

OUR HEAVENLY HOME

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:1-3.

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Revelation 21:4.

Prospect of going to a new home always creates a special interest. One wants to know about his new home in advance of arriving there. Concerning our heavenly home God's Word tells us a number of things. This revelation is calculated to comfort God's children, to enable them to carry their burdens on earth more bravely, and to stimulate their longing for the heavenly home. Nothing else will cheer us like the prospect of being at home with our Lord.

Our Heavenly Home is a theme which has occupied preachers, hymn writers, and saints all through the centuries. It is often passed over in earth's sunshine of success, but it is often considered in earth's shadow of sorrow. Probably no Bible theme is more entrancing to the human mind than that of heaven.

If you were going to leave your present home and move to a new country, you would feel a deep interest in the character of that country. Its climate, products, people, laws, customs, etc., would be of deepest interest to you. Your interest in heaven, the place to which you expect to go ere long, should be none the less real. Since God's Word is the only source of information, which we have, concerning heaven, we should seek diligently to learn what it has to tell us about our heavenly home, and about the life on the other side.

I. What is Heaven?

According to the Scriptures, heaven is not merely a state or a condition of happiness, but it is a place. It is very definitely not a mere shadowy existence, nor a mere mental state, as some would have us believe. It is not a vague dreamland where spirits are wafted about in a kind of ecstasy. It is the final and eternal dwelling-place of the righteous.

II. Where is Heaven?

God's Word does not tell us specifically where heaven is located. Therefore, it is useless for us to speculate about that matter. Heaven is in some bright expanse of God's great, glorious, and boundless universe. One is led to believe that heaven is above this earth somewhere, for Elijah ascended in a chariot of fire when he was translated. Jesus Christ was taken up from the earth when He went back to the Father. "And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." Luke 24:51. "And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." Acts 1:9-11. As to where heaven is located, to me a most satisfactory answer is found in the words of our Saviour, "That where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:3.

III. What Kind of a Place is Heaven?

1. It is a commodious place.

God has made heaven big enough to accommodate all who will ever become prepared to enter there from creation to the end of time. No one will be crowded there.

2. It is a beautiful place.

Heaven is a place of inconceivable and indescribable beauty. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." I Corinthians 2:9. Built by the Divine Architect Himself, it is the crown of all His marvelous works.

Those Christians who are inclined to be regretful at not having a beautiful home here should remember that a golden palace is awaiting them over there.

"My Father is rich in houses and lands,
He holdeth the wealth of the world in His hands!
Of rubies and diamonds, of silver and gold,
His coffers are full, He has riches untold.

My Father's own Son, the Saviour of men,
Once wandered on earth as the poorest of them;
But now He is pleading our pardon on high,
That we may be His when He comes by and by.

I once was an outcast stranger on earth,
A sinner by choice, and an alien by birth;
But I've been adopted, my name's written down,
An heir to a mansion, a robe, and a crown.

A tent or a cottage, why should I care?
They're building a palace for me over there;
Tho' exiled from home, yet, still I may sing:
All glory to God, I'm a child of the King.

I'm a child of the King, A child of the King:
With Jesus my Saviour I'm a child of the King."

No mind can conceive and no language can describe the "things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

"My heavenly home is bright and fair,
Nor pain nor death can enter there;
Its glittering towers the sun outshine;
That heavenly mansion shall be mine.

Let others seek a home below,
Which flames devour, or waves o'erflow:
Be mine the happier lot to own
A heavenly mansion near the throne."

--William Hunter

3. It is a restful place.

There will not be any servile or grinding toil in heaven. Neither will there be

any heavy burdens to weigh down tired shoulders. Weariness will not be known there. "There the weary will be at rest." Job 3:17. "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God." Hebrews 4:9.

"There is rest for the weary,
There is rest for the weary,
There is rest for the weary,
There is rest for you."

4. It is a place of perfect knowledge.

Here we get only fragmentary glimpses of the deep meaning of life. Here we are baffled at every turn in life's road. Here the wisest of us see through a glass darkly, but there we shall see face to face. Up there all of the perplexing problems of God and man, of time and eternity, will be solved. The whys and the wherefores will be fully explained. There will not be any more doubts, uncertainties, questionings or errors.

"Not now, but in the coming years,
It may be in the Better Land,
We'll read the meaning of our tears
And there, sometime, we'll understand."

5. It is a place of perfect love.

"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." We shall be like Him, and He is loving. What a place in which to live, where everyone is a lover and all love is perfect. And the love found there will not be like that of the earth--hesitating, suspicious, selfish, or changeable, but it will be unfaltering, unbounded, unchanging, and Christlike.

6. It is a holy place.

Heaven will be the first and the only sinless city. Nothing that defileth shall ever enter that home of love and light and life. How different it will be from what things are down here. One cannot read a daily paper here without being shocked with the most amazing revelations of human weakness and sin. Here men deceive, decoy, and destroy for just a few dollars. But holiness, righteousness, and white-robed purity shall everywhere be regnant in yon house of love and light and life which Jesus has gone to arrange for His friends and His followers. In heaven everyone will obey the will of God perfectly.

7. It is a happy place.

There will not be any sickness or pain there. Some are sick and suffer all of the time here. They get so tired of lying in bed, or sitting in the chair. And many of them know that they will never get well. But, when we say goodbye to this world we say farewell to all sickness and pain. No medicine or operations will be needed in heaven.

Neither will there be any sorrow in heaven. All causes of sorrow will have been removed. There will not be any breaking hearts as they look for the last time into the faces of loved ones as cheeks grow ashen and as the eyes glaze. None will have to watch a funeral director fasten the coffin lid on the one loved, or a funeral procession passing along the street, or a casket lowered into a yawning grave. Neither will any have to listen to the cold clods as they fall remorselessly on the box that contains the form we loved so much and whose departure leaves life so cheerless. Thank God, there will not be any death in heaven. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." Revelation 21:4.

8. It is a place of reunion.

All of the saved will be there. Sons and daughters will meet again the fathers and mothers whose departure left their lives so desolate. Fathers and mothers will meet again the children who were removed from them in all the beauty of their early lives, and whom they never forgot for one day through all of the months and years that have passed since they went away. Bereaved husbands will meet again the wives, and bereaved wives will meet again the husbands whom they have missed so much and so long. Ah! what glad days those coming days will be when we meet again never more to part. "They who enter into this city shall go no more out forever."

IV. Shall We Know Each Other in Heaven?

" When the holy angels meet us,
And we go to join their band,
Shall we know the friends that greet us
In that glorious spirit land?
Shall we see the same eyes shining
On us as in days of yore?
Shall we feel the dear arms twining
Fondly 'round us as before?

When we hear the music ringing
In the bright celestial dome,
When the angels' voices singing,
Gladly bid us welcome home,
To the land of ancient story,
Where the spirits know no care,
In that land of light and glory,
Shall we know each other there?"

Yes, all who go to heaven will recognize and know the people whom they knew and loved on earth. This answer is based on three things.

1. Instinct.

Recognition of each other in the glory world has always been a universal belief. When a thing is universally believed, it is acknowledged to be true. The instinct, the longing, and the belief that we shall see and know each other again beyond death has been as universal and as persistent as the belief in the existence of God or in the immortality of the human soul. Have you ever seen a bee, a bird, or a beast misled by its God-given instinct? No. Then, do you suppose that God, Who planted this best and sweetest of instincts in the universal heart, would fail to make provision for its realization? Certainly not. He would not give that instinct without satisfying it.

2. Reason.

How are we going to recognize ourselves in heaven? How are we going to know who we are? Most certainly by the same means that we do here. How do you recognize yourself and know who you are here? Your memory enables you to do it. I am to be the same person in heaven, alive, conscious, thinking, willing, loving, and capable of fellowship with others round about me, that I am here. Our mental powers will be continued in heaven. Your common sense assures you that you will at least possess in heaven all of the intelligence which you have in this world.

The wife of Christmas Evans, the celebrated Welsh preacher, walked into his study one day, while he was preparing a sermon. She said, "Dear, do you think that we will recognize each other in heaven?" He looked her steadily in the eye, and with a twinkle of humor said, "Well, dear, do you think that we will be bigger fools in

heaven than we are here?" She thanked him and passed out of the study, for the answer was complete, even though it was based solely on common sense. Think carefully through this. Heaven may enlarge our faculties, as no doubt it will, but most assuredly it will not dwarf or annihilate them. We shall recognize others in heaven as certainly as we recognize them here.

3. God's Word.

This doctrine is implied in the Scriptures. When David's son died, the father said, "He shall not return unto me, but I shall go to him." He did not mean that he was going to join his body in the grave because the body of his boy was still with him. David was buoyed up by the thought of a blessed future. He firmly believed that he would see and recognize his child in heaven. The reunion that he believed in was conscious and happy. What consolation would David have had if he had gone to his child, and yet not have known him?

At the transfiguration of Jesus, Moses and Elijah, long since departed, appeared; and Peter, James, and John saw and knew them. If they recognized those whom they had never seen before, how much more shall our loved ones be recognizable.

Some New Testament passages are incapable of explanation except on the basis of the reality of mutual recognition in heaven. For example, our Lord said, "Many, I say unto you, shall come from the east and the west, the north and the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." If we sit down with them, and yet not know them, why the distinct specification which is here given of their names? Would our Saviour mock us with the promise of giving us admission into that unknown company? You cannot imagine that we shall be in ignorance of each other in heaven without turning these words into mockery.

After all, what sort of comfort would there be for us if we did not know each other there? God's Word comforts Christian mourners with the thought of meeting them again. But, what would be the good of meeting them if they cannot be known? Literally, we shall know our loved ones in our heavenly home. When we meet them over there, we shall know them far more intimately than we have known them here.

V. How Does One Get To Heaven?

He must have a sense of need, a desire to go, and make the necessary preparation by repenting toward God and believing on Jesus Christ.