

HEAVEN

by

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"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Revelation 21:23).

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CHAPTER ONE

HEAVEN: Its Hope

"We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . for the HOPE which is laid up for you in heaven" (Colossians 1:3, 5).

The Home of the Soul

"That unchangeable home is for you and for me,
Where JESUS of Nazareth stands;
The King of all kingdoms forever is He.
And He holdeth our crowns in His hands.

"Oh, how sweet it will be in that beautiful land,
So free from all sorrow and pain;
With songs on our lips and with harps in our hands.
To meet one another again."

A great many persons imagine that anything said about Heaven is only a matter of speculation. They talk about Heaven much as they would about the air. Now there would not have been so much in Scripture on this subject if GOD had wanted to leave the human race in darkness about it. **"All Scripture,"** we are told, **"is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."** (II Timothy 3:16, 17).

What the Bible says about Heaven is just as true as what it says about everything else. The Bible is inspired. What we are taught about Heaven could not have come to us in any other way than by inspiration. No one knew anything about it but GOD, and so if we want to find out anything about it we have to turn to His Word.

Dr. Hodge, of Princeton, says that the best evidence of the Bible being the Word of GOD is to be found between its own two covers. It proves itself. In this respect it is like CHRIST, whose character proclaimed the divinity of His person. CHRIST showed Himself more than man by what He did. The Bible shows itself more than a human book by what it says.

It is not, however, because the Bible is written with more than human skill, far surpassing Shakespeare or any other human author, and that its knowledge of character and the eloquence it contains are beyond the powers of man, that we believe it to be inspired.

Men's ideas differ about the extent to which human skill can be carried, but the reason why we believe the Bible to be inspired is so simple that the humblest child of GOD can comprehend it. If the proof of its divine origin lay in its wisdom alone, a simple and uneducated man might not be able to believe it.

We believe it is inspired because there is nothing in it that could not have come from GOD. GOD is wise, and GOD is good. There is nothing in the Bible that is not wise, and there is nothing in it that is not good. If the Bible had anything in it that was opposed to reason, or to our sense of right, then, perhaps, we might think that it was like all the books in the world that are written merely by men. Books that are only human, like merely human lives, have in them a great deal that is foolish and a great deal that is wrong.

The life of CHRIST alone was perfect, being both human and divine. Not one of the other volumes, like the Koran, that claims divinity of origin, agrees with common sense. There is nothing at all in the Bible that does not conform to common sense.

What it tells us about the world having been destroyed by a deluge, and Noah and his family alone being saved, is no more wonderful than what is taught in the schools, that all of the earth we see now, and everything upon it, came out of a ball of fire.

It is a great deal easier to believe that man was made after the image of GOD, than to believe, as some young men and women are being taught now, that he is the offspring of a monkey.

Like all the other wonderful works of GOD, this Book bears the sure stamp of its Author. It is like Him. Though man plants the seeds, GOD makes the flowers, and they are perfect and beautiful like Himself. Men wrote what is in the Bible, but the work is GOD's.

The more refined, as a rule, people are, the fonder they are of flowers, and the better they are, as a rule, the more they love the Bible. The fondness for flowers refines people, and the love of the Bible makes them better. All that is in the Bible about GOD, about man, about redemption, and about a future state, agrees with our own ideas of right, with our reasonable fears and with our personal experiences.

All the historical events are described in the way that we know the world had of looking at them when they were written. What the Bible tells about Heaven is not half so strange as what Prof. Proctor tells about the hosts of stars that are beyond the range of any ordinary telescope; and yet people very often think that science is all fact, and that religion is only fancy. A great many persons think that Jupiter and many more of the stars around us are inhabited, who cannot bring themselves to believe that there is beyond this earth a life for immortal souls.

The true Christian puts faith before reason, and believes that reason always goes wrong when faith is set aside. If people would but read their Bibles more, and study what there is to be found there about Heaven, they would not be as worldly-minded as they are. They would not have their hearts set upon things down here, but would seek the imperishable things above.

EARTH THE HOME OF SIN

It seems perfectly reasonable that GOD should have given us a glimpse of the future, for we are constantly losing some of our friends by death, and the first thought that comes to us is, "Where have they gone?" When loved ones are taken away from us how that thought comes up before us! How we wonder if we will ever see them again, and where and when it will be! Then it is that we turn to this blessed Book, for there is no other book in all the world that can give us the slightest comfort; no other book that can tell us where the loved ones have gone.

Not long ago I met an old friend, and as I took him by the hand and asked after his family, the tears came trickling down his cheeks as he said:

"I haven't any now."

"What," I said, "is your wife dead?" "Yes, sir."

"And all your children, too?"

"Yes, all gone," he said, "and I am left here desolate and alone."

Would anyone take from that man the hope that he will meet his dear ones again? Would anyone persuade him that there is not a future where the lost will be found? No, we need not forget our dear loved ones; but we may cling forever to the enduring hope that there will be a time when we can meet unfettered, and be blest in that land of everlasting suns, where the soul drinks from the living streams of love that roll by GOD's high throne.

In our inmost hearts there are none of us but have questionings of the future.

"Tell me, my secret soul,
O, tell me, Hope and Faith,
Is there no resting-place
From sorrow, sin and death?
Is there no happy spot
Where mortals may be blest,
Where grief may find a balm,
And weariness a rest?
Faith, Hope and Love - best boons to mortals given
Waved their bright wings, and whispered:
Yes, in heaven!"

There are men who say that there is no heaven. I was once talking with a man who said he thought there was nothing to justify us in believing in any other Heaven than that we know here on earth. If this is Heaven, it is a very strange one - this world of sickness, sorrow and sin. I pity from the depths of my heart the man or woman who has that idea.

This world that some think is Heaven, is the home of sin, a hospital of sorrow, a place that has nothing in it to satisfy the soul. Men go all over it and then want to get out of it. The more men see of the world the less they think of it. People soon grow tired of the best pleasures it has to offer. Some one has said that the world is a stormy sea, whose every wave is strewn with the wrecks of mortals that perish in it. Every time we breathe some one is dying. We all know that we are going to stay here but a very little while. Our life is but a vapor. It is only a shadow.

"We meet one another," as some one has said, "salute one another, pass on and are gone." And another has said: "It is just an inch of time, and then eternal ages roll on;" and it seems to me that it is perfectly reasonable that we should study this Book, to find out where we are going, and where our friends are who have gone on before. The longest time man has to live has no more proportion to eternity than a drop of dew has to the ocean.

CITIES OF THE PAST

Look at the cities of the past. There is Babylon.

It is said to have been founded by a queen named Semiramis, who had two millions of men at work for years building it. It is nothing but dust now. Nearly 3 thousand years ago, a historian wrote that the ruins of Nebuchadnezzar's palace were still standing, but men were afraid to go near them because they were full of scorpions and snakes. That is the sort of ruin that greatness often comes to in our own day. Nineveh is gone. Its towers and bastions have fallen.

The traveler who tries to see Carthage cannot find much of it. Corinth, once the seat of luxury and art, is only a shapeless mass. Ephesus, long the metropolis of Asia, the Paris of that day, was crowded with buildings as large as the capitol at Washington. I am told it looks more like a neglected graveyard now than anything else. Granada, once so grand, with its twelve gates and towers, is now in decay. The Alhambra, the palace of the Mohammedan kings, was situated there. Little pieces of the once grand and beautiful cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii are now being sold in the shops for relics. Jerusalem, once the joy of the whole earth, is but a shadow of its former self. Thebes, for thousands of years, up almost to the coming of CHRIST, among the largest and wealthiest cities of the world, is now a mass of decay.

But little of ancient Athens, and many more of the proud cities of olden times, remain to tell the story of their downfall. GOD drives His plowshare through cities, and they are upheaved like furrows in the field. **"Behold,"** says Isaiah, **"the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold, He taketh up the isles as a very little thing . . . All nations before Him are as nothing; and they are counted to Him less than nothing, and vanity."**

See how Antioch has fallen. When Paul preached there, it was a superb metropolis. A wide street over three miles long, stretching across the entire city, was ornamented with rows of columns and covered galleries, and at every corner stood carved statues to commemorate their great men, whose names even we have never heard. These men are never heard of now, but the poor preaching tent-maker who entered its portals stands out as the grandest character in history.

The finest specimens of Grecian art decorated the shrines of the temples, and the baths and the aqueducts were such as are never approached in elegance now. Men then, as now, were seeking honor, wealth and renown, and enshrining their names and records in perishable clay.

Within the walls of Antioch, we are told, were enclosed hills over seven hundred feet high, and rocky precipices and deep ravines gave a wild and picturesque character to the place of which no modern city affords an example. These heights were fortified in a marvelous manner, which gave to them strange and startling effects. The vast population of this brilliant city, combining all the art and cultivation of Greece with the levity, the luxury and the superstition of Asia, was as intent on pleasure as the population of any of our great cities are to-day.

The citizens had their shows, their games, their races and dancers, their sorcerers, puzzlers, buffoons and miracle-workers, and the people sought constantly in the theaters and processions for something to stimulate and gratify the most corrupt desires of human nature. This is pretty much what we find the masses of the people in our great cities doing now.

Antioch was even worse than Athens, for the so-called worship they indulged in was not only idolatrous, but had mixed up with it the grossest passions to which man descends. It was here that Paul came to preach the glad tidings of the Gospel of CHRIST; it was here that the disciples were first called Christians, as a nickname; all followers of CHRIST before that time having been called "saints" or "brethren."

As has been well said, out of that spring at Antioch a mighty stream has flowed to water the world. Astarte, the "Queen of Heaven," whom they worshiped; Diana, Apollo, the Pharisee and Sadducee, are no more, but the despised Christians yet live. Yet that heathen city, which would not take Christianity to its heart and keep it, fell. Cities that have not the refining and restraining influences of Christianity well established in them, seldom do amount to much in the long run. They grow dim in the light of ages. Few of our great cities in this country are a hundred years old as yet. For nearly a thousand years this city prospered; yet it fell.

GOING TO EMIGRATE

I do not think that it is wrong for us to think and talk about Heaven. I like to locate Heaven, and find out all I can about it. I expect to live there through all eternity. If I were going to dwell in any place in this country, if I were going to make it my home, I would want to inquire about the place, about its climate, about the neighbors. I would have about everything, in fact, that I could learn concerning it.

If any of you were going to emigrate, that would be the way you would feel. Well, we are all going to emigrate in a very little while to a country that is very far away. We are going to spend eternity in another world, a grand and glorious world where GOD reigns. Is it not natural, then,

that we should look and listen and try to find out who is already there, and what is the route to take?

Soon after I was converted, an infidel asked me one day why I looked up when I prayed. He said that Heaven was no more above us than below us; that Heaven was everywhere. Well, I was greatly bewildered, and the next time I prayed, it seemed almost as if I was praying into the air. Since then I have become better acquainted with the Bible, and I have come to see that Heaven is above us; that it is upward, and not downward. The Spirit of GOD is everywhere, but GOD is in Heaven, and Heaven is above our heads. It does not matter what part of the globe we may stand upon, Heaven is above us.

In the 17th chapter of Genesis it says that GOD went up from Abraham; and in the third chapter of John, that the Son of Man came down from Heaven. So, in the 1st chapter of Acts we find that CHRIST went up into Heaven (not down), and a cloud received him out of sight. Thus we see Heaven is up.

The very arrangement of the firmament about the earth declares the seat of GOD's glory to be above us. Job says: "**Let not God regard it from above.**" Again, in Deuteronomy, we find, "**who shall go up for us to heaven?**"

Thus, all through Scripture we find that we are given the location of Heaven as upward and beyond the firmament. This firmament, with its many bright worlds scattered through, is so vast that Heaven must be an extensive realm. Yet this need not surprise us. It is not for short-sighted man to inquire why GOD made Heaven so extensive that its lights along the way can be seen from any part or side of this little world.

In Jeremiah 51:15, we are told: "**He hath made the earth by His power; He hath established the world by His wisdom, and hath stretched out the Heaven by His understanding.**" Yet, how little we really know of that power, or wisdom or understanding! As we read in Job: "**Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of Him? But the thunder of His power, who can understand?**"

This is the Word of GOD. As we find in the 42nd chapter of Isaiah: "**Thus saith God the LORD, He that created the heavens and stretched them out; He that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; He that giveth bread unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein.**"

The discernment of GOD's power, the messages of Heaven, do not always come in great things. We read in the 19th chapter of the first book of Kings:

"And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice."

It is as a still small voice that GOD speaks to His children. Some people are trying to find out just how far Heaven is away. There is one thing we know about it; that is, that is not so far away

but that GOD can hear us when we pray. I do not believe there has ever been a tear shed for sin since Adam's fall in Eden to the present time, but GOD has witnessed it. He is not too far from earth for us to go to Him; and if there is a sigh that comes from a burdened heart to-day, GOD will hear that sigh. If there is a cry coming up from a heart broken on account of sin, GOD will hear that cry. He is not so far away, Heaven is not so far away, as to be inaccessible to the smallest child.

In II Chronicles we read:

"If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from Heaven, and will forgive them their sins, and will heal their land."

When I was in Dublin, they were telling me about a father who had lost a little boy. This father had not thought about the future, he had been so entirely taken up with this world and its affairs; but when that little boy, his only child, died, that father's heart was broken, and every night when he returned from work he might be found in his room with his candle and his Bible, hunting up all that he could find there about Heaven.

Some one asked him what he was doing, and he said he was trying to find out where his child had gone, and I think he was a reasonable man. I suppose no one will ever read this page who has not dear ones that are gone. Shall we close this Book today, or shall we look into it to try to find where the loved ones are?

I was reading, some time ago, an account of a father, a minister, who had lost a child. He had gone to a great many funerals, offering comfort to others in sorrow, but now the iron had entered his own soul, and a brother minister had come to officiate and preach the funeral sermon; and after this minister had finished speaking, the father got up, and standing at the head of the coffin, he said that a few years ago, when he had first come into that parish, as he used to look over the river he took no interest in the people over there, because they were all strangers to him and there were none over there that belonged to his parish. But, he said, a few years ago a young man came into his home, and married his daughter, and she went over the river to live, and when his child went over there, he became suddenly interested in the inhabitants, and every morning as he arose he would look out of the window across the river to her home. "But now," said he, "another child has been taken. She has gone over another river, and Heaven seems dearer, and nearer to me now than it ever has before."

My friends, let us believe this good old Book, be confident that Heaven is not a myth, and be prepared to follow the dear ones who have gone before. Thus, and thus alone, can we find the peace we seek for.

SEEKING A BETTER COUNTRY

What has been, and is now, one of the strongest feelings in the human heart? Is it not to find some better place, some lovelier spot, than we have now? It is for this that men are seeking everywhere; and they can have it if they will; but instead of looking down, they must look up to

find it. As men grow in knowledge, they vie with each other more and more in making their homes attractive, but the brightest home on earth is but an empty barn, compared with the mansions in the skies.

What is it that we look for at the decline and close of life? Is it not some sheltered place, some quiet spot, where, if we cannot have constant rest, we may at least have a foretaste of the rest that is to be?

What was it that led Columbus, not knowing what would be his fate, across the unsailed western seas, if it were not the hope of finding a better country? This it was that sustained the hearts of the Pilgrim Fathers, driven from their native land by persecution, as they faced an iron-bound, savage coast, with an unexplored territory beyond. They were cheered and upheld by the hope of reaching a free and fruitful country, where they could be at rest and worship GOD in peace.

Somewhat similar is the Christian's hope of Heaven, only it is not an undiscovered country, and its attractions cannot be compared with anything we know on earth. Perhaps nothing but the shortness of our range of sight keeps us from seeing the celestial gates all open to us, and nothing but the deafness of our ears prevents our hearing the joyful ringing of the bells of Heaven. There are constant sounds around us that we cannot hear, and the sky is studded with bright worlds that our eyes have never seen. Little as we know about this bright and radiant land, there are glimpses of its beauty that come to us now and then.

"We may not know how sweet its balmy air,
How bright and fair its flowers;
We may not hear the songs that echo there,
Through these enchanted bowers.

"The city's shining towers we may not see
With our dim earthly vision,
For Death, the silent warder, keeps the key
That opes the gates Elysian.

"But sometimes when adown the western sky
A fiery sunset lingers,
Its golden gate swings inward noiselessly,
Unlocked by unseen fingers.

"And while they stand a moment half ajar,
Gleams from the inner glory
Stream brightly through the azure vault afar,
And half reveal the story."

It is said by travelers that in climbing the Alps the houses of far distant villages can be seen with great distinctness, so that sometimes the number of panes of glass in a church window can be counted. The distance looks so short that the place to which the traveler is journeying appears almost at hand, but after hours and hours of climbing it seems no nearer yet.

This is because of the clearness of the atmosphere. By perseverance, however, the place is reached at last, and the tired traveler finds rest. So sometimes we dwell in high altitudes of grace; Heaven seems very near, and the hills of Beulah are in full view. At other times the clouds and fogs caused by suffering and sin cut off our sight. We are just as near Heaven in the one case as we are in the other, and we are just as sure of gaining it if we only keep in the path that CHRIST has pointed out.

I have read that on the shores of the Adriatic sea the wives of fishermen, whose husbands have gone far out upon the deep, are in the habit of going down to the sea-shore at night and singing with their sweet voices the first verse of some beautiful hymn. After they have sung it they listen until they hear brought on the wind, across the sea, the second verse sung by their brave husbands as they are tossed by the gale - and both are happy.

Perhaps, if we would listen, we too might hear on this storm-tossed world of ours, some sound, some whisper, borne from afar to tell us there is a Heaven which is our home; and when we sing our hymns upon the shores of the earth, perhaps we may hear their sweet echoes breaking in music upon the sands of time, and cheering the hearts of those who are pilgrims and strangers along the way. Yes, we need to look up - out, beyond this low earth, and to build higher in our thoughts and actions, even here!

You know, when a man is going up in a balloon, he takes in sand as ballast, and when he wants to mount a little higher, he throws out some of it, and then he will mount a little higher; he throws out a little more ballast, and he mounts still higher; and the more he throws out the higher he gets, and so the more we have to throw out of the things of this world the nearer we get to GOD.

Let go of them; let us not set our hearts and affections on them, but do what the Master tells us - lay up for ourselves treasures in Heaven.

In England I was told of a lady who had been bed-ridden for years. She was one of those saints whom GOD polishes up for the kingdom; for I believe there are many saints in this world whom we never hear about; we never see their names heralded through the press; they live very near the Master; they live very near heaven; and I think it takes a great deal more grace to suffer GOD's will than it does to do it; and if a person lies on a bed of sickness, and suffers cheerfully, it is just as acceptable to GOD as if they went out and worked in His vineyard.

Now this lady was of those saints. She said that for a long time she used to have a great deal of pleasure in watching a bird that came to make its nest near her window. One year it came to make its nest, and it began to build so low down she was afraid something would happen to the young; and every day that she saw that bird busy at work making its nest, she kept saying, "O bird, build higher!"

She could see that the bird was likely to come to grief and disappointment. At last the bird got its nest done, and laid its eggs and hatched its young; and every morning the lady looked out to see if the nest was there, and she saw the old bird bringing food for the little ones, and she took a great deal of pleasure looking at it.

But one morning she awoke, looked out, and she saw nothing but feathers scattered all around, and she said: "Ah, the cat has got the old bird and all her young." It would have been a kindness to have torn that nest down.

That is what GOD does for us very often - just snatches things away before it is too late. Now, I think that is what we want to say to professing Christians - if you build for time you will be disappointed. GOD says: Build up yonder. It is a good deal better to have life with CHRIST in GOD than anywhere else. I would rather have my life hid with CHRIST in GOD than be in Eden as Adam was. Adam might have remained in Paradise for 16,000 years, and then fallen, but if our life is hid in CHRIST, how safe!

THOUGHTS OF HOME

BY Anna Shipton

O Lord, 'twas Thine to labor and wear the thorns for me;
Thou sharest all my sorrows; Thou knowest what 'twill be
To see the Father's glory, to hear Thy welcome there,
Where never cross or burden remains for us to bear.

I seem to pace the glittering street, and hear the harps of gold,
The echo of the new song that never groweth old;
I hear Thy praise, Lord JESUS, my Life, my Lord, my King,
Until my worn heart pineth the strains of Heaven to sing.

Safe in the better country my loved ones I shall find,
And some in that bright multitude I feared were left behind;
Then loud shall sound our praises within the jasper wall,
As cherubim and seraphim before the Holiest fall.

With folded wings, expectant, the angel bands will come
To listen to the tale of grace that wooed the children home;
And sitting at Thy feet, Lord, my joyful lips shall tell
How much He hath forgiven, who "**doeth all things well.**"

Thou blessed Spirit, cheering this valley land for me,
With glimpses of the glory of that which soon shall be;
Each harp string, dull and broken, Thy gentle breath awaits;
Then let me sing of JESUS up to the golden gates.

~ end of chapter 1 ~
