

Chapter 1

Two Heavens

“You preachers are all the same,” said Jim, “always talking about heaven or the coming of Christ. What I want to know is, What can I do to enjoy life now?” My minister friend tried to reason with Jim, but he could not talk very long without mentioning heaven again. The boy interrupted with, “There you go, peddling your wares again.” What Jim didn’t realize is that the present loses its significance and hence its joy when there is no belief in the hereafter.

The shortsighted person, whose thoughts turn inward, who is interested only in himself and the present, will be morose and unhappy. A vibrant, happy person looks to the future with a hopeful heart, which gives him present fulfillment and a bright prospect.

God’s Gift of Hope

A workingman understands the need of keeping alive this spark of hope. How long would he continue on the job with its monotonous routine throughout the day, if it were not for the hope of five o’clock, the cheerful greeting of his wife at the door of his home, and the happy laughter of his children’s voices in the evening hours? Hope kindles a satisfying pleasure in his heart. Men need even a wider hope than this today.

Television, the radio, the newspapers - all scream out trouble, war, crime, and unrest! The immediate reaction to a telegram is goose-pimples and the query, “What’s the trouble now?” The entire human race is gripped with the deadly chill of a world filled with frustrating fears. Yet the scientists hold out the hope of an age of Utopian ease. The statesmen hold out the hope of peace and plenty. Their promises have failed to satisfy. In such an hour as this, God has given man a wider and higher hope to look forward to. His great gift to modern-day man is the hope of heaven.

The psalmist had the hope of heaven in his heart, and he testifies through personal experience: “Happy is he... whose hope is in the Lord.” Psalm 146:5. God realized that a few parts of hope mixed in the heart would make for happiness, and thus He filled His word with uplifting promises. The Bible says that “whatsoever things were written

aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.” Romans 15:4.

I know of one lady who was dying from an unusual and incurable disease. The first time I saw her was amid roaring motors and screaming sirens - she had attempted suicide. The attempt was unsuccessful, but left her in a state of depression. She had only a few years to live at best; but now she was dying more from despair than from her dread sickness.

It is a scientific fact that death through despair is possible. Scientists have reached the conclusion that in some cases of attempted suicide with poison the patient may die even though not enough poison has entered the body to be the immediate cause of death. In these cases death is attributed to despair and fear rather than to the poison. The scientists have also found that rats put in a helpless situation with no hope of escape will die.

The lady mentioned above began to study the great truths of the word of God which are discussed in this volume. Peace took hold of her troubled heart. The teaching of heaven and the hereafter especially appealed to her. The hope of heaven in her heart brought heaven to her heart. Her fears melted. She became radiant, happy, buoyant. Such a result is not to be wondered at, for the Bible says that “we are saved by hope.” Romans 8:24.

When you have this hope of heaven lodged firmly in your heart you, too, will have greater happiness. The promise is that we “have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast.” Hebrews 6:18, 19. A crime-filled city, noisy neighbors, sickness, even death itself, can be faced more easily when the heart is anchored to the hope of heaven.

A Hope Undreamed Of

A clipping from the newspaper tells this story: “Johnny didn’t want to go to heaven. Flying around on a cloud and strumming a golden harp - if that is what heaven would be like, he sort of dreaded going there.” And Johnny isn’t the only one with vague, distorted ideas about heaven. There are many people who have beautiful homes and gardens, fine automobiles, and a large group of friends to make their time enjoyable, but who do not wish to be in heaven because they feel that it will be a place with no useful activity to occupy their time. They are mistaken.

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According to the Holy Scriptures, heaven is to be a real place; it is to be far beyond our fondest hopes or our wildest dreams. "As it is written, what no eye has ever seen, what no ear has ever heard, what never entered the mind of man, God has prepared all that for those who love Him." 1 Corinthians 2:9, Moffatt.

No man has seen beauties to compare with the beauties of heaven. Nor has he heard or ever dreamed of how wonderful the things will be that God is now preparing for those who love Him. Think for a moment of a place without war, sickness, trouble, or care of any kind. Imagine being in a world where no infirmity, old age, or death can be found. Dream of a land with an exquisite home, an abundance of food, and, in these pleasant surroundings, your best friends to enjoy these bounties with you. Visualize a life full of the highest and noblest pleasures with never a discordant note to mar your happiness. Then consider that it has never even entered the mind of man how satisfying heaven really will be.

Jesus is now preparing a place in heaven for you. This hope is yours to cherish. Jesus Himself spoke these words: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:1-3. Jesus is here admonishing, "Let not your heart be troubled," for the hope of heaven is for you!

Someday Jesus intends to bring His heavenly home down to this world. But this old world will be purified from sin. Revelation 21:1, 2. Jesus came to save men from sin and to make possible the restoration of this world to its heavenly state. Someday soon Jesus will restore "the first dominion." Micah 4:8. This world made new again will be the final location of "the Holy City, New Jerusalem" as it descends "from God out of heaven." Revelation 21:2. Eden lost is to be Eden restored, and "the meek... shall inherit the earth." Matthew 5:5. The magnetic hope of this future perfect world should send a vibrating thrill through the whole being.

The heaven Jesus has prepared will be just as real as this present world; however, the marks of sin will be removed. Heaven is to be inhabited by real people, children who play with animals, men who build homes, women who raise beautiful gardens. It is a place where there will be the most pleasant associations with loved ones and friends. Heaven is for everyone. Heaven is for you!

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A Satisfying Hope

The following questions and their Bible answers give ample assurance that heaven will satisfy every heart.

Would you care to own a beautiful home of your own? The Bible reveals that in the earth made new the redeemed will “build houses, and inhabit them.... They shall not build, and another inhabit.” Isaiah 65:21, 22. They will build beautiful country homes of their own design, and in addition to this Jesus has prepared homes for them in the Holy City, the New Jerusalem. This beautiful capital city of heaven is large enough for all. It is square and measures 375 miles on each side. The foundations are of twelve manner of precious stone, the walls are of jasper, the gates are of pearl, and the whole city has an appearance of “pure gold, like unto clear glass.” Revelation 21:18. Just think of it - this city home is being custom-built by Jesus to assure each occupant of complete satisfaction.

Do you love the beauty of rivers, trees, gardens, and flowers? This earth will be completely transformed into a Garden of Eden, when it becomes the setting for the capital city, New Jerusalem. The Bible says of this new earth: “For the Lord shall comfort Zion: He will comfort all her waste places; and He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.” Isaiah 51:3.

There will be no smog-poisoned air, no rocky wastes, no weeds, no hurricanes, no earthquakes, no calamities of any kind. The perfect balance of nature will be restored, assuring the best of soil and a perfect climate for all types of flowers, shrubs, and trees. The beautiful things of earth - the sunsets, the waterfalls, the rushing rivers, the crystal lakes, the varied hues of flowers, the majestic stature of the trees - are not even to be compared with the beauties of that heavenly home. Oh, how beautiful heaven must be!

Do you enjoy seeing new things? Learning new things? Think of the unlimited opportunities for delving into the mysteries of life. Consider what the mind unfettered by the chains of sin will be able to accomplish through creative thought.

Are you fond of the beautiful animals of earth? In heaven “the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.” Isaiah 11:6.

Do you enjoy working in the garden and eating home-grown fruits and vegetables? The promise is, “And they shall plant vineyards, and

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eat the fruit of them.... And Mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.” Isaiah 65:21, 22.

Do you experience gratification as you sing from a heart overflowing with joy? Some of the most magnificent passages of Scripture are those in the book of Revelation which picture the joyful singing of the redeemed. Isaiah pictured the choirs of the saints marching to Jerusalem “with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads,” and he says of them, “they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” Isaiah 35:10.

Would you like to be a real person in heaven rather than some ethereal spirit being? When Jesus comes He promises to “change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body.” Philippians 3:20, 21. The glorified body of Jesus is real. When Jesus appeared to the disciples in His resurrected and glorified body He said to them, “Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have.” Luke 24:39. On this occasion Jesus was in a real house, talking to real people, eating real food. “When He shall appear, we shall be like Him.” 1 John 3:2. This is proof. We will be real in heaven, even as the heavenly body of Jesus is real.

Would you appreciate living in a place where you would never be lonely, a place where you could at all times enjoy the association of your family and friends? In His heavenly body Jesus was recognized by His disciples because of His familiar bodily features. Luke 24:36-43. He was recognized by Mary at the tomb because of the familiar sound of His voice when He called her by name. John 20:14-16. He was recognized by the two disciples at Emmaus because of His personality traits. As they witnessed the manner in which Jesus blessed the food, they recognized their Lord. Luke 24:13-34. Since the Bible says in 1 John 3:2 that “we shall be Like Him,” the redeemed are certain to know one another by their familiar bodily features, by the familiar timbre and tone of their voices, and by the individual traits of personality which each one will retain. True, the marks of sin will be removed; nevertheless, we shall know as we are known. See 1 Corinthians 13:12.

Do you want to live forever? In the home of the saved there will be no old age or death. For “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” Revelation 21:4.

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Do you long for a place where there will be no more sickness, suffering, or sorrow? “The inhabitant” of heaven “shall not say, I am sick.” Isaiah 33:24. “The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.” Isaiah 35:5,6.

Would you like never to be tempted? “There shall in no wise enter into” heaven “anything that defileth.” Revelation 21:27. All temptations to sin will cease. There will be no gambling dens, no smoke-filled dance halls, no sin of any kind. The very nature of man will be changed, making it possible for all petty irritations, proud desires, and selfish thoughts to be removed forever.

Do you enjoy lifting your heart in prayer near the cool quiet of the lakeside as it reflects the light of the setting sun? In the most awe-inspiring setting that can be dreamed of, the redeemed will have the pleasure of worshiping their Creator at the very heart of this heavenly home. In the midst of the heavenly city is the great white throne of God surrounded by the crystal-like sea which extends in all directions. The glory of the Son of God will mirror forth from this sea of glassy gold. On it the redeemed will gather to worship the God of the universe. The Bible says, “And it shall come to pass, that... from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me, saith the Lord.” Isaiah 66:23. The joy of such worship is beyond description but is fruitful for contemplation.

You Must Be There!

Those who miss heaven will miss everything! The folly of missing heaven is realized when we contemplate the following appeal by J. L. Shuler, a modern-day evangelist. He once said something like this: “Friend of mine, tell me, what do you desire most of all? Most of all you want good health, freedom from pain and disease, freedom from calamity, accident, and injury. You want to be happy and enjoy life continuously, with nothing to mar your pleasure every day. You want to eat of the good of the land. You want a home of your own. You want good friends and congenial associates around you. You want freedom from fear, from oppression, and from every kind of sickness and death.

“Listen! God wants you to have all of this and to have it to the full. Jesus Christ wants you to have all of these good things -health, life, happiness, food, clothes, home, friends. He wants you to have them

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not merely for seventy or eighty years as men do here, but He wants you to have them for ten thousand years, for ten million years - yes, for eternity!

“On the cross of Calvary, He opened a way for you and for me to have them forever. ‘For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.’ John 3:16.

“This blessed Jesus is preparing a heavenly home for you. He came to die so that you might have a place in heaven and have all of these things to the full and have them without end.”

A Heaven for You Now

A thousand voices thunder, “The hope of a future heaven is a blessed hope, but I need help now! I need deliverance from fear, anxiety, guilt, worry, anger, lust, discouragement. I am hardened to the externals of war, strife, and sickness. I can even face the possibility of a troubled future, but it is the enemies within me that destroy my peace.”

The real truth is this: You can have deliverance from these internal enemies. The benefits you gain from inviting Jesus into your heart are not limited to the assurance of a place in that future heavenly home. There is a present benefit as well.

Jesus in the heart brings deliverance from sin. Accepting Jesus into the heart creates a little heaven within. He transforms the sin-burdened heart and makes a heaven out of it, in much the same way that He will someday transform this sin-cursed earth and make a heaven out of it. He rids the heart of worry, anger, lust, discouragement, fear, and guilt; and He Himself enters in. Jesus in the heart brings heaven to the heart. The Bible says, “Even now” Jesus “brings you a joy that words cannot express and which has in it a hint of the glories of heaven.” 1 Peter 1:8, Phillips.

Garfield once said that a log cabin with Mark Hopkins for a teacher would be a college. What Christian would not be willing to say that anywhere he might be with Jesus is heaven?

So, in reality there are two heavens. It is not necessary to wait until that future day when Jesus comes to destroy all sin from the earth to experience heavenly joy. In the meantime Jesus promises to destroy sin from your heart and create a present heaven within. This present heaven should be as real as the future heaven will someday become.

In the future heaven, we are promised, the presence of Jesus will assure the inhabitants of “fullness of joy” and “pleasures forevermore.”

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Psalm 16:11. His presence will banish death, sickness, hunger, war, violence, and all of the other external enemies which disturb us in this present life.

At the same time the presence of Jesus in your heart will create a present heaven there which will bring you “fullness of joy” and “pleasures” now and “forevermore.” His presence banishes all the internal strivings of a sin-darkened heart. In the sunlight of His presence the inner conflicts melt away; there is a freedom from fear, the lifting of cares and anxieties; deliverance from guilt, remorse, anger, resentment, and other deadly sins which destroy your present joy and pleasure. You can make your heart a little heaven by inviting Jesus to enter in. This is your hope!

The heaven of the future inspires hope. Contemplating a land where all the external results of sin will be removed, the Christian is girded with hope and stirred onward and forward in the conflict with Satan. The heaven of the present also brings hope to earth’s despairing millions - hope of deliverance from a sin-blackened heart, hope of Jesus’ eternal presence within.

Jesus holds out this hope to all. He longs to welcome you to the heaven of the hereafter. He is also anxious to create a heaven in your heart now.

The anxiety of Jesus over you is illustrated by the Biblical story of the prodigal son recorded in Luke 15. This son spurned his father’s love by going away into a far country into sin and riotous living. He went out in a search for happiness, but he found only insecurity and distress. He was finally reduced to poverty, filth, and despair. He did not realize that true happiness does not come by searching for it in a material world, but by seeking after God.

This boy remembered his father’s heart of love and decided to return home. He had hope that his father would accept him, at least as a servant, and this magnetic hope drew him homeward. On his return his father was watching for him - eagerly waiting for him. He ran to the boy, embraced him, and kissed him. He then took him home to a big banquet of celebration. He accepted him not as a servant, but as his son. There was joy! There was happiness! There was singing!

Jesus is that wonderful Father. He welcomes every sinner home. The hope He sets before us draws us toward home. He is preparing a place in His heavenly home and a wonderful banquet of celebration for you. When you come to Him, He does not treat you as a servant, but as a son.

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It would be glorious enough if only the future hope of heaven were offered, but Jesus offers the present heaven as well. He runs to us as to His own sons. He creates a heaven within us, inviting us to feast on the present bounties of home. He promises a life of heavenly peace and rest here and now.

Jesus is the only hope of your experiencing the two heavens. Jesus is the only hope of having heaven in your heart now, for it is only in His presence that you can have “fullness of joy.” Jesus is your only hope of having a place in the heaven of the hereafter. It is only by basking in the presence of Jesus that you can be prepared for that place where there will be “pleasures forevermore.” For this reason the Bible speaks of the “Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope.” 1 Timothy 1:1.

Wonderful story of Jesus,

Whisper it softly to me. Give me a hope in His mercy;

Hand me His pardon so free.

Tell me for all of my longings,

All of my strivings for peace,

All of my heartaches and sighings,

Jesus will bring me release.

“Everyone who has at heart a hope like that keeps himself pure, for he knows how pure Christ is.” 1 John 3:3, Phillips.