

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

HEAVEN

We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. 2 Corinthians 5:8

It is quite common to hear men talk about going to heaven when they die. Such talk is very prevalent at funerals and whenever someone passes from this life. Heaven is usually described as some place of bliss and happiness where all sorrow is past and men are made happy forevermore. They are reunited with loved ones with whom they can sit around and while away the hours reminiscing about old times on earth. All the things which brought them pleasure in this world are there. Those who loved to fish will find streams full of all types of trophy bass which will never get off the hook. The woods there are full of 12 point bucks who just beg to be shot and mounted on the walls of mansions which take the breath away. Tables are spread with all sorts of rich and exotic foods which can be eaten with abandon with no thought to counting calories or cholesterol. One can spend hours reading his favorite book or engaging in his beloved hobbies. We are once again reunited with the dogs and cats which were so faithful to us here on earth. No desire which the flesh can imagine goes unfulfilled.

Amazingly, there is not one scripture reference indicating such a place exists, nor that men go there when they pass from this world of sin and sorrow. The picture of men going up to the pearly gates when they die, waiting to be admitted by some door keeper (usually St. Peter) is a very common fable which many never question. Such ideas serve to satisfy the fleshly and religious minds of men when faced with the grim reality that this life is a passing one. The truth that "*it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*" (Heb 9:27) is one which can be easily glossed over by such myths. This sinful flesh would rather believe a lie, finding more comfort in folklore than it does in truth. Many are convinced that infants and the young that die, become angels and play harps while floating on the clouds. Or they believe that men who had no desire in their hearts for the things of GOD, while they lived, are suddenly, miraculously transformed into those who readily worship the LORD with all their heart when the breathe of life passes from their bodies.

It is, indeed, true that there is a place where those who are bought by the blood of the LAMB are taken when they leave this hinterland of sin. It is a place of pure delight which our SAVIOR has gone to prepare for us. HE has promised to take us there. (see Jn.14:1-6) The glory and joy that awaits the blood bought saints of GOD is that we shall dwell in HIS presence for ever no longer separated from HIM by the limitations of these earthly bodies. Gone will be that sin which so easily beset us in this life. We shall be enabled to worship HIM without the hindrance of this old man who desperately strives to overcome us. (see I Pet.1:8-9; 2:7; Col.1:5)

This is not a place where the unregenerate would find any happiness. A man whose chief desire is to please himself or even a man who delights in his own morality, would be most miserable in a place where JESUS CHRIST is the continual, sole object of praise and worship. The scripture indicates that the fleshly bodies of the redeemed will be transformed at the

resurrection into incorruptible bodies. Mortality shall put on immortality and the possibility of death will be forever gone. (see I Cor.15:51-57) But there is no indication that any transformation takes place upon the heart of a man at this time. If a man dies without a love for CHRIST he will not one day awaken with such a desire. As he lives so will he die and as he dies so will he live. (see Heb.11:13) The work of the SPIRIT of GOD is one of regeneration and transformation (sanctification) of the elect sons of GOD in this time world. HE brings us out of darkness into the light and transplants hearts of flesh in the place of hearts of stone. (see Ezek.36-26-27; II Cor.5:17; Eph.2:10; Rom.6:4-6; 8:9-10; Col.3:1-10) HE shall return for those that look for HIM and long to see HIS face. CHRIST is the central hope and chief desire of those who have been redeemed. They will worship and serve HIM forever because HE has drawn them to HIMSELF and has made them new creatures who delight in these activities in this present life.

Death is but a transitional phase of life, that the saints of GOD go through. “*Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.*” (Psalms 116:15) Our death as well as our life are in the perfect and absolute control of HIM who loved us more than life itself. Physical trauma and pain might accompany our passing through the chilly waters of Jordan just as they often affect us in life’s everyday journey, but we are never forsaken. We are not those who pass into some land with which we are not already familiar. If we are in CHRIST we are already seated in heavenly places (see Eph.2:6). We are presently familiar with the language of that city to which we are called (see I Cor.13:8-13), in love with its inhabitants (I John 3:14), and thoroughly acquainted with its KING. Our LORD, JESUS CHRIST who is our hope and expectation, a very present help in time of trouble, rules and reigns there even as HE does upon this earth. I am convinced that the only thing that will change for the saints of GOD when death invades this mortal house of clay is that we will be set free from all shackles and hindrances which impede our fellowship with HIM. No longer will this body of sin rear its head nor will that old man strive to overthrow us in our blessed communion with our dear REDEEMER. “*And so shall we ever be with the Lord.*” (1 Thess 4:17)

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