 of the principalities in the HP did not join in the rebellion. But I have changed my mind about how many principalities there are. We will talk about this later in this study.

Just as a quick reference, to get your thinking moving this week, think about the following passages. I want to make a very brief case to support my idea that the rebellion took place at the principality level and below. Take a look at Romans 8:35-39.

In this passage there are two lists. The first one is in vs. 35 and it is a list of the things which may befall us.

Romans 8:35 Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

If you think back to the way things were under Israel's program, if these kinds of things were happening to you, what would you be thinking? You thought yourself to be under the judgment of God; God is angry with me. Paul is explaining how things have changed.

These sufferings are no longer an indication that God is dealing with us out of His wrath and not His love. God is still dealing with us out of His love through Christ – which is why this is called, "the love of Christ."

By the way, these things can happen as part of the SoPT; or they can be part of the SoC. No matter, Paul affirms these things are not being sent by God to punish us; they are not evidence of His wrath or that He has turned His love away from us.

The second list is a list of creatures who are opposed to us.

Romans 8:38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, **nor principalities, nor powers**, nor things present, nor things to come, ³⁹ Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, **shall be able to separate us from the love of God**, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Before we continue, notice “principalities and powers” are in view once again.

When we suffer, Paul says these creatures are unable to do something – separate us from the love of God. When we suffer, how does God express His love toward us? By giving us His all-sufficient grace to endure our sufferings.

2 Corinthians 12:9 And he said unto me, **My grace is sufficient for thee**: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

We have a remedy for every kind of suffering; grace. Grace is the expression and proof of God’s love to us when we suffer. No creature has the power to separate us from that grace that makes us more than conquerors.

Paul is teaching two things here: 1) suffering is not a sign that God is no longer dealing with us out of His love, and 2) nothing can keep us from God’s grace, which is the proof of His love. Just think about that this week.

As you look at this passage, you may not think these are all creatures (minus the opening two of life and death). But I think they are.

Thrones

Dominions

Principalities

Powers

Might – Rulers /**depth (things under the earth)** – Spiritual Wickedness / **height**

Depth is either a subset of or a synonym for “rulers of the darkness of this world.” **Height** is either a subset of or synonym for “spiritual wickedness in high places.”

And wait until you see what they (depth and height) are in control of, it's going to blow your mind. We will talk about this more when we get to Ephesians 6.

But, my main point in all this is that the ones mentioned in the Romans 8 passage is "principalities and powers." They are the ones attacking us.

Think about to whom we are supposed to make manifest "the manifold wisdom of God."

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,

Look at who we wrestle against.

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.

I have a lot to say about this when we get to Ephesians 6, but we are going to cover some of it in these sessions. The point right now is that in this verse principalities is the top and it goes down from there.

And who did Christ "spoil" after His resurrection from the dead?

Colossians 2:15 And **having spoiled principalities and powers**, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.

It doesn't say he spoiled thrones and dominions. It doesn't say we are opposed by thrones and dominions. It does not say that it makes God's manifold wisdom known to thrones and dominions; all of them say principalities and powers. For that is where the rebellion began!