

THE TWO SALVATIONS

“The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God . . . because the creation itself also shall be delivered.”
(Romans 8:19, 21)

All of mankind, who are children of Adam, whether good or bad, whether Christian or heathen, all who die go to one place. We know this is true for the Bible tells us so. We read in Ecclesiastes 3:20, *“All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again.”*

But the Bible is equally positive in telling us that all who go into this one place will live once more. John 5:28, 29 informs us that *“all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth.”*

God has prepared more than one place for those who are to be raised from the dead. They may live in either of two places — in heaven or on earth. This is what Jesus meant when he taught his disciples to pray, *“Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.”* (Matthew 6:10)

God plans for some to live forever on the earth as well as for some to live forever in heaven. This fact is shown in the simple statement of God’s ultimate purpose found in Ephesians 1:10, *“That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.”*

Earth and heaven are just two of the many dwelling places that Jesus describes in John 14:2 when he said, *“In my father’s house are many mansions.”*

Let’s look at what the Bible has to say about each of these places that God has prepared for his children, and what the requirements are to live in either of these places.

THE EARTH DESIGNED FOR MAN

We are not left in doubt concerning God’s purpose in creating the planet earth. His purposes are specifically stated for us in Isaiah 45:18. *“For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord; and there is none else.”*

The design that God had in mind was that this planet should be occupied forever by the man which he would create. In order to make it habitable for man, God carefully developed it and made it fit for human life.

This development process is described in six steps in the first chapter of the Bible.

First Step.

Light—Gen. 1:3-5

Second Step.

Firmament or Atmosphere—Gen. 1:6-8

Third Step.

Separated Land and Sea—Gen. 1:9-13

Fourth Step.

Sun, Moon, Stars Appear—Gen. 1:14-19

Fifth Step.

Fish and Fowl Created—Gen. 1:20-23

Sixth Step.

Land Animals and Man—Gen. 1:24-31

When God completed his work of preparing the earth for man, the Bible describes him as surveying the work of his creation and . . . *“behold, it was very good.”* (Gen. 1:31)

It was the purpose of the one who created and developed the earth for man that his creation should not pass out of existence. We read in Ecclesiastes 1:4, *“One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever.”*

Although the earth was *“very good,”* and although it was built to *“abide forever,”* it was not all fruitful. So, we discover in Genesis 2:8, *“The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man that he had formed.”*

God not only placed man within this beautiful paradise, but he made the care of it man’s responsibility, as it is put in Genesis 2:15, *“And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.”*

But there were rules for man to keep. One of them was that, though he could eat of all the trees of the garden, there was one tree of which he was not to eat — the *“tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”*

When man failed to keep this simple rule he was expelled from that beautiful garden and the earth was cursed to be unproductive. We find this curse stated in Genesis 3:17-19. *“Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee; and thou shalt eat of the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return*

unto the ground, for out of it thou wast taken; for dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return.”

As a result of man’s sin, and God’s subsequent curse upon the ground, the earth has been less than an ideal place for human habitation. But the beautiful thing about the Bible promise is that, because Jesus Christ died as a ransom for man, the time will come when *“there shall be no more curse.”* (Revelation 22:3)

This reversal of the curse upon the earth will not be an instantaneous matter, but will occupy the greater part of a *“thousand years.”* (Revelation 20:6) The effects of the removal of the curse will not only affect the ground itself, but all men who have lived upon the earth. These effects are beautifully described in the 35th chapter of the book of Isaiah:

“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God . . . Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water.”

Man himself, beset by the thorns and thistles of personal sin and wickedness, will also be lifted up to a nobler way of life. The prophet Isaiah goes on, in the 35th chapter, to describe a way by which man will progress from evil, sickness and death to righteousness, health and life.

“And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy

and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.”

Man, living in peace and harmony upon the earth, will have rulers over them, for Revelation 5:10 says of some that they are made “*kings and priests*” and “*shall reign on the earth*.” It is of these that we read in Revelation 20:6, “*They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*”

But, though these priests and kings shall reign “*on the earth*,” they shall not be living on the earth as human beings. Rather, as we read in 1 John 3:2, “*it doth not appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*”

A HEAVENLY HOPE — A HEAVENLY HOME

It was to his closest disciples that Jesus revealed in John 14:2, 3 that his “*Father’s house*” had “*many mansions*” and that he would go to prepare a place for them and come again and receive them unto himself, “*that where I am, there ye may be also.*”

Heaven is the “*mansion*” which Christ prepared for his followers. We read about heaven in Isaiah 55:9, “*For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*”

We know that no man had ever gone to heaven at the time Jesus of Nazareth lived on this earth, for he clearly said in John 3:13, “*No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven.*”

After Jesus gave his life for the sins of the human race, he became the first to ascend from earth to heaven, as we read in Colossians 1:18, that “*he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*”

However, having entered into heaven, Jesus opened the way for others to follow after him. The Apostle Paul states it this way in Hebrews 10:19, 20: “*Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.*”

Another way Paul states the same matter is in 2 Timothy 1:10 where he tells us that Jesus Christ “*abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.*”

The fact that something is “*brought to light*” implies that it has not previously been known. If, therefore, Jesus brought “*immortality*” to light through the Gospel, immortality must not have been possessed by man previously. This is in harmony with

Romans 2:7 where we are admonished to “*seek for glory and honor and immortality.*” We do not “*seek for*” that which we already possess. Therefore, immortality must be a prize to be gained, and not a possession we have merely by virtue of being born as humans.

The fact that “*immortality*” is a prize to be sought, and not something we possess naturally also assures us that the alternate destination for man — if he does not go to heaven — is not a conscious existence in hell. Since man is not immortal, he cannot be alive in such a place. And since he cannot remain alive in such a place, he obviously cannot suffer any torments. And, as we have just learned, immortality is a prize to be sought and human nature does not have it naturally.

Therefore, when man dies he does just that — dies — he ceases to live, he has no conscious existence until the resurrection. And then the resurrection becomes just that, a real resurrection from a state of non-existence to a renewed state of existence.

THE ROAD TO HEAVEN

But our interest now is in how to get to heaven. When Jesus told us about the special “*mansion*” he was preparing for his followers, he also told them, “*whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.*” (John 14:14) As the account goes on we find that Thomas expresses the Apostles’ bewilderment. “*Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life.*”

We would like to note here that heaven is described in Hebrews 10:19 as “*the holiest.*” This is an expression that describes the innermost sanctuary in Israel’s tabernacle, which was their place of worship during their wilderness flight from Egypt to the promised land.

The tabernacle was arranged as a building with two rooms inside a large courtyard. To progress from Israel’s camp into this “*holiest*” you had to pass an entranceway, or “*gate*,” into the courtyard, continue through that enclosure and pass through another entrance, or “*door*,” into the main building itself. Passing through one more portal, or “*veil*,” gives entrance into the “*holiest*” or “*most holy*” where God’s presence was pictured as dwelling with Israel.

In other words, there were three entrances that must be passed through for one to reach the “*holiest.*” So Jesus, in this scripture of John 14:6 says that he is “*the way*,” “*the truth*,” and “*the life*,” or the three entrances into the “*mansion*” which

he is preparing for his followers, heaven itself.

The tabernacle well pictures the path to heaven. When one comes to the first entrance — appreciating Jesus as “*the way*” — he sees before him an altar of sacrifice and a laver of water for washing. These picture the appreciation of the sacrifice of Christ for the sins of man (the altar) and the responsibility of the individual to cleanse himself (the laver) from the defilements of sin.

As he goes on he comes to the “*door*” where the animals were sacrificed at the tabernacle, and sees within a golden candlestick, a table of bread and a golden incense altar. This illustrates the individual Christian giving up his life to serve the Lord as best he can and, consequently, receiving the light of truth, being nourished on the “*bread of life*,” and appreciating the privilege of prayer, ascending to God as sweet perfume, when offered in the name of Jesus.

Finally he comes to the last barrier, the second “*veil*,” picturing the death of the individual’s human life so that he might, through the resurrection of the faithful, enter into the presence of God himself. The holy “*ark of the covenant*” in the innermost sanctuary of Israel’s tabernacle represented God’s presence.

Pervading the entire tabernacle picture is one key word — one main concept — the principle of sacrifice. So it is that Paul describes the Christian’s walk in Romans 12:1, 2: “*I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.*”

We notice here that the key element is sacrifice and a new way of thinking — a renewing of the mind. This is why James speaks of this process as being “*begotten with the word of truth.*” (James 1:18) This involves study of God’s word, the Bible, as God’s revealed truth in order to determine what his will is for us, so that we might obey the directions of that will.

To summarize: the Christian’s way to heaven must begin with the acceptance of Jesus Christ and his sacrifice as the only way. It must then include a complete commitment to serve him and do his will, and a sincere study of the Scriptures to see what that will is. Finally, a dedicated obedience to the doing of God’s revealed will must be worked at unto death itself. “*Be thou faith-*

ful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life.” (Revelation 2:10)

Yet, despite the high rewards for such a full service of God, we read in Matthew 7:14, “*straight is the gate, and narrow the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*”

What of the many who do not find it? We are assured that they are not lost. In 1 Timothy 2:4-6 we read that God “*will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.*” Yet it is obvious that all are not saved as of now. Most of the people of earth are not Christians. Many have not even heard of the name of Christ. But we are informed in Acts 4:12 that “*there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*”

If, therefore, God promises to give all men an opportunity for salvation but still men die having never had this opportunity, then man must be made alive again so that he might have just such an opportunity. Otherwise God would be a liar — but we read that it is impossible for God to lie. (Hebrews 6:18)

Just such a resurrection of all is promised in John 5:25. “*The hour is coming, when the dead shall hear the voice of the son of God: and they that hear shall live.*” This resurrection is spoken of as a crisis or judgment time in verse 29. And Paul assures us in Acts 17:31 that “*he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.*”

Righteous judgment means those who are to be judged must have knowledge of the basis for their judgment. This is why God has arranged for the judgment day to be a thousand years long — so that man might first be educated in the laws of God. This education process is described in Isaiah 35:8-10 as the “*highway of holiness,*” or a highway that leads from sin to a condition of holiness.

The success of this instruction period is

amply attested to in Jeremiah 31:34. “*They shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*”

OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED

Man shall learn the righteous laws of that kingdom, and the blessed results which obedience to those laws brings . . . health, happiness and life. When they contrast this new experience with the present lot of life in a sinful world and its companions of sickness, sadness and death, is there any question which they will choose? They will choose life that they might live. (Deuteronomy 30:19)

But, some may ask, is this not offering man a second chance? The answer is no. A real “chance” means a real “opportunity” to see that which is right and do it. Now, however, as we read in 2 Corinthians 4:4, “*the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.*” But, in that kingdom, Satan, the god of this world, will be bound for a thousand years so that he might deceive the nations no more. (Revelation 20:1)

Some may suggest another objection: If all who die are to be raised and given an opportunity for life, why live a good life now? Why not wait for that second privilege of life, and enjoy the pleasures of sin for the present.

Here, too, God’s Word has a reasonable answer. Man will be raised from the dead in the same condition he was in when he died. It is in harmony with this that we read in Ecclesiastes 11:3, “*where the tree falleth, there shall it lie.*” Paul also states it this way in Galatians 6:7: “*Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*”

Righteousness is an awesome standard. The Apostle Peter, noting this, wrote in 1 Peter 4:18, “*If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?*”

The answer to this question, as we have seen, is that they appear right here on earth to learn the laws of righteousness. It is much to their advantage to learn as many of those laws now so that they will be that much further advanced in the special kingdom learning period which God has so mercifully arranged.

The conclusion of the whole matter is, then, Where will you spend eternity — in heaven or on earth? There is still time and opportunity for one to present his life to God in full consecration and strive to have a place with the Lord in heaven, for Jesus assures us in John 6:37, “*him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.*”

If this course is chosen, one must solemnly and prayerfully “*count the cost*” of discipleship. (Luke 14:28) As we read in Ecclesiastes 5:4, 5, “*When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better it is that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow, and not pay.*”

If, on the other hand, one does not feel called of God for the heavenly salvation; or if one, after counting the cost, feels hesitant to make the commitment to pay that cost: let such a one rest assured that the earth will be a wonderful place to spend eternity — a place where peace and harmony will mark a perfect society. Earth will be a place where “*God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*”

Let all who choose to wait for this glorious kingdom of God on earth begin to prepare now for that kingdom by a commitment to righteous living. This will help them to quickly come into line with the rules and laws of that righteous government.

Whatever your goal, heaven or earth, there is no better advice than that given in Amos 4:12: “*Prepare to meet thy God.*”

QUESTIONS

1. What two salvations does the Bible teach? (Page 1)
2. What people will go to heaven? (Page 2)
3. How can a Christian obtain immortality? (Page 2)
4. What people will return to earth? (Page 3)
5. What will people be doing during the judgment day? How long will it last?