

## **God's Way Out**

"For Us and For Our Little Ones"

"Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance."

Ezra 8:21.

### **Lesson 24. Mysteries of the Way Made Clear**

You may have a host of questions. "Is heaven real? Where is it? How can God's people inherit the earth if they are in heaven? Why has God permitted evil men to continue? Why do the innocent suffer?" This chapter gives some striking answers.

THE radiant hosts of the redeemed, with the innumerable army of the angels of God, rise swiftly and joyously toward heaven. Slowly the earth recedes into the distance. Soon it seems like the moon in size, then a little later it appears only as a faint star in the distance. But lo! before long there appears above them a star which shines with heavenly glory as they approach. Its radiant beauty surpasses anything earth has ever seen. It is heaven! Heaven itself

Thrilling, thrilling moment! Unspeakable joy! Here at last is that radiant realm of light and glory which has been the theme of Christian thought and song for centuries. Heaven itself! With what unutterable 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 on 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 perhaps 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.

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.

### ***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 and 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.

### ***Judgment-The Jury-The Evidence The Judge***

But while the redeemed are in heaven, the record books of earth's checkered history are opened before them and every mystery is made clear. The great "Drama of the Universe" is presented before them from the records of heaven. What a moving picture that will be!

To the saved is presented this series of pictures of the past so that they will understand God's dealings with mankind. They shall see that He has been just. With Christ they shall decide if the unsaved have been treated rightly. With Christ, the merciful Judge, they shall also decide the measure of the punishment yet to be meted out to the brutal, the heartless, the cruel, the wicked, and selfish who have cursed their fellow men and despised the mercy of God.

"The saints shall judge the world," declared the Apostle Paul. "We shall judge angels," [13] he told the Christians of Corinth. "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them" thus speak the sacred writers. This is not a work for the angels--nor for the inhabitants of unfallen worlds. They have never known want, or misery, or fear, or the fascination of sin. How can they know the strength of temptation?

No, the Magna Charta of heaven demands that a man shall be judged by his peers--his equals. So God, the merciful, has ordained that the punishment of the wicked shall be decided by men of like passions, who can understand the temptations that have caused men to sin. The extent of their punishment will be determined by a jury of men of like passions, who, however, have absorbed their Redeemer's nature of love and mercy. And the Son of man, Christ Jesus, will be the Judge. [14]

Here in heaven's judgment hall the record of each wicked man or woman is laid open. The great film of their lives is, as it were, thrown on the screen. They have cast away their opportunities of eternal life. Justice demands that every sin shall receive its due punishment. But what a difference it makes as we see the motives which prompted wrong actions and when we know all the facts! [15]

### ***Listen to Their Evidence***

A voice calls out: "Here is the record of a man who gave his life's energies toward destroying the Christian faith. Through him many chose the paths of sin and were lost. What shall be his punishment?" the question is asked. Hear the reply: "His offence is a terrible one. If he caused a score to perish then common justice demands that he should feel the pain of a score of souls doomed to death for their wickedness."

"Yes," says the voice of Mercy, "but there is another side. He was of tender heart in his youth. He was wrongly taught that God roasted evil-doers in flames for thousands of years, and would not let them die. His anger was stirred and his sense of justice outraged, and he determined he would oppose the teaching of such a God. Yet he built a hospital and helped the poor. What shall be done unto him?"

"Show him mercy," voices call. "Let his punishment be shorter. His was the sin of ignorance."

"Here is a thief. He stole the hard-earned wages of poor working people. What shall be done with him?"

"What a despicable sin!" says one of the jury. "Did he not care that the working people's children went short of food, and the mother was denied badly needed shoes?"

"Yes," says Mercy. "But on his life's film it is shown that his father was a thief and started him in the wrong way."

"What shall be done to him?" the question comes.

Husky voices of his fellow men say: "Show him mercy. He did not have as many opportunities as others. Let there be some shortening of the punishment that comes before oblivion."

"Here is the record of a man who was respected by many. He never stole, lied, or used profane language. But he never troubled to help others. He declined all invitations to assist in the church or in the Sabbath school; he cared not whether the work of God prospered or not."

"No," says another voice. "No widows or orphans, or lame or blind or hungry received gifts or help from him. True, he gave a penny a week to the Red Cross, but spent scores of pounds a year on harmful self-indulgences."

"What shall be his lot?"

Sorrowfully his fellow men say: "Selfishness can have no part in the Eden of God! He who knew his Lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes."

So the record of human lives passes before the merciful Judge and the merciful jury.

But the film astonishes everyone. Picture after picture shows that God has poured His blessings upon the wicked to induce them to turn to Him. His love has come to them like a flood-tide. He has sent His human servants to bless them. He has spoken to them through the love of little children. By His angels He has often warned them of danger and saved them from harm.

He actually gave His well-beloved Son to die for them--only to be rejected of them!

"We will not have this Man to reign over us," their lives have declared. Thus, if they have rejected the Prince of Peace, could they be happy under His rule in the restored earth? Can we hope to enter that goodly land if now we neglect and ignore the Lord Jesus? The voice of Justice says, "No!" Slowly, deliberately, the voice of Reason says, "No!"

"No!" sadly comes the voice of Love. "No!"

### ***Evil Angels Are Judged, Too***

But the redeemed "shall judge angels" also, fallen angels. They shall have a voice in deciding the fate of the Prince of evil angels, Satan, the adversary, Lucifer as he was once called, and the angels who followed his leading.

According to the Scriptures, Lucifer, in the days before this earth began its course, was an archangel in heaven. He was chief of the heavenly choir, he was glorious in appearance and honored of God with great talents. He was one of the two cherubim nearest to the throne of God. [16] But how often beauty and talent bring pride and self-exaltation! Pride and ambition entered into the heart of Lucifer, and he planned to exalt himself to the height of God. "I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will be like the Most High," he determined. [17]

Lucifer was jealous of the honor bestowed upon Christ, the Son of God, and began to sow the seeds of distrust among the other angels, and to cast doubt upon the wisdom and love of God. God in His love and mercy bore long with Lucifer. Christ and the high angels pleaded with him. But he obstinately refused to listen, and continued his evil work against the government of God. Finally it became necessary to cast him out of heaven. [18]

God could have destroyed Satan at that time. But neither the loyal angels nor the inhabitants of the other worlds understood then the nature of sin. It was a new thing, disrupting the harmony of heaven. Had God destroyed Satan and his followers, then many would have felt that God was harsh and arbitrary, that He demanded obedience without understanding. Rebellion would have been crushed, but a million seeds of future rebellions would have been planted. [19] So it was necessary to let Satan take his course.

### ***Was Satan's Accusation True?***

If Satan's way was right, time would show. If he was wrong, the whole universe would be convinced that God was just and righteous in His actions. They would know if His laws brought happiness to His creatures, or if happiness came in following Satan in selfish ambition and disobedience to God's law of love. Already we know! We of this century know full well that the breaking of God's law brings misery and heartbreaking sorrow.

But, in that heavenly court, as never before, the members of God's great jury understand as they see the panorama of Satan's history. What do the records show? What does the great film reveal? The film of the past reveals that God made the earth a beautiful place and filled it with everything that would make His creatures happy. But Satan induced men to disobey God and brought in a flood of violence and terror on the earth.

God strove through the patriarchs and prophets to implant love, generosity, and gratitude in the hearts of men. Satan strove to turn the people away from

honesty, kindness, and purity. Through Pharaohs and Sennacheribs and Herods he used violence, torture, banishment, cruelty, and death to bring misery on earth.

God sent His Son to bring healing of mind and body, blessing and peace to the world. And gave Him, His only begotten Son, that we should not perish in our sins, but have everlasting life. Satan, on the other hand, tempted Christ to the uttermost, raised up priests and rulers against Him, urged them on to spit on Him, lash Him, crush a crown of thorns into His forehead, and finally nail Him on the cross. Lash Him who had given His life in loving service!

God, since that time, has sent His servants to bring purity, freedom, peace, and prosperity to mankind. Satan has brought the horrors of war, family unhappiness, envy, hatred, falsehood, misery, and persecutions. He has worked through popes and priests, with the rack, the thumbscrew, and the fire. He has worked through dictators and rulers, with bombs and concentration camps until all parts of the world have been drenched with blood and tears. We of this century know!

### ***God's Way Declared***

The great film also reveals that which we did not know. It reveals that God has poured out His blessings upon the unjust as well as on the just. Through His servants He has followed sinners with love and tender solicitude. "How shall I give thee up?" pleads He over every sinner. As the film draws to its close, the great jury of the redeemed cry out with one accord: "Great and marvelous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways!" "Thou art righteous, O Lord!" "True and righteous are Thy judgments!" [20] This is their verdict--the unanimous verdict.

The mysteries of God's dealings are now made clear. The dark chapters of life shine out now with the radiance of God's loving purpose. Satan's deceptions are laid bare. The reason of suffering is unfolded. No longer are God's plans shrouded in mystery. All is made clear! Now they understand! And the song goes up from millions of voices:-

"Just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints." "Thou art holy." "Righteous are Thy judgments." "Thy judgments are made manifest." Are they now content that God should reign as Ruler of the universe? Are they assured of His goodness?

A great thundering Niagara of voices rises on the air: "Alleluia! Alleluia! The Lord God omnipotent reigns." "God is good! God is just! God has always done the loving and right thing! Joy, that He reigns!"



### ***Where Is Satan?***

At the first resurrection when Jesus comes, the Christian dead arise, they become alive and reign with Christ a thousand years. This is “the resurrection of the just” – “the resurrection of life” of which Christ spoke. But the rest of the dead, the wicked and unbelieving, do not live again until the close of the thousand years.

During this millennium, Satan is bound. He cannot tempt the children of God, they are in heaven. He cannot tempt the wicked and unbelieving, they are dead on the earth. Thank God, a mighty Angel, our Lord Jesus, has laid hold on him and his angels and bound them this thousand years! Here they shall gaze upon the result of their wicked labor. They shall wander among earth's desolate, ghost-like, silent cities, and view their handiwork for a thousand years.

They survey the frowning ruins of the cities of Europe; they see the stony skeletons of the great towns of the West. Mysterious and awesome, silent and dead, are the shattered streets of the great ports of the East. And ever they think: “What might have been!” But now there is no way out for Satan and his angels.

### **REFERENCES**

- |                                |                               |
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| 2. Revelation 20:4.            | 12. Matthew 5:5.              |
| 3. Job 1:6.                    | 13. 1 Corinthians 6:2, 3.     |
| 4. John 14:2.                  | 14. John 5:26, 27.            |
| 5. Matthew 6:9.                | 15. Psalm 87:4-6.             |
| 6. Revelation 21:16-20.        | 16. Ezekiel 28:13, 14.        |
| 7. Revelation 21:11-14.        | 17. Isaiah 14:13, 14.         |
| 8. Job 14:12, 15.              | 18. Luke 10:18.               |
| 9. 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, 49. | 19. Ephesians 3:10.           |
| 10. World of Wonder, Page 128. | 20. Revelation 15:3; 16:5, 7. |



Revelation 20:1