

SEED & BREAD

FOR THE SOWER ISA. 55:10 FOR THE EATER
BRIEF BIBLICAL MESSAGE FROM

THE WORD OF TRUTH MINISTRY

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THE EARTH - OUR FUTURE HOME

The subject of this study declares a conviction that has been mine for twenty-five years. It is a conviction that was forced upon me by my own studies in the Word of God. I now regret that I did not see and understand this tremendous truth during the first thirty-two years of my Christian experience and Bible study. I had come upon intimations of this Biblical message many times as I searched the Word, but was somewhat reticent to really look into it. I now admit that I shrank back from further investigation when, early in my studies of man's destiny, I began to see what the Bible really said as to our future home. But it was only a momentary pause to catch my breath, and now my studies have continued in this subject for a quarter-century.

As a result of these studies, I have come to realize more and more that when you carefully search out something for yourself, piecing all the clues together, facing up to every question and problem the study raises, it creates a conviction that is much deeper than one that has come from simply accepting some hand-me-down traditions. Such a conviction will always be equal to any onslaught of doubt from any source, it being protected by the whole armor of God's Word.

Of course, very few men indeed will want to even consider that an idea might be the truth when it will demand that they reexamine and rethink all that they have ever been taught from childhood. Could it be that they know that the Word of God is powerful, especially when it comes to "casting down imaginations," and that every imaginary idea about heaven is sure to fall if one persists in searching the Scriptures to see what the Bible reveals concerning it?

When I was a small boy, we were taught a song, one line of which said, as best I can remember, "I love to think about heaven, and the joys that await me there." We sang this at the top of our childish voices; but we did not know what we were saying; and what we said was not the truth. We probably wondered about heaven, since there was so much talk about it; and we were constantly being promised that someday, if we were good, we would go there. But it could not have been true that we actually thought about it. This would have been impossible, since we had nothing whatsoever to think with.

I do not mean by this the brain, since we all possessed a brain. Neither child nor man thinks with his brain. He thinks with the facts that are recorded by the brain and stored there for future recall and use. If the facts are not there, or if they cannot be recalled, we cannot think, no matter how hard we try. If the facts are there, they can be assembled and sorted out so as to form proper and right ideas. The exhortation to "use your brain" is an exhortation to act upon and make use of facts you already know. In order to think properly, we must be in possession of certain facts which we have gained and verified. So, since we did not possess any knowledge of heaven and were in possession of very few facts concerning it, it was impossible for us to think about it. We accepted the few things we were taught about it, usually by inadequate and incompetent instructors; but that was all we could do.

Inasmuch as young and active minds like to collect and store away facts, we often sought information about heaven from our parents, Sunday-school teachers, or pastors. I now feel that it was not easy for them to acknowledge their ignorance of the subject, so they often manufactured something on the spot to tell us about it. As one mother confessed to me, "My child asked me question after question about heaven; and since I knew nothing about it, I felt impelled to make something up. And I finished up believing what I had manufactured to tell my child." Even so, we were loaded down with a lot of imaginary ideas concerning heaven.

As I reviewed all this later in life and sought to separate the true from the false, I saw that only three things I had been told about heaven could be verified by the Word of God: (1) heaven is a place, (2) Jesus Christ is now located there, and (3) it is the dwelling place of a host of angelic beings. These were the only truths about heaven that I could verify.

I can now honestly say that I have added to these facts. In the course of my studies in the Word of God, careful consideration has been given to everyone of the 419 occurrences of the Hebrew word *shamayim* (the Hebrew word for heaven), and the 268 occurrences of the word *ouranos* (the Greek word for heaven). These have been carefully examined in their contexts; and as a result, I am now in possession of many more facts about heaven that have come from the Word of God. These facts now regulate, circumscribe and order all my thinking in regard to heaven. Now, when I hear a speaker on the radio say, "The Bible says," and he then follows this with some imaginary or traditional statement about heaven, I am forced to answer, "Not *my* Bible."

The messages which I have spoken and written on this subject over the past twenty-five years have sent hundreds of people scurrying to the Bible, fully confident that they could turn up hundreds of passages that would support the idea that heaven is our future home. Many were amazed at what they found there, and they reported their experiences to me. Most all of them confessed to great difficulty in understanding how an idea could be so widely held and taught throughout Christendom and, yet, have nothing in the Word of God to support it. This is not hard to explain.

When the Egyptian and Greek ideas of "the immortality of the soul" became the almost universal belief of mankind, along with all the related errors that make up the Platonic philosophy of man's nature, it was necessary for them to have someplace for these "immortal souls" to go when they departed from the body. So, the Greeks had their "Elysium"; the American Indian had his "happy hunting ground"; the Hindus had their "Nirvana"; and the Norse had their "Valhalla." All of these were places where "immortal souls" were supposed to go at death.

When the church of the Latin and Greek fathers (not the simple fellowship of the apostles) adopted the Platonic philosophy as to man's nature, that hybrid, which took the name of Christianity, took the Biblical word "heaven" to describe the place where "immortal souls" were supposed to go at death.

The Bible-taught believer does not find himself in any such quandary. He knows that death is a reality, that it is an enemy yet to be abolished, that it is the end of this life, and that resurrection from the dead is the beginning of

the life to come. Thus, he has no need for some imaginary place with a Biblical name for "immortal souls" to go between the time of death and resurrection. There is no such thing as an "immortal soul" in the Bible; and the very idea is flatly contradicted by Ezekiel 18:4, "**The soul that sinneth, it shall die.**"

Of course, the position I take in regard to our future home is highly controversial. Strong reactions are to be expected. One who takes an unpopular position must expect it to be denied, ridiculed, and misrepresented. I am prepared for this in mind and spirit. However, after twenty-five years I am still waiting for someone to bring forth from Scripture positive facts that will show I am wrong and that the popular view is right. Meanwhile, there is one misrepresentation that constantly amuses me. Over and over some are saying, "Mr. Sellers does not believe in heaven." In answer to this, I will simply say that Mr. Sellers takes second place to no man living or dead in believing in the reality of a place called heaven. In fact, my insistence upon heaven being a place has brought to light the fact that many do not believe that heaven exists at all.

When one says that heaven is a place, it is a meaningless statement unless we define the word "place." Let us consider that an airport is a very definite place upon the earth. We go to this place when we wish to travel by plane. When the plane is 35,000 feet above the earth, there is no place in the air for the plane to stop. If anything happened, the plane would not stop until it came to someplace upon the earth.

Heaven is not a place upon the earth, but it is a very definite place in space. It is the place where "the man Christ Jesus" is now located, the place where Enoch and Elijah now are. Heaven is a place in space, just as the earth is a place in space.

There are those who say that "heaven is a place beyond all space," but this is a meaningless statement that defies analysis.

Others say that "heaven is a place beyond the reach of man's greatest telescopes," but that is the same kind of guesswork as if one should say that heaven is the planet Pluto. For all we know, when we train our telescopes upon some distant and giant star, we may be looking at the sun of another solar system; and one of its planets may be the place that the Bible calls heaven. If heaven is a place, and I believe that it is, then it is a place somewhere in this universe.

It is also said that my views of heaven are too "materialistic." Those who say this insist that heaven is "a spiritual place," but such a declaration says nothing and means less. To them the opposite of "spiritual" is "material," but this is a part of the Platonic philosophy and it is not Biblical. I challenge anyone to write as much as three meaningful statements about an "immaterial" place called heaven. Heaven is just as much a material place as is the earth.

It has to be acknowledged that today heaven is a much better place than the earth. Conditions there are certainly far better than they are here. However, every possible criticism that anyone can make of the earth or of the conditions upon it has to do with something that is to be changed or removed.

It is my conviction that this earth, not heaven, is the future home of God's redeemed. In taking this stand and in teaching it to others, the words of Carl Sandburg, spoken in regard to another matter, come to my mind: "If I had not faithfully plodded through every last piece of material I could lay my hands on that concerned the essential record, I would feel guilty." But far more important are the words of the Psalmist: The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth hath He given to the children of men. (Psalm 115:16.)

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