

HEAVEN'S GLORIOUS APPEAL

Many years ago I dreamed I was in heaven with Jesus, and in that rapturous environment I felt a measure of joy and happiness which exceeded any I had ever known before. I do not recall any details of this dream, other than the unspeakable happiness I felt;---but one thing that abides very fresh in my mind is that, as I awoke from this delightful reverie, I was immediately immersed in a deep sense of gloom and disappointment because of the fact that I was still bound to this earth and all its attendant burdens and sorrows. I was not really with my Lord in a glorified state but had only been dreaming.

I have many times reflected upon this experience and have thought that surely the prospect of being with Jesus would not appeal to me so much, yea, none at all, if I were not His born again child. All my life's experience, as well as all that is revealed in God's word, has made me view myself as a stranger in this present world and has convinced me beyond doubt that "to depart, and to be with Christ...is far better," and that "to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21-23).

With Job I can truthfully say, "I would not live always" (Job 7:16). I have a sweet assurance that though the "earthly house of this tabernacle" (this fleshly body in which I dwell) shall be dissolved (die and decay) yet I will one day have "a building of God, an house not made with hands" (a glorified body), "eternal in the heavens." And with that house, which is from heaven, I earnestly desire to be clothed, "that mortality might be swallowed up of life" (II Cor. 5:1-4). "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened," but in the glorious regions beyond we will never again breathe a sigh nor labor under the burdens that are common to this life.

There is not a lot revealed in the Bible about heaven, but everything it does convey to us of that blissful abode is very wonderful, and causes us (God's believing children) to look forward to it with sweet anticipation. How glorious indeed is the prospect of one day being with Jesus in a state of incessant joy and perfection. His felt presence with us here in time makes for a little heaven on earth, but how much more glorious it will be when we not only see Him "face to face" (I Cor. 13:12) and behold him in righteousness, but when we also bear His likeness. "We shall be like him," and "we shall see him as he is" (Psalm 17:15 & I John 3:2). With this blessed state of affairs we will be perfectly satisfied, and, being satisfied, we will be completely content with all things just as they are, however that may be. There will be no room for improvements and we will desire no changes.

If we were called upon to summarize the state of a glorified saint in one word we suppose it could not be better comprehended briefly than in the term satisfied. To be with Christ and to be like Christ is to be satisfied, and to be satisfied is to be perfectly content with things exactly as they are.

Also contributing greatly to the satisfaction of the children of God in glory will be the fact that sin and sinners will have no place there. It has been well said that this alone would be worth dying for. Every heaven-born child of God feels the awful weight of indwelling sin, and longs to be free of it; and they also know what it is to have their ears wounded and their hearts vexed from time to time by their inevitable contact with the wicked, and by a subsequent exposure to their filthy conversation. Such things often make us exclaim with David, "Oh that I had wings, like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest" (Psalm 55:6). How inexpressably glorious to be forever separated from the oppression and hatred of the wicked, and never again to be distressed with the outcroppings of sin from within our own carnal nature!

One of the most pleasing aspects of our final conformity to our great Head and Lawgiver is the fact that we will be holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. When the wicked die they "cease from troubling" (Job 3:17). One of the things they most delight in doing while they live in this world is to trouble God's people, but when they die they will never again persecute or otherwise distress the righteous, for they will be forever severed from them (Matt. 13:49 & 25:32).

When we enter the eternal security of heaven's gates all afflictions will cease. There will be no sin in heaven, and consequently there will be no pain. Oh what a wonderful prospect is this, especially for those who for many years, or perhaps all their lives, have suffered with various maladies! The words of Revelation 21:4, though perhaps requiring a timely application, nevertheless describe very accurately things as they will be when God ushers His people into the heavenly state: "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..."

No small part of the joy of heaven will be our immunity from the temptations of Satan. What awful torments have entered into this nether world through his agency. As we view him slandering such dear men of God as Job and inflicting, by the sufferage of God, such terrible miseries upon him; and as we see him busily engaged in such things as transforming himself into an angel of light (II Cor. 11:14) and catching away the good seed that is sown in the hearts of many of those who hear the gospel (Matt. 13:19), sowing tares among them (13:38,39) and walking about seeking whom he may devour (I Peter 5:8), how thankful we are that we shall one day be placed forever out of his reach, and altogether shielded from his awful wrath and hatred.

These are a few of the things that make heaven so wonderfully appealing to me. I am sure our situation there will far exceed anything any of us could ever imagine, but we know enough about it to be convinced that it is a wonderful place, and we have had enough of a foretaste of it to greatly desire to be carried there some sweet day. It is a precious hope indeed!

---Elder Ralph Harris