

God's Way Out

joy the redeemed of earth enter that glorious place! What songs of triumph come from their once pale lips! At last! At last! With what joyous anticipation mothers now press their children to their side! "Here is the place where the heavenly Father dwells. See the wonderful lofty walls and buildings! See the glorious, glorious throne of God! Oh, at last!"

How great is the joy on the face of the Lord Jesus, too! These, the redeemed of earth, are infinitely precious in His sight. How joyfully He presents them before the eternal Father on His throne! Though the saved have passed through experiences of disappointment, and have suffered the fascination and hardship of the enemy's temptations, Christ has shown Himself able to keep them from falling. Now, with exceeding joy, He presents them faultless before the presence of His glory! [1] You and I shall be there if we remain loyal to Him here.

For a full thousand years the redeemed are to dwell in heaven. They are to reign "with Christ a thousand years." [2] They enter into the music and gladness of the celestial host, that glorious melody of song that the shepherds heard on the hills of Bethlehem. They sit down to "the marriage supper of the Lamb." Here the princes of other unfallen planets gather. [3] The redeemed listen to the stories of other strange worlds, and in turn they tell of the wonders of God's redeeming love to our earth.

Heaven Is No Myth

When Jesus stood before the people in His earthly life, He taught them that heaven was a real place. It is not simply a happy frame of mind. No! "I go to prepare a place for you," He assured His disciples. [4] Now the redeemed see it with their own eyes. Jesus taught His disciples that heaven was real. It was the dwelling-place of God. He urged them to pray: "Our Father which art in heaven." [5] And the endearing words, "My Father in heaven," "Your Father which is in heaven," were the names He seemed to delight to use.

But just where is heaven? It has been suggested that heaven lies beyond the gigantic open space or dark patch of the nebula of Orion, that wonderful group of stars we see rising in the eastern sky in early summer. Be that as it may, it is a curious fact that this part of the sky was almost above Jesus on that ascension day when He rose up through the air to the heavenly courts beyond. Jesus wanted His disciples to know how real heaven was that there were homes there, dwelling-places, mansions for them "In My Father's house are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you."

The New Jerusalem is there. It is an immense wide-spreading city, built of beautiful and precious stones. It stands four-square and measures three hundred and seventy-five miles each side. It is large enough to take within its walls all England, Scotland, and Wales. These walls, great and high, tower up a hundred and forty cubits-about two hundred feet. [6]

Not only the dimensions, but the materials employed in its building are carefully described. Jasper and gold are there. The foundations are beautiful with twelve different precious stones. The very streets are of gold.

It Is a Real City

One could draw a plan of the city, or even construct a model, from the information given. Three gates on the north, three on the south. The same on the east and on the west. Even the inscriptions on the stones are given-the names of the apostles of the Lamb. [7]

No, there is nothing shadowy or vaporous or unreal about the city of God in heaven, to which the Lord Jesus shall lead His redeemed. Some have thought it seemed a fanciful, almost a childish, thing to think of a city floating above the clouds. But now the simplest knowledge of astronomy makes such a city a certainty, thank God! A fact-well known to us all. London, Paris and Melbourne, Cape Town and New York, are "cities floating in the air."

On any moonlit night we can see rocky mountain ranges floating in the sky. For in the Moon which glides above us, there are towering mountains 20,000 feet high. A small telescope reveals on its surface precipitous heights, rocks, valleys, plains, craters, and lofty ranges-all of them floating through the air or rather rushing along at 2,000 miles an hour.

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Our Earth's Course Through Space

And we ourselves, on our great globe-our houses, gardens, factories, palaces, and cities are all floating through the sky. Our mountains, forests, oceans, and rivers-the whole planet is gliding through space as the Queen Mary glides across the ocean. All the other planets and suns do likewise. You can see them floating. Six months ago we were floating ninety million miles on the other side of the sun. Right now we are going there again.

If a journalist could visit the planet Mars and watch the earth through a huge telescope, what a story he could write about our "Cities and Gardens that Float Through the Sky"! "The City of London Flies Toward Me at 60,000 Miles an Hour."

So let us banish the old idea that heaven is a spiritual vagueness of which we can only form the haziest idea. Heaven is more substantial and real than earth. Our beloved Christian dead are not vaporous spirits. They sleep in the grave until Christ's second coming. [8] Our Lord Jesus then raises them and gives them a new body. [9] A real human body, but made anew, glorious like that of Adam and Eve in Eden.

Are There Real Precious Metals?

"But do you really believe there are streets of gold-real gold in heaven, floating in the sky?" someone asks. Well, why not? Through that instrument called the spectroscope our men of science have analyzed the contents of the sun, that place of light and glory in the heavens above us. And they discover it is composed of iron, nickel, silver, lead, tin, zinc, aluminum, sodium, calcium, oxygen, hydrogen, helium-and at least fifty other elements. [10] It is believed there may also be gold and quicksilver in the lower depths of that glowing ball. So if our sun contains thousands of tons of silver, it is easy enough to believe that heaven itself displays all the gold which God has described.

In Heaven-For How Long?

Yet heaven is not to be the permanent dwelling-place of the redeemed. There is yet a great joy to come to them. Heaven will be their home for one thousand years, and then the completion of God's loving purpose will be manifested for them. He will re-create the earth in its wondrous beauty as of old, and bring about "the restitution of all things," [11] by making this their eternal dwelling-place. Then "the meek shall inherit the earth," [12] as Jesus promised.

Why, then, this thousand years in heaven? The answer is simple: It is the time of the Great Court, where the history of God's government is made clear, and when God will be justified before His creatures for-ever, so that sin will never, never rise again.

Oftentimes on earth, God's plans and purposes have seemed shrouded in mystery. Often there seems cause to doubt His love and wisdom. "Why does God permit wars and calamities to come? Why does He not destroy those who originate evil?" the heart questions. "Why do the innocent have to suffer?"

O sympathetic heart-we know not the answer in full. We simply trust God. In giving His only Son for us He has given abundant evidence of His loving-kindness. We leave the future to explain.