



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume XVII
Issue 414

A Glimpse of Heaven

A Story by — A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)

The funeral was over. I had gone partly out of curiosity, to see how old Mr. Aye would stand this new strain on his faith. He was known as an out and out God man, who believed his Bible from cover to cover, but had some strange ideas about its teachings. At least they appeared so to me, though I must confess my theology was very nebulous in its way. I could never give chapter and verse for anything I believed.



“What?” said I, “Your daughter was one of the saintliest women I ever knew!”

“I’m glad you think so well of her, but you do not catch my meaning. All I meant was that she is not in heaven yet – not until the resurrection – when Christ comes, and all His own will go together.”

“Then you don’t believe the Bible, that we go to heaven when we die!”

The old man had lived a hard life, but it had not soured him. How would he bear the loss of his daughter? His wife had long since passed on. His only remaining child was the comfort of his declining years, and now a sudden accident, terrible and unavoidable, had taken her from him. This ought to show him how little God cared for him. This ought to break down his trust.

The old man smiled. “You are touching a tender spot when you hint that I don’t believe the Bible. Suppose you come and see me and tell me where you find that in the Bible. You know I would like nothing better. The Old Book is my only solace. I am surely glad to see how interested you are in it!”

I thought he was a bit callous and hard-hearted at the funeral. Hardly a tear did he shed. He seemed almost serene. I could not make up my mind whether he was buoyed up by his faith or just naturally too selfish and unfeeling to make any demonstration of grief. I determined that I would go and see him as soon as I decently could and satisfy my curiosity. After all, death is an awful and desperate reality, and it was worthwhile to be able to face it as Mr. Aye did.

Now that was quite a poser, wasn’t it? The old man had turned the tables on me. So I made up my mind I would show him where he was wrong. The idea! Mary hadn’t gone to heaven! I know some good church people who would mob him if they knew what he said. Why are people who study the Bible such a lot of fanatics? But the old man did not act like one, and I knew he would not speak lightly of a matter like that. I made up my mind I would show him.

DO THE GOOD GO TO HEAVEN?

I met him on the street not long after and wondered what I could say to comfort him. I did not want to disagree with him at such a time. So I wished him a hearty good morning and said, “You must miss your daughter, but I suppose she is enjoying the bliss of heaven now.”

So I borrowed a Bible. I don’t know what has become of the one I won in Sunday School. Must have mislaid it. I thought I would get at least twenty texts to show that we went to heaven at death, but I was too rusty to find them. I remembered one about departing to be with Christ, but

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“Yes,” said he, “I do miss her much, but I’m quite sure she is not in heaven.”

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Bible Student's Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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This free weekly electronic publication (52 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the church, the Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Romans 11:13);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
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- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
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GLIMPSE (continued from front page)

it didn't say anything about heaven. Finally I came to the conclusion that if I did not want to read the whole book, I would have to buy a concordance. I did this, and looked up the word "heaven."

CHRIST WENT TO HELL?

There was a long list. But I could not find a single case where anyone went there when they died. I was so disgusted that I looked up "hell" – it was only a page or two further – and, sure enough, I found the passage I had often heard, "*The wicked shall be turned into hell.*" But I also found that Christ went to hell when He died! Yes, there it was, "*Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell.*" I couldn't swallow that without proof so I looked it up in the Bible itself. The concordance might be wrong. I turned to Acts and read Peter's speech at Pentecost. I had often heard of St. Peter. I thought he ought to know, for wasn't he the one who held the keys to heaven? Yes, there it was, just as it is in the concordance, "*Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell.*" But I had another shock coming. Peter goes on to say that "*David is not ascended into heaven.*" David, a man after God's own heart, and he is *not* in heaven! I gave up. If I kept on, the Bible would soon knock all my Christianity out of me. I knew I could put up a better argument without the Bible.

I really didn't want to visit the old man, but I was doubly ashamed, seeing that his sorrow called me, and he had invited me as well. When I went, I proposed to forget about heaven and steer into safer channels.

After the usual greetings we talked of his loss. But he quickly changed the subject, saying, "I hear you have bought a concordance. Jones, at the bookstore told me. You don't know how glad I am. You couldn't get a better book, unless it is the Bible itself. I hope you'll make good use of it. It's astonishing how many of our ideas about the Bible fall flat when we test them by means of a concordance. Did it damage your conception of heaven? I suppose you looked it up in the concordance. That's what you bought it for, wasn't it?"

I'll have to give Jones a piece of my mind. Why did he need to tell Mr. Aye about that concordance? Here I was, trapped and helpless. So I tried to back out. "Yes," I said, "I bought a concordance, but I can't say that it was very satisfactory. I didn't find what I was looking for."

DAVID IS NOT IN HEAVEN

But the old man held on. "Neither did I, at first, because I wanted to prove I was right, and the concordance usually proved I was wrong. But what did you find?"

"Well, honestly, I couldn't find that anyone went to heaven when they died. In fact, St. Peter, who ought to know, says plainly that David hasn't gone there. But I had less trouble with hell. I found a place that says that the wicked will be turned into hell. Of course, that's all right, but what bothers me is that St. Peter says that Christ went there, too."

"I suppose you were going to show me that all good people go to heaven at death."

"Well, I know they do, at least I think I know, but I can't get the Bible to back me up in it."

He smiled. "Why not let the Bible speak for itself! Or, rather, why not let God speak, for the Bible – in the original – is God's word. Why try to change it! You have learned a valuable lesson. Christianity, as usually interpreted, has drifted far from the Bible. In fact the Bible itself is sadly tinged with human ideas. The concordance will correct that. Does your concordance refer you to the original words or only to the English translation?"

"I understand that I can find out what the original word is, but that is beyond me. I don't know a word of Greek or Hebrew."

"You don't need to know them. Some concordances, even in English, are based on the original, so that it is very easy. See, here is one. Let's take an example. Didn't you say that all the wicked were to be turned into hell! Let's look up the word "turn" in this index. You will see that it stands for ten different Hebrew words. The question is, what does it mean in this passage? I happen to know that it is *shuv*. Let us turn to it. See, it occurs over a thousand times. Notice how often it is translated *return*, *come again*, or *go back*, or some similar phrase."

THE WICKED RETURN TO HELL

"What, you don't mean to suggest that it ought to read "*The wicked shall return to hell?*"

"Why not? If it means *return* in nine hundred and ninety-nine cases, why not in the thousandth?"

"But that upsets the whole theology of hell. The wicked never have been there. So they can't return."

"I would not be so sure that we know all about this subject. Christ went there, as you have said. You will find that everyone, good or bad, goes there at death, if you will consult your concordance. But we were not going to talk of hell, but of heaven. What is your idea of heaven?" ►

“Why, let me see, the Bible says it is a city, doesn’t it, with streets of gold and gates of pearl?” I did not want to expose my ignorance, so I put it as a question. But he had no mercy on me.

“Where does the Bible say this? Do you refer to the new Jerusalem, which comes down from God ‘out of heaven’? (Revelation 21:2).”

“‘Out of heaven’ – does it say that?”

“Yes. It comes down to the earth. In fact, the kings of the earth bring their honor and glory into it.”

“Well, if that is not a description of heaven, I’m sure I don’t know what it is like. I thought heaven and happiness were synonymous, that there was no sickness or sorrow or death, but that we had everything possible to please ourselves. Doesn’t it say that there are many mansions in heaven?”

THE APOSTLES NEVER WENT TO HEAVEN

“No. You refer to the text, ‘In my Father’s house are many mansions.’ Have you never wondered how so many mansions could be in one house? Your concordance will show you that mansions is simply abodes. There were many little rooms in the temple, in which the priests lived while they were on duty. This has no reference to heaven. The apostles never went to heaven. Try to prove it if you want to be convinced.”

“If I take your word I won’t have any Bible left.” I had little enough of the Bible as it was, and this freehanded way of

changing it roused all my religious scruples. But he only smiled.

“Don’t take my word. You have a concordance, you know. Which would you rather believe the original or the translations?”

“But the men who translated knew more than I do about these things. Why should I set myself up against them?”

“Very good. Don’t overrate your knowledge. But don’t lean on any human authority when you can get the facts fresh from the fountainhead. Do you think the translators did right in rendering *shuv* as ‘turn’ instead of ‘return’?”

“No, I can’t see that they did.”

“The principle of authority in matters of faith is most mischievous. When the ‘authorities’ disagree there is confusion. When one authority is acknowledged it leads to spiritual slavery. In either case you will soon leave the pure spring of truth for the muddied waters of human tradition. But to return to heaven. Where is it! What is it? What shall we do there?”

I saw how useless it would be for me to say anything, so I blurted out, “I don’t know. I don’t believe the Bible tells us.”

He smiled, and taking a Bible, handed it to me, saying, “I see you do not carry a sword, so here is one. Turn to the first verse in the whole book and read it.”

I read, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”



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He nodded, saying, “Now, can you tell me where heaven is?”

“Why,” said I, “heaven here means anything outside of the earth. This isn’t the heaven where people go when they die.”

He smiled again, as he said, “How do you know that people go to heaven at death?”

What a silly thing I had said! This was the very point I had not proved, and now I was taking it for granted! So I could only say, “Well, I don’t know, but I thought I did.”

CHRIST WENT TO HEAVEN

Continuing, he said, “If you will study your concordance and consider every place where heaven is mentioned in the Bible you will find that there are two locations. Sometimes it is confined to the atmosphere, the sky. But usually your definition is true – everything outside of the earth. Of course, in the visions of the Revelation the figures employed seem to suggest a large closed space with a door. But visions are the last places to go in seeking the literal meaning of words. The birds fly through heaven, and the sun, moon, and stars are in the heavens. Christ, the Lord, soared into the heavens, not at His death, but at His ascension. He disappeared in the empyrean. There is a heaven worth your while! Not a city covering a small part of the earth, but the boundless expanse of infinite space, sprinkled with stars, which are the abode of untold multitudes of celestial beings, which the Bible calls “principalities and powers and might and dominions,” for these are the various forms of government which exist among them. Here you have the answer to your question. All atmospheric and stellar space is heaven.”

“Do you mean to say that there are beings in heaven who are not human, who have not died and gone there?”

“Tradition dies hard, does it not? Christ is the only One Who has died and ascended into heaven. You found that David had not gone. Neither has anyone else. But that doesn’t mean that the heavens are empty. Nor are they peopled merely with angels or messengers. There are orderly political powers, with myriads of subjects.

MANY SAINTS ARE BLESSED ON EARTH

“No human being, as now constituted, can go to heaven unless by a special miracle. A great many of earth’s inhabitants, notably the Jews of other dispensations and those of the nations who are blessed through them, will not go to heaven. The Jews will dwell in the holy city, new

Jerusalem, which is so often mistaken for heaven. Only those of the present administration go to heaven, and they do not go until they are changed at the resurrection. Then they will be given bodies specially suited for traveling through space, with supernal functions and unlimited powers, and an aura so splendid and luminous that our present desires for food clothing, and shelter, and our craving for physical gratification will be entirely absent (I Corinthians 15:35-53).”

Here I interrupted the steady flow of his speech, which was threatening to become a sermon. “What!” said I, “We are to have nothing good to eat, or to wear, and no mansions to live in? Why, that’s all the heaven most Christians are looking for!”

HAPPINESS IS TO GIVE, NOT RECEIVE

But he went on. “Whatever there is of such blessings in the Bible are for those on earth, and we are speaking of heaven. Have you ever thought what the Bible teaches about happiness? It is not found in self-gratification. I would not be happy in a heaven where I had all I wished to eat and wear and every delight that my heart could wish. These things pall. Man was not made to wallow in his own lusts. Such selfishness is the course of mankind today and it cannot be the bliss of heaven. All of these are things. Things cannot satisfy. We want the companionship, the esteem, the love of our kind far more than mere creature comforts.”

As the old man’s voice showed that he was tiring, I begged him to rest a while, and perhaps we could finish another time. But he wanted one word more.

He continued. “There is a saying of Christ which tells us much of heaven, if it is a place of bliss. He said, *‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’* How can the con- ▶

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ventional heaven be a happy place, when it is all taken up with receiving? Even if you have a place in the choir, as many imagine, and thrum a harp incessantly, do you think you would be happy?”

He did not really expect an answer, but I interrupted. “But there is music in heaven, isn’t there? I always thought I would enjoy that part of it. I can play a little.”

“Yes, doubtless there will be music, but true music is an outlet for emotion overfull, not a means for concocting pleasure. The music of heaven will be praise and adoration to the great Benefactor. It is intended to make Him happy, not us. Yet this is the secret of heaven’s happiness – the response of love reacting on itself.”

I was getting a bit impatient by this time, so burst out, “Well, what will we do when we get there? I’m beginning to wonder whether you have a definite idea yourself.”

WE WILL BE MISSIONARIES

A slight shadow crossed his face, but he smiled bravely. “Yes, I have some very definite ideas. But bear with me for a little, ’til I tell you a little of my life. As you know, I have been on the way a long time. When I was a young lad, my heart went out to the heathen and I hoped someday to be a missionary, and to share with them the glorious gospel I had received. You know how hard my life has been. I have taken it all as a preparatory course for a place as a foreign missionary. That is why I have seldom grumbled or murmured. I knew that God was for me, not against me. Well, I’m going to be a missionary.”

AMONG THE CELESTIAL REALMS

Once more a suspicion crossed my mind. Was he really sane? But the suggestion of a twinkle in his eye reassured me. Nevertheless, with a forced harshness I cried out “You a foreign missionary! Old as you are! Who will take you?”

His face lit up as he said, “That is what I’m going to do in heaven. That is what we are all going to do. Listen to this: *‘That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus ... We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.’* This reads far better in the new *Concordant Version*, which has it that we are blessed with every spiritual blessing *among the celestials*, in Christ. There is much more in Paul’s epistle to the Ephesians. God is going to convert the Jews and through them the whole earth. They will be the great home missionaries to bring the earth

back into the bosom of Jehovah. We will be foreign missionaries. Their parish will be the earth. Ours will be the heavens. God is going to make Himself known through us to the myriad hosts of the heavens. Our bliss will be to bestow the boon of God’s favor throughout the bounds of stellar space. Out of the munificence of God’s grace we will gladden the hearts of His creatures in worlds we have never seen.”

“But,” I interrupted, “you don’t mean to say that you are going to preach to the angels, do you? They don’t need your help. They are beyond anything you can do for them.”

But once more his eyes twinkled. “Use your concordance, and you will learn something about angels. The word simply means *messenger*, and is applied to men quite as freely as to heavenly beings. Men are not ‘angels’ in the usually accepted sense. But Satan is an angel also. He is still in heaven ...”

But I could not let that pass. “Satan is in heaven! Where do you get that? I found out that Christ went to hell, and now you say that Satan is in heaven! You’re not going to tell me *that’s* in the Bible!”

But he quietly proceeded: “Don’t believe *me!* Read the opening chapter of Job. In the twelfth of Revelation, when he is cast out of heaven he takes a third of the heavenly host with him. At present we wrestle with sovereignties and authorities and world-mights, with the spiritual forces of wickedness among the celestials. So you see, heaven is not by any means the holy happy place which religious fiction fancies. We are not going to heaven to *be* happy, but to *make it* happy. You cannot gladden others without being blessed.”

The old man sat and mused for a while, but I did not speak. So he went on. “Love is the great thing. God loves me. Christ died for me to display God’s affection. It has

(see *GLIMPSE*, next page)



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Your *BSN* that talked about "The I Cycle" [389] was very good. Thank you for sharing that revelation. I enjoyed [Being OK with Not Being OK](#), and will get more. – **NE**

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I thank the Lord for the ministry He has blessed you with! I hope you and your family are doing well. ... I now understand the concept of persecution, which I never experienced in the past when I was aligned with orthodoxy! – **GA**



God's Wrath in Perspective

by – Dan Sheridan & Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

God's wrath is real. However, people have a warped sense of what God's wrath is. It has nothing to do with a burning underworld containing "dead souls." That crap was invented by wicked religious "theologians" who wanted to scare the people into submission.

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In the life of Christ, the only time we see Him angry is in the Temple where the worship of Jehovah was corrupted. He was always calm, cool and collected – except when it came to corrupt religion. In the future, God's wrath will be poured out on a **false religious system**. Hell is a myth invented by "the system" and the "clergy" to divert our attention from the true enemy – the system itself. ■

Glimpse (continued from previous page)
filled my heart to overflowing. I have tried to share it with my fellows, but O, so feebly and faithlessly. Yet I have known no joy so pure and permanent, no bliss so ecstatic as comes to me when some straying sinner or seeking saint enjoys God's love through some word of mine. What will it be to be perfectly equipped with inexhaustible supplies of power and grace, and to fare forth into the celestial realms as an ambassador of peace to proclaim the evangel of God's limitless love to the celestials of the starry spheres! This – this will be happiness – and heaven – I am very tired."

Exhausted by his fervor, he sank into slumber. I rose softly and quietly made my way home. I had gained a glimpse of heaven. ■

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