

"Holding fast the Faithful Word . . ."



# *The Word and Work*



"Holding forth the Word of Life."

September, 1999

## **What does HEAVEN mean to you?**

An evangelist said that the church's two main jobs were "to Pillage Hell and Populate Heaven!" Pillage means to plunder, devastate, to deprive of booty. Sounds good to me. Fits in with last month's theme of evangelism.

Let's get people who are headed for hell turned around and, by faith in Christ, destined for Glory. That glory is so radiant we can barely conceive of it. But -- let's try! It will do us good.

\* \* \* \*

## **Do You Fear You Might Not Like Heaven?**

"The images of heaven we have in our minds don't seem to match up all that well with our deepest longings. It's like being invited to a chamber music concert when what we really wanted was to go to the ball game.

"It's too much like visiting in the home of a rich aunt where you always have to dress your Sunday best, sit up straight, keep your feet clean, say 'please' and 'thank you, ma'am' and be careful about wiping your nose.

**Continued inside front cover**

“What most of us would really like is to have strong, splendid, healthy flesh-and-blood bodies built like Greek gods or goddesses. We would like to have important things to do and exciting challenges to meet. We would like a place where we could bask in the sun and go for a dunk in an idyllic swimming hole, then dry off by running through the shade of a cool, deep woods without stickers or poison ivy.”

[The writer goes on to say that what we want is in fact to return to Eden. And that is exactly what will happen. We are reminded that heaven is not the end of our story; in fact it is a return to the beginning.]

“The story as God originally outlined it has not yet been written. Adam and Eve began the first chapter but spilled the ink over the remaining pages. Jesus has blotted the ink and cleaned the pages, and when he comes, he will present them to us to complete the story as it should have been written. Our story is not ending; it is about to begin.” -- Thomas M. Williams in his book, **From Eden to Eternity**, published by College Press, Joplin, MO.

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The radiant joys of Heaven will be like a **ROYAL WEDDING FEAST**. In Jesus' teaching (especially His parables) He occasionally described the future glory of His kingdom in terms of a great banquet--sometimes a wedding-feast put on by a king (Matt. 8:11, NIV; 22:1-14; 25:10; Luke 12:35-6; 14:15-24; 22:28-30). And Rev. 19:9 specifically mentions “the wedding supper of the Lamb.”

Thus Scripture pictures the bliss of God's people as a grand royal banquet: Lights. Splendor. Festive music by worldclass performers. Jokes and laughter. Fellowship with friends. Food fit for a king. Beautiful bride. Handsome husband. Stirring songs. Solemn ceremonies. The presence of the Emperor himself. Sacred vows, never to be broken. Commitment that prepares for loving, thrilling, productive intimacy. God's word uses all the magnificence and delight of such a once-in-a-lifetime celebration to portray the future and continuing joy when we shall be united with our Groom and Savior at His coming and forevermore. —avw

# THE WORD AND WORK

*"Declare the whole counsel of God"*

**Alex V. Wilson, Editor**

**Dennis L. Allen, Missions**

**Bennie Hill, New & Notes**

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**Theme:**

## **Do You REALLY Want to Go to Heaven?**

Alex V. Wilson

“Funny thing about heaven. Everybody wants to go there, but nobody wants to die.” Whoever said that was making a valid point but overstated it. It’s true that we who are born again need not fear death. After all, Christ conquered it for us, and He holds the keys to that realm -- controlling the timing of its occurrence. Yet scripture still calls death an enemy (1 Cor.15:26), for it causes us to leave behind unfinished tasks, and loved ones who need and miss us.

Often what we fear is not death itself but dying: will it be slow, painful, expensive and lacking in dignity? Sometimes it is, due to modern science which lengthens our living but also p-r-o-l-o-n-g-s our dying. Yet scripture assures us that though we go through the valley of the shadow of death, we need fear no evil. For our Lord is with us. And should He come before we die, we’ll go straight to His presence without the “benefit” of death. Maranatha! (Read what Brother Boll says about Christ’s return, not death, being our hope.)

But back to our main point, heaven and our mixed reaction to it. A lady whose husband was terminally ill told the visiting pastor, “Say something *hopeful* to my husband, not about heaven.” And a little boy whose buddy had died remarked, after seeing the adults’ reaction to it all, “*Poor Johnnie, he’s gone to heaven.*” A Christian couple outgrew that attitude after their preemie granddaughter died. Telling about it, the grandmom wrote, “The grief we feel is just as real as though she had lived much longer than the two hours God allotted her. *Heaven is no longer that wonderful place we would do anything to stay out of.*”

Harry Blamires, a perceptive Christian writer, said, “The young do not want to think about the afterlife because it is *too far off*, and the old do not want to think about it because it is *too near*.” Then he points out some of the many “if-onlies” of this life, and contrasts them with the glories to come:

If only the vigor and beauty of youth did not fade! If only the energy of youth could be experienced at the same time as the poise of maturity and the wisdom of age! [As George Bernard Shaw sighed, “Youth is such a wonderful thing, it’s a shame to waste it on young people.”]

If only there were no human sinfulness to plunge nations into misery! If only bodies could not be destroyed by cancers, wills broken by addictions, emotions poisoned by perversions! If only!....

[But] whatever form your most moving earthly experiences of beauty have taken, they were foretastes of heaven. Wherever you have found lovingkindness in human hands and eyes and words, you were confronting Christ's personality operative in God's creatures. Since the source of all that Beauty and all that Tenderness is God, **the full opening up of His presence before his creatures can be nothing less than the concentration and intensification of every loveliness and every goodness we have ever tasted or even dreamed of.**

May this month's focus on heaven thrill us with the glories to come, that originate not from a place but a Person.

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## **THOUGHT-PROVOKERS about HEAVEN**

"Many a child in a Christian home asks, 'Will I be able to have my doll (or teddy bear or bicycle...) in heaven?' The accompanying tone of voice implies that heaven has little or no attraction if the answer is NO. Most children are perfectly satisfied with an answer something like this: 'If you still want it when you get to heaven, you will find it is there. The Lord Jesus has everything to make boys and girls happy.' As children get older they can understand more readily that the Lord will satisfy them completely without the material things that make a child's heaven." --Leith Samuel

\* \* \*

On a signboard outside a church-building:

**FREE TRIP TO HEAVEN!  
INQUIRE INSIDE FOR DETAILS.**

\* \* \*

I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, **prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband** (Rev. 21:2).

"One time in a woman's life she has a right to be extravagant, one time she prepares herself with the greatest care and dresses as elegantly and beautifully and attractively as she can -- the time of her marriage ... As a bride adorns herself for her husband, so will God adorn and beautify this city for his loved ones. God has made all the beautiful things in the world -- sunsets, mountains, lakes, roses, beautiful trees, snowflakes, clouds, waterfalls. What will a city be like made by the Divine Architect? (See also Jn. 14:2.)

“A holy city will be one in which no lie will be uttered in one hundred million years, no evil word will ever be spoken, no shady business deal will ever even be discussed, no unclean picture will ever be seen, no corruption of life will *ever* be manifest. It will be holy because everyone in it will be holy.” -- Wilbur Smith in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*

\* \* \*

“Eternal life is not merely a description of **duration**, but a description of the **quality** of life. That is important. A man said to me, ‘I do not believe in the future life because *I would not like to live with myself forever.*’ So Jesus talks about the quality of life as well as duration of life eternal. [You may live] a quality of life that makes it possible for you to love yourself. *I like myself because Jesus is changing me into a kind of self which is fit for survival.*” --E. Stanley Jones

\* \* \*

### Epitaph on a gravestone in Scotland

Consider, friend, as you pass by,  
As you are now so once was I;  
As I am now you soon shall be.  
Prepare therefore to follow me.

*(Underneath someone added:)*

To follow you I'm not content  
Until I know which way you went.

\* \* \*

“Why are there so few Christians these days who can honestly affirm that they have anchored their hearts in heaven and are continually excited about it? Worldliness, alas, is the cause. Secular materialism, preoccupied with the present, and [unbelievers' mockery of our belief as] “pie-in-the-sky-when-you-die,” combine to make Christians feel embarrassed about their hope of glory, as if having it is somehow bad manners; so they do not talk about it, and soon they stop thinking about it .... So many churchpeople of my generation see this world as home and leaving it as the supreme tragedy.” -- James Packer

\* \* \*

In this fallen life in a fallen world, human nature mainly gives meaning to ownership of things based on the fact that others lack what the possessor owns. Value depends on scarcity! For example, a collection of antiques, an Olympic gold medal, a 1928 baseball card with a

picture of Babe Ruth, a signed personal letter from Adolf Rupp, John F. Kennedy, or Jim Elliot.

“On Earth, value depends on *scarcity*. In Heaven, value resides in *abundance*. Whatever experience we enjoy in Heaven will be magnified, not by the fact that others are deprived of it, but by the fact that others enjoy it, too.” Yet there will still be individuality. You won’t be just a statistic, or a cookie stamped out by a cookie-cutter. Not uniformity but delightful diversity will still be the norm.” -- Harry Blamires in 5-27-91 *Christianity Today*

\* \* \*

### Neither Dull nor Boring

“When God made the earth, He could have finished it, but He didn’t. He left it as a raw material -- to tease us, to tantalize us, to set us thinking and experimenting and risking and adventuring. And therein we find our supreme interest in living. He gave us the challenge of raw materials, not the satisfaction of perfect finished things. He left the music unsung and the dramas unplayed. He left the poetry undreamed, in order that men and women might not become bored, but engaged in stimulating, exciting, creative activities that keep them thinking, working, experimenting, and experiencing all the joys and durable satisfactions of achievements.” -- Allan Stockdale

Obviously the preceding words were not written about heaven. Instead they tell what God did at the creation of earth and humanity. But I can’t help wondering if the same principle -- God loves to challenge and stretch us -- won’t apply to eternity as well as this life? Isa. 9:7a tantalizes me: “*Of the increase of [Christ’s] government ... there will be no end.*” Could that possibly mean that the Lord will begin creating universes again (perhaps letting us help Him!), bringing into existence new realms to rule over (letting us share in that rule!). Will new worlds, additional planets, more galaxies and undreamed-of creatures be brought into being?

Whatever, one thing is sure: The redeemed will not be bored in heaven. We will share in our own Creator’s creativity. Wondrous *workship* and *work* will occupy us through “the ages of the ages” (that’s the literal meaning of “forever”).

What the Bible Teaches about...

## THE ETERNAL DESTINY OF THE REDEEMED

Alex V. Wilson

### Various Biblical Pictures and/or Symbols

Children sometimes ask impossible questions. All parents face the problem of how to explain to their youngsters certain facts and experiences far beyond their grasp. The mysteries of death, sex, and bad things happening to good people are three obvious examples. So we try our best to convey complex truths with simple ideas and picture-language.

Have you ever thought about the similar problem God has with us? The eternal state of His glorified people will so far transcend our present experience that our minds can barely grasp it. Thus in communicating with us the Lord must use figurative language. But not to worry. The fulfilment of the figures of speech will be greater, not less, than the figures used.

To whet our appetite and convey something of the rapturous glory to come, the Lord uses a number of pictures in His Word. He doesn't intend that we take them all literally. Indeed we couldn't, for they would be contradictory. Heaven is portrayed in Hebrews as the real and eternal temple; but Revelation describes it as the throne-room of the universe and omits mentioning most features of the temple. Again, not to worry. **Each and every picture presents true and valuable insights about the infinite splendor of God's presence, our future home. Look for the Main Lessons in each picture. Let's examine some of the major passages now.**

1. **"In MY FATHER'S HOUSE are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also."** (Jn. 14:2-3, RSV)

Many folks prefer the expression "many mansions" used in the King James and American Standard versions. But "rooms" conveys more accurately what Jesus meant--though "dwelling places" (NASV) is a good compromise. It has become common to think of each individual Christian having his/her personal mansion in heaven. But the more accurate idea of this passage pictures God as a rich father--the head of the clan--living in a spacious mansion. It's big enough to contain rooms or suites for each of his children and their families. And as the clan grows, he keeps adding new wings to make suites for them all.

Obviously this is symbolism. Jesus did not mean that all the redeemed are going to live in one humongous building! He used a picture that would be familiar to His hearers: a rich, generous father who loved his children and their families so much he kept adding rooms to his manor-house so all of them could live with him there and they could enjoy each other's presence.

So when we think of the eternal destiny our Savior is preparing for us, this is one wonderful way to picture it: **A loving father's home with plenty of room and a warm welcome to all. And the presence of our elder Brother, our Savior, who has built it for us. Home!**

**2. The REAL TEMPLE of God, in Heaven.** The book of Hebrews develops this theme at some length, as it connects the teachings of the Old Covenant and New Covenant writings. It reveals that the earthly tabernacle, and the later temple--though valuable in themselves--were mere shadows of God's actual dwelling-place.

We read that Christ now "serves in the sanctuary, **the true tabernacle set up by the Lord, not by man.**" The earthly tabernacle was "a sanctuary that is a copy and shadow of what is in heaven." The Messiah is our High Priest in "**the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not manmade....[At His ascension] He entered the Most Holy Place by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.**" (Heb.8:2, 5; 9:11-12.) We believers have "a hope that enters into **the inner shrine behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever....**" (6:19-20 RSV.)

In other words, heaven is the real Temple. God's presence there is the actual Holy of Holies. The Day of Atonement really was held in heaven, not on earth. The authentic Mercy-seat is there, and the redeeming blood of the Lamb of God was presented there before the Judge of all. That Lamb is also our great High Priest, who intercedes for us.

In addition, since He is our "forerunner" as well as priest and sacrifice, we shall follow Him there. In fact even now "we have confidence to **enter the Most Holy Place** by the blood of Jesus....[so] let us draw near to God." (10:19,22.) Christ purchased our here-and-now right to enter spiritually into the heavenly Holy of Holies, the aweful presence of the High and Holy One who is also our Father. And as we now enter spiritually, later on--at the End--we shall enter there in our risen, glorified bodies, as 1 Thes.4 and 1 Cor.15 make clear.

**3. Heaven is the COSMIC THRONE-ROOM, SUPREME HEADQUARTERS of the Universe.** Chapters 4-5 of Revelation un-

veil this for us. John saw a Throne in Heaven, and an Awe-inspiring One seated on that Throne. He is the Lord God Almighty, the Sovereign Lord of All, the Thrice-Holy Majesty. He was, and is, and is to come. He is Creator and Sustainer of all that is, and worthy of absolute praise and obedience. And with Him stands the Lamb once slain, now risen. He purchased from all tribes and nations a people for God. The worship offered to the One on the Throne is offered equally to Him--a sure proof of His deity. (4:10-11; 5:11-14.)

And what worship it is! Circling the Throne, millions of angels clamor to exalt our infinite God. Other mystical beings of high rank bow low before Him. Holy songs of joy burst from the throats of the ransomed. Throughout the whole cosmos His creatures explode with applause to His Majesty.

That is heaven. God's will is done there. God's worthiness is extolled there. God's judgments and mercies emanate from there, as the following chapters show. Some people say they want to go to heaven, yet they don't obey God's will here nor delight in His worship now. How could such people enjoy heaven even if God would allow them to enter?

**4. The GLORIFIED HEAVEN AND EARTH: God's Presence, the Missing Miseries, and the Fullness of the Holy Spirit.** (a) In Rev. 21:1-3 John sees a new heaven and earth, and the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. And he hears the wonderful announcement, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them....God himself will be with them and be their God." The threefold mention of "with them," plus the expression "coming down out of heaven" raises a question: Will "heaven" be in heaven or on earth, the new earth? This passage suggests the latter, or at least that what we now call "heaven" and "earth" will be merged, all knit together by the presence of the Lord. There will be no boundary lines between the two. Whatever and wherever, since HE will be there [or here!], it will be glory indeed. He will still be **Immanuel: "with us is GOD"**!

(b) Since in the present we can hardly understand the transcendent nature of our future state, the Lord reveals it in the form of negatives. We can't grasp very well what will be there, but we can rejoice in what won't! Listen to the list of "**missing miseries**": no more tears, death or mourning or crying or pain--"for the old order of things has passed away....I am making everything new" (21:4-5). Praise be to God.

No more colds, allergies, arthritis or migraines. And no more cancer, heart disease, AIDS or Alzheimer's. No more need for Tylenol,

injections, wheelchairs, feeding tubes, operations, amputations, health insurance, psychiatric wards or nursing homes. And no more morgues, funeral homes or cemeteries. As Isaac Watts put it, "Death itself shall die!" Ahhhhh....what a prospect. Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

(c)Then a marvelous invitation issues from the Enthroned One: "To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life" (21:6). The next chapter also mentions this, twice: The "river of the water of life...[flows] from the throne of God and of the Lamb....Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life" (22:1-2, 17).

God's Word repeatedly uses water as a **symbol of salvation, eternal life and especially the lifegiving, refreshing presence of the Holy Spirit**. The Lord promised through His prophet, "I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring, and my blessing on your descendants." (Isa.44:3.) And Christ Himself said, "If any one is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him." The gospel writer explains: "By this he meant the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were later to receive." (Jn.7:37-39.) Notice how similar the promises in Rev.21 & 22 are to these verses. And--on a personal level--observe how each promise is made to the thirsty. God's blessings go to those who yearn, not the self-satisfied.

It seems to me that the "water" described and offered in Rev.21-22 is not literal. Instead it is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. There are four reasons for believing this: (1)It is thus used in Isaiah's prophecy and John's gospel. (2)If the water is literal, then the Holy Spirit is left out of this description of eternity. We read of "God [the Father] and the Lamb," but nowhere of the Spirit--unless He is symbolized by the water of life. (3)Since He dwells and works within each believer, drinking is an apt symbol of seeking His fullness, and water an apt symbol of His presence and effect. The river of the water of life portrays the unceasing abundance of the Spirit's availability. (4)While 21:6 could be taken as merely a description of future conditions in heaven, 22:17 is obviously a present-tense promise, an offer made to us right now: "Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life." It's obvious that if this refers to literal water in heaven, we can't go get it now; the offer is an empty one. But if it refers to the Holy Spirit, we can accept the offer now. For it's the same invitation Christ makes to us through the ages (Jn.7). Study this idea for yourself; I find it exciting.

**5. THE FULFILMENT OF GOD'S GLORIOUS ETERNAL PLAN:** This is shown in various ways in the final two chapters of

Scripture, as Rev. 21-22 brings to a climax a number of themes found repeatedly throughout the Bible.

(a) God's Word is "a tale of 2 cities." **Babylon** is the city of man: the center of human pride, rebellion, materialism, passion, violence, false religion, idolatry, and persecution. Starting at Babel, it has reappeared often throughout history: Nineveh (the capital of Assyria), Babylon, pagan Rome, papal Rome, Paris, Berlin, New York, San Francisco--and your city? It will reach its peak of wickedness in the endtimes, till finally the Most High will hurl doom upon it. In fact, in Rev.18 John had already seen it fall--smashed forever by God.

In contrast, John now sees the Holy City, the new **Jerusalem**. It is huge, dazzling, beautiful and totally secure. It is as high as it is wide and long!--a cube, like the Holy of Holies in the earthly temple. It is brightly lit by the presence of the Lord. Its gates will never be shut, for all the redeemed are welcome there. (The unrepentant will already be in hell by that time.) "Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life" (21:27). The city of man will fall; the city of God will last forever. This will be the truly "great society" men have longed for.

(b) **Our Inheritance:** "**He who overcomes will inherit all this.**" (21:7.) Just as Babylon and Jerusalem appear often throughout the Bible, so do the words **inherit, inheritance, and heirs**. The main idea is that of something we will receive in the future, because a loved one dies and leaves us something in his will. We don't possess it now, but look forward to having it later.

The parallels are clear: Christ died, and we are the beneficiaries of His death. Scripture speaks of several treasures we shall "inherit": the kingdom of God; eternal life; salvation; God's promises. (Search it out for yourself; the ASV is recommended for such a word-study.) Of course we already possess these gifts, but we shall experience and enjoy them even more fully at the End. That fullness will be our inheritance, which is what Rev.21:7 is about.

(c) **God's Covenant Consummated:** That same verse continues, "I will be his God and he will be my son." That is similar to verse three: "They will be his people, and God himself will be...their God." This latter expression is used repeatedly in the Bible when covenants are made. Through the ages the Lord entered into various covenants--such as with Abraham, and the Old Covenant with Israel, and the eternal New Covenant with His people now. At least twenty times He summarized the heart and goal of His covenant relationship in simple words like these:

"I have remembered my covenant....I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God...." "I will walk among you and be your God, and you will be my people." "When I brought your forefathers out of Egypt...I gave them this command: Obey me and I will be your God and you will be my people." "I will make a new covenant....I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people." (Ex. 6:4-8; Lev. 26:12, also quoted in 2 Cor. 6:16; Jer. 7:22; 31: 31-34; and Hebrews 8.)

What a wondrous God! To inspire our confidence in Him, He not only makes promises to us, but even takes oaths and enters into covenants. It's as though He says, "Just in case you think I may not keep my word, let me express it in the most binding forms which you humans use among yourselves to guarantee your sincerity and determination to do what you have pledged!" (See Heb.6: 16-18, 7:20-22.)

In the coming glory, the Lord's covenant purpose for us--the close communion that He yearns to have with us--will be fulfilled and more than fulfilled. We shall be His people, with all the privileges that position bestows (Rev.21:3). More blessed than that, we shall be His children and heirs (v.7). And more intimate than that, we shall be His bride, the wife of the Lamb" (v. 2c, & 9). Wonder of wonders!

**(d) Eden Regained, Paradise Restored:** When we reach the Bible's final chapter, we find the culmination of some themes which appeared in its opening chapters. Gen.2:8-10 tells of the garden of Eden, with its river and the tree of life. Paradise! But Gen. 3 shows man's sin, which caused his expulsion from Eden, and also God's just-but-dreadful decree: "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life...." (3:17). What tragedy: banned from God's fellowship, and the beautiful garden-home He had made for man.

But Rev.22:1-3 portrays the reversal of all this: A river of life, and the tree of life "yielding its fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations." And hear this: "There shall be no curse any more." No more weeds or blights, floods or droughts, tornadoes or earthquakes. Quoting the titles of two of John Milton's great poems, we may say, *Paradise Lost* shall be *Paradise Regained*.

**6. "The THRONE of GOD and of the LAMB"** (22:1,3). That **Throne** dominates the book of Revelation, as it dominates the universe. Of the 62 times "throne" is used in the N.T., 47 of them are in this book--usually referring to the throne of the Lord. In fact at least ten times John refers to God as "him who sits upon the throne." What

a relief in this crazy, pernicious world to remember that He really is sovereign, working out His plan in the universe He made.

The Father shares His seat of authority with the Lamb. Nothing unusual about that; they are equally divine. But the Lamb offers to share His throne with us! That is startling indeed, but true. "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne" (3:21).

"**The Lamb**": Consider some more significant statistics. In the Q.T. writings Christ is repeatedly foreshadowed as a lamb: Abel's offering, Isaac's substitute at Mt. Moriah, the Passover lamb, the regular Levitical sin-offerings, etc. In the gospels John the baptizer clearly announces Him as the Lamb of God who removes the sin of the world. But in all the epistles He is called our lamb only two times. The disciples to whom those letters were written had already trusted in Him as their saving sin-offering. And they regularly remembered His saving death at the Lord's table. So the inspired writers usually called Him "Lord." Thus they reminded those mostly poor believers, who were often rejected and persecuted, that they were followers of the sovereign Master of the universe, the real Caesar.

But in Revelation, over and over Jesus is called the Lamb--at least 24 times. This is especially true in the scenes in heaven. Why? Maybe because once we get to glory, with our warfare over, we might be tempted to let Calvary slip away from our attention. In that sinless place, left to ourselves we might not keep our redemption front and center in our minds. But that would never do, so we will be called to focus on Jesus as the Lamb. That title (plus His wounds?) will remind us of (1)the price God paid to save us--the cost of our gaining heaven. It will forever call us to gratitude for (2)the grace of our self-sacrificing Deity, the unmeasurable love that prompted Him to pay such a price.

And (3)Rev.22:3-5 tells us three results of that love and sacrifice: "His servants will serve him." Most versions say "worship him." (The Greek word has both meanings, which surely overlap.) Don't worry about being idle or bored in heaven. There will be opportunities for exhilarating work and praise. "And they will see His face." That will be the peak of glory and fulfilment. Jesus said the pure in heart will see God. Christ's close friends through the ages have yearned for this "beatific vision"--the privilege of beholding God Himself. (See this month's poems.) "And they [we!] will reign for ever and ever." As we saw above, the Lamb Himself invites us to share His throne--His splendor, authority, power and responsibility. We shall reign with Him, not just for 1,000 years (20:4,6) but unto the ages of the ages.

**"The Throne of God and of the Lamb."** What a wonderful expression. "Throne" reminds us of His lordship; "Lamb" of His saviorhood. The former speaks of His holy justice, the latter of His merciful forgiveness. The first recalls His good law, the second His glorious gospel (1 Tim.1:8,11). "Throne" warns us not to disregard His severity and chastening; "Lamb" teaches us to trust in His kindness and tenderness (Rom.11:22). This is our God. Let us exalt Him now, as we shall in heaven with all the redeemed, without end:

**"To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb  
be praise and honor and glory and power,  
for ever and ever!"**

---

## **God's Wondrous Grace Displayed**

'Midst the darkness, storm, and sorrow,  
One bright gleam I see;  
Well I know the blessed morrow  
Christ will come for me.  
'Midst the light, and peace, and glory  
Of the Father's home,  
Christ for me is watching, waiting,  
Waiting till I come.  
Oh the blessed joy of meeting,  
All the desert past!  
Oh the wondrous words of greeting  
He shall speak at last!  
He and I together entering  
Those fair courts above--  
He and I together sharing  
All the Father's love.  
Fit companion then for Jesus,  
From Him, for Him, made--  
Glory of God's grace for ever  
There in me displayed.  
He and I, in that bright glory,  
One deep joy shall share--  
Mine, to be for ever with Him;  
His, that I am there.

--Gerhard Tersteegen

# HEAVEN

by Winston N. Allen

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed to usward.”  
(Romans 8:18)

A preacher who had announced that he planned to speak about Heaven the next Sunday received the following letter from a man who was ill:

“Next Sunday you are to talk about Heaven. I am interested in that land, because I have held a clear title to a bit of property there for over fifty-five years. (I did not buy it. It was given to me without money and without price. But the donor purchased it for me at tremendous sacrifice. I am not holding it for speculation since the title is not transferable. It is not a vacant lot. For more than half a century I have been sending materials out of which the greatest architect and builder of the universe has been building a home for me, which will never need to be remodeled nor repaired because it will suit me perfectly, individually and will never grow old. Termites can never undermine its foundations, for they rest upon the Rock of Ages. Fire cannot destroy it. Floods cannot wash it away. No locks nor bolts will ever be placed upon its doors, for no vicious persons can ever enter that land where my dwelling stands, now almost completed and almost ready to enter in and abide in peace eternally, without fear of being ejected.

There is a valley of deep shadows between the place where I live in . . . and that to which I journey in a very short time. I cannot reach my home in that city of gold, without passing through this dark valley of shadows. But I am not afraid, because the best friend I ever had went through the same valley long, long ago and drove away all of its gloom. He has stuck by me through thick and thin since we first became acquainted fifty-five years ago, and I hold His promise in printed form, never to forsake me nor to leave me alone. He will be with me as I walk through the valley of shadows, and I shall not lose my way when He is with me.

I hope to hear your sermon on Heaven next Sunday from my home in \_\_\_\_\_, but I have no assurance that I shall be able to do so. My ticket to Heaven has no date marked for the journey--no return coupon--and no permit for baggage. Yes, I am all ready to go, and I may not be here while you are talking next Sunday evening, but I shall meet you there some day.”

Thinking about prophecies in the Bible dealing with heaven can and should be a powerful motivation and comfort to Christians as we seek to obey the Lord's Great Commission and as we face the sufferings of this present life. God's promises had a similar effect on Old Testament saints. Of Abraham we read, 'By faith he became a so-

journer in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Hebrews 11:9, 10). Moses chose not to "enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he looked unto the recompense of reward" (Hebrews 11:25, 26). Of other heroes of faith we are told that they were willing to be strangers and pilgrims on the earth because they desired "a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:16).

Many hymns express the true Christian's desire for heaven: "O They Tell Me of a Home," "I Have Heard of a Land," "The Sands of Time Are Sinking," "I Am a Stranger Here," "When All My Labors and Trials Are O'er."

The word heaven brings to our minds that which is supremely beautiful and satisfying and secure. The basic meaning of the Hebrew and Greek words for heaven is "that which is above." Actually there are three heavens referred to in the Bible: (1) atmospheric, (2) stellar, and (3) "the heaven of heavens." Such expressions as "rain from heaven" and "the birds of heaven" refer to the first. "The stars of heaven" are located in the second heaven. 2 Corinthians 12:1-4 speaks of "the third heaven" or "Paradise." This is where God's throne is located; a fuller description is given in Revelation 4 and 5.

Heaven is a real place. Jesus said in His farewell discourse to His apostles: "Let not your heart be troubled: 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; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you I come again, and will receive you unto myself that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go, ye know the way" (John 14:1-4). For almost 2000 years the Lord Jesus Christ has been preparing a place for His bride, His people. Think of the wonders He created in this present world before it was cursed by rebellion and sin. But no sin will be there.

That prepared place for a prepared people will be beautiful and wonderful beyond the power of words to portray (a flickering candle cannot illuminate a brilliant sunset).

Heaven is not just a condition or state of being, not something ethereal or nebulous. Heaven is a place just as real as this world on which we now live. When by God's grace we see His heaven, perhaps our reaction will be comparable to the reaction of the Queen of Sheba

when she saw the splendor of Solomon's kingdom, "the half was not told me."

The inhabitants of heaven will have real bodies. "We shall be like him (Christ), for we shall see him even as he is" (1 John 3:2). In 1 Corinthians 15, 1 Thessalonians 4 and 5, Romans 8, and Philippians 3 Paul writes about the resurrection of the Christian's body. In Philippians 3:20, 21, we read: "For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory), according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself." It is important to note that Christ's resurrection body--the body He now has in heaven--is a real body which the apostles and disciples saw and felt (man-made things in heaven will be the nail prints in His hands and the evidence of the spear thrust in His side). He ate food in their presence and said, "a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye behold me having" (Luke 24:3). But His resurrection body had new strange powers: He could pass through a door without opening it; He could travel from one place to another with the speed of thought. Think of the implications of this in exploring the wonders of the new heaven, the new earth, and the new Jerusalem.

The Scriptures indicate we will know each other in heaven. Moses and Elijah were still Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration. Identity does not change with the passing of time or condition. David expected to be reunited with his baby which died; he said, "I shall go to him, but he will not return to me" (2 Samuel 12:23). Stephen recognized the risen and ascended Lord. Paul said, "then shall I know fully even as also I am fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

What will we do throughout eternity? Of course there will be rest from labors, and there will be heavenly music, but this is not all, far from it. We read in Revelation 22:3, "his servants shall serve him." As God provided interesting and challenging employment for Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden before sin entered, so He will provide for His own in heaven. Forever we will be learning more about our infinite God and the wonders of His love and grace and power. In heaven our worship and fellowship and obedience will be perfect. "Just to be near the dear Lord I adore will through the ages be glory for me." "Face to face with Christ my Savior, face to face, what will it be, when with with rapture I behold Him, Jesus Christ Who died for me?"

Who can enter heaven? "Only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21:27b). Jesus gave three very important excerpts regarding salvation:

1) "Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24b).

2) "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3).

3) "Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

If we can say as did David in the 23rd Psalm, "The Lord is my shepherd" we can also say as he did, "Surely goodness and loving kindness shall follow me all the days of my life; And I shall dwell in house of Jehovah for ever."

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## KEEP YOUR FORK

*Author Unknown*

There was a woman who had been diagnosed with a terminal illness and had been given three months to live. So as she was getting her things "in order", she contacted her pastor and had him come to her house to discuss certain aspects of her final wishes. She told him which songs she wanted sung at the service, what scriptures she would like read, and what outfit she wanted to be buried in. The woman also requested to be buried with her favorite Bible.

Everything was in order and the pastor was preparing to leave when the woman suddenly remembered something very important to her. "There's one more thing," she said excitedly.

"What's that?" came the pastor's reply.

"This is very important," the woman continued, "...I want to be buried with a fork in my right hand."

The pastor stood looking at the woman, not knowing quite what to say...

"That surprises you, doesn't it?" the woman asked.

"Well, to be honest, I'm puzzled by the request," said the pastor.

The woman explained. "In all my years of attending church socials and potluck dinners, I always remember that when the dishes of the main course were being cleared, someone would inevitably lean over and say, 'keep your fork.'" It was my favorite part because I knew that something better was coming...like velvety chocolate cake or deep-dish apple pie. Something wonderful, and with substance!

So, I just want people to see me there in that casket with a fork in my hand and I want them to wonder 'What's with the fork?' Then I want you to tell them: 'Keep your fork....The best is yet to come'."

The pastor's eyes welled up with tears of joy as he hugged the woman goodbye. He knew this would be one of the last times he would see her before her death, but he also knew that the woman had a better grasp of heaven than he did. She KNEW that something better was coming.

At the funeral, people were walking by the woman's casket and they saw the pretty dress she was wearing and her favorite Bible and the fork placed in her right hand. Over and over the pastor heard the question "What's with the fork?" And over and over he smiled.

During his message, the pastor told the people of the conversation he had with the woman shortly before she died. He also told them about the fork and about what it symbolized to her. The pastor told the people how he could not stop thinking about the fork and told them that they probably would not be able to stop thinking about it either. He was right. So the next time you reach down for your fork, let it remind you, oh so gently, that the best is yet to come.

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## HEART-STIMULATORS

### Poems and Hymns about Heaven

The King there in His beauty,  
Without a veil, is seen:  
It were a well-spent journey  
Though seven deaths lay between.  
The Lamb, with His fair army,  
Doth on Mount Zion stand,  
And glory--glory dwelleth  
In Immanuel's land.  
The Bride eyes not her garment,  
But her dear Bridegroom's face;  
I will not gaze at glory,  
But on my King of Grace--  
Not at the crown He giveth,  
But on His pierced hand:  
The Lamb is all the glory  
Of Immanuel's land.

--Anne R. Cousin

## The Beatific Vision

My God, how wonderful Thou art,  
Thy majesty how bright!  
How beautiful Thy mercy-seat,  
In depths of burning light!  
How dread are Thine eternal years,  
O everlasting Lord,  
By prostrate spirits day and night  
Incessantly adored!  
How beautiful, how beautiful  
The sight of Thee must be,  
Thine endless wisdom, boundless power,  
And awe-full purity.  
Father of Jesus, love's reward,  
What rapture will it be,  
Prostrate before Thy throne to lie  
And gaze and gaze on Thee.  
--Frederick Faber

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## ABOUT GOING TO HEAVEN

R. H. Boll

There is a common mistaken view regarding heaven. It is that when the Christian dies he goes at once to heaven, and there enters upon his eternal inheritance. This is often heard in the songs we sing--as for example in the hymn by Isaac Watts:

"There is a land of pure delight where saints immortal reign,  
Infinite day excludes the night and pleasures banish pain;  
There everlasting spring abides, and never withering flowers:  
*Death like a narrow sea divides that blessed land from ours.*"

If that outlook, so often voiced and so commonly held, is correct, it nullifies all the meaning and the hope of Christ's second coming. For why, if at death we are at once transposed to that "happy land" would Christ need to come at all? What could His return from heaven add at all to the blessedness of the departed? In fact what need would there be of even a resurrection? For we would enter into a blessed spirit land, where (as one of the songs expressed it) "with spirit eyes we shall see" the glories of our eternal home. Obviously there is some-

thing very wrong in this idea. It simply substitutes the prospect of death in place of the promised return of our Lord from heaven, on which latter event all the hope and expectation God's saints according to the New Testament is focused and centered. We know that to the child of God "to live is Christ, and to die is gain;" and Paul voiced his desire "to depart and be with Christ, which is very far better" (Phil. 1:21, 23). But this is not the fulfillment of the Christian's hope. Not until Christ comes and the dead in Christ are raised incorruptible, and those who are alive, who are left unto the coming of the Lord, are changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye," and are together with them "caught up to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Cor. 15:51, 52; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17) do we enter upon the promised inheritance. The departed ones as well as the living alike look forward to that day.

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## The Procedure of Home Bible Classes

(A sequel to last month's article)  
by Howard Hendricks

How should you establish and conduct home Bible classes? Let me suggest three areas to consider: personnel, program and promotion.

### *PERSONNEL*

There are two people who are most important in this ministry: the host and/or hostess, and the teacher.

The responsibility of the *host and hostess* is twofold: (1) they provide their home as the meeting place for the class, and (2) they invite their neighbors to attend.

Usually it is best to meet in a Christian home. But sometimes if you want to go into a certain community and you can't find a Christian family there, you may consider asking a non-Christian couple to serve as hosts. Interestingly, I have never known of an unbeliever who has provided his home in this way who has not come to know the Lord as a result of the Bible teaching in his house! The following are some helpful hints for hosts and hostesses:

- Arrange your living room (or den or whatever room the class will meet in) to provide a friendly informal atmosphere. Aim at making every one feel at ease.
- Avoid "church" expressions; be natural and casual in your attitude and actions.
- Learn the people's names, and when a new person attends, introduce him to the others. Have newcomers sign a guest book so you can learn their names between classes.

- Have extra Bibles on hand. Some people who attend may not own a Bible or may forget to bring theirs. For Catholics, have a Catholic version available (the Confraternity edition, or RSV, Catholic edition).
- After most of the attendants have gone, some will want to stay to ask questions of the teacher. Be prepared to let them stay.

Then, obviously, you need a *teacher* for each class. It is usually not wise for the host or hostess also to be the teacher of the class. It is rather difficult for the teacher to say to neighbors in his community, "We're having a terrific Bible class at my house each Tuesday night. You ought to come over." Someone will surely ask, "Who's the teacher?" And then it's embarrassing to reply, "Me"!

The most effective teachers of home Bible classes are not always pastors or seminary students. Often laymen make excellent teachers. This has a special appeal to many unsaved couples who otherwise might not be interested in going to a class to hear their neighbor's pastor.

It is best for pastors to train teachers on why and how of home Bible classes before assigning them their classes. Be sure to help them see how to deal with some of the problems they may face. It is especially important to help teachers know how to answer questions effectively.

A class was studying the book of Mark, and in the question-and-answer period, a husband inquired, "Do you mean that you're trying to tell us that Jesus Christ is *God*?" How should a teacher respond to a question like that? If he indicates by his words or tone of voice that the question is a foolish one, the student's interest will be squelched and he may not return to the class. Teachers need to know how to encourage their questioners with comments such as "Jim, that's a good question." In a "no-holds-barred" approach to the discussion periods, the teacher must be ready for all kinds of questions and be able to answer them satisfactorily.

Pastors should occasionally meet with home Bible class teachers to answer questions they may have, and to encourage them in their ministry.

### ***PROGRAM***

Home Bible classes should meet once a week, in the same home, for about one hour. Guard the time limit carefully. Many classes have about 40 minutes of presentation--direct study of the Scriptures--followed by about 20 minutes for questions and answers on the lesson.

Instruct the hostess to appear promptly at the end of the 60-minute period with light refreshments. During refreshment time you have opportunity to talk with individuals informally. People ask questions freely and many times some will linger after the rest of the group has gone home.

For whom should these classes be designed? Who should be invited? Some classes are for men (such as the class for physicians which I mentioned), some are for women, and others are for couples. In my judgment the most effective classes are those for men and those for couples. If you win a wife to Christ before her husband is won, you create a Problem--a divided home. Many husbands refuse to have anything to do with Christianity for they get the impression it's a "woman's religion."

On the other hand, if you win a husband to Christ, almost invariably he will soon be witnessing to and winning his wife and children to the Lord. Furthermore some men will not attend such a class unless they can bring their wives, whereas other husbands will attend only a men's class.

What should you study in home Bible classes? The Gospel of Mark is a good book to begin with, because it presents the person and work of Jesus Christ in a simple action-packed manner. You may then want to teach the book of John. Some classes go through Romans, but in that case be sure the primary thrust is still evangelism, not doctrinal teaching for believers.

### **PROMOTION**

These classes can be promoted in a variety of ways--through pulpit announcements, posters, notices in the church bulletin, etc. But the best promoters are the members of the classes. And many of them may be lost people! Having no so-called "Christian inhibitions," they don't mind inviting almost anybody to attend. A student at the University of California in Los Angeles attended a Bible study class in a fraternity--a form of a home Bible class. He had a New Testament in one hand and a cocktail glass in the other. After several sessions he accepted Christ as his Savior. Later, sensing that God was calling him to the ministry, he enrolled in our seminary and became student body president. Today he is serving the Lord in a large university in the East, introducing young people to Jesus Christ. All because someone exposed him to the Gospel, believing that it's still the power of God unto salvation.

There's no doubt about it--home Bible classes *are* getting results! Is there any real reason why you can't begin a home Bible class ministry in *your* community?

-from CRUSADER magazine, October 1969

# "Persevere! . . . PERSEVERE!!"

Dan Wilson

Condensed from a Commencement Message  
at Portland Christian High School, May 1999

Winston Churchill was prime minister of England during World War 2 and a great motivational speaker whose words inspired the British to continue fighting when it seemed hopeless. During the course of the war he was asked to speak at his alma mater, a boys' boarding school. It is said that when the time came for Churchill to make his address he stood up and simply said, "Boys, persevere! ...PERSEVERE!" He then sat back down. (Don't count on me doing that.)

Tonight I offer you three things: congratulations, warning and challenge.

## I. CONGRATULATIONS: "IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES..."

First, I offer congratulations: Charles Dickens opened his great novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, with these words: "It was the best of times..." For you tonight these are some of the best of times.

You have finally made it! You have persevered through 13 years of schooling! During the course of the last 12 years you have spent roughly 14,700 hours in school, approximately 4,900 of them as high schoolers. During those high school years you have spent about 4,080 periods of 50 minutes each in academic classes. You have also consumed 2,040 school lunches. Congratulations!

More importantly than just finishing, you have finished your high school career at a school of academic distinction.... Most of you have, at the same time, also participated in extracurricular activities -- whether as members of yearbook or Broadcaster staff, Christians In Action, math league, a sports team, drama or any other activity. Several of you have received honors and trophies for these activities, but most of you probably worked in relative obscurity, doing your best to take the right photos for the yearbook, or compete only to meet defeat. *You may have met defeat, but not failure.* Whether receiving acclaim or working in obscurity, most of you have carried on with integrity and perseverance, doing all things as unto the Lord.

But most importantly, you have persevered to the end in a school which sets its standards higher than most, because you have been asked to live each of those hours with a level of character that is above that which the world expects or requires. For that you are to be commended, but also to be thankful — thankful to the people who required these standards of you and modeled them for you, and thankful

to our God, who set the standards and gives us the strength to live by them. Congratulations, you have persevered to the end.

## II. WARNING: "...IT WAS THE WORST OF TIMES..."

But now I must turn from the positive to the painful. I could spend the remainder of my time giving you nuggets of wisdom that, if followed, would lead you to happiness and success in a world of opportunity which waits for you with open arms if you will but do your best. But that would be untrue, and thus unkind. I must warn you of what is ahead. The world that waits for you is one that is twisted, often antagonistic and is now in the agony of death.

Most of you know of Dr. Pavlov, the Russian scientist made famous by his many experiments with dogs in which he conditioned them to salivate whenever a bell was rung. These experiments proved that behavior is not so much in-bred as taught by the conditioning of one's environment. But Pavlov conducted another experiment which is not so well-known. He taught a dog to jump to its right whenever it was shown a circle. Then he taught it to jump to its left whenever it was shown an oval. When he had accomplished these two things he began to do something which would prove very cruel. He slowly began to change the shape of the circle into an oval, and the shape of the oval into a circle until the dog could no longer tell the circle from the oval or the oval from the circle, and it drove him mad.

Young people, your generation has experienced a similar, but more profound experiment. Teenagers today have had the truth stretched out to the point of sounding like a lie, and lies finessed into sounding like the truth, and they are going mad. The question which has guided previous generations, "What is truth?" has become for them the confusing and meaningless, "What is 'is'?" This distortion of truth has created a dreadful generation of young people whose souls are deformed because they do not know which way to turn and so they are turning upon themselves.

If you were to read further into the opening lines of *A Tale of Two Cities*, you would read the following:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times;

It was an age of wisdom, it was an age of foolishness;

It was a season of light, it was a season of darkness;

It was a spring of hope, it was a winter of despair....

Bill Muir is a noted Christian movie producer and former chaplain to several professional sports teams. He spoke at the National Day of Prayer assembly in Washington, D.C. this past May. In his speech he noted that the period that Dickens was describing with those words,

the days of the dreadful French Revolution, was very much like our present time.

Your generation, Seniors, is the richest generation America has ever produced. More of your peers own cars, carry cellular phones and beepers, have more expendable cash and live in a house owned by their parents than any other generation past. Economically, these are the best of times.

*USA Today Weekend* magazine recently conducted their 12th annual teen survey in which almost 200,000 teens responded. The results were published in the April 30 issue, which titled their findings "The Richest Generation Ever." Let me read you one quote from that article. A 17 yr. old boy said, "I think happiness stems a lot from comfort, and you can't really be comfortable without lots of money. So as superficial as it sounds, I think we've been forced to group money and happiness together."

So, if yours is the wealthiest of generations, should it not be the happiest also? Why, then, has depression among children in America increased 1000% and suicide among teenagers increased by 300% since 1960? Why do 50% of you worry about death? Why have there been 173 violent school deaths in the United States just between 1994 and 1998? How did it come about that so many young people of this age find it necessary, even seemingly enjoyable, to take up weapons and randomly kill their own school mates, many of whom they do not even know? Why?

I have little doubt that you know the answer to those questions. Wealth does not bring happiness. In fact, as Mother Theresa commented after visiting the U.S. not many years ago, "*The worst poverty is the poverty of affluence.*" The point is, your generation is made up largely of confused, hurt, angry people, who will become your co-workers and leaders, making yours a difficult world.

But we do know, Seniors, that the root cause of this messed-up world goes deeper than how your predecessors as humans have messed up. The truth is, every inch of your life is a battleground for your soul. The truth is, Satan is real. He is intent on deforming your soul. The Apostle Peter tells us he is "Your enemy" and he "prowls around... looking for someone to devour." He is supremely subtle, rarely pushing us to the point where we know we are being manipulated. Have you ever watched a crab being boiled? You do not throw the crab into hot water. You put him in a pan of cold water where he is comfortable and then you slowly turn up the heat until the water boils. But the change is so subtle that the poor creature never knows he's being cooked. To catch us, Satan takes the truths and lies that we

know and slowly changes their shapes until we can no longer tell the difference between the two. Eventually we go mad. He uses the subtle approach to win our unknowing loyalty. Be warned, Seniors — your future world will be enemies of the truth much more than you can imagine and will not tolerate your standing for or even living by the truth you know. The worst of times may still be ahead, and if you are not aware of it and prepared for it then you become its victim.

### III. CHALLENGE: "IT WAS THE BEST OF TIMES, IT WAS THE WORST OF TIMES."

I do not apologize for bringing such a dark message to you on your graduation night. But I would be remiss if I did not end with a positive. I want to bring you that positive now in the form of a challenge. But before I offer the challenge, let me tell you that you can leave school as one of three types of people.

*First, you can leave as a part of that messed up world.* If you have never given full control of your life to your God by giving yourself to follow Jesus Christ, then you are part of the problem and you are as dead as the rest of your generation. Your future IS ultimately hopeless — meaningless — until you give your life to Christ.

*Second, you can leave this school as too many have left, as casual "Christians" who will become victims of that messed up world.* By the time you wake up and find you're being dragged into that mess, you will find you've acquired some wounds... that is, IF you wake up. Surveys have shown that something around 78% of the teens who were active members of their church youth group will quit attending church once they start attending a secular college or university, and won't come back until they have their own family ...or won't come back at all.

*Or, lastly, you can leave as someone who knows the truth and seeks to live it and make it known.* To these last, which I pray includes all of you (but which my own experience tells me does not include all of you), I offer this challenge of hope:

**Enter your world as a servant and soldier and you will find the joy and meaning to life that is eluding most of your peers. First, be a servant to your fellow-man.** Put other people first. Be a place that they can come to find understanding, love, forgiveness. Gallup did a survey to find out what Americans wanted to hear most. The results came back this way: the first words that Americans want to hear most are "I love you." The second words that Americans want to hear most are, "I forgive you," and the third words that they want to hear most are, "Dinner is served." Seniors, if you have given your life to Christ, you have given your life to the One who says, "I LOVE YOU!" "I

**FORGIVE YOU!" "DINNER IS BEING SERVED!"** Be a person who serves others by telling a mixed-up, lost, searching people the things they really want to hear most: "I love, I forgive, dinner is served!"

But don't just let them come to you — you go to them. I remember my dad giving me advice as he and mom drove down to drop me off for my first year away at college. "Look around you for those who are lonely and unpopular and give them your attention." That's what Jesus did.

While at college I had a professor who epitomized service to others. I'll never forget him making this statement one day in chapel, "Whomever you are with at any given moment, make that person feel like they are the most important person in the world to you." That struck me because he lived it. I remember my first and second personal encounters with him, both of them in the hallway of the administration building. The first time he stopped and asked me my name and I found out that he remembered my brother from a few years before. The second time we spoke was many days later in the same hallway. I was walking past him and he said, "Hi, Dan," using my name although he had hundreds of students. When speaking with you he never looked over your shoulder or at his watch. You always knew that you had his full attention and would remember your conversation. That's what Jesus does. He gives you his full attention. Serve others by giving them your full attention. Jesus came to serve, not to be served.

**Second, be a soldier for the Truth.** That means not letting an opportunity go by when you can speak the truth in love, regardless of how unpopular or even dangerous it may be. Be prepared even to die for the truth, because the Truth is a person who died for you.

The story of Cassie Bernall is by now a sort of legend. She was the 17 year-old senior who had a shotgun pointed at her face by one of the two killers at Columbine High School less than six weeks ago. The boy with his finger on the trigger asked her, "Do you believe in God?" A short pause followed, after which, according to eyewitnesses, Cassie replied, "Yes, I believe in Jesus." "Why?" the killer demanded, then shot her without waiting for her answer. Is Jesus more valuable to you than this short life? Let me challenge you not to let an opportunity go by to speak up for the truth regardless of how large or small the consequences. It will keep your circles round and your ovals oval. It will also give courage to the weak, win you respect from others who might wish they could be strong, allow you the joy of fellowship with your Lord, and, in the end, win you the prize if you persevere.

You are not the first to face a culture that is at great odds with the truth. History is full of examples, dozens of them recorded in the pages of Scripture. Be encouraged by the words of Hebrews 12:1-2, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out before us. Let us keep our eyes on Jesus...." Many of you have stood up before your peers here at PCS in the past couple of weeks in chapel to testify to God's work in your life. Let me challenge you to continue to stand up, but this time in the outside world where they don't even know what "chapel" is. Let me also encourage you to find a role-model who is slightly older and who stands for Christ, and follow him/her. Also, read as much as you can now about Christian men and women who have stood for their faith. Reading about Jim Elliott, A.C. Green, St. Augustine and Daniel, among others, has helped me be bold.

Let me end with the words of an old but glorious hymn —

Stand up, stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross,  
Lift high his royal banner, it must not suffer loss;  
From vict'ry unto vict'ry his army shall He lead,  
'Til every foe is vanquished and Christ is Lord indeed.

**"Persevere, Seniors! ...PERSEVERE!"**

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## **VOICES From The FIELDS**

**Susan Brooks    Maputo, Mozambique    August 21, 1999**

Last week I asked you to pray about the Bible study with my friend Laura. We had our first study this week, and it was very interesting and challenging for me. Martin and I had found the "Experiencing God" Bible study workbooks in Portugal, written in Portuguese. Laura and I started that study, and in the first lesson we went through the verses in Romans that explain about salvation. I found that she had accepted the Lord, and had been baptized. We had a good time of study together, and then she asked me a question.

"Our people have traditions," she said, "and I want to know how I can pray for myself and others.

I went into Phil. 4:4-6, and we talked about prayer, but slowly it dawned on me (maybe because you prayed for me?) what she was really asking. I came right out and asked, "By traditions, do you mean people going to the witchdoctor and cursing others and you?"

"Yes, yes," she eagerly responded.

She wanted to know how to pray for protection for herself and her family when someone had gone to the witchdoctor to curse her, and she wanted to know how to pray for those people that go and visit the "medicine man." She shared with me that she had heard a banging on the roof of her house in the night, and this was frightening to her. She prayed, and it eventually stopped.

As she's telling me all this, so many thoughts are running through my head.

"Lord, I'm not sure I can handle this! Didn't you mean to send someone else to Mozambique to deal with this type of thing? Lord, If I pray for her, please don't let anything happen to her! My faith isn't strong enough for this!"

We looked at a couple more scriptures, and I prayed for her. I did feel that the Lord helped me as I lifted her up to Him, and prayed for protection for her and her family.

The next day she came back, and I asked her, with a measure of nervous anticipation, "Did you sleep well last night?" "Yes," she replied with a smile, "I rested well." "Gracas a Deus," (Thanks be to God), I replied, with much feeling and relief.

This morning I searched out a Bible study on spiritual warfare and prayer. Perhaps this will help me, and Laura, know how to pray about witchdoctor traditions and curses. I feel very inadequate to help her, yet my God is "abundantly above" more than adequate. Thank you for praying with me, I need it!

**George C. Galanis**

**126 Erythrou Stavrou  
186 48 Drapetsona, Piraia, Greece**

The spiritual situation in this Country: I am sorry to inform you that it is running down. We feel that we badly need a real revival of the Spirit to be able to obey the Lord in these perilous times. We are earnestly praying for this our great need. Most of the young people of our churches have a worldly and fleshly mind. They do not obey the word of God, but prefer their own will, and a cheap Christianity.

Family news: now my wife's health condition is running down due to her Parkinson's disease. Our first granddaughter is now in Detroit, Michigan working at a children's camp just for the summer season. She attends a Bible institute in Athens and she is planning to apply for a full scholarship at a Christian college in Virginia.

# NEWS and NOTES

Edited by Bennie Hill

## Apology from W&W Editor

Please accept my apology for the many mistakes in both the July and August issues, especially the latter. We thought we had the bugs ironed out, only to have them get worse! I trust that this issue is much better; we've taken steps to prevent so many errors. Please pray for all who work together to produce this magazine: the editor, writers, printers, proof-readers, office manager, etc. We pray that you, the readers, will be fed by the Lord via this ministry. -- Alex Wilson

## Update On Hymnals

I wrote our friends at ACU Press, "Since we told the readers of Word & Work magazine that you will not be publishing Great Songs Of The Church, #2, we have been getting requests from various churches for it anyway! People are asking if you will reprint it if enough requests come in? So now I ask you that same question.

"How many orders would be needed to persuade you to reprint it? How many such requests have you received already? I.e., is there any chance it will be reprinted, or is it now deceased forever? Or is there a chance someone else would get from you the rights to reprint it?"

They replied briefly, saying they received my message and will

notify us of their decision once they make it. Doubtless it will take time to weigh the prospects and economics involved. Stay tuned. -- AVW

## Be Thinkful & Thankful

"Suppose for a moment that God began taking from us the many things for which we have failed to give thanks. Which of our limbs and faculties would be left? Would I still have my hands and my mind? And what about loved ones? If God were to take from me all those persons and things for which I have not given thanks, who or what would be left or me?"

-- Patrick Henry Reardon  
[Quoted in Out to Canaan, by Jan Karon, the 4th in her justly-popular series of "Mitford novels."]

**LaGrange** (Louis Schuler) We have purchased two acres of land which is now being cleared off with the idea of relocating. There are some interested buyers and with the sale of our present property, we anticipate moving forward with this project. We solicit your prayers on behalf of the Lord's work in LaGrange.

**Two Vacant Pulpits Filled.** Bro. Kenneth Preston will be preaching at Bohon (1 year) and Bro. Frank Preston will be preaching at Mackville.

**Available To Preach . . .** Kevin Gilbert is a preacher & Bible teacher living in Elizabethtown, Ky. He grew up in anti-institutional Churches of Christ but studied his way into a strong belief in God's grace & a premillennial understanding of "the blessed hope." While finishing up his Ph.D. studies, he is available to preach (fill-in or regularly) in churches in the greater Louisville area. He has already preached at Buechel, Portland & Ebenezer. You may reach him at (270) 737-0326 or Email address: gilbert2x2@aol.com

**Belmont (Ben Rake)** announces a fall revival meeting with evangelist Don McGee Sept. 12-15. The meeting is designed to offer encouragement, a closer look at the reality of life in this terminal decade, the need for preachers to be called, etc. Pray that the meeting will be to God's glory and our edification.

**Highland Community Church (James Girdley)** offers many opportunities for Christian fellowship and participation in community service. They include: Volunteer work at Wayside Christian Mission and Volunteer with Habitat for Humanity. A community cookout was scheduled for Sept. 3<sup>rd</sup> on the church lawn in an effort to meet those that live, work, and visit in this area.

**Lily Dale/Tell City area.** Robert & Joy Garrett are making the rounds with preaching several mission sermons of Paul in the

Book of Acts and reporting on the Lord's work in Zimbabwe. The fellowship between these two churches continue to be a blessing to all who are involved. **Revival:** at Tell City October 3-8 with Jerry Carmichael. 7:00 p.m. nightly.

**Jennings (Paul Estes)** How does your week begin? As we begin a new week, we come together to worship! We offer up our voices in praise and our hearts in humility. Christ has done so much for us that it is only right that we gather to serve.

**Amite: (Don McGee)** Two very important events happened this summer for the Amite youth group. In July nine of the kids and four adults spent a week in Honduras along with groups from the Gallatin and Fayetteville, TN churches. Their work included tearing down and rebuilding a small house, conducting a VBS program, and visiting and working with children in an orphanage and a hospital. None of the kids had ever been to a third-world country, thus they had never before seen such privation. The youth group was a blessing to the people to whom they ministered, but what they experienced will be a great and never-forgotten blessing for them also.

Just after the trip was over the church was blessed in another way. After a lot of prayer the Amite church now has a new Youth Minister. Corey and Brandi Risley arrived on July

28<sup>th</sup> to begin their new work. Korey is teaching math at a local school and Brandi is working for the parish government. Both are graduates of David Lipscomb University. Korey is well known by many people as a former member of the singing group "Full Access" from Nashville. His education, experience and Christ-like spirit will allow him to have a great influence on the kids of the church and the community. The Amite church is so very thankful to the Lord for having answered their prayers in such a magnificent way.

**Ralph Ave.** (Bill Smallwood) Praise the Lord! The James Embree family put their membership with us in August. We are thankful to have the whole family. James plans to lead singing, help with the young people and start a young couples Sunday School class. Remember our **Revival Meeting** with evangelist Dale Offutt September 26-30. The recent community yard sale gave us many opportunities of meeting new faces in our church neighborhood.

**Community** (Henry Ott) Ron Flora has taken the position of Youth Minister and is now forming a new youth group for the young people at Community. Presently there are about 7 young people to which we hope to add. The youth group is selling year **2000 calendars** and can be purchased by contacting Ron Flora at (502) 543-6348. All other youth ministries out there, put us on your mailing list.

**Gallatin** (Julius Hovan) Our first session of "Training Faithful Servants" got off to a roaring start! Attendance increased markedly; interest and discussion were great. Jim and Brad Schreiner were excellent facilitators. Response afterward suggested more than one session a month. After introducing the "law of the lid", we learned that a church or organization can grow no higher than its leadership. Jesus left us the mandate to teach disciples and Paul echoed that and added, those who are taught must in turn teach others. (2 Tim.2:2)

**Hamburg** (Randy Coultas) from **Dr. James Dobson** bulletin: "Ministers, those well-being of God's people, are increasingly overworked and underappreciated, according to Barna Research Group. With the challenges and isolation often felt by ministers, it's not a surprise that 80 percent believe ministry has affected their families negatively. Knowing that you appreciate their dedication and service can make a great difference in ministers' lives."

**Central Louisiana Christian Fellowship...**November 15-18, 1999 at Glenmora, Louisiana. Theme: "God's Instructions for Last Days Living."

**Crowley, Louisiana...**Senior Week at Englewood is now history. It was a good week, even though it was a hot one, weather wise. The reports we have tell us of a group of well-behaved young people who were inter-

ested in spiritual things as well as varied physical activities. Thank God for all of this.

Bro. & Sis. Val have just completed 29 years of ministering at Ave. E. Praise God for His faithfulness! We are thankful for Brian & Angie Leger coming to work with us. This younger couple must increase and this older couple must decrease. Give to Brian & Angie your complete prayerful support. We are also thankful for other younger couples who have recently come to serve the Lord with us here at Avenue E.

**Dugger** announces their fall revival with Bro. Robert Garrett September 26 through October 1.

### **Manila, Philippines**

In 1955, Central Bible Institute (now College) was started by our beloved American Missionaries [Victor Broaddus & Dennis Allen] in obedience to the command of making disciples of all nations.

After 44 years now, we at CBC are still committed to teach and train everyone willing to serve Him.

This first Semester, 83 students came to register. They are university students, professionals, church workers, pastors, and church planters and others who wanted to be prepared to do God's work here on earth. Students came from at least 23 local churches around Metro Manila.

There are students who come from nearby provinces unmindful of arriving home sometimes at midnight simply because of their desire to learn at CBC. What a real testimony!

CBC's youngest student is 16 years old and the oldest is 72. Age does not matter for anyone who desires to study God's word. God speaks to His people regardless of their ages too. He spoke to Samuel while he was still very young (1 Samuel 3), while God called Moses when he was 80 years old.

Another student who came was recently released from prison in Saudi Arabia. We learned that he secretly copied portions of scripture and shared it to fellow prisoners there. -- CBC Bulletin

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## **Important Announcement about Overseas Workers for the Lord**

What would you do if without warning your employer couldn't pay you for an entire month? That might happen to some of our missionaries.

It seems likely that in the U.S. the Y2K or Year-2000 computer problem will be fairly minor. Probably it will be more of a nuisance than a major disaster. But many other countries, especially in "the 3rd world," seem dreadfully unprepared. People in those lands may indeed suffer financial problems. Perhaps a number of banks will be disrupted in their transactions for days or even weeks. That means that support sent from donors here to missionaries and overseas national workers may not get through to them during January 2000. Workers such as the Nomuras and Nakaharas in Japan, the Martin Brookses and Mark Garretts in Africa, the Galanises in Greece, and others might get in a tight spot.

Here is a possible solution. If during November our workers can be sent their usual funds **for January AND ALSO FEBRUARY**, that could meet their needs even if Y2K causes difficulties during the early weeks of 2000. Of course **this could be done only if donors send to Brother Broaddus** (if he is the forwarding agent they use to transmit funds) **in November the gifts they usually would send during December and January!** This will require planning and laying aside of funds ahead of time. But it can be done.

If anyone has questions or suggestions, you may contact Victor Broaddus, Church of Christ Worldwide (forwarding funds to missionaries; P.O. Box 54842, Lexington, KY 40555)