What the Bible Says About
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The Believer's Eternal Home

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FOREWORD

We are living in a day of crumbling thrones. The world is seething with those inner rumblings of restlessness and uncertainties that bespeak a coming cataclysm. We can truly say, "Change and decay in all around I see." Surely the rapture of the saints draweth nigh.

What then? My heart was prompted to write to my inner circle of friends both in my church, and in radio land, a brief message on Heaven, as a sure and steadfast hope, an anchor to the soul.

Heaven is not only a comfort, but it is a sure comfort. Christ said, "Let not your heart be troubled ... in my Father's house are many mansions ... if it were not so I would have told you."

In this message we have not covered all of God's revealed truth about Heaven and the coming glories. For instance, we have not dealt with the twofold descent of the New Jerusalem during the millennial age and the age of the new earth to follow. There is much more that could be said.

We trust, however, that what we have written may be blessed of God and used by Him to comfort the saints to whom we are privileged to minister, and also to call our unsaved friends to a sure faith in Christ Jesus as a personal Saviour.

At the close of the book is a dedicatory pledge, which I trust many among our younger Christian friends will feel led to sign. There will also be found a place for those who are willing to accept Christ, to record their confession of Christ as Saviour and Lord.

—L. T. T.
WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT HEAVEN

ONE COLD wintry day during a pastorate in the Middle West, I was asked to call at the home of a woman who was said to be dying. All the occupants of the home were strangers to me. On entering the house, I was met by a man who proved to be the husband of the dying woman, and also by her mother and father who were there—and the attitude of all of them was one of bitterness and resentment.

When I introduced myself as a minister of the gospel, they cried out with vehement rudeness, "If you have a God, He must be a monster to permit what is going on upstairs!"

They declared in one breath that they did not believe in God and in the next that they did—but that they had no confidence in His love, His mercy, or His justice.

"If you want us to believe in your God," the husband blurted out, "let Him now restore my wife to health."

"Yes," the parents chimed in, "let Him raise our daughter from this deathbed."

I tried to speak calmly. "My friends," I replied, "I know there is a God, and that He is merciful as well as just. His Word says so. But you can never get anything from Him by approaching Him in the belligerent attitude you are showing.

"And now," I added, "may we go to the patient’s room?"
Not too willingly, someone led the way. When I entered that bedroom, it seemed to me I was passing from Satan's territory into Heaven itself, for the one whom I met there had that sweet, confident restfulness which belongs only to the children of God. I sat by her bedside and spoke to her of the Saviour and of Heaven. I am not sure how many scriptures I read to her—precious passages on which she and every other sinner must rest his or her faith—but the following must have been among them:

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God” (I Pet. 3:18).

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24).

When I asked the question, “Are you sure that when you pass out of this world you will go to be with Christ?” she replied with beautiful confidence, “I know that my Redeemer liveth.”

Just then the husband came into the room and the wife beckoned him to come near. She put her arms around him and told him that she was going to Heaven. She tried to express to him what Christ meant to her, how He had enabled her to live victoriously and was empowering her to die triumphantly. She told him also that if he would put his trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and accept Him as his Saviour, they two would meet again.

A few moments later, the father and mother who had said such hard words against the love and mercy of God, also entered the room. Their daughter spoke to them persuasively of the grace and love of God, and reminded them that she had earnestly endeavored to lead them all to Christ.

“It may be,” she said, “that this is God’s way of bringing you to give heed to those things that are really worth while.”

Two hours later, she passed into the presence of the Redeemer whom she loved.

That afternoon, I had the privilege of leading the husband and also the father and mother to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their lives during the years which followed revealed that a real heart change had taken place with each of them.

“Just think,” they often would exclaim rapturously, “now all of us are going to be ‘ever with the Lord!’”

Yes, the destiny of every child of God is to be “ever with the Lord.” His everlasting home is to be the New Earth with its New Jerusalem. The consummation of his hope is to be the fashioning of his own body like unto that of Him who redeemed him. His highest vocation is to share the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Christian passes through this world as a pilgrim and a stranger, by faith looking ahead to the “city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” When he enters that eternal abode, his pilgrimage is over and he is at Home.

The perfection of God’s provision of a home for His redeemed children is beyond all human under-
standing. Eloquent descriptions of Heaven have come from the gifted pens and lips of renowned writers and preachers—utterances based upon the revelation in God’s Word. But when once we reach the presence of God and see the King in His glory, when we gaze upon that glorious place in which we are to reside, our confession will be like that of Solomon’s visitor: “The half was not told me.”

Here, in the twilight of earth, the heart yearns for the sunnier clime of Heaven. Trials, losses, tears, and graves create a longing for the land never ravaged by the sorrows and sins of this mortal life. We long for complete deliverance from a groaning and travailing creation. Death, as it touches some loved one of ours, turns our thoughts heavenward, perhaps more than any other experience. When a dear one, trusting in Christ, has been snatched from our side, we wonder what our departed friend is doing in the life beyond the grave. We shall never know the full story until we arrive and see for ourselves. However, the Bible gives us a sufficient though a partial revelation of that tearless, sinless, deathless home which God is preparing for all who love and trust Him. It is pleasing to Him that we should desire to know beforehand the information He has given about where we are to spend the eternal ages.

The prospect of going to a new home always creates a special interest. For example, before I left Australia to reside in America, I spent a great deal of time gathering information about this country. Every atlas in my father’s home was consulted and marked. The time-tables of American railroads were eagerly perused, and literature pertaining to the United States was studied carefully. You see, I was planning to live here, and I wanted to know about my new home in advance of my arriving here.

My friends, if God has invited us to spend eternity in another realm and with Him, then it is to be expected that He has recorded important facts in His Word about that

“... land of pure delight,
Where saints immortal reign.”

And, to be sure, He has provided this information, for many pages of His blessed Word are given to a portrayal not only of the eternal dwelling place, but also of the enjoyments and employments of all those who, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, have become members of the heavenly family. This revelation is eminently calculated to comfort God’s people, to enable them to carry their burdens on earth more bravely, and to stimulate their longing for the heavenly home.

This being true, we children of God should dwell more and more on the subject of Heaven. Nothing else will so surely help to sanctify our hearts and lives and tend to separate us from the things that mar our testimony as will a contemplation of our high calling in Christ Jesus and our eternal abiding with Him. Nothing else will cheer us as will the prospect of being at home with the Lord. How blessedly comforting are the words of our Saviour that He uttered when He was about to leave earth and return to Heaven:

“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

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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).

What scenes, what joys, await the redeemed one! And these are for every child of God—even the weakest and poorest—who has been “born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever.”

As one meditates on this subject, naturally there are questions that arise. Within the limits of this brief and informal study, it is possible to discuss only a few of these queries, but for every one of them an answer will be sought from the Word of God:

1. Can we know that there is a heavenly city and a life after death?
2. Is the heavenly home a literal place or just a state of mind?
3. Where is Heaven?
4. What is Heaven?
5. What are the enjoyments and employments in the New Jerusalem?
6. Is there an intermediary state?
7. Why does God not permit the saved on earth to communicate with the saved in Heaven?
8. How can one go to Heaven?

I.

CAN WE KNOW THAT THERE IS A HEAVENLY CITY AND A LIFE AFTER DEATH?

The Apostle Paul, in discussing the believer and his relation to death and eternity, makes three statements that ring with confidence. He declares:

“For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (II Cor. 5:1).

Emphasizing this assurance, he continues:

“We are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord” (II Cor. 5:6).

And finally he affirms emphatically:

“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (II Cor. 5:8).

Paul’s threelfold affirmation—“we know,” “we are always confident,” “we are confident”—is the answer of the Holy Spirit to those who hold that whatever may be said about the believer’s heavenly home is all idle speculation and the product of imagination. There are certain facts that we, as humble believers in the written and the living Word, may know beyond the shadow of a doubt.
Science and philosophy, being unmixed with faith in the declarations of the Word of God, can return no complete answer to Nature's two mysteries, life and death. That is the reason the ancient heathen often would build great tombs over their dead and carve upon them inverted torches. They could not represent the torch as being extinguished, because they still loved the departed one, and how could they love—nothing? They dared not put the torch erect in a strong hand, because they did not know for a certainty that it still burned, that the life continued after death. It seemed to them to have gone out.

Again, the ancient Greeks symbolized by means of a broken column a life terminated in death. The firm-set foundation, the sculptured base, the fluted shaft—these were there. But when the eye, craving completeness, looked for the crown at the top of the structure, there was none to be seen—only a sharp fracture. The memorial stood there, a beautiful fragment, supporting nothing and ending nowhere. No doubt many have seen the broken column even in this day, but perhaps did not know that this concept originated with the ancient Greeks who attempted to express that, in spite of their advanced philosophy, they did not know whether life continued after death.

Within more recent years, two of the most eloquent of unbelievers have spoken upon this mystery of life and death, and they, too, have echoed uncertainty. It is significant that they have expressed in words what the Greeks carved in marble. The atheistic orator, Robert G. Ingersoll, declared at the funeral of his brother:

“Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry.”

On the same occasion, an agnostic and a Senator, whose name is not recorded, said of his friend:

“He has gone to an undiscovered country. Whether his journey thither was but one step across the imperceptible frontier, or whether an interminable ocean, black, unfluctuating and voiceless, stretches between these earthly coasts and those invisible shores, we do not know.”

Over against the horror of the heathen’s despair and of the unbeliever’s dreadful uncertainty, we place these words of divine assurance:

“We know.”
“We are confident.”
“We are always confident.”

And why may we be so sure? Heaven is not an unexplored country as skeptics would have us believe. The apostle who wrote the words which have just been quoted had himself been “caught up to the third heaven . . . into paradise, and [had] heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (II Cor. 12:2, 4).

Again, John, called the beloved disciple, had been given on the Isle of Patmos such a clear vision of the land of glory that it doubtless became as familiar to
him as the scenes of your home town are familiar to you. But most convincing of all is the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is “at home” in Heaven. He has lived there through past ages, and (reverently we say it) He ought to know something about this glorious place! He does know, and He does tell us—all that it is needful for us to know now. He explored every avenue of death; He arose with the cry of the conqueror:

“I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death” (Revelation 1:18).

Thank God! He has the keys of death and of the unseen world. He is Himself the way to the Father’s house. What greater assurance could one ask for than that which He already has provided?

II.

IS THE HEAVENLY HOME A LITERAL PLACE OR JUST A STATE OF MIND?

Twice the Lord Jesus called the eternal dwelling of redeemed ones “a place”:

“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” (John 14:2, 3).

These were the words with which the Lord comforted His troubled disciples on the eve of His returning to Heaven. He told them that He was leaving them, and despair gripped their hearts. However, He sought to wipe their fears away with the assurance that one day He and they would be in a place which He was going to prepare, a city of “many mansions.”

That Heaven must be an actual abode, and not a mental state, is further proved by the fact that Enoch, Elijah, and Christ Himself ascended from the earth in bodily form. If Heaven is not a place, where can their bodies be? And where will the bodies of the saints exist after the resurrection?

Heaven is not a ghostly unreality. It is just as really a place as is New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles—only more so, because these earthly cities have the marks of decay upon them, and they will one day crumble and mingle with the dust of earth. But the heavenly city is eternal.

It is true, of course, that in the ages to come we believers will be in “a heavenly state of mind.”
realization prompted Canon Farrar, in his *Eternal Hope*, to say, "Heaven is to be something rather than to go somewhere." Or, as another writer has said, "Heaven means a state of character, not just a place of residence." Now all such statements as these may have truth in them—but they are not the whole truth. Heaven is to be a state of mind and heart and soul, unquestionably; but it is more than that. It is a place of residence, too.

What do we know about this divinely prepared "place"? In the book of Revelation, the wonderful place that will be the eventual and continual home of the redeemed is called "the holy city, new Jerusalem" (Rev. 21:2). John, who was given a foregleam of its glory, records the city's dimensions:

"And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, a hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel" (Rev. 21:15-17).

No human eye ever has seen on earth such a city as this. Starting from the center of our own city, Los Angeles, though it is the fifth largest in the United States, one can travel only a comparatively few miles until he reaches the city limits. But this heavenly city is beyond earthly parallel.

J. A. Seiss, in *The Apocalypse*, beautifully describes the eternal abiding place of those who have been redeemed by Christ's precious blood:

"The golden city for which the Church of the first-born is taught to look as its eternal home is 1,500 miles square; for 12,000 stadia make 1,500 miles. John saw it measured, and this was the measure of it, just as wide as it is long, and just as high as it is wide; for 'the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.' Here would be streets over streets, and stories over stories, up, up, up, to the height of 1,500 miles, and each street 1,500 miles long. Thus this city is a solid cube of golden constructions, 1,500 miles every way. The base of it would stretch from furthest Maine to furthest Florida, and from the shore of the Atlantic to Colorado. It would cover all Britain, Ireland, France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Austria, Prussia, European Turkey, and half of European Russia, taken together! Stupendous magnitude!"

This wonderful city is to be the everlasting home of all who have trusted the Lord Jesus Christ. It is where God will manifest His presence, where Christ will abide in His resurrection body. It is, moreover, to be recognized as the capital of God's universe. And oh, the unfathomable vastness of this universe! Astronomers tell us that this earth is a very small thing as compared to the millions of other planets that surround it.
For illustration, let us suppose that one could take an augur and bore a hole in the sun. If he could do this, he could pour 1,200,000 earths like ours into this cavity and still have room for 4,300,000 moons to be lodged around inside the edge! But even the sun is small, comparatively, because some fixed stars such as Alpha Centauri are five times larger than our sun. We are told that “the Milky Way” is composed of untold millions of suns, some of them so far away that the light traveling from them to the earth at 186,000 miles a second requires almost 100,000 years to arrive here. How, then, shall we think of our earth in relation to the whole universe? As a single grain of sand, at the base of a single blade of grass in the vastness of a Manitoba prairie, so is our earth when compared with the rest of God’s universe! Think for a moment of the incomprehensible outreaches of this great universe. And then remember that the government of it—the upholding of it—all emanates from that holy place where Christ is at the right hand of the Father.

III.

WHERE IS HEAVEN?

The Scriptures proclaim the existence of three heavens, and the context of each passage determines which one is in the mind of the writer. First of all, there is the aerial heaven, where birds fly, the winds blow, and the rain is formed. Satan, as the prince of the power of the air, has his abode somewhere in this area.

Then we have the second or planetary heavens wherein the sun, moon, and stars are set. And it is these heavens that “declare the glory of God,” as the psalmist affirms.

Last of all, we have the heaven of heavens, the third heaven, God’s residence and the dwelling place of angels and of the redeemed. This sacred precinct of light and joy is “the habitation of his holiness, the place where his honor dwelleth.” It is different from the other two localities in that it is entirely separated from the impurities and imperfections, the alterations and changes, of the lower realms.

Ultimately, the redeemed of all ages will, by the grace of God, have their habitation in His holy presence. The Old Testament saints will be there. Prior to Calvary, the spirits of the righteous dead went to Paradise (or Sheol) which was one division of “the place of the departed spirits.” Hades (or hell) was the other section. But sometimes the word translated
"hell" is used loosely to mean both sections, as in Psalm 16:10 and Acts 2:27. Paradise, in the Old Testament times, was not identical with Heaven, though it has been since the resurrection and ascension of our Lord. When the Lord Jesus died on Calvary, His body rested in Joseph's new tomb for three days and three nights, while His spirit went to the abode of the righteous dead who had lived from the time of Adam to the time of Christ. Through His death on the cross, Christ opened the way for believers to enter Heaven, God's dwelling place. And thereby He made it possible for the redeemed of the Old Testament days who were in Paradise, a waiting place, to ascend with Him into the presence of the Father. Because all believers are identified with Christ by faith, and because death could not in any way hold Him, it follows that every believer—whether living before Calvary or after it—is assured of eternal residence in the Saviour's presence.

Looking ahead, now, to that time of the complete ingathering of all those who are and shall have been redeemed in all the ages, and to that place of their permanent residence, we turn our attention to the eternal city and seek the enlightenment of God's Word concerning it.

The Scripture always speaks of Heaven as "up" from the earth. We read that "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (II Kings 2:11). Again, "when he [Christ] had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9). And again, "then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds" (I Thess. 4:17).

But which way is "up"? If we say it is in the direction at right angles with the earth's surface wherever one may happen to be, then it would follow that "up" would be in a somewhat different direction from every part of the globe. The earth is round, and if a command were given for everybody to look up, broadly speaking every person on earth would look in a different direction from every other person. If Heaven is just "up," then Heaven is everywhere in general and nowhere in particular.

But this is not what the Word of God teaches. When the Lord ascended, He went somewhere in particular and not everywhere in general.

My friend, Dr. W. L. Pettingill, discussed in the Church of the Open Door not long ago this subject of the locality of Heaven. His conviction is that the eternal abiding place of the redeemed, the New Jerusalem, is in the north; and to bear out this view he called attention to Isaiah 14:12-15, where the fall of Lucifer is described. Lucifer was the name for Satan before his fall, and the event of his being cast out of Heaven is graphically pictured:

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit."

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This passage reveals a great mystery. Lucifer said, "I will ascend into heaven . . . I will be like the Most High." In so declaring he locates where the city of God is:

1. It is "above the stars of God."
2. It is "above . . . the clouds."
3. It is "in the sides of the north."

That Heaven is above the stars of God and above the heights of the clouds we have learned from other passages, but here we have the additional information that it is "in the sides of the north," or, as the Revised Version puts it, "in the uttermost parts of the north."

Dr. Pettingill called attention to another significant passage, Psalm 75. In the first verse, God is addressed as follows:

"Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks: for that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare."

Beginning at verse 2, God Himself speaks:

"When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly. The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it. I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly: and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn: . . . For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge" (Psa. 75:2-7).

Here it is implied that the throne of God where He judges uprightly is in the north. Since it is not in the east, nor in the west, nor in the south, it must be
IV.

WHAT IS HEAVEN?

The Bible never discusses Heaven theoretically, but from a practical point of view. Reflections upon Heaven are never a waste of time. Rather do they provide a moral force for our practical life upon this earth. A true believer, longing for Heaven, is never too heavenly minded to be of no earthly use!

The Biblical description of Heaven is made up of an array of positives and negatives. More is said of what is not in Heaven, than of what is to be there. For example, John gives us a list of "no mores." Heaven is made up of the absence of many elements that characterize our life on earth. There will be no more pain, no more night, no more sorrow, no more crying, no more curse, no more tears, and no more death. Seeing that all the former adversities cannot enter that holy place to mar the bliss of the redeemed, every true Christian longs to be there.

Summarizing the teaching of Scripture regarding the exact nature of Heaven, the following aspects may prove to be helpful.

Heaven is a place of inexpressible beauty. It is called a place of "many mansions," "a building of God, an house not made with hands," "a city," "a better country," "an inheritance," "glory." Our God is a God of beauty. This world must have been very beautiful when it first came from the hand of God. Although sin has come in and brought chaos and the blight of death to everything, still there remains some evidence of the original glory. But the New Jerusalem never will know sin and its fruits. It will be perfect in form and splendor. John was granted a glimpse of it one day from his lonely island of Patmos, and he tried to describe what he saw. But no human words could portray the magnificence that he beheld.

The late Dr. W. E. Biederwolf has related the story of a little girl, blind from birth, on whose eyes a noted surgeon worked a successful operation. As the scenes of earth came into her line of vision for the first time, she ran into her mother's arms and cried, "Oh, Mother, why didn't you tell me the world was so beautiful?"

The mother, wiping away her own tears, replied, "My child, I tried to tell you, but I could not do it. You had to see it for yourself."

One day you and I shall stand in the glory, and when we catch a vision of the splendor of that city, perhaps we shall say to the beloved disciple, "John, why didn't you tell us it was so beautiful?"

And I think John will reply something like this: "I did my best to describe its glory, in the last chapter of Revelation. It was the best I could do. But to really know, you had to see it for yourself."

And, oh, my friends, we shall see it. This is the glad experience that awaits even the weakest of the children of God. Praise His name!

Heaven is a place of companionship of all the redeemed of all ages. God no doubt has infinite surprises in store for us. Paul says, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man,
the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit" (I Cor. 2:9). Think of being intimate with Peter, James, and John! Think of sitting down with these eye witnesses of stupendous happenings and having them tell us about the transfiguration, the resurrection, the ascension. Imagine conversing with Paul and Silas; with Mary, the mother of our Lord; with Elijah, and Daniel, and Abel, the first martyr. We shall meet the reformers, John Huss, Martin Luther, John Wycliffe, and others, as well as great evangelists of modern times: Wesley, Whitefield, Finney, Moody, Torrey. We shall see Gabriel and Michael. We shall behold a myriad of angels. Our loved ones will be there—those who have died trusting in the finished work of Calvary.

"Friends will be there
I have loved long ago."

I shall see my dear old mother, and you shall see yours if she was in her lifetime a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall clasp that precious hand once more and hear that well loved voice.

But above all, we shall see the Lord Jesus Christ, for the Word of God assures us that "we shall see his face." We are to be "for ever with the Lord." Heaven would not be Heaven, without Him.

I have read somewhere of a child who was inconsolable over the loss of her mother. Her father, for a change of scenery, sent her to another locality. While she was gone, he built a beautiful house and filled it with rare and costly furnishings. Then he sent for his little girl and brought her into the house which he had built. But he could not interest her in any part of it. She would give one quick look around the room that was being shown to her, and then would ask to be shown to the next.

At last, her father had to say, "My child, there are no more rooms. You have seen them all."

And then she fell to the floor with a despairing cry: "O Mama, O Mama, this is not home without you!"

Our grateful hearts can understand the child's feeling and we can say with reverent adoration, "O blessed Lord Jesus, even Heaven would not be Heaven without Thee!"

It is not the golden streets that we look for, but we long to "see his face."

When we stand in that glorious company, we shall not be afraid. We shall not only see Him, but we shall be like Him, and we shall praise His name forever.

Several years ago, I was going across the Pacific. I was standing on the promenade deck, watching the blazing sun about to disappear over the horizon. There were innumerable little white-crested waves moving in a westerly direction and each one seemed to be doing obeisance to the sun. As I gazed upon that sight, I thought of that day when the redeemed of all the ages will stand in Immanuel's land, and every head will be turned in the direction of the Son of God and the united voices of that vast multitude will acclaim: "Thou ... hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and
people, and nation. . . Worthy is the Lamb that was slain. . . Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (Rev. 5:9-13).

Heaven is a place of glad reunions. The Apostle Paul comforted the Thessalonians who were sorrowing because of the death of loved ones by saying, “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (I Thess. 4:17). How well do we remember the time when the hearse came for the body of one of our dear ones! We shall meet that dear one again, if he or she died in Christ.

Some people ask the question, “Shall we know each other in Heaven?” If mutual recognition were not to be had in Heaven, how could Paul say to the Thessalonians, “We . . . shall be caught up together with them [our departed dead]. . . Wherefore comfort one another with these words”? There would be no comfort in being caught up with our loved ones if we did not recognize them or know who they were! As Moses and Elijah were recognized by others on the Mount of Transfiguration; as Stephen knew his Lord as he was being stoned, and as Dives in hell recognized Lazarus and Abraham, so in the life beyond the grave each of us shall know even as also we are known.

This belief in continued recognition after death has been beautifully set forth in a silent testimony. There are graven on the tombstone which marks the place where Charles Kingsley and his wife both are buried, the three Latin words, “Amavimus, Amamus, Amabimus,” which when translated mean, “We have loved; we love; we shall love.” Such was Kingsley’s faith! And such is ours!

“And with the morn
Those angel faces smile,
Which I have loved long since
And lost awhile.”

When D. L. Moody lay dying, his son leaned over him to listen to his last utterance. And these were the words that he heard: “Earth is receding; Heaven is opening; God is calling.”

“You are dreaming, Father,” said the son, gently. “No, Will, this is no dream. I have been within the gates. I have seen the children’s faces.”

“The children’s faces” referred to Mr. Moody’s children who had preceded him to the glory land.

Yes, there will be glad reunions. We have Christ’s own words of assurance for that in Matthew 8:11: “And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.” That verse assures us of preserved personalities. What a blessed thought!

In connection with the prospect of reunions in Heaven, one may ask a question in regard to children. Speaking of little ones, the Lord uttered these precious words: “In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 18:10). Could you wish for a more delightful occupation for the darling of your heart and home?
It is sometimes asked, "Do children grow after their spirits have passed from earth?" Some writers suggest that those who pass away in childhood have their purpose in Heaven—as children—that without them much would be missed in Heaven by all motherly and fatherly hearts. This view is based on the premise that apart from human life on earth, human growth, increase, and development cannot be; and that, whether child, youth, or patriarch at the time of death, to whatever status the individual has attained, so he or she abides. Accordingly, while others might have grown sons or daughters there, a mother would have her child in Heaven as a child forever. Hence it is pointed out that when Christ comes to raise our bodies, He will raise them just as when they were first put into the ground, without having aged in any way. Thus children of one year would still be, in size and appearance, children of one year, and children of ten years would still look like children of ten.

This view, while it has in it an element of comfort and possibility, nevertheless presents some difficulties. For example: If a mother goes to be with Christ at the age of thirty-five, and her child, who is then ten years old, is permitted to live to a ripe old age, would it seem strange to the mother to find this older person as the little daughter she had known and loved?

Other writers affirm that as progress is characteristic of all God's working, the place of His eternal habitation will be the scene for advance along all lines. Following this reasoning, children would not remain juvenile. But the mother who crosses the threshold of the life beyond would instantly realize that her child had grown and would receive him as her own nevertheless, with the same individual traits that had endeared him to her.

F. C. Spurr tells of a friend of his who had lost a child, and who sent him a card printed in silver, bearing the words: "In memory of our little Donald, lent to us for two years; the sunshine of our home, recalled by the Father, now at school with the angels for his tutors." What a sweet thought this is!

Now both of these views are suggestive, but no one can dogmatize as to which one is correct. This we know, that no matter what change may be wrought upon their forms, our loved ones still will be ours. Mary recognized the risen Lord Jesus by the sweet intonation of His voice when He called her name. The Emmaus disciples recognized the hands of their beloved Lord as He broke bread with them. The loved traits of human nature are not destroyed by the grave. Richard Baxter, in his fine hymn on the Confidence and Covenant of Faith expresses the true Christian point of view:

"My knowledge of that life is small,
The eye of faith is dim;
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,
And I shall be with Him."

Heaven is a place of universal and perfect knowledge. How little we know here on earth, even the wisest of men! Sir Isaac Newton, when an old man, said to one who praised his wisdom, "I am as a child on the seashore picking up a pebble here and a shell there, but the great ocean of truth still lies before me." But in Heaven the most uneducated souls (so far as human standards go) will fathom the great ocean of truth.
In Heaven, we shall understand the mysteries of God and why He led us along the way that seemed strange to us. We shall understand then why the financial reverses, the tears, the heartaches, the sleepless nights have entered into our experience. We shall realize then how fully true is the statement in Romans 8:28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

How unsearchable are some of God's ways with us! We cannot understand why God allows this man to retain his strength and vitality, and takes away another man's health; or why God leaves this Christian with $20,000.00 a year and takes away practically every penny from some other man. But nothing "happens" in the providence of God.

Some time ago a Christian friend and I were recounting our experiences over a period of twenty-five years. During all that time, I had lacked no necessary provision. My friend told me that before the depression he had supported ten missionaries. But he said that when the collapse of 1929 came, his entire fortune was wiped away, and many a day he and his wife had sat at the breakfast table drinking coffee without sugar or cream because they did not have sufficient money to buy these supplies. God had seen best to test him severely, but the full purpose of that testing and of the glorious testimony that grew out of it can be known only when we are at home with the Lord.

My friends, never try to find out reasons for the providences of God. If you do so, your soul will grow dark and cold. Just trust God, and you will learn some day that all the tears and heartaches were essential as God views human needs. Poor Jacob cried, "All these things are against me," when he heard that Benjamin was wanted in Egypt after Joseph had been taken away from him. But later he came to see that the very things that seemed to be against him had worked out for his good and for the preservation of his whole family. When you stand on the glory side and look at the pathway along which you have come, you will thank God for the loving heart that planned and for the pierced hand that led you all the way.

Some years ago when I was a pastor in Minneapolis, Minnesota, I had in my congregation a woman who spent the last ten years of her life upon a sick-bed. She scarcely knew a day without pain, and yet she gave herself to the giving of thanks to God for the very testing through which she was passing. After her triumphant death, her husband found the following poem in her Bible. The title is "The Weaver."

"My life is but a weaving
Between my Lord and me:
I cannot choose the colors;
He worketh steadily.
Ofttimes He weaveth sorrow,
And I in foolish pride
Forget He sees the upper,
And I, the under side.

Not till the loom is silent
And the shuttles cease to fly,
Shall God unroll the canvas
And explain the reason why
The dark threads are as needful
In the Weaver's skillful hand"
As the threads of gold and silver
In the pattern He has planned.

"He knows, He loves, He cares;
Nothing this truth can dim.
He gives His very best to those
Who leave the choice with Him."

Thus in joy or sorrow, in sickness or health, in riches or in poverty, in life or in death, our testimony is to the assurance of God's unfailling purpose: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." "We know" only in part here, but there we shall fully know.

Finally, Heaven is to be an eternal place. There we shall have all the eternal ages in which to worship, praise, and serve our wonderful Lord. In Hebrews 13:14, the apostle refers to a "continuing city," in contrast to the perishing abodes of this earth. Earth's greatest metropolises soon crumble into dust. Where are Nineveh and Babylon with their pomp and dazzling glory? They are gone, and the ruins lie buried beneath the accumulated debris of the ages. Only a few mournful bits remain of the ancient city of Rome, once called "the eternal city."

But the New Jerusalem has God as its Builder and Maker, and it never shall pass away. The city and the joys as well are to be endless. Their glories will never be marred.

V.

WHAT ARE THE ENJOYMENTS AND EMPLOYMENTS IN THE NEW JERUSALEM?

From what the Bible reveals, there will be no monotony in Heaven.

In Heaven there will be an eternal unfolding of the glories of God and of His Son in the work of redemption. This fact is clearly implied in Revelation 22:1:

"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."

This verse is a part of the description of the heavenly Jerusalem, as the portion which immediately follows speaks of "the street of it," evidently identifying it with what has gone before in the previous chapter. What does this "river of water of life ... proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" mean? May it not refer to the Holy Spirit's testimony to Christ? Believers have all drunk of that testimony here on earth, for "the Spirit ... beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God" (Rom. 8: 16). But, beloved, there will be in the eternal ages a never ending unfolding of the matchless glory of the Person and work of our wonderful Lord. It will pass before our wondering eyes like the constant flowing of an endless river.
This thought is made clear from other scriptures. In turning to John’s Gospel, we find it said of Christ in the first chapter, “In him was life,” and that He was “full of grace and truth.” Again, you will recall how the Lord Himself spoke to the sinful Samaritan woman about the necessity of drinking “living water” in order to find peace and joy. He said:

“If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water” (John 4:10).

He who was Himself the life, the dispenser of living water, spoke to a sinner dead in trespasses and sins, and He also referred to the effect of living water on one’s soul. Speaking of the water of Jacob’s well, He said:

“Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:13, 14).

Dear fellow-believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, you have drunk of that living water which is Christ Himself; otherwise you could not be saved. But among the blessed features of the New Jerusalem is the flowing of the river of water of life from the throne of God and of the Lamb, representing Christ as He is yet to be known. Fresh wonders of the Saviour’s person will be unfolded endlessly.

In Heaven there will be habitual worship. Of the home of the redeemed, John makes a somewhat surprising statement: “And I saw no temple therein” (Rev. 21:22). There will be a temple in the earthly millennial Jerusalem, but none in the New Jerusalem, the believers’ eternal home. No matter how sweet the idea of an earthly house of worship may be to you, any such structure localizes God. But in that heavenly city, there will be no temple, for, if I may so speak, the whole city is a temple: “The Lord God almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.” There will be no need of any building to enclose the divine presence and to exclude any individual, for continually the redeemed ones will be aware of their function and privilege as worshippers.

Then, too, in Heaven there will be continual praise. A great multitude is pictured in Revelation 7:10 as standing before the throne of God, crying with a loud voice, “Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” In that coming day, we sinners saved by grace shall glorify the Lord as we ought, because we shall understand fully, as we cannot now, what it means to be saved and how much we owe to our Redeemer. Robert Murray McCheyne must have had this thought in mind when he wrote:

“When this passing world is done,
When has sunk yon glowing sun,
When we stand with Christ in glory,
Looking o’er life’s finished story,
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not till then—how much I owe.
"When I stand before the throne, 
Dressed in beauty not my own, 
When I see Thee as Thou art, 
Love Thee with unsinning heart, 
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not till then—how much I owe.

"When the praise of Heaven I hear, 
Loud as thunder to the ear, 
Loud as many waters’ noise, 
Sweet as harp’s melodious voice, 
Then, Lord, shall I fully know—
Not till then—how much I owe.

"Even on earth, as through a glass 
Darkly, let Thy glory pass, 
Make forgiveness feel so sweet, 
Make Thy Spirit’s help to meet, 
Even on earth, Lord, make me know 
Something of how much I owe."

In Heaven there will be also continual service. 
This is clearly stated in Revelation 22:3: “And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him.” The sphere of this service will not be limited to the earth during the millennial reign of Christ, but to the whole created universe. The church will reign with Christ over the earth for a thousand years, but she is also linked with all of God’s creation as a co-heir with Christ. Ultimately, the service of Christians will extend to the whole created universe.

What the character of this service is to be is not revealed. However, we shall not grow tired in it. One has said, “I often grow tired in the Lord’s service, but not of it.” This fatigue is due to this body of humiliation. But in the coming day we shall know no limitation or weariness. We shall have our glorified bodies, which are discussed at length in I Corinthians 15:35-54. The Christian’s glorified body will be glorious, powerful, honorable, incorruptible. Our resurrection bodies will be like the resurrection body of Christ (cf. I John 3:2; Phil. 3:20, 21). That our Lord’s body was real, even as ours will be real, is seen in His words, “Handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet” (Lk. 24:39, 40). Yet the fact that His body knew no limitation is evidenced by His vanishing out of their sight. Neither will our bodies be subject to the limitation with which we are familiar in this life.

Beloved, we shall never grow weary. We shall mount up with wings as eagles; we shall run, and not be weary; and we shall walk, and not faint. In this glorified body we shall render perfect and continuous service, and our service will be wholly to the glory of our wonderful Lord.
VI.

IS THERE AN INTERMEDIARY STATE?

The question may be asked: "Does a believer go immediately to Heaven at the moment of death?" The Lord said to the believing thief on the cross, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Lk. 23:43). When the stones were crushing the life from the body of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, to him the heavens were opened, and he saw his Saviour "standing on the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). He then cried out in joyful certainty of being at once with Him: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."

The Scriptures plainly teach that the passing of the redeemed spirit from the body does not for one moment arrest consciousness, but that, immediately one is "absent from the body," he is "present with the Lord" (II Cor. 5:8). This text disposes of a whole brood of unwholesome, unscriptural surmises, theories, fears, and doubts: "Absent from ... present with." There is no room here for the theory of soul sleeping or of purgatory.

And, beloved, this teaching is in accord with all the Scriptures. There is, for example, no waiting in order to receive salvation: "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).

Consider another illustration. A poor beggar, covered with sores, dies at a rich man's gates. The body is hurried away to the potter's field, no doubt, but nothing is said of the body, because the Lord is so eager to tell us where the beggar himself is! We read in Luke 16:22: "The beggar died"—that is what any passerby might observe. But look! The veil is parted, for we continue to read, "... and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." One instant, he was a despised beggar with only the dogs to pity him; the next, he was regnant, with angels as his willing servants! And then the word comes like clear, sweet music: "Lazarus ... is comforted." "Absent from ... present with." His was an immediate entrance into the presence of the Lord.

In Philippians 1:23, Paul declares:

"For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better."

Note those words, "depart and to be"—where? Is he to be in a state of soul sleep, or to enter for a period of soul purification into the flames of purgatory? No, no! For Paul, to depart from this life meant "to be with Christ." And for you, to depart from your beloved fellow-believers means the same thing—"to be with Christ."

The expression, "soul sleep," is not in the Bible, and what it implies is not taught in the Bible, either. The word "sleep" applies only to the body of a believer which awaits the return of the Lord to be raised and fashioned like unto His glorious body. Our loved ones are in the presence of the Lord now—conscious, glad, praiseful. When the Lord Jesus Christ
descends from Heaven with a shout, the departed spirits of believers will descend with Him. Their bodies will be raised—immortal, glorified—and they will assume these bodies. At the same time, living believers shall be "caught up," their bodies also instantly changed, and all will meet the Lord in the air. What a morning that will be!

When John Harper, the well known English evangelist, was journeying to America to conduct an evangelistic campaign in the Moody Church of Chicago, he was a passenger on the ill-fated Titanic. The evening of the catastrophe, Dr. Harper was standing on the deck with a friend, watching the sunset. The heavens were aglow and the picture they presented was one that only God could paint. Harper turned to his friend and said, "It will be beautiful in the morning!"

The words were almost prophetic. A few hours later, the great liner struck an iceberg, and Dr. Harper went into the Saviour's presence from the deck of the sinking ship. But for him, "the morning" was indeed "beautiful." And there is a glad and glorious morning ahead for every child of God. It will dawn when the Lord shall descend, when the bodies of believers that sleep in Christ shall awake, and when we which are alive and remain shall be caught up to meet the Lord (I Thess. 4:13-18).

"It will be beautiful in the morning!"

VII.

WHY DOES NOT GOD PERMIT THE SAVED ON EARTH TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE SAVED IN HEAVEN?

We believe that Heaven is real. We believe also that the believers who die go to be with a real Lord in a real place. Why, then, does God not strengthen our faith by giving us a realistic touch and contact with those saints who have left this earth?

Spiritism claims to answer this question and professes that the living may have communication with the dead. Seances are held and actual "appearances" are claimed to have occurred. Christian people usually mock at these spiritualistic claims, saying that there is nothing to them but fraud and trickery. But God would not have given us the warnings that He has given in the Bible against spiritism if it were harmless (cf. Deut. 18:9-12; Isaiah 8:19, 20; 1 John 4:1-3). What is in it? We answer that the devil is in it, and his demons are a part of it.

Satan is an impersonator. He will devise all kinds of lying wonders, and signs, and miracles to deceive, if possible, the very elect. We cannot now discuss at length the ruination of mind and health that have come to many who have tried to pierce the veil that hides things after death. This much we do say: All such attempts bring the seekers into contact with Satan and his powers of the air—an experience which cannot but create disastrous effects to the person who
indulges in it. Therefore, let us beware of necromancers, wizards, spiritualistic mediums, all of whom seek to enter forbidden realms.

Let us consider briefly whether or not there are any Scriptural reasons for living saints to be denied communication with loved ones who have gone to be with Christ.

We read in II Corinthians 5:7: "We walk by faith, not by sight." If God gave us "sight" into the beyond, we would be carried out of the realm of faith and would be basing our confidence chiefly upon things that we saw.

We would become trapped in "the snare of the devil," and "taken captive by him at his will" (II Tim. 2:26). Satan is "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2). If God permitted us to enter his special domain, we would be exposed unnecessarily to Satan's wiles and deceptive devices.

We who are in the flesh see now "through a glass darkly." At present, we do not possess a body adapted to contact with heavenly beings. Our present mentality could neither understand nor declare heavenly things (II Cor. 12:3, 4).

Once our Lord did permit two men from the glory to come to a mountain apart from the multitude and to talk with Him in the presence of three of His disciples. What was the result? The record is in Luke 9:28-36. First, the disciples "were heavy with sleep." Second, "They feared as they entered into the cloud." Third, they said, "Let us make three tabernacles; one for thee and one for Moses, and one for Elias." If God allowed us on earth to talk with the saints in Heaven, our reaction doubtless would be exactly the same as that of the three disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration. We, too, would sleep, dazed by the glory. We, too, would be filled with unspoken awe and fear. We, too, would respond unwisely, having only the power of human reasoning, as the disciples had. They wished to build three tabernacles—for the Lord Jesus, for Moses, and for Elias—thus committing the grievous sin of placing the Son of God on a plane of equality with the departed dead!

God does not want our worship to center in men, even in men who have gone to Heaven. To the blundering disciples, "there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him" (Lk. 9:35).

When John, on the Isle of Patmos, saw a shining one, he fell at his feet to worship him. But immediately John was reproved with the words, "See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets... worship God" (Rev. 22:9).

Believers who are with Christ "rest from their labours" (Rev. 14:13). The idea that saints are hovering around somewhere in the air above us, floating about in blissful wanderings, is utterly untrue. Our believing dead are far above the first heavens. They cannot come to us until that blessed day when "those who sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." And do you think that God would want us to bring back the saints who are happy in Him—to bring them back to this vale of tears? Have they not had their day of sorrow and of testing? Now they rest from their labors. Why should we want to contact them? Is not the Lord Jesus Christ, our great High Priest, sufficient to meet all our needs, and to bear all our burdens?
VIII.

HOW CAN ONE GO TO HEAVEN?

Surely what God has recorded in His Word regarding the endless delights of the glory land should create within every true and wise heart a desire to go to that happy place. But the question is, how? The Book that describes the city also shows the way. There is but one way, and it is open to all.

In John 14:6 we read:

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Christ is the Way. He is not merely the way-shower; He is the Way. Sin closed the gates of glory against every rebellious son of Adam. But through His death on the cross, Christ opened the way for every poor, defiled sinner to enter, if he will, into the presence of a holy God—provided that one comes through "the blood-sprinkled way."

The atoning blood of Christ is never forgotten in Heaven. In Revelation 7:14, 15, John describes a great multitude which he saw before the throne of God. When he asked who these individuals were, he was told:

"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple."

The word "therefore" makes it clear that the blood of Christ, and the blood of Christ alone gave them title to stand before the throne of God.

Christ died for our sins. He died, "the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. 3:18). Every unbeliever, in order to be saved, must take his place alongside the Lord Jesus Christ at Calvary, must acknowledge that it was for his sin that the Redeemer died, and must accept the salvation that Christ's death provides. Only through a definite acceptance of Him as one's own personal Saviour is the way opened to salvation and to Heaven.

There are those who mistakenly say it does not matter what one believes, so long as he is sincere in that belief. But if he is wrong, no matter how great the sincerity, the result is tragic. This is true in every realm of life.

In Sydney, Australia, there is one of the most beautiful harbors in the world. It has but one entrance. The only channel that is wide and deep is between two high promontories of rock known as the North Head and the South Head. A short distance from the South Head there is a depression in the coastline called "The Gap," and this gap became known as "the graveyard of ships," so often was it mistaken for the entrance to the harbor.

Many years ago, a vessel called The Dunbar with hundreds of people on board drew near the harbor after dark. The captain saw "The Gap" and thought it was the entrance to the harbor. Before he discovered his mistake, he heard the roar of the breakers
against the rocks. Every one of the hundreds of passengers perished, with the exception of one man who was thrown up onto a ledge on the high rocks. The captain had been perfectly sincere. But he was mistaken, and he was lost.

There is just one channel into salvation and everlasting bliss. That way is Christ. My friend, you cannot afford to make a mistake in regard to your eternal destiny. You can be sure of Heaven. The dominant note of the Word of God is triumphant certainty. Job said, “For I know that my redeemer liveth” (Job 19:25). The Lord Jesus said, “Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). Hear Him again declare, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me hath [not will have] everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24). Take again, the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth verses of the thirteenth chapter of Acts: “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man [Christ Jesus] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”

These verses tell me that when I commit my guilty soul into the safe-keeping of the Lord Jesus Christ, there and then I am justified from all things.

My beloved reader, if you have not accepted Christ as your own personal Saviour, let me urge you to trust Him now, to forgive you all your sins. The moment you do so, you possess everlasting life, and Heaven with all its joys and glories is yours forever. Do it today. Do it now!