

JBTS

VOLUME 5 | ISSUE 1

JOURNAL OF
BIBLICAL AND
THEOLOGICAL
STUDIES

EPHESIANS AND THE POWERS

**"You Have Been Raised with Christ"
Investigating the Spatial Portrait of
New Creation in Ephesians**

Luke R. Hoselton

“You Have Been Raised with Christ”: Investigating the Spatial Portrait of New Creation in Ephesians

LUKE R. HOSELTON

Luke R. Hoselton (Ph.D., University of Otago) is assistant professor of biblical and theological studies at Grand Canyon University.

Abstract: The theology of Ephesians comprises a number of distinctive features. Among other things, the letter portrays a unique relationship between the temporal and spatial aspects of its soterio-eschatology and displays significant attention to the powers. This essay explores the soteriology of Ephesians with reference to its spatial framework, the powers, and the new creation concept.

Key Words: Ephesians, new creation, resurrection, cosmology, powers

Introduction

Ephesians is well known for its references to “the heavenlies” (1:3, 21; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12) and for its attention to a host of inimical powers. However, the question of how these two features function in the soteriology of the letter is not altogether clear. How can Christ, believers, and the hostile powers all be located “in the heavenlies” as Paul¹ maintains? This essay investigates the soteriology of Ephesians by examining the letter’s spatial portrait of eschatology in light of the Pauline concept of new creation. It begins by outlining recent research on new creation to demonstrate the value of its framework for this discussion. It then turns to delineate (1) the contours of eschatology and cosmology in Ephesians and (2) the depiction of the powers. Finally, key descriptions of salvation which involve the readers, the heavenlies, and the powers are examined. The result, I will endeavor to show, is that Ephesians provides a richly textured portrait of new creation that expands the scope of the concept in Pauline studies due to its vertical emphasis that involves heaven and earth, believers, and the powers.

1. The debates regarding the authorship of Ephesians and the relation of Ephesians to the *Hauptbriefe* are outside the purview of this essay. I will refer to the author of the letter as “Paul” and treat Ephesians as a Pauline text without any attempt to defend the veracity of either position.

New Creation

The new creation concept operates at a significant intersection of ideas in Paul's theology. Though the phrase *καινή κτίσις* ("new creation") occurs explicitly only twice in the Pauline corpus (Gal 6:15; 2 Cor 5:17), the concept describes the influence of the Christ event on the apostle's anthropology, ecclesiology, and cosmology. Indeed, while a brief overview of the history of research would demonstrate that each of these theological facets (e.g. anthropology) could be taken as the central force of the phrase,² the more recent trend has been to regard the concept to be interweaving all three and thereby to avoid separating categories that would have been interrelated in Paul's thinking. Jackson is representative of this position, for example, when he argues that new creation articulates Paul's "eschatologically infused soteriology which involves the individual, the community and the cosmos."³

While the majority of research on new creation has prioritized the *Hauptbriefe*, in large part because this is where the phrase occurs explicitly, recent studies have turned to explore the concept's existence and implicit influence within the so-called deuterio-Pauline epistles. Of particular note is the recent monograph of Mark Owens, which includes Ephesians alongside Galatians and 2 Corinthians in his examination of the new creation concept.⁴ Owens argues that new creation is depicted in anthropological, ecclesiological, and cosmological terms in all three letters. With regard to Ephesians, Owens endeavors to delineate the intertextual links between Ephesians 1–2 and Isaiah's New Exodus motif and argues that new creation fits within the Jewish pattern of an eschatological *Urzeit-Endzeit* typology, particularly through its evocations of temple-building.⁵ Though the scope of the investigation is limited to the first two chapters of Ephesians, Owens makes a valuable contribution by providing the first focused study of the concept in the epistle.

The following essay will examine the new creation concept with a different approach. The value of the concept for this essay is in the way in which it provides a heuristic lens for examining soteriology in a cosmological framework, and particularly

2. On new creation as an anthropological concept, see esp. Moyer V. Hubbard, *New Creation in Paul's Letters and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 133–232. For arguments for new creation as an ecclesiological concept, see e.g. Wolfgang Kraus, *Das Volk Gottes: Zur Grundlegung der Ekklesiologie bei Paulus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 250–51. Taking new creation as cosmological, see esp. Ulrich Mell, *Neue Schöpfung: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche und exegetische Studie zu einem soteriologischen Grundssatz paulinischer Theologie* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1989), 316–24.

3. T. Ryan Jackson, *New Creation in Paul's Letters: A Study of the Historical and Social Setting of a Pauline Concept* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 83. See also e.g. Edward Adams, *Constructing the World: A Study in Paul's Cosmological Language* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 235; G.K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2012), 172.

4. Mark D. Owens, *As It Was in the Beginning: An Intertextual Analysis of New Creation in Galatians, 2 Corinthians, and Ephesians* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015).

5. See Owens, *As It Was in the Beginning*, 121–170.

with reference to the powers. That is, new creation provides a lens through which we can examine the features of salvation, resurrection, eschatology, cosmology, and the powers within a single construct.⁶ I would contend that the connection between new creation and resurrection is central and fundamental to this. Indeed, though this correlation of resurrection with new creation is by no means unique to Ephesians,⁷ nor a new observation,⁸ it is pivotal for this essay to state at the outset because it anchors the implicit operating of the new creation concept to the text at numerous points. We will return to this below.

Mapping the Eschatological-Cosmological Landscape of Ephesians

An exploration of the eschatological and cosmological landscape of Ephesians embarks the reader of Paul on a journey into new frontiers. There are many features to account for. Indeed, even a cursory reading of the letter would glean a list that included the phrase “the heavenly places” (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12); reference to heaven and earth (1:10) and also to the lower regions and the heavens (4:9–10); the cosmos (1:4; 2:2, 12); the ages (1:21; 2:2, 7; 3:9, 11, 21); “the day/days” (4:30; 5:16; 6:13); and the recurring locative use of “in Christ/him” (e.g. 2:6).⁹ As a comprehensive examination is not possible, in this section I will primarily seek to delineate the unique balance between the temporal and spatial features that is maintained in Ephesians in order to set the stage for the subsequent discussion of the powers and salvation.

Ephesians evidences the common Jewish understanding of time as consisting of two successive, temporal ages: the present age and the age to come (e.g. *4 Ezra* 6:7). While this understanding of the ages is discernible throughout Paul’s writings (see e.g., 1 Cor 1:20; 10:11; 2 Cor 4:4; Gal 1:4; Rom 12:2), Ephesians 1:21 provides the

6. While I am in agreement with Owens and others that there are anthropological, ecclesiastical, and cosmological facets to new creation in Ephesians, due to space restrictions my focus will be limited primarily to some of the cosmological features. However, it will become clear that one cannot discuss the cosmological features without reference to humanity or the church in Ephesians.

7. The connection between resurrection and new creation has antecedents in the OT (e.g. Isa 25:8; Dan 12:1–2) but comes to the fore in Second Temple Jewish literature. At times resurrection is associated with the inauguration of the new age (e.g. *T. Job* 4:6–9; *1 En.* 71:15; *2 Bar.* 44:8–15), at other times resurrection is associated with the created order (e.g. Ps. -Philo 3:10; *Sib. Or.* 4:181–191). While most often new creation is implicit, at some points this connection is made with the explicit use of the phrase “new creation” (e.g. *Jub.* 1:29; IQS IV: 7, 25).

8. Interpreters as far back as Irenaeus have noticed the link between resurrection and new creation; see Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.36.1. See also Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 121–22, 227–32; N.T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2013), 1092–94, 1476. With particular attention to Ephesians, see Beale, *New Testament Biblical Theology*, 277–81; Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 107.

9. For a helpful visual overview of the dative classifications of “in Christ/him/whom” in Ephesians, see Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2002), 173–74.

clearest depiction of a full contrast between the ages anywhere in the Pauline corpus when Christ is declared supreme “not only in this age but also in the age to come” (οὐ μόνον ἐν τῷ αἰῶνι τούτῳ ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐν τῷ μέλλοντι).¹⁰ The ages are contrasted again in Ephesians 2:2 and 2:7. The former age is depicted in 2:2 with the language “the age of this world” (τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου), a phrase that characterizes the readers’ former lifestyle of trespasses and sins (see below). Significantly, the contrast between the ages pivots from “this” age to the future age on the basis of the readers’ participation in resurrection (“God . . . made us alive together with Christ,” 2:5) and results in the promise of manifold blessings “in the ages to come” (ἐν τοῖς αἰῶσιν τοῖς ἐπερχομένοις) in Christ (2:7).¹¹

It is in this latter contrast between the ages in 2:2 and 2:7 that we are able to observe that the ages are imbued with spatial significance and function as more than a temporal category in Ephesians.¹² Put differently, we find that Paul’s eschatology and cosmology are interrelated in a crucial sense.¹³ This is not unique to Ephesians, of course, for the terms αἰών and κόσμος serve as overlapping concepts elsewhere in Paul (e.g. 1 Cor 1:20; 2:6; 3:18). However, what is notable in Ephesians is the way in which Paul displays the full vertical axis of his eschatological framework by explicitly drawing repeated attention to the heavenlies.

We noted above how the contrast between the ages in Ephesians 2:2 and 2:7 pivoted on the readers’ experience of resurrection in 2:5. Here we observe that the readers are described in 2:6 as having been “raised” (συνεγείρω) and “seated” (συγκαθίζω) with Christ “in the heavenly places” (ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις). The phrase “in the heavenlies” occurs five times in Ephesians (1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12) but nowhere else in the NT. It is best to take ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις as a dative of location in each of its five occurrences and ἐπουράνιος as synonymous with “heaven” (οὐρανός).¹⁴ In Ephesians 1:3, believers are described as blessed in the heavenlies “in Christ” (ἐν Χριστῷ). Ephesians 1:20 describes Christ himself as seated in the heavenlies, far above the powers *who themselves are also in the heavenlies*. In Ephesians 2:6, as we

10. Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2010), 108. All citations of scripture will come from the NRSV unless otherwise stated.

11. The plural form of “ages” may be a liturgical way of describing eternity (i.e. the age to come), or a general way of describing the countless periods of time of which eternity is comprised. See Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, ZECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 138. Compare e.g. 1 Corinthians 10:11.

12. See Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, WBC 42 (Dallas, TX: Word, 1990), 95.

13. See esp. Rainer Schwindt, *Das Weltbild des Epheserbriefes: Eine religionsgeschichtlich-exegetische Studie* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), 379–83. See further e.g. Moisés Silva, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2014), 2:733; Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1994), 12–18, 42–61; Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 476–77.

14. On ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις as a dative of location, see e.g. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 169; William J. Larkin, *Ephesians: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), *passim*. On ἐπουράνιος, see M. Jeff Brannon, *The Heavenlies in Ephesians: A Lexical, Exegetical, and Conceptual Analysis*, LNTS (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 204.

have seen, it is the readers of the epistle who are described as seated in the heavenlies in Christ. That the powers are located in the heavenlies is reiterated in 3:10 when Paul explains that God makes his wisdom known to the powers through the church in the heavenlies. And finally, Ephesians 6:12 describes that the readers are involved in an ongoing struggle with the host of inimical powers *in the heavenlies*. The cosmological portrait that is taking shape in Ephesians, then, is best understood to be a two-tiered cosmos, composed of heaven and earth (1:10; 3:15; 4:9–10).¹⁵ Brannon notes that Paul’s conception of heaven is dependent on the background of the OT and can be expressed as a single heaven or as a plurality: “within Paul’s basic OT framework, ‘heaven’ could refer to the atmosphere (Ps 147:8; Matt 6:26), the firmament (Gen 1:7, 14), or the dwelling place of God (Ps 2:4; Matt 6:9) and it is probable that these three basic Old Testament divisions comprised Paul’s view of heaven.”¹⁶

The significance of this for the present interest is threefold. First, the readers of the letter are depicted as presently participating not just in the future temporal age/world of salvation but also in the heavenly places, which they inhabit in some spiritual sense in Christ. Thus the already/not-yet in Ephesians has a crucial above/below dimension and the letter’s soteriology cannot be understood without this emphasis on the vertical and spatial aspect of salvation.¹⁷ Second, the various uses of the phrase ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις make it evident that in the temporal/spatial eschatology of Ephesians heaven (in addition to earth) is involved in the present evil age as well as in the age to come.¹⁸ Related to this, thirdly, when Paul pulls back the curtain, as it

15. Brannon, *The Heavenlies in Ephesians*, 199–200. See further Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians*. ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 118, 384; Andrew T. Lincoln, “A Re-Examination of ‘The Heavenlies’ in Ephesians,” *NTS* 19 (1973): 479–83; Robert L. Foster, “Reoriented to the Cosmos: Cosmology and Theology in Ephesians through Philemon,” in *Cosmology and New Testament Theology*, ed. Jonathan T. Pennington and Sean M. McDonough (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), 110. The reference to τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς (“the lower regions of the earth”) is best taken as a partitive genitive or an exegetical genitive, either of which refer to the lower tier of the earth. See Benjamin L. Merkle, *Exegetical Guide to the Greek New Testament: Ephesians* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 125.

16. Brannon, *The Heavenlies in Ephesians*, 207.

17. The unique emphases found in the eschatological program of Ephesians have been misunderstood on two levels. First, some have taken the vertical emphasis here to have completely replaced the temporal. However, the presence of the “once/now” contrast (e.g. 2:2, 13) and future ages (e.g. 2:7) indicates it is better to see the temporal and the spatial as both operating, with the latter serving to emphasize the decisive break and transfer of dominions believers experience in salvation (see Clinton E. Arnold, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesians* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989], 150–51). Related to this, secondly, there is a noticeable emphasis on what is often referred to as “realized eschatology” in Ephesians since, for example, the audience is portrayed as “already raised.” However, it is clear that Paul’s already/not-yet is retained since future eschatology exists in Ephesians (1:14; 2:7; 4:30; 5:5, 27; 6:8, 13). See further Andrew T. Lincoln, *Paradise Now and Not Yet: Studies in the Role of the Heavenly Dimension in Paul’s Thought with Special Reference to His Eschatology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 167.

18. According to Lincoln (*Paradise Now and Not Yet*, 172–73), both heaven and earth were similarly included in “this age” and in “the age to come” in apocalyptic literature.

were, and displays the involvement of heaven and earth in the eschatological overlap in Ephesians, we find that Christ, believers, *and* the powers are all residents of the heavenlies at the same time. In this we arrive at a core issue from a soteriological and cosmological perspective. To spell this out further, we turn now to examine how the powers are portrayed in Ephesians.

Identifying the Powers

The frequent attention to the powers in Ephesians is one of the most striking features of the epistle. They are mentioned approximately fifteen times total using at least nine different designations across the letter (1:21; 2:2; 3:10; 4:27; 6:12, 16). By sketching the contours of how the powers are portrayed, we will be able to understand with greater clarity the nature of how salvation operates in Ephesians.

One pair of powers—the ἀρχή and ἐξουσία—is highlighted at three different points in Ephesians (1:21; 3:10; 6:12). The term ἀρχή can mean “ruler,” “authority,” or “principality.” It should be taken to designate “angelic or transcendent powers” in the present texts.¹⁹ Though ἐξουσία can refer to a sphere or domain, it also can denote powers of the spirit world as “transcendent rulers and functionaries,”²⁰ often with the translation “authority” or “authorities.” While these powers feature once in the LXX (Dan 7:27), they appear frequently as angelic powers in Judaism (e.g. 1 En. 61:10; 2 En. 20–22; T. Levi 3; T. Abr. 13:10; 2 Macc 3:24). They are mentioned elsewhere in the Pauline corpus, both as a pair (Col 1:16; 2:10, 15) and independently (Rom 8:38; 1 Cor 15:24). In Ephesians they are best seen to represent angelic powers. The pairing of these terms “represents a sort of hendiadys for powers, rulers, spheres of control, authorities . . . which exercise their influence throughout the entire cosmos.”²¹

The two other powers listed in Ephesians 1:21 are the δύνάμις and κυριότης. The term δύνάμις is connected with angelic powers in the translation of the “Lord of Hosts” and “hosts of heaven” in the LXX (e.g. 2 Kgs 21:5) and Second Temple Judaism (e.g. 1 En. 61:10; 4 Ezra 6:6). In addition to the present text, it is found in the Pauline literature to portray inimical angelic beings in Romans 8:38 and 1 Corinthians 15:24. Meanwhile, the term κυριότης is rarely found outside of the NT. It occurs in 2 Peter 3:10 and Jude 8 with reference to the Lord’s power, but it is only found here and Colossians 1:16 in the NT with the sense of the “dominions” or a “special class of angelic powers.”²²

19. BDAG: 138 [*A Greek - English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*; 3rd ed.; rev. and ed. Frederick William Danker (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 1979)]. See further TDNT 1:483–84 [Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, TDNT, 10 Vol (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974)].

20. BDAG: 353.

21. EDNT 1:162 [Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, ed., *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: 1990–1994)].

22. BDAG: 579. See Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 278.

In addition to the struggle against the ἀρχή and ἐξουσία, Paul indicates in 6:12 that readers also face “the cosmic powers of this present darkness” (τοὺς κοσμοκράτορας τοῦ σκότους τούτου) and “the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις). The term κοσμοκράτωρ is not found elsewhere in the NT or in the LXX. However, the later second century AD work *Testament of Solomon* employs the term twice and in both cases in connection with “darkness” (κοσμοκράτορες τοῦ σκότους, in 8:2; οἱ κοσμοκράτορες τοῦ σκότους τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου, in 18:2).²³ The term is fairly common in astrological writings and Hellenistic religions employed a view of gods who controlled aspects of the universe, but these were seen as evil spirits in Jewish religion.²⁴ Κοσμοκράτωρ translates woodenly as “world-rulers” but can also be rendered as “cosmic powers” (NRSV). It here refers to these “rulers of the world” who are forces of evil “in order to bring out the terrifying power of their influence and comprehensiveness of their plans.”²⁵ Their sinister nature is further emphasized by the genitive “of darkness.”²⁶ Rather than another distinct category, lastly, the final phrase “spiritual forces of evil” (τὰ πνευματικὰ τῆς πονηρίας) functions as a comprehensive designation for all of the classes of hostile spirits and summarizes all of the previously mentioned powers.²⁷

The devil is also mentioned at multiple points in the letter. We find, for example, that clear reference is made by the title διάβολος (“devil”) in 4:27 and 6:11. The noun ὁ διάβολος is employed in the LXX to translate ῥῶψ (“Satan”) and serves as the title of the “principal transcendent evil being.”²⁸ In both cases the Ephesians are warned against his sinister and comminatory nature (“do not make room for the devil,” 4:27; “stand against the wiles of the devil,” 6:11).²⁹ Another appellation used to depict the devil is “the evil one” (ὁ πονηρός) in 6:16. The devil is characterized vividly as a hostile antagonist, an archer who flings flaming arrows at the people of God.

The most evocative language used to describe the devil, however, is found earlier in the letter in 2:2, where Paul describes him as “the ruler of the power of the air” (τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος). While the term ἄρχων is often used in the LXX to depict figures who exercise authoritative influence, such as tribal or national

23. This text may well have been influenced by Ephesians. Arnold argues that such later uses indeed reflect the use current in the first century or before. See Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 65–68.

24. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 827.

25. *TDNT* 3: 914.

26. Larkin takes this as a genitive of subordination, a “metaphor for the spiritual and moral state controlled by sin” (Larkin, *Ephesians*, 158). On the issue of darkness and light as a significant soteriological contrast in Jewish literature, see Ester A. G. D. Petrenko, “*Created in Christ Jesus for Good Works*”: *The Integration of Soteriology and Ethics in Ephesians* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2011), 48–49, 52–59.

27. Arnold, *Ephesians*, 448.

28. BDAG: 226.

29. The noun μεθοδεία, which is often translated here as “wiles” or “stratagems,” is employed in Ephesians 4:14 to characterize the “scheming” or “craftiness” of deceptive teaching.

leaders, it can also denote the heavenly beings or “powers” (e.g. Dan 10:13; 12:1 LXX); meanwhile, in the NT it is used occasionally to refer to the devil (e.g. Matt 9:34; Luke 11:15; John 12:31; 16:11) as it likely does here.³⁰ The ἄρχων is modified by the genitive ἐξουσία, which is best taken as an objective genitive to describe the ruler’s “realm,” “domain,” or “kingdom.” Indeed, this is specified further by the exegetical genitive “the air” (τοῦ ἀέρος),³¹ which was regarded as the dwelling place of evil spirits and abode of demons in antiquity.³² The force of this description communicates that the devil has a host of evil spirits at his command, including those already delineated in this section. The inimical nature of the devil’s work is clarified by the final clause of 2:2. The devil is described, significantly, as being “at work among those who are disobedient.”³³ As Arnold explains, “the devil is thus seen to exercise effective and compelling power in his work of inspiring disobedience among humanity” with a force “so entirely effective in retaining its subjects that the author can describe these victims as ‘sons’ of disobedience.”³⁴

In summary, we find that Ephesians maintains a symbolic worldview that reflects the prevailing Jewish and Hellenistic belief in the reality of evil spirit-beings.³⁵ In Jewish traditions, such beings once held positions of authority and served as God’s regents in the ordering of world, but in their rebellion they have become sources of chaos and destruction for humanity and creation.³⁶ That the powers are inimical in nature is substantiated consistently by the evidence of Ephesians. The four powers listed in Ephesians 1:21 are portrayed as enemies of Christ through allusion to Psalm 110:1.³⁷ Ephesians 2:2 depicts the devil as an “arch power” over a host of powers which are sufficiently equipped to lead and keep individuals in a life of disobedience.³⁸ The summary description “spiritual forces of evil” in Ephesians

30. See further *TDNT* 1:488–49; Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 60.

31. See BDAG: 353. See also Larkin, *Ephesians*, 28.

32. See Brannon, *The Heavenlies in Ephesians*, 208–209; John Muddiman, *The Epistle to the Ephesians*, BNTC (New York: Continuum, 2001), 104; Philo, *De Gigantibus*, 8–18; 2 *En.* 29:4–5.

33. The genitive translated “the spirit” (τοῦ πνεύματος) is best taken in apposition to ἄρχοντα and thus refers again to the devil. See further Larkin, *Ephesians*, 28.

34. Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 61, 62.

35. Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 69. This, then, is contra interpretations that downplay the inimical nature of the powers in favor of other readings. For example, see Wesley Carr, *Angels and Principalities: The Background, Meaning and Development of the Pauline Phrase HAI ARCHAI KAI EXOUSIAI* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), which interprets the powers as good entities. For a wide-ranging interpretation of the powers that demythologizes them and takes them to refer to “heavenly and earthly, good and evil” (emphasis original), see Walter Wink, *Naming the Powers: The Language of Power in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 39.

36. See Timothy G. Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians: Participating in the Triumph of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 36–48. On their original role, see e.g. Deut 32:8–9; 1 Kgs 21:23–20 (LXX); *Jub.* 2:2; 2 *En.* 19:4; on their corrupting influence on creation, see e.g. 1 *En.* 7:4–6; 9:1–2.

37. E.g. Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 56.

38. Arnold, *Power and Magic*, 62. Gombis (*The Drama of Ephesians*, 409) describes it this way: “In Ephesians, the powers are portrayed as leading humanity astray from the path of obedience to

6:12, meanwhile, supports the sense that throughout the letter the powers should be conceived as hostile.³⁹

Salvation in Ephesians

In this section we turn to explore the soteriology of Ephesians. In light of the previous two sections, our study gives particular attention to how salvation operates in the eschatological-cosmological framework of Ephesians and in relation to the powers. It is also here that we will assess how the new creation concept is operating.

Our survey begins in Ephesians 1:20. Here Paul expounds on the power first mentioned in 1:19 that is “for us who believe,” contending that God manifested this great power by raising Jesus from the dead and seating him in a position of authority in the heavenlies. At the mention of resurrection in Ephesians 1:20, this text is operating within the framework of new creation. Christ has been raised as the firstfruits of the new physical order (1 Cor 15:20–23; Col 1:18) and has inaugurated the eschatological age to come. As we have seen, this verse also highlights the vertical aspect of cosmology in Ephesians since Christ is depicted to be reigning in the heavenlies “high above” (ὑπεράνω) all of the inimical powers listed in 1:21 (πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας καὶ δυνάμεως καὶ κυριότητος) in both ages. The term ὑπεράνω is quite important for it gives insight into the relation between the resurrected Christ and the powers, likely in two senses. The adverb can be used to denote superior rank, power, and authority.⁴⁰ This meaning fits well with the idea of a victory won over defeated foes and therefore is supported further by Paul’s allusion to Psalm 109 LXX. As Owens summarizes, Paul is using Psalm 109 LXX “in order to connect Jesus’ Messiahship with his defeat of cosmic evil . . . Jesus is the ultimate Davidic king whom God grants victory over not earthly enemies as in Ps 109 LXX, but over the spiritual forces of evil.”⁴¹

The other sense that ὑπεράνω may be conveying relates to the spatial positioning of Christ above the powers. We have noted that one of the theological issues in Ephesians is how we are to understand that Christ, believers, *and* the God. They rule the present evil age, ordering it in such a way that humanity is enticed to continue in transgressions and sins, remaining spiritually dead.”

39. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 64. See also Muddiman, *Ephesians*, 90; J. Gnllka, *Der Epheserbrief*, HTKNT 10.2 (Freiburg: Herder, 1971), 175. Such a threat, as Rudolf Schnackenburg ([*The Epistle to the Ephesians: A Commentary*, trans. Helen Heron (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 274]) puts it, is “explained by the accumulation of concepts: the whole of human existence comes under the pressure of powers which act disastrously or a concentrated power of evil (personified in the ‘devil’) against which human beings seem powerless in their earthly state.”

40. BDAG: 1032. Louw & Nida: 737: “a marker of superior status, suggesting an additional factor of degree—‘far above, considerably superior to.’” Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996).

41. Owens, *As it Was in the Beginning*, 133–34.

inimical powers can all be said to be located “in the heavenlies.” Brannon outlines how the spatial aspect of ὑπεράνω may be a key to understanding this. Brannon suggests that Paul’s OT understanding of a three-fold division of heaven would allow him to envisage the evil powers in the lower heavens in a way that is consistent with Jewish thought, and that matches the description of “the ruler of the power of the air” in Ephesians 2:2. At the same time, God (and the seated Christ) would be located in the highest heaven (“far above all the heavens,” 4:10).⁴² This multivalent understanding of ὑπεράνω in Ephesians 1:21 makes sense of both the soterio-eschatological and cosmological facets of the text regarding Christ’s supremacy over the powers through the Christ event. This supremacy is then reiterated in Ephesians 1:22 (in allusion to Ps 8 LXX) with the description that God has “put all things under his feet” (cf. 1 Cor 15:25, 27) and “made him the head over all things for the church.”⁴³

Ephesians 2:1–22 builds upon 1:20–23 and provides the clearest overview of humanity’s salvation experience in the letter.⁴⁴ Gombis helpfully frames the thrust of 2:1–10 in relation to 1:20–23 by raising the question, “If Christ has been so exalted, what are his triumphs, or in what way has he demonstrated his superiority over these supposedly vanquished powers?” He suggests that Paul answers this question in two parallel passages (Eph 2:1–10, 11–16) in order to substantiate his claim of Christ’s supremacy.⁴⁵ The present focus will be on the former of these texts, which can be examined in three sections: verses 1–3 detail the former situation of the readers; verses 4–7 describe the dramatic salvation operation God enacted in the Christ event; and verses 8–10 expound the new reality of this salvation for the readers.

It is helpful to begin by highlighting the spatial significance of the language that is used in Ephesians 2:1–3, particularly as it relates to the powers. First, we note that Paul employs a number of spatial inferences when he describes the readers as having been metaphorically dead. For example, the phrase τοῖς παραπτώμασιν καὶ ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις is best taken as a dative of sphere to convey that they were “dead in the trespasses and sins.”⁴⁶ This is then modified by a prepositional phrase that also conveys sphere: ἐν αἷς ποτε περιεπατήσατε (“in which you once walked”).⁴⁷ The

42. See Brannon, *The Heavenlies in Ephesians*, 207–9. Delling (*TDNT* 1: 483) remarks, “Perhaps they were originally assigned to a higher heavenly sphere. Their abode is now the ἐπουράνια, which is obviously the lowest of the heavenly spheres from which σκότος comes into this world.”

43. This is a clear example of the ecclesiological implications of the new creation concept in Ephesians.

44. Owens (*As it Was in the Beginning*, 141) explains that “1:20–23 forms an introduction to the author’s treatment of new creation in Eph 2:1–22 by portraying Christ as a divine warrior . . . and inaugurator of the new creation.” On this theme, Gombis (e.g. *The Drama of Ephesians*, 27–31, 87–88) argues that Ephesians exhibits patterns of the divine warfare motif found in the ANE mythological traditions. However, Owens (*As it Was in the Beginning*, 135–37) contends that it is better to find the background for this pattern in Isaiah’s New Exodus motif.

45. Timothy G. Gombis, “Ephesians 2 as a Narrative of Divine Warfare,” *JSNT* 26 (2004): 410.

46. So e.g. Larkin, *Ephesians*, 27; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 308; Merkle, *Ephesians*, 53.

47. So e.g. Larkin, *Ephesians*, 28; Merkle, *Ephesians*, 53.

force of this spatial language communicates that the readers’ trespasses and sins functioned as more than a lifestyle of choices detached from any greater reality. Rather, it was a manner of living that was ingrained in and in step with a pervasive and inescapable realm of existence. The next two prepositional phrases in Ephesians 2:2 offer even greater clarity about this sphere and lifestyle.

The use of *κατά* in the first phrase conveys that the standard was, translated literally, “according to the age of this world” (*κατὰ τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ κόσμου τούτου*). While it has been suggested that *τὸν αἰῶνα* here should be taken to refer to a personified inimical power,⁴⁸ it is better (as noted earlier) to take this phrase as a further temporal and spatial description of the readers’ former existence in the present evil age/world. As Lincoln expresses it, “Instead of being oriented to the life of the age to come and the heavenly realm, the past lives of the readers had been dominated by this present evil age and this world. Their sinful activities were simply in line with the norms and values of a spatio-temporal complex wholly hostile to God.”⁴⁹ The second prepositional phrase now offers a fuller indication of why this is so: the readers’ lifestyle in this sphere is also *κατὰ τὸν ἄρχοντα τῆς ἐξουσίας τοῦ ἀέρος*. Having determined already that the accusative and two genitives refer to an evil personal power (namely, Satan) whose realm of power is in the air, we add here only that *κατά* conveys that the readers’ former lifestyle was directed by or functioned according to the standard of this evil power. It is probable that the preposition also purports the sense of “under the control of.”⁵⁰ So thorough is their captivity in this sphere, this intrinsic lifestyle of disobedience in the grip of inimical forces, that Paul can describe the readers—along with all humanity—as “children of wrath *by nature*” (*τέκνα φύσει ὀργῆς*) in Ephesians 2:3.⁵¹

It is against this dark backdrop that God’s salvific action in the Christ event shines all the brighter in Ephesians 2:4–7. Because of God’s merciful nature and great love for humanity, he performed an act of new creation by making humans, who were otherwise dead and hopelessly captive to the powers in the present evil age, “alive together with Christ” (*συνεζωοποίησεν τῷ Χριστῷ*, 2:5) through resurrection. More than this, however, God has also “raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (*συνήγειρεν καὶ συνεκάθισεν ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ*, 2:6).⁵² In these phrases, the depiction of union with Christ is emphatic. Each of the aorist verbs (“made alive,” “raised,” “seated”) contains a σύν-compound that conveys

48. See e.g. Gnika, *Epheserbrief*, 114; Markus Barth, *Ephesians 1–3* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 214.

49. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 95. See also Thielman (*Ephesians*, 123) who describes it as a “powerful mode of existence characterized by rebellion against God.”

50. Merkle, *Ephesians*, 53.

51. See also Ephesians 5:6.

52. Gombis (“Ephesians 2 as a Narrative of Divine Warfare,” 411) rightly notes that these three verbs refer back to Jesus’ own resurrection and seating in the heavenlies in 1:20–23.

humanity's participation in each action through union with Christ.⁵³ The result of this salvific action, Paul continues to explain in Ephesians 2:7, is that God has done this "so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." At this stage, four observations need to be made.

First, by nature of its association with resurrection, this is an act of new creation. It bears the major marks of the explicit new creation announcements found in Galatians 6:14–15 and 2 Corinthians 5:14–17, including union with Christ, participation in the Christ event, and a new eschatological beginning.⁵⁴ At the same time, secondly, it introduces a new vertical and spatial aspect to the Pauline concept of new creation since believers are raised and seated "in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."⁵⁵ Third, though we will need to turn to other texts to more thoroughly delineate the readers' relation to the powers, which also remain "in the heavenlies," what can be highlighted here is that believers are seated securely above the powers as a result of their union with Christ, who himself is seated above the powers (1:21). In this, it must be emphasized that the readers' participation and security in this new realm above come entirely from their spiritual connection to Christ. The fourth observation, finally, is that believers inhabit both the heavenlies and the earth simultaneously.⁵⁶ That is, in the spatial soteriology of Ephesians they enjoy "a heavenly existence 'in Christ Jesus' which does not cancel their life on earth with all its worldly implications and obligations."⁵⁷ As we turn now to see, Paul begins to spell out the earthly "implications and obligations" in 2:8–10 (and following).

It is significant for our purposes to notice that the outcome of this salvation event, insofar as it relates to the new life of the readers on earth, is framed concretely in new creational terms. After disclosing that salvation is by grace through faith (2:8–9), Paul summarizes the result in 2:10 with the language "for we are what he has made (ποίημα) us, created (κτίζω) in Christ Jesus for good works." Snodgrass strikes the correct balance on this when he writes, "That creation language is used should

53. See Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 233.

54. In 2 Corinthians 5:14–17 new creation points to humanity's transfer from the old age/world to the new creation in Christ through participation in the Christ event. The same is true of Galatians 6:14–15, but here the reference point comes from Paul's own proclamation of dying to the old order of circumcision and uncircumcision, which has bearing on the former lifestyle of the Galatians in relation to the powers of the στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου ("elemental spirits of the world"). The best analysis of these text remains Jackson, *New Creation*, 83–149.

55. The closest parallel to this idea is found in Colossians 2:20 wherein, through participation in the Christ event, the readers are described as having died "from" (ἀπὸ) the powers (τῶν στοιχείων τοῦ κόσμου). The inference of this is that they have been brought into the world of new creation with Christ that is free from the threat of the powers. This temporal/spatial aspect of salvation is underscored in Colossians 3:1–4 as the readers are told to "seek the things that are above" (τὰ ἄνω) where their lives are hidden with Christ. Still, the focus in Colossians is not so emphatically oriented towards the vertical aspect of salvation as it is in Ephesians.

56. See Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 335, 830–31.

57. Schnackenburg, *Ephesians*, 52.

not be taken lightly. The New Testament assumes that God’s act in Christ is parallel to creation itself.”⁵⁸ Indeed, just as the first creation activity was purposed to launch a world of growth and flourishing, so “this new creation is to be active and productive like the Creator.”⁵⁹ This juxtaposition of the readers’ heavenly existence in Christ with their obligation to faithful productivity on earth illustrates both aspects of salvation in the vertical framework of Ephesians. Both are true in the temporal overlap of the ages since believers inhabit both heaven and earth. One particular tension related to this comes to the fore when we observe that even as believers are freed from the grip of the powers and positioned above them, they must still combat their evil advances. In order to understand how this is so, it is necessary to turn briefly to Ephesians 3:10 and 6:10–17.

In Ephesians 3:10 Paul conveys that the church plays a key role in making the wisdom of God known to “the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.” Gombis explains, “As Paul the prisoner preaches the riches of Christ, God creates the church, and this coming into being is a striking lesson for the cosmic rulers about God’s power.”⁶⁰ The nature of this “striking lesson” builds from the description of God’s unification of Jew and Gentile in the church in Ephesians 2:11–22 (cf. 3:6).⁶¹ Specifically, the manifestation of the church as a unified body demonstrates to the powers the stunning power of God’s creative purposes and wisdom: “He not only created the universe with its endless variety, but in a wholly surprising way he has also begun to restore the crowning achievement of his creation—humanity—to its original unity.”⁶² More than this, however, it indicates to the powers who controlled and subjugated a divided humanity in the present evil age that this power has been taken from them in the church, and that this is to be taken as a sign of their own defeat.⁶³

Our final text concerns the nature of the on-going battle between believers in Jesus and the hostile powers (Eph 6:10–17). The readers are to put on (ἐνδύω) six pieces of armor, which correspond to truth, righteousness, gospel readiness, faith, salvation, and the word of God. There is a significant connection between these features and the power of God that has been in focus throughout the letter (e.g. Eph 1:17–23), for by putting on the armor believers are equipped with the power of

58. Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 106–7. See also Owens (*As it Was in the Beginning*, 148), who rightly notes that his text (2:1–10) displays both anthropological and cosmological aspects of the new creation concept.

59. Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, 107.

60. Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians*, 116.

61. It is important to note that Ephesians 2:11–22 expands from 2:1–10; see Arnold, *Ephesians*, 149, 153. As such, the unification of Jew and Gentile depicted in Ephesians 2:11–22 and alluded to in 3:10 both build from and are an (ecclesiological) outcome of new creation in 2:1–10.

62. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 216.

63. See Schnackenburg, *Ephesians*, 140; Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians*, 116.

God.⁶⁴ Gombis suggests that in Eph 6:10–18 Paul portrays the church in the role of the divine warrior “as the presence of God on earth and as the chief character in God’s ongoing cosmic conflict with the suprahuman powers that rule the present evil age.”⁶⁵ However, the nature of the battle to which the church is called is one of inhabiting God’s accomplished victory over the defeated foes through resistance.⁶⁶ Put differently, the purpose of the armor is not for attacking the powers but for holding and defending the ground God has won. To underscore this, we observe that Paul uses the term “stand” (ἵστημι) three times and “withstand” (ἀνθίστημι) once in Ephesians 6:11–14. Believers put on the armor in order to stand, for example, “against the wiles of the devil” (6:11) and to withstand “that evil day” (6:13).⁶⁷ Gombis rightly notes that Paul’s instructions for performing this divine warfare are found in the preceding section (Eph 4:17–6:9), which lays out the ethical mandates for the church.⁶⁸ That is, the church stands firm in the result of God’s salvific defeat of the powers by faithfully embodying the realities of the new creation of which it is a part. Believers complete the works prepared in advance (2:10) and demonstrate the defeat of the powers (3:10), for example, by faithfully serving one another in a united, multiracial body where two have become one; by putting off the “old self” (4:22) and putting on the “new self, created after the likeness of God” (4:24); and by living as light and not in the former ways of disobedience and darkness. The church is to continue faithfully in all of this until the final act of new creation when God will “gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth” (1:10).⁶⁹

Conclusion

This essay has covered significant ground in its effort to examine the portrait of soteriology found in Ephesians. Two key results should be noted. First, I have argued that the new creation concept operates in Ephesians with an important vertical axis. In addition to depicting believers as raised to new life and participating in the age to come, Paul also portrays the readers to be seated securely in the heavenlies with Christ above the powers, even as their life continues on earth. This vertical axis enlarges the scope of the Pauline new creation concept to include both heaven and

64. Thielman, *Ephesians*, 417. See also Thomas Yoder Neufeld, *Put on the Armour of God: The Divine Warrior from Isaiah to Ephesians* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 117.

65. Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians*, 116.

66. Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians*, 160.

67. The reference to the “evil days” in 5:16 (αἱ ἡμέραι πονηραὶ) and “evil day” (τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ πονηρᾷ) in 6:13 may well be additional ways of expressing the ongoing experience of the evil age from 2:2, to the point of the climactic evil day. See Markus Barth, *Ephesians 4–6* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 579; Best, *Ephesians*, 504; Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 694–95; Arnold, *Ephesians*, 449–50.

68. Gombis, *The Drama of Ephesians*, 159.

69. See Owens, *As it Was in the Beginning*, 130–31.

earth in the overlap of the ages until the consummation (1:10). Second, we have noted that the powers play a significant role in the soteriology of Ephesians and now observe that their demise is characterized in a unique and multifaceted manner. Whereas, for example, the defeat of the powers is stated plainly in 1 Corinthians 15:24 or connected directly to the Christ event in Colossians 2:14–15, their overthrow is illustrated with significant nuance *in relation to the church* in Ephesians. In Ephesians, we observe the powers’ defeat in the rescue and removal of the readers from their sphere of control, by the display of God’s creative wisdom in uniting Jew and Gentile in the church, and through the faithful conduct of the church in resisting the powers, which is a direct manifestation of their life in the new creation.