

CRYING IN THE CHAPEL

AND OTHER MESSAGES

by

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CHAPTER EIGHT

BEYOND THE SUNSET

“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:1-6).

Going to heaven is not going to a place, primarily, but going to a Person. Jesus is heaven, and though the golden streets and the pearly gates and the jasper walls will be there, the main attraction of heaven will be the Person of the Saviour. Jesus told the dying thief, **“Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”** Truly to be absent in the body is to be present with the Lord.

I travel many months out of the year, and going home is a delightful experience. But when I go home, I do not go to the furnishings in the house. I go home to people who mean a great deal to me. Do you think that the next time I arrive home, I will walk into the house and say, “Hello, television set. How are you doing, drapes? Silverware, I missed you on this trip.” To be sure, these things will be there, but they are secondary and marginal. Going home is made delightful by the people who are there. So heaven, with all of its visible beauty, will be secondary in comparison to the delight of beholding the Saviour and our loved ones who are there.

When I was going to college many of my friends would come to me and say, “Angel, since leaving home and coming to college, have you begun to doubt many of the beliefs that you never questioned before you began to study philosophy and botany and zoology?”

A number of my friends would confess that they were wavering in their faith. And I found out that many of them could no longer believe in the doctrine of hell. But I will confess to you that I have never doubted the doctrine of hell. To me, hell is logical and plausible. When I review the sinful depravity of my own heart and when I look around and see devilish eruptions of man’s inhumanity to man I know that there must be a hell.

I have never had any trouble believing in hell, but do you know what has given me trouble? I have had trouble believing in heaven. How can there be a place like that; and how can the grace of God be so wonderful as to make it possible for sinners to go there? That is the greatest mystery to me.

As we review the Bible teachings of heaven, we recognize that the Word of God gives us many different pictures of heaven. The Bible calls heaven a city. It is said that Abraham **“looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.”**

- If you don't like cities, the Bible calls heaven a country. In Hebrews 11, the Word of God calls it **“a heavenly country.”**
- The Bible calls heaven a garden. The word He spoke to the dying thief when He called heaven **“paradise”** is the word for garden.
- The Bible calls heaven a banquet. In Luke 16, Jesus tells us that the poor man Lazarus went up to Abraham's bosom. This was the Jewish concept of heaven. It is the picture of a banquet, and sitting next to Abraham was heaven for the Jew.
- The Bible calls heaven a house. This is the word used in our text. Jesus is saying that in His Father's house are many rooms. The word **“mansion”** in our King James version is the picture of everyone being under one roof, at home with the Father.

The Bible talks about heaven in broad outlines. It does not give the answer to every detail, for the simple reason that the human mind cannot comprehend the glory of the future for the Christian. And if it could comprehend it, then the Christian would probably get careless concerning this life, and seek to get to heaven as quickly as possible. God has a purpose for us here. We are here, not to get ready for heaven, for that readiness is completed the moment we accept Christ. We are here to get others ready for heaven. This comprises the unique contribution of the Church to an unsaved world.

I. THE HUNGER FOR HEAVEN

Resident within the bosom of every human being there is a consummate hunger for a perfect order. Here we have no continuing city; and only an eternal order with perfect peace can satisfy a man in whose heart God has set eternity. The anthropologists remind us that every race and nationality of man has some concept of a future existence. It matters not how uncultured or pagan, man looks for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

- The Indians believed in a “happy hunting ground” where the departed spirit felled game every time he released the extended bow.
- The Egyptians would kill the servants of the departed man so they could continue to serve him in the other existence.
- The Eskimos believe in a place where warm tropical climates abound forever and where the blast of winter never returns.

On the contrary, in the lore of the desert tribes, they speak and dream about a place where the cool breezes blow forever, and the water supply is never abated.

But one finds the hunger for heaven beautifully prevalent in the sacred Scriptures.

Paul told the Philippians that he was in a strait between the two. He did not know whether he should remain here or depart and be with Christ, which was far better. He chose to stay with the friends who needed him until Christ would call him. In his letter to the Corinthians, he reflects that same hunger and includes within that hunger every true believer. He says, **“For we know, that when this earthly tabernacle is dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”** Then he continues to relate that we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened, wishing to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. For to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. The dying Stephen cried in the closing moments of his earthly sojourn, **“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”**

Modern man, enraptured by a scientific world and a mechanistic philosophy, has not ceased to long for this home which is from heaven. He often expresses this wish, subconsciously, or he reveals his longing by his deep disgust with the inability of pleasures and material things to satisfy the hunger and the mystery of his heart.

Every time a scientist goes into his laboratory and says, “I must find a cure for cancer,” whether that scientist knows it or not, he is reflecting a subconscious hunger for a world minus disease and pain. Heaven is that kind of a world; he is projecting a hunger for heaven.

Every time a social worker, viewing the slum sections, says, “We must abolish these living conditions; human beings, made in the image of God, should not live in such squalor” — whether he knows it or not, the social worker is projecting a subconscious hunger for a world minus poverty, penury, and woe. Heaven is that kind of a world. He is projecting a hunger for heaven.

Every time statesmen meet and propose solutions for the abolition of war and bloodshed, whether they know it or not, they are projecting a hunger for heaven. For heaven is a place minus tears and death and farewell; the human race is hungering for heaven.

But the poets have been most vocal in their insistence that there must be something more beyond the rim of this confusion that we call life. They have dipped their creative pens in the ink of immortality and they have bequeathed to us the rich legacy of beautiful verse. Remember Longfellow in The Psalm of Life?

Tell me not in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream;
And the soul is dead that slumbers
And things are not what they seem.

Life is real, and life is earnest,
And the grave is not its goal.
Dust thou art, to dust returnest,
Was not spoken of the soul.

Remember Kipling's immortal poem on heaven,

When earth's last picture is painted
And the tubes are twisted and dried;
When the oldest colors have faded
And the youngest critic has died;
We shall rest, and faith we shall need it,
Lay down for an aeon or two;
Till the Master of all good workmen,
Shall set us to work anew.

And they that were saved shall be happy,
They shall sit in a golden chair,
They shall strike at a ten-league canvas,
With brushes of comets hair;
They will have real portraits to draw from,
Magdalene, Peter, and Paul;
They shall take an age for a sitting,
And never be tired at all.

And only the Master shall praise us,
And only the Master shall blame;
And none shall work for money,
And none shall work for fame.
But each for the joy of working,
And each in his separate star,
Shall draw the things as he sees it,
For the God of things as they are.

Then there is Tennyson's famous poem,

Sunset and evening star
And one clear call for me.
And may there be no mourning at the bar
When I put out to sea;

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,
Too full for sound or foam,
When that which came from out the boundless
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,
And after that the dark;
And may there be no sadness of farewell,
When I embark.

For though from out the realm of time,
The waves may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar.

II. THE HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN

Heaven will be a happy place because all of the ingredients that go to make unhappiness in this world will be absent.

- No tears in heaven.
- No farewells in heaven.
- No hatred in heaven.
- No jealousy in heaven.
- No crime in heaven.
- No broken homes in heaven.
- No disease in heaven.
- No liquor in heaven.
- No broken hearts in heaven.

No one ever dies, for there is no death in that land of life. No one ever gets sick, for there is no disease in that land of perfect health. The joy of living will be an eternal one and God will equip us with the capacity to enjoy that perfect order.

Will we know each other in heaven? Absolutely. We know each other down here, and we will have perfect knowledge in heaven. I contend that there will be no introductions in heaven. No one will come to me and say, "Angel Martinez, this is John the Baptist." I will know John the Baptist without any introduction. No one will introduce David; I will know the sweet singer of Israel without introduction. No one will introduce the apostle Paul. I will know him without any introduction.

Peter, James, and John recognized Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration. And they were still residing in their natural bodies. How much more shall we know when this mortal puts on immortality, and when this corruptible puts on the incorruptible.

Often people ask me if the folks in heaven know what is going on down here. They do not. A woman once came to me and said, "I had a wonderful Christian husband, but he was very jealous of me. He died and went to heaven. I have met a man and I am in love with him and would like to marry him. If I did, would my husband in heaven be jealous?"

I informed her that her husband did not know what was going on down here. We are told in the Scriptures that the former things of the earth will not be brought to mind. I think that this is true with one exception. The Bible states that there is joy in heaven when a sinner repents. Spiritual victories are known in heaven. The only news that makes the headlines of heaven is the repentance of a sinner upon the earth.

People ask, "Will babies be babies in heaven, or will they grow?" We are not conversant with all of the details of heaven, but we do know that heaven is a place of growth and development. Mothers are often saddened by the news that their babies will grow. They seem to think that the baby should remain in that arrested condition so that they can see the child as they saw him upon the earth. I often ask these mothers, "Let us suppose that you would die, and leave a six-month-old baby behind. Would you want him to remain a baby upon the earth until he died so that you could see him as you left him upon the earth?"

They always reply, "Of course not. I would want the baby to grow and be normal."

I then answer, "Why don't you give him the same opportunity in heaven that you give him upon the earth?"

You may not have thought about this, but I believe that I have Biblical proof for it. Everybody in heaven will be thirty-three years old forever.

The Bible states that we shall be like Him (I John 3:2; Philippians 3:21). In Romans, Paul tells us that the purpose of God is to conform us into the image of His Son. I know that this refers to spiritual likeness, but it also has reference to the physical. His resurrection body was real and mysterious. He had a real body, and yet He went through a door without opening it. Ladies, you will never have to lie about your age in heaven. I asked a minister friend of mine, "How old is your wife?" He replied, "I don't know. She was born in the year of our Lord only knows when."

Many inquire with reference to our loved ones who remain unsaved and die in that condition. Will they be remembered in heaven? If so, would we be in sorrow thinking about their eternal plight in a place where they are separated from God forever?

We will not remember our loved ones who did not go to heaven. Their memory will be blotted from our minds. The unsaved will be like the unborn; we will not remember them. We have such periods in our present existence. For example, we do not remember a moment of the womb existence, yet we were alive and our hearts were beating. We don't remember the period from birth to age three or thereabouts. My mother tells me that when I was six months old I was very sick. For days I cried with pain and she thought I wasn't going to pull through. I don't remember a minute of it. She also tells me that when I was two years old, a neighbor was tossing me in the air and catching me. She dropped me. Sometimes I think that I landed on my head when I fell, but I do not remember it. In like fashion, God will blot these bitter memories from our minds.

Many are concerned about the fate of the heathen who were born, grew, and died in lands where the Gospel was never preached. Some theologians claim that they will all be in heaven, that God will deal with them as He deals with babies who are unaccountable. This sounds far-fetched, for then the way to send folks to heaven would be never to preach to them.

Other Bible students believe that God will judge the heathen on the basis of what they would have done if the Gospel had been preached to them.

For example, if one hundred heathen in Africa were to hear the Gospel, let us say twenty of them would have responded. Some say that since God knows everything, He will take the twenty to heaven who would have been saved. Others believe that all the heathen will go to hell and that they will not suffer like the man who heard and rejected. But if all the heathen wind up in heaven, I will not complain. The Judge of the earth will do right. I will be grateful and humbled that through the grace of God I made it.

III. THE HIGHWAY TO HEAVEN

Jesus said, “**I am the way.**” There is no salvation apart from Him. The angel told Mary, “**Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.**”

There is no name under heaven or given among men whereby we can be saved. There is only one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus. This is the message that we have to repeat to the unsaved man. That heaven is unreachable without Jesus. He came to earth and made it possible for us to go to heaven. Good works, good ethics, a charitable disposition, all these, as wonderful as they are, will not give us an entrance into heaven. Salvation comes through Christ.

If men could have been saved by the efforts of good behavior, then Jesus never would have died on the cross. The cross was an essential ingredient in the plan of God. There is a sense in which Jesus died for God as well as for the sinner. God could never have been “**just and justifier of them that believe**” without the death of Christ. Christ died for the sinner, but He also died for God. For by His death Jesus made it possible for God to put His arms around a sinful world, and bring it unto Himself.

What a wonderful story. How can men refuse to accept it! Why do we have to beg people to embrace it? The heart of man must be deceitful and desperately wicked to turn a deaf ear to this appeal of love. The simplicity of God’s salvation will be the most condemning feature at the judgment for the unbeliever. He will not have an excuse. The cross has stripped human life of any flimsy excuse in refusing the love of Christ. This plan of redemption is so effective. It lays the ax at the root of the tree. It does not content itself with symptoms. It deals with the causes of the malady that afflicts the human race.

I care not how deep your sins, or how dark your past. *The minimum of the atonement can defeat the maximum of the fall.* Though your sins be as scarlet, they can be as white as snow. Though they be red like crimson, they can be as wool. The blood of the Lord Jesus cleanses from all sin. There is a fountain open in the house of David for every man who will say “yes” to His love.

I know that Christ can effect salvation in your heart. There is no need to despair. It is easy to think about your problems and weaknesses and think that perhaps you do not belong to the kingdom of Christ. But your biggest sin is not your little sins. The biggest sin is your unwillingness to put your life in the hands of Christ. He is sympathetic and kind. He understands your nature. He knows the genes and chromosomes that underlie your behavior. He takes all this into consideration. Look how He handled people when He was here on the earth.

Take a look at a hopeless woman in the fourth chapter of John.

She had everything against her. She was a Samaritan, and the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. She was a woman of the streets. She was a woman, and they had little standing in that day. But Jesus talked to her and saw in her a diamond in the rough. She began to argue with Him, and Jesus said to her, **“Go call thy husband.”** Notice this little stroke of honesty. There is honor even among thieves. She replied, **“I have no husband.”** She told the truth; she was honest. She could have lied and told the Saviour that he was out of town or some such excuse. Jesus took this little bit of honesty and worked on it.

Jesus answered, **“You are right, you have had five husbands.”** (She would have made a good movie star, wouldn't she, with all those husbands). And yet, the Lord saw potential in this woman. Any woman that can attract and marry five men must have something to her. Then she said, “Lord, the trouble with me is I don't know what church to join. Some say we ought to worship on this mountain and some in Jerusalem, and when Messiah comes, He will tell us all things.”

Jesus said, **“I that speak unto thee am He.”** The record states that she went back to town, and told the people, **“Come see a man who told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?”** He forgave the woman and gave her a mission in life. He did it so quickly and He will do the same for us. But we cannot know heaven here or hereafter unless we come through Christ.

There was once a wonderful Christian woman who lived in a little town that had only one church. It was a Catholic church, and though she was not a Catholic, she worshiped there every Sunday. One day she was dying, and some of the Catholics went to their priest and said, “Father, the little lady who is so sweet and so Christian is dying. Go to see her. She doesn't have a pastor here, and although she doesn't belong to our church, she would appreciate a visit from you.”

The priest went to see her and said, “I wish that you were a member of my church. If you were, I could give you extreme unction, the last rites, and forgive you of your sins before you die.” The little woman looked up and said, “Let me see your hand.” The priest thought it a strange request, but he extended it. She looked at it, turned it over, and then dropped it. She looked at the priest and said, “Sir, I appreciate your visit, but the Man who forgave my sins has a nail print in the palm of His hand.”

There is the answer. The Lord Jesus is the way to heaven. How wonderful it would be if the entire world would receive Him. He promises us in the third chapter of Revelation that if we will open the door of our hearts, He will sup with us (that is, now) and someday we will sup with Him (that is, in heaven). May the Christ of heaven who opened for us the gates of grace someday open for us the gates of glory.

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