

Sorrow and Hope: The Loss of a Child

Introduction

This booklet is intended to help parents who have lost a child, as I have. The longer you live, the greater the probability that the experience of death can and will become part of your life. I've lost a mother, with whom I was very close, and a father, with whom I was not as close. The grief and sorrow experienced when losing my parents was nothing compared to that of losing my son. So, while I pray that all those who have lost loved ones may benefit from this book, my primary focus here is for parents who have lost a child. But certainly anyone who has lost a loved one will benefit from what I will share here, if you choose to accept and believe God's Word.

I do not pretend to know the depth of your sorrow. The only thing I know for a certainty is that God's Word, when understood and believed, does bring the best type of comfort.

Foundation

The (only) basis of what I will share with you is from the Bible, God's revealed Word and Will. I did not say "Christian tradition" or "what your denomination says". We will dig deep into the Bible verses that deal with The Hope of Christ's return.

To gain the comfort that God provides and to take the sting out of the immense grief and sorrow from the loss of a child, it is critical that you allow God's Word to speak to your heart. This book is not intended to be derogatory to your beliefs, but if we seek God's comfort we must allow His Word to have pre-eminence, and to do that you must not place other men's words (or your own) above His Word. While each of us may have preconceived ideas about Heaven and eternal life, we must put them aside and allow God's Word to speak if we want His relief from sorrow.

We must absorb the Word of God without defending our own preconceived ideas.

Christians and Sorrow

We will begin here:

I Thessalonians 4:13

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

Notice that this verse does not say “you will *not* have any sorrow”. It says we are to not have sorrow “as others which have no hope”. Christian believers will experience sorrow, but a knowledge of the realities of The Hope will provide the comfort to help you with your sorrow. Note also that this verse refers to those who have died as “asleep”. Why?

I Thessalonians 4:14

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

Being asleep implies that one will wake up. Who is this verse speaking to?

Romans 10:9, 10

That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

On the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, it was made available to be born again of God’s spirit. This is the salvation in the verses here in Romans.

I Corinthians 15:51-53

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed,

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

There are many more verses where God promises that for the believers, those who have confessed Romans 10:9 and 10, death is not a permanent state. At some point in the future, when Jesus Christ returns, the believers who have fallen asleep will get up from the dead and those believers that are alive will be changed.

So?

You may say “So? I’ve heard all this before. Where is my comfort? Where is my relief from this sorrow, the grief, the thoughts of suicide, the hopelessness, the self-hate, the anguish I feel right now?”

For many years I knew the above verses. But I didn’t *really know* them until my son fell asleep and I either had to *really go* to the Word of God for comfort, or lose my mind.

Death

One truth we must be clear on: death is an enemy, and it is **not** any sort of gift from God.

I Corinthians 15:26

The last **enemy** *that* shall be destroyed *is* death.

You may have been part of memorial services where someone says “God called him home”, or “God took her”, or “God needed another rose petal in heaven”. These are lies. God’s Word says that death is an enemy.

When Adam and Eve sinned in Genesis 3, death slipped in to their physical bodies and blood, and sin entered the world. And so it says in Hebrews 9:27, “...it is appointed unto men once to die.”

Romans 5:12

Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

But! God in His love sent us a savior, His son Jesus Christ:

I Corinthians 15:21

For since by man [Adam] *came* death, by man [Jesus Christ] *came* also the resurrection of the dead.

The Christian believer does die (fall asleep), but this is not their permanent state. This is why we are told to “sorrow not, even as others which have no hope”; and this is why we must explore the realities of The Hope in great detail, for it is in The Hope that we have release from some of our sorrow.

How Do I Process My Sorrow?

In my opinion, there is no way for a grieving parent to fully explain to someone (that is, someone who has not lost a child) the depth and pain of the sorrow experienced when losing a child. Thoughts of their childhood, birthdays, fights, sports, looking at photos, holidays, moments of extreme joy, struggles you helped them with, victories, failures, good parenting moments (and bad), guilt, remorse over things promised and planned that will never come to pass, the unfairness of life – are just but a few. The pain is, in my mind, indescribable.

As the father I took it upon myself to handle communications with the Coroner, details of the cremation, and coordinate the planning of the memorial. I considered it my duty to be strong for my family, and I only allowed myself to cry in private. I’m not saying this was right or wrong, but it was my nature.

Fortunately our community has a grief/crisis center that provides counseling. My wife and I and our other son met with a counselor once a week for many months. It was here, more often than not, I would let my feelings gush out, and allow a third-party to help me understand better the havoc that losing a child can cause. If nothing else it was a place for our family to be

together for an hour a week and express emotions that might not have gotten aired at home. Many times these meetings acted simply as a pressure relief valve.

Just because I am a Christian does not mean that professional counseling which does not talk about the Bible is a waste of time. I learned about loss, shock, protest, deterioration, disorganization, recovery – things that happen in varying degrees and sequences to every human being experiencing loss and trauma, Christian or not. *Proper* counseling can be a tremendous benefit, and I would encourage you to not overlook it as a means of help.

However, the source of true, lasting comfort from grief and sorrow is the Word of God.

Paul

The apostle Paul received perhaps the greatest revelation of God's Word, the books of Romans through Thessalonians: the books of the Bible that are written to those of us after the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, those who are born-again of God's holy spirit. If you have not confessed Romans 10:9, 10, I encourage you to consider doing so. It must be from the heart. The gift of God's holy spirit, Christ in you the hope of glory, is the greatest gift God has given to man at any place or any time.

The books of Corinthians were written to reprove the believers for not sticking to the truths revealed in Romans. The believers had gotten very confused (no doubt due to false teachers); some even doubted that there was a resurrection from the dead, or even that Jesus Christ was raised!

Chapter 15 of 1st Corinthians is a source of great truth regarding our hope:

I Corinthians 15:1, 2

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand:

By which also ye are saved [made whole], **if ye keep in memory** [hold fast, retain] what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.

What we are going to read, if we hold it fast in our thinking and memory, will give us wholeness and give us healing. God's Word is not a book of rules and regulations, it is His Word and Will to us and He wants us whole, healed, blessed.

I Corinthians 15:3, 4

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

The first truths Paul taught them were in regards to Christ's substitution for our sin nature and our sins, and that he was raised up after being dead for three days. There is no Christianity without him being raised from the dead.

I Corinthians 15:12-14

Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?

But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen:

And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith [believing] *is* also vain [empty].

If there is no resurrection for us as believers, then Christ didn't get up, and if Christ didn't get up, all the preaching, the Bible fellowships, the talks of salvation, the "glory hallelujahs", and therefore our believing, is vain, empty! See Romans 10:9, 10 above, "and shalt believe in thine heart that [what?] God hath **raised** him from the dead."

What the Word is saying to you is that without Christ being raised there is no resurrection from the dead, and there is no Christianity. And there is no Biblical comfort for the sorrow over the loss of a child because there is no hope of Christ's return and the glory that will follow. But this is not the case! Therefore, we must go to the Word of God and let it speak.

I Corinthians 15:17-19

And if Christ be not raised, your faith *is* vain; ye are yet in your sins.

Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

If Christ didn't get up from the dead, then believing Romans 10:9, 10 is a joke and there is no salvation. If, as Christians, we are going about believing in and talking about an event that didn't happen, then we are miserable, and to be pitied, and are a laughing-stock; the joke is on us.

But, and thank God, Jesus Christ did get up from the dead! And as we shall see, Christ is coming back. Those believers who are dead will get up, and those of us who are alive at the Return will be changed. We will be reunited with our loved ones and what will be *will surpass* our wildest dreams or thinking. These are the truths we must drive into our minds and think of *daily*. The truths of The Hope will give us comfort and reduce our sorrow.

Thought Substitution

Due to the effect of emotional trauma there are times when it is almost impossible to control one's thinking. I had many years of teaching from God's Word, yet when my son fell asleep I was of course traumatized. It was not an easy task (at all), but I was able to start remembering verses which did bring me comfort. Over the next months I had to dig deep into the Word of God, and then drive those truths into my heart.

There is a tremendous key to controlling our thoughts in 2nd Timothy:

II Timothy 1:7

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

To have a "sound mind", we need to put on the healing truths of God's Word into our mind, and drive them deep into our heart. When we take an aspirin for a headache we absorb it into our bloodstream and wait for the pain to subside. We need to take God's healing Word into our hearts in order to be healed and have comfort.

One can hear truths from the Word of God for many years, accept them, and file them away without really having to put them to the test. If you are poor, then you put into practice verses

that God wants you to prosper and that He is your sufficiency. If you are sickly you focus on verses that Jesus Christ not only died for your sins but his beaten and tortured body purchased physical healing and health.

As a teenager I learned that God has eternal life waiting for me. If I die before Christ returns, I'll get up; if he returns before I die I will be changed. But back then I didn't fret about dying, that was a long way off in my mind. I had no wife, no children. I was happy just to know that there was life after death.

Losing a child required that I dedicate my thinking to the verses regarding The Hope or go mad with sorrow. What was the point of being a Christian believer if I didn't? Why did God provide for me the knowledge of The Hope? Just to smile and be happy when everything was going right? What was the point of being a believer all these years unless I made the Word of God in this area my own? Otherwise I'm as Paul wrote by revelation "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable". The truth is that what God has planned for us is many times more wonderful and precious than the life we will have here on this present earth.

Being born again of God's holy spirit doesn't remove the need to renew your mind to the Word of God. This is fundamental to living a blessed life. Many times I have spoken out loud to myself, confessing the promises and realities from God's Word. The mind is a complex "child" – it must be trained and taught to behave.

Job

The book of Job is a study showing the goodness of God and the evil of the devil. We must keep in mind that in addition to the Bible being literal most of the time, figures of speech and cultural idioms, "orientalisms", are used. For example, in Bible times and lands, there was the custom of "constraining" someone. If you really wanted someone to come to dinner, you would ask them three times. If the person was polite, they would refuse the first and second invitations and only accept the third. This would be a custom that probably isn't understood in many countries today.

Also, there are over 200 figures of speech used in the Bible. You have probably heard of *hyperbole*, *analogy*, *simile*, *metaphor*, and others. These are legitimate uses of a language to emphasize and call attention to what is being said. "The ground is *thirsty*" is more vivid than saying "the ground is *dry*." "God spoke", "the hand of God", "the eyes of God", are all figures of speech since God is spirit and has no vocal chords, hands, or eyes.

So, when God and Satan appear to be having a casual conversation about Job, one must keep in mind that God and Satan are not on friendly terms. Satan's desire is to strip Job of everything

Job has, to get Job to curse God, to get Job to accept that believing God is a waste of time and foolishness.

The book of Job also helps us to understand that we can, if we choose, allow Satan to cause harm to our lives. The blessing and protection from God is always there for us, but we can, if we choose by neglect or wrong believing, allow Satan within that protection. In Job's case it was fear, fear that his children were not walking on God's Word.

Job 1:1-5

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name *was* Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.

And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.

His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.

And his sons went and feasted *in their* houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them.

And it was so, when the days of *their* feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings *according* to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job **continually**.

The full study of Job's fear, his loss and recovery is a topic for another time. However, Job's life was devastated: his wealth of sheep, camels, oxen, and asses, even his children – all destroyed. Satan is "the god of this world", 2nd Corinthians 4:4. Adam transferred rulership to him in Genesis.

Luke 4:6

And the devil said unto him [Jesus Christ], All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: **for that is delivered unto me**; and to whomsoever I will I give it.

But Jesus Christ set us free from Satan's rule:

John 10:10

The thief [Satan] cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I [Jesus Christ] am come that they might have life, and that they might have *it* more abundantly.

If Satan, the Devil, wants to cause a flood, hurricane, or some other disaster, he can. However, we as God's children have the God-given authority and power to live a safe and blessed life. This is our right. We can fall into a trap of fear, neglect our believing, and permit negative influences in our life. Notice that Job 1:5 says Job offered sacrifices for his children "continually". This wasn't a one-time negative thought passing through his mind. This had become part of his lifestyle. This *fear* of his children not walking on God's Word had taken root in his life to the point he *permitted* Satan to cause him ruin.

There are natural laws (such as gravity), and spiritual laws. God honors your free will and believing. If we allow Satan to lodge himself into our lives by neglect or choice, we cannot blame God. As believers we need to continually study the promises of God to us so our believing can be strong.

There are many *apparent* contradictions in the Bible that come from the incorrect idea that God hurts or kills. Most can be reconciled with the proper understanding of the figure of speech, *idiom*.

An idiom is a colloquialism, a peculiar manner of speaking, or an expression with a meaning that cannot be understood from the words alone. An idiom can also be described as a usage of words in a culture that has a meaning different from a strict dictionary definition. In Figures of Speech Used in the Bible, E. W. Bullinger explained that the Hebrew language has an idiom of *permission*, which is a unique usage of words where active verbs are sometimes used "to express, not the *doing* of the thing, but the *permission* of the thing which the agent is said to do. (emphasis added)"

When we read verses such as Exodus 10:20, "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart", it means "the Lord permitted Pharaoh's heart to be hardened." When we read "God smote so and so", it means "God permitted so and so to be smitten." When people step outside of the Word of God, such as Pharaoh hurting God's people, or outside of God's protection, they are breaking a spiritual law, permitting harm to themselves. If I throw myself off of a cliff, ignoring common sense and the laws of gravity, I would choose to step outside the natural law and permit harm

to myself. Just because God instituted gravity when he formed the earth does not make it His fault that I brought harm to myself.

Job 1:22

In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

If you have lost all of your wealth, all of your belongings, then you know how Job felt. If you have lost a child, you know how Job felt. Job lost it all, including ten children, and yet he did not blame God for his loss.

Job 2:7-9

So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.

And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.

Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.

So now Job is covered, head to toe, with boils. His wife tells him give up and “curse God and die”. I am sure that Job felt like dying, and perhaps some of us would have ended our lives over the catastrophic damage that had occurred – certainly people have done so for less.

Job 3:3

Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night *in which* it was said, There is a man child conceived.

Perhaps you have felt this low; perhaps you feel this way now. Thankfully this is not the end of Job’s story! Job had to, and did, turn his mind and believing around:

Job 42:6, 10, 12, 13, 16

Wherefore I abhor *myself*, and repent [mental change] in dust and ashes.

And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job **twice as much** as he had before.

So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses.

He had also seven sons and three daughters.

After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, *even* four generations.

When Job repented, which means he changed his thinking from one of fear and decided to reach out to God and move forward, he found deliverance. That is not to say Job never felt pain or loss about his 10 children ever again, but Job was able to receive comfort and blessings from God because he chose to reach out to God for answers. Job 42: 5, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee."

Why didn't Job have 14 more sons and 6 more daughters in order to double his children as well? Because the first 10 children *will be there with him at the resurrection!* That is the beauty and accuracy of God's Word.

Did you feel regret, guilt, or shame when your child passed away? Do you have those feelings now? How do you think Job felt? Ten children and all his wealth and belongings gone and his wife putting the blame squarely on his shoulders. And yet in all this he did not blame God but he ended up turning his mind and believing around and his life was restored.

If you are a Christian, do you believe that your child will be there at Christ's return? How clear in your mind, how *convinced* are you, that what will be in the future cannot be compared with this life now?

Rom 8:18

For I reckon [logically reason] that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

1Corinthians 2:9

But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.

The Road Back From Too Much Sorrow

The complete details regarding paradise and heaven after Christ returns to gather the sons and daughters of God are not written down in the Bible; however, God has provided enough in His the Word that we need in this life.

To use a rather poor parallel, I remember the first time my wife and I went to Hawaii and sat on the beach, listening to the waves and watching the sunset – it was a sensation I could not adequately describe to a friend of mine who has never been there. The experience of snorkeling and seeing the fish and coral was something I tried to imagine from the travel brochures, but of course being there was so much more complete and fulfilling. However, the travel brochures gave me much hope and excitement before actually making the trip. I think I stared at the pictures for hours prior to going.

God has given us His Word and in it are many promises that we must absorb into our thinking until they become living and real, until they become a part of our common, everyday thinking and believing. This is the primary release from having sorrow “even as others which have no hope.” We do have hope, and making that hope living and real in your life will ease your sorrow.

God’s Word is not just “dead” text, it is spiritual and it gives life and healing to you *when you believe*.

Hebrews 11:6

But without faith [believing] *it is* impossible to please *him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

We saw in 1st Corinthians 15:1-3 that it was the truth of The Hope that Paul first taught the Corinthian believers, and if we keep these truths in our minds we are made whole, that is, we obtain healing. There is healing in the Word of God if we will but replace old thoughts with the new. Of the seven Church Epistles (Romans through Thessalonians), it was Thessalonians that

was recorded first. The one great topic of Thessalonians is The Hope of Christ's return – as God's people need to know about their hope.

After Jesus Christ ascended to heaven in Acts 1:9, immediately the angels told the apostles that he would be coming back! Hope.

We need to study places in the Bible that show us where God revealed hope to the believers and how that helped them, and then we need to study The Hope with regard to *our* day and time and how it applies to us and those who have fallen asleep.

At this point you may be tempted to say "Yes, yes, all this Bible talk I've heard before, but my heart is broken and I can't focus my mind on any of this." Yes you can. Even if you pick one verse, you can say it out loud over and over until your mind absorbs it and your heart is calmed. The truths I will share with you from God's Word will heal your heart if you allow.

The Comfort Of The Hope

Believers in the Old Testament had the hope of Jesus Christ's first coming. The "promised seed", the redeemer, was first mentioned in Genesis 3:15 after Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden. Ever since that time believers looked for the coming of the son of God who would re-establish paradise here on earth. Abraham, who is called the friend of God, the father of all them who believe, looked for and anticipated the future heaven and earth:

Hebrews 11:8-10, 13

By faith [Greek word *pistis*, believing] Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

By faith [believing] he sojourned in the land of promise, as *in* a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise:

For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.

These all [believers before Jesus Christ's coming] died in faith [believing], not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

The believers in the Old Testament looked forward to a day when paradise would be re-established on earth, and yet died before that promise has been brought to pass. Verse 13 says they were *persuaded* of God's promises, and *embraced* them. You and I need to know God's promises regarding the future life and then we need to believe (become persuaded) and embrace them and hold them close. *If we do this we will get comfort from sorrow.*

We today look back at Jesus Christ's accomplishments and to his future return to gather his saints, the believers.

Romans 8:18

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time *are* not worthy *to be compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Life today has its wonderful moments but also has times of hardship and pain. And yet, God has promised us eternal life, and one that surpasses our wildest imaginations. I know I can imagine quite a lot. I've been to some beautiful places here on earth and enjoyed times of peace and contentment, but no one has been able to imagine the greatness of what our heavenly Father has waiting for us at Christ's return.

On my desk I have a picture of my son, and written on the frame I wrote "Dear Mike, see you at the Return." God is not done. My son is not here with me now, but he will be with me at the Return, and every sorrow, every pain, every disappointment forgotten, and a life bigger, better, and more glorious awaits. If you will not embrace the truths of Christ's return and become persuaded of them, then you will have too much sorrow.

Are we "pretend Christians" or do we really believe the promises of God regarding life after falling asleep? Once again:

I Corinthians 15:19

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

But The Hope is not some cruel joke! Without the hope of Christ's return there is no point in being a Christian, it would be a lie; but God did provide hope for us:

Again,

I Corinthians 15:51-54

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality.

So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

When Christ returns, the believers who are alive at that moment will be changed from mortal to immortal, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, "...and so shall we [immortal and incorruptible] ever be with the Lord."

Reasons For Sorrow

We *are* human beings with human emotions. Death was never part of God's plan, but since we live in a world (for now) where Satan seeks to steal, kill, and destroy, we will experience the grief that death brings.

A parent who loses a child will have many reasons why they feel almost insurmountable sorrow; these are but a few:

- My child didn't deserve to die.
- My child didn't do anything wrong, why did they suffer pain?
- What more could I have done?
- Why is it that *my* child died? He/she was such a good kid and yet so many bad people are out there in the world.
- How could God allow this to happen to an innocent child?
- I regret the times I was mean or unfair, I can never go back and apologize.
- I'll never forget the look of sadness and hopelessness in their eyes.
- I'll never again see their happy smiling face (wrong!).

There is nothing shameful in having any of these feelings. These are feelings that any parent will have when losing a child. But, and thank God, we have the truths from God that will help us.

Reasons For Less Sorrow

Believers, and by this I mean someone who has confessed Romans 10:9, 10 (which we have previously covered), need to read and believe, and then meditate on, the truths regarding Christ's return and what that means for their child.

It is important to know that your young child, one who was not old enough to confess and believe Romans 10:9, 10, and who has fallen asleep, is sanctified by the believing parent (even if only one parent is a believer):

I Corinthians 7:14

For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy.

Do you believe that:

- ...God is fair and will ultimately bring happiness, joy, and smiles to your child?
- ...the next heaven and earth will be free from pain, sickness, and death? Do you even believe that there is a next heaven and earth?
- ...your earthly family of believers will be reunited?

It seems that giving a child a "time-out" when they misbehaved became a common way to discipline them. My son is taking a "time-out". He awaits the return of Christ, just as I do. Right now he has no consciousness, no pain, no regret or remorse. His next waking moment will be seeing Jesus Christ, face to face.

The apostle Paul wrote, by revelation, to Timothy:

II Timothy 1:12 (James Murdoch translation)

Therefore I suffer these things: and I am not ashamed; for I know in whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is competent to keep for me my deposit against that day.

The “deposit” is that gift of holy spirit. Our bodies turn to dust; our soul (breath-life) expires; but the gift of holy spirit is eternal, kept in God’s hands, until the day of Christ’s return.

Even believers in the Old Testament (prior to the new birth being available) had the hope of the resurrection of the just:

Psalms 16:8, 9

I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.

King David knew that he would be raised, therefore he believed that he would rest (in death) in hope. If Old Testament believers, who were waiting for the first coming of Jesus Christ, could hope, then certainly we can.

We’ve had this verse before:

Hebrews 11:13

These all [Old Testament believers] died in faith [believing], not having received the promises [which includes the gift of holy spirit], but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of *them*, and embraced *them*, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

When you would put your child to sleep at night, tuck them in, say prayers and give them a kiss, did you have sorrow? Why not? *Because you knew they were getting up again in the morning.* Well, you need to be persuaded that your son or daughter will be getting back up at Christ’s

return. You have sorrow now because their life was cut short, or they were in pain, or things went unsaid. But your child has no memory of those things now. You do, they do not.

You need to “embrace” the truths of Christ’s return and of the future heaven and earth and of the life to come. You need to be totally convinced that your child is in God’s hands, that He is keeping your child’s “deposit” safe, and even though the world was not fair to your child God *will more than balance the scales*.

For you as a parent, your sorrow will be reduced in proportion to how convinced you are of God’s promises of eternal life, of His promise of a future heaven and earth, where not only is there no more sickness, death, and sorrow, but is one of complete joy and one of your child being happier than you ever saw or imagined.

Perhaps this type of thinking seems just like foolishness to trick our minds. But it is not foolish, because if God’s Word is a lie about the next heaven and earth then it’s a lie about everything. God’s Word is truth, so it cannot be accurate when it comes to Noah, or Moses, or Jesus Christ, and a lie about Christ’s return, or eternal life, or being reunited with your child where they are happy and healthy and alive. God’s Word cannot be accurate about the past, but a lie about the future. It is never foolishness to believe God’s Word.

Therefore, we as parents must go to that Word of God that tells us about Christ’s return and the glory that shall follow.

We, particularly in Western culture, are conditioned to think very little about life after death and the next heaven and earth. We focus on our life in the here and now. There is nothing wrong with taking care of today, but we at times neglect the realities of what will be.

Resurrection, or Gathering Together?

We read earlier that believers who die are referred to as “fallen asleep”, because at the return of Christ they will be raised incorruptible and those of us who are alive will be changed from mortal to immortal (1st Corinthians 15:51-53). Death is not a permanent state.

The believers *before* the day of Pentecost (Acts chapter 2) were promised a “better resurrection” (Hebrews 11:35). Jesus Christ spoke of the resurrection of the just and the unjust in John 5. We saw above in Psalm 16 that King David said “my flesh also shall rest in hope”, because he looked forward to and believed in the coming Messiah. That was his hope.

Believers *after* the day of Pentecost look forward to the return, the second coming, of Christ. Furthermore, we are not part of the resurrections, but are in the gathering together.

I Thessalonians 2:1

Now we beseech you, brethren, *by* the coming [*parousia*] of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our **gathering together** unto him,

The return of Christ has two basic parts, the *parousia*, when Christ comes *for* the saints (yes, if you are born again you are a saint!), and the *apokalupsis* (from which we get our word “apocalypse”), when Christ returns to earth *with* his saints.

Matthew 24:3, 6

...Tell us, when shall these things be? and what *shall be* the sign of thy coming [*parousia*], and of the end [*sunteleia*] of the world?

...for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end [*telos*. final point] is not yet.

It is at the *parousia* that the dead in Christ will be raised, and when the mortals (believers that are alive) put on immortality. This gathering together is for the born-again ones.

I Thessalonians 4:16-18

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and **so shall we ever be with the Lord.**

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Who is “we” in verse 17 above? Believers! We are not going to start out on earth here as a family, and then at the return of Christ end up as some kind of “eternal life space alien” where no one knows each other. God is about family.

The believers before the new birth was made available in Acts chapter 2, those who looked forward to the first coming of Christ, will be resurrected and judged. This occurs *after* the

gathering together. Believers today, those of us born again of holy spirit, will have been already gathered together and not judged for good or bad (because we have already been judged in the person of our substitute and mediator, Jesus Christ). We will stand before the *bema*, and be rewarded for our faithfulness here on earth:

II Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat [*bema*] of Christ; that every one may receive [*komizo*] the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad.

The *bema* is where rewards (such as in the Greek games) are handed out. In the Olympics some receive the gold medal, some the silver, some the bronze. Our reward is tied to our faithfulness here on earth. *Komizo* (the word for “receive” above) is also used in the following verses:

I Peter 1:9, 5:4

Receiving [*komizo*] the end of your faith, *even* the salvation of *your* souls.

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive [*komizo*] a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Hebrews 11:39, 40

And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received [*komizo*] not the promise:

God having provided some better thing for us [that’s you and me], that they without us should not be made perfect.

The believers in the Old Testament (who died before Acts 2) did not receive the promise of the new birth, yet they stayed faithful and will be rewarded with the “better resurrection”. We have received the promise; we have the new birth; we will be gathered together and blessed with everlasting life and rewards.

It is completely natural for us as parents who have lost a child to have sorrow. We expect that our children will outlive us and we do not expect to go through the anguish of them falling asleep before us.

Too often Christian teaching has us thinking our child is, immediately after falling asleep, running around in a playground in heaven, or floating on a cloud, or playing with angels. And too often these words sound a bit hollow and unbelievable as though the speaker of them really wasn't convinced and was searching for something hopeful to say. If believers immediately went to heaven with all the best things in life when we fall asleep then death is not an enemy, and Christ doesn't need to come back to gather us!

Make no mistake, Christ is coming back and the dead in Christ will get up and those of us alive at that time will be changed. It is important that we as parents understand the difference between the *resurrections* of the just and unjust for the believers (pre-Acts chapter 2) looking forward to the first coming of Jesus Christ, and the *gathering together* for us believers who have confessed Romans 10:9, 10.

Gravedom

It makes no sense for Christ to come back to raise the dead if we immediately go to heaven or paradise when we die. So, where are the dead?

“Gravedom” is a place where there is no consciousness or remembrance.

Psalm 6:5

For in death *there* is no remembrance of thee...

Psalm 146:4

His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6, 10

For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward: for the memory of them is forgotten.

Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any *thing* that is done under the sun.

Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do *it* with thy might; for *there is* no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave [Hebrew *sheol*, gravedom], whither thou goest.

Because there is no consciousness in death, there is no awareness of time for the person who has fallen asleep (I'm sure we all have at least once experienced a wonderful night's sleep or a nap where it seemed like we woke up right after dozing off). The next moment of awareness for the believer (your child), will be seeing Jesus Christ face to face at the gathering together!

Did your child have pain? Mental anguish? Troubles? Disappointments you could not solve? Sadness? Your son or daughter has none of those now. Their next thought, their next moment of awareness, will be at the gathering together. That is when we will be reunited, and there will be no more sickness, sadness, disappointment, or death.

The Christian believer is body, soul, and spirit. The body returns to dust; the holy spirit received at the time of the new birth returns to God and is kept until the return of Christ (2nd Timothy 1:12). Soul life, in Hebrew *nephesh kai*, or perhaps another translation would be *breath life*, is gone. When you breathe your last breath you are in gravedom, the state of being dead.

Death (gravedom) Is Not The Finish Line!

When I was 17 or 18 years old I thought, "Ok, I work until I'm 65 and then go on Social Security until I die. What is so rewarding about that?" This is perhaps a common viewpoint of someone without God, and that is who I was at that time.

Our Heavenly Father has quite a different idea about life. His son Jesus Christ paid the price necessary, due to Adam's fall, for us to have a life more than abundant here on earth (John 10:10), AND, life everlasting because of the eternal nature of the gift of holy spirit.

For whatever reasons, people often look at a life of 75 years or so as "full", and certainly 75 years is something to be thankful for. But perhaps we at the same time do not consider what God has in store for the believer after, and that is where we need to adjust our thinking.

We have much grief due to our child falling asleep. Life cut short; their pain and disappointments; we as parents seeing our beloved child gone before we die; the void in our lives without our child. However, we need to think and remember daily, or hourly, or by the

minute, that their passing is *not* the end, it is *not* all there is, it is *not* the last time we will see them!

So far the only person to get up from the dead and stay up is Jesus Christ. Even though he told his disciples that he would “the third day rise again” (Luke 24:7), it seems they sort of forgot. Certainly his public torture and crucifixion was fresh in their minds, just as the details of our child’s passing can be in ours. And in the turmoil perhaps they forgot to remember the promise Jesus Christ made to them that he would be getting back up.

We read about an occurrence a few days after Jesus’ crucifixion, where two disciples were walking on the road to Emmaus and Jesus Christ (in his resurrected body) approached them.

Luke 24:15-17

And it came to pass, that, while they communed *together* and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them.

But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

And he said unto them, What manner of communications *are* these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad [gloomy, mournful]?

After the disciples explained why they were mournful, Jesus Christ admonished them:

Luke 24:25 (Murdoch translation)

Then Jesus said to them: O deficient in understanding, and slow of heart to believe all the things that the prophets uttered.

You and I need to be “not deficient” in our understanding, or slow of heart to believe the realities of The Hope. Because this is where our comfort will come from. This is where we can put our lives back on track. We have God, a family, others, ourselves, who need us as whole emotionally as we can be.

Yes, the disciples (if they remembered) had the knowledge that Jesus Christ would be raised up from the dead in only three days. But they lost sight of the hope that he would be getting up

from the dead, and were mournful. Jesus Christ spent time with them, in his resurrected body, teaching and comforting them.

Acts 1:3-5

To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:

And, being assembled together with *them*, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, *saith he*, ye have heard of me.

For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

However, on the day of the ascension in Acts 1:9 he left them again.

Acts 1:9

And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

While the apostles stood gazing into heaven (what I would give to see a picture of that), two angels chided them:

Acts 1:10, 11

And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel;

Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.

This is our hope also, the return of Jesus Christ to gather his saints, his believers, and for us to be reunited! When will this happen? Only God knows. Until that day we must comfort ourselves with the knowledge of The Hope, and walk in God's love, knowing that God isn't done with our child. A brighter future, a better world, awaits us.

God's Word reminds us to have The Hope of Christ's return *in the forefront of our thinking*:

I Thessalonians 1:9, 10

For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God;

And to wait [a better translation is "await", to wait for eagerly, not just a passive waiting such as waiting for a bus] for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, *even* Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath [born again believers will not be present on earth during the period of turmoil in the book of Revelation] to come.

Romans 8:25

But if we hope for that we see not, *then* do we with patience wait [in Greek, *apekdechomai*; to diligently look] for *it*.

Colossians 3:2-4

Set your affection [your deepest thoughts, which includes thinking about The Hope] on things above, not on things on the earth.

For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

When Christ, *who is* our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

Where Are We?

Let's take a moment to review some of what we have covered:

- Death is an enemy, not a welcomed friend

- When we fall asleep, we do not immediately go to heaven or paradise (else why would Christ need to return?), but we wait for the gathering together
- Gravedom is *not* the final resting state for the believer
- There is no consciousness, pain, or memory in gravedom
- After falling asleep, our child's next waking moment will be face to face with Jesus Christ
- Believers today are judged for rewards due to their faithfulness at the *bema*
- The gathering together of the saints occurs *before* the wrath; we will not be here on earth
- Our sorrow is reduced by learning and thinking often about the details of The Hope; we are made whole as we keep these truths in our memory and daily thinking

Together With

At this time I want to explore some of what is meant by “and so shall we ever be with the Lord”, from 1st Thessalonians 4:17.

I John 3:2, 3

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet 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.

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

I think that when I was new to the Word of God I had this image of a bunch of “risen from the dead” believers standing in kind of a heavenly crowd of people staring at Jesus Christ, all of us in white robes with some sort of glow coming from somewhere. Not! It's much, much more intimate than that!

God is about family! We, His born again sons and daughters, are His family. All throughout the Word of God one can read of families, fathers and mothers, parents instructing their children, children respecting their parents. While political movements and cultural changes work hard to disrupt the family structure (to the detriment of that society), God has always placed the emphasis on family. There is no indication that this changes after the gathering together.

Genesis 12:3 (God speaking to Abraham)

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all **families** of the earth be blessed.

Abraham is referred to as father of us all – who believe. As believers we have this blessing from our Heavenly Father.

Ephesians 3:14, 15

For this cause I [the apostle Paul] bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

Of whom the whole **family** in heaven and earth is named,

The strength of any community and country is in direct proportion to their trust in the one true God and *family* dependence.

Part of the grief that we have over losing a child is that we will no longer see them, we can no longer talk to them and explain our thoughts and love; and for the remainder of this life here on this earth that is true. Which is why we must focus our thinking (“By which also ye are saved [made whole], *if ye keep in memory* what I preached unto you”) on the next life, the next heaven and earth -- which will be established after the return of Christ.

What will that be like? We only know a very little bit. The human mind most likely could not comprehend the fullness of it all. The only person so far who was raised from the dead and given their spiritual body is Jesus Christ.

I Corinthians 15:42-44

So also *is* the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption [our physical bodies]; it is raised in incorruption [our new bodies after the gathering together]:

It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power:

It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.

Let's take a look at just a few of the recorded activities of Jesus Christ *after* he was raised from the dead:

- We see that on the road to Emmaus Jesus spent time with just two disciples, walking and teaching them from the Word of God, and yet he was able to somehow not reveal that it was he, until he chose to do so (Luke 24:13 *ff*).
- Jesus sat and ate with them (Luke 24:30).
- Jesus was able to stand in the midst of his disciples, even though the doors were closed (John 20:19).
- He could eat, walk, talk, and be recognized as the man he was before his crucifixion. He could be touched. He spent time with his friends and disciples teaching, comforting them, and helping them.
- While Jesus Christ was still here on earth he spent time with people (he wasn't sitting on some throne in temple or church). He wasn't some glowing orb, and he didn't look like an alien being. Why should it be any different for us and our family? It's not!

Perhaps you've been to a family reunion, or perhaps not. Well, there's one coming that will be the biggest and best for all for us, and that will be when we are again with our loved ones at the return of Christ. Do you have trouble believing that? We cannot drive these truths into our minds and hearts too deeply.

I Corinthians 15:19

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

As a reminder, there is no point in being a Christian, in fact Christianity doesn't even exist, without the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And if Jesus Christ got up from the dead, we as believers will get up from the dead. And if we are getting up from the dead then we will be together again with our loved ones where God has more in store for us than we can possibly imagine now.

If you understand nothing else from this booklet, understand what I just said.

Revelation 21:4

And 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.

God, Our Father

You and I as parents loved our children. We fed, clothed, played, cared, nurtured, and did many other acts of love. The bond between a parent and child is unique and precious. And yet we are not perfect.

Our God, the Father of our savior Jesus Christ, is our Heavenly Father and He is perfect.

I Peter 1:23

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

Romans 8:15-17

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption [of sonship], whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ...

You see, not only is the Creator of the heavens and earth our God, He is our Father. "Beloved now are we the sons of God...."

Our Heavenly Father is perfect. He will more than set things right for your child. He is not done yet with the blessings and abundance of life that will be poured out for us at Christ's return. Like any father or mother, He wants the best for his children.

There is much we do not understand about this life and especially the next, but what I have shared with you here we do know for a certainty, and the more you drive these truths repeatedly into your hearts the more comfort you will have, because it is God's Word, and His Word is truth.

I Peter 1:3, 4, 13

Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

We could spend much time on these verses, as they are so rich.

- “Begotten us again”: when we confessed Romans 10:9, 10 we were born again of God’s holy spirit, which is seed, eternal life.
- “A lively hope”: or more literally, a “live hope”. One translation has “the hope of life”. Our hope is not a fake, or dead hope. It’s not something to occupy our minds only while alive now on the earth so we feel good. Christ is returning and what God has promised He will fulfill.
- “By the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”: we covered the significance of the resurrection in 1st Corinthians 15 and Romans 10:9, 10.
- “To an inheritance incorruptible...”: As children of God we have an inheritance! What all that is I do not know, but it includes eternal life, a new, spiritual body, and a reunion with our loved ones. It is incorruptible; it cannot be taxed, taken away, or otherwise be reduced in life or quality.

And then verse 13 asks us to “gird up the loins of your mind”. So much of today’s physical health regimens involve “strengthening one’s core”. When looking up “loin” on *Dictionary.com* there is an Idiom listed, meaning “to prepare oneself for something requiring readiness, strength, or endurance”.

The Greek word for “gird up”, *anazōnnyimi*, is used only here in the New Testament. This is something we must do. In Bible times men had flowing garments (such as a tunic) and what we might call a sash, or a belt. Before physical labor, or fighting, men would gather their tunic and wrap their belt around their loin area. This represents preparing for a trial to come. Our trial is to live in a world where negatives and hardships exist, yet never lose sight of our Hope.

We need to “gird up” daily.

“Be sober”, that is, be awake, alert; and “hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought you at the revelation of Jesus Christ”.

Every day, and every time we can during every day, we must actively hope. How? By going to the Word of God that tells us about what God will do for our child at Christ’s return. That God has not left them behind. That we will be reunited. That there is a better life coming. We have the responsibility to live life fully now, not just stumble along in sadness. We can be sad, we can feel pain, but we need to balance that with the greatness of the truths of The Hope.

In Closing

Writing this booklet was very emotional for me. It was also very healing. Writing to a public that I am hoping to assist in their healing adds the responsibility of endeavoring to be accurate and thoughtful in what I put down. It required me to think and re-think truths of The Hope.

Emotional healing can come in stages. You may barely notice any improvement for many days, and then one morning you may wake up with a lighter heart, more convinced that you will see your son, daughter, or loved one at the gathering together. You will need to manage your thinking, thought by thought, day by day.

Furthermore, if we are concerned about seeing men and women in heaven -- neighbors, children, loved ones, we should carry out the ministry of reconciliation so that men and women may be born again of God’s Spirit.

I would like to close with a few verses:

Job 14:14

If a man die, shall he live *again*? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come

Psalms 33:22

Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

Psalms 119:114

Thou *art* my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.

Titus 1:2, 3:7

In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;

That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Hebrews 6:19

Which *hope* we have as an **anchor of the soul**, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;

II Corinthians 4:14, 18

Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present *us* with you.

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal.

I Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Appendix A: Why Evil?

This is a question that is asked in almost every church and every philosophy class: “If God is love, how can he permit all the evil in the world?” I suppose we get this idea that God can manipulate everyone and everything on a whim. If He invented gravity, and I toss myself off of a cliff and He doesn’t catch me and I die, is it His fault?

We covered this verse earlier, where Jesus and the devil are conversing:

Luke 4:6

And the devil said unto him [Jesus Christ], All this power [*exousia*, delegated power] will I give thee, and the glory of them: **for that is delivered** [surrendered, transmitted] **unto me**; and to whomsoever I will I give it.

Adam was given dominion of the earth in Genesis. He was, along with Eve, ruler over earth. Part of his great crime of disobeying God and obeying the serpent (Satan, the devil) was that he committed treason; he transferred this dominion to the devil. It was a “legal”, although morally very wrong, action. Just as God must respect your free will to jump off of a cliff, He must respect His own laws of the universe. He is just.

Adam’s fall wrought havoc. Sin and death entered this world. God no longer had a perfect man ruling the earth, and now Satan, the fallen archangel Lucifer, is ruler.

For God to redeem mankind back from this dominion He had to wait for a woman to believe to give birth to His son Jesus Christ. You and I can choose to live a blessed life in this present evil world as sons and daughters of God, for “greater is he [Christ in you] that is in you, than he [Satan] that is in the world”, and “I [Jesus Christ] am come that they [believers] might have life...more abundantly.”

And, when Christ returns there will be a new heaven and earth, “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.”

Appendix B: Paradise or Heaven?

Paradise and heaven are often used interchangeably, but this is not scripturally correct.

At the time of Jesus’ crucifixion, one of the malefactors speaks to Jesus Christ:

Luke 23:42, 43

And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

In the Septuagint, a Greek version of the Old Testament, the word “paradise”, *paradeisos*, is translated “Eden” 16 times and “garden” 19 times. *Paradeisos* is never used in the Bible in any other sense than that of a place of beauty and delight upon earth. Paradise never refers to any place above the earth or under it.

From *Are the Dead Alive Now?*, by Dr. V. P. Wierwille, “Paradise is described in Genesis 2 in its pure state, which purity was lost according to Genesis 2 with the entrance of Satan and the pronouncement of the curse. The restoration of paradise is never cited, as far as regaining and enjoying it, until *after* [emphasis added] the last enemy, death, is destroyed. *After* [emphasis added] death has been destroyed, there will be a new heaven and the new earth as recorded in Revelation 22 when Satan shall be bound and the Lord Himself shall reign in His Kingdom”.

So, when Jesus told the malefactor, “I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise” we have an apparent contradiction, since paradise will not be regained until much later, in Revelation 22.

Furthermore, the malefactor said “remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” A kingdom implies “the reign of a king”, but Jesus Christ was being crucified and was about to die. His kingdom will not be re-established upon earth until *after* the return of Christ (gathering together) and the resurrections.

In the original manuscripts of the Bible there were no commas. Translators did their best, however were not always accurate. Luke 23:43 should read “Verily I say unto thee today [or as in some translations “this day”], thou shalt [in the future] be with me in paradise.” This is a huge difference from placing the comma between “thee” and “today”.

The phrase “I say unto thee this day” was an idiom in the Hebrew culture at the time, used to emphasize a solemn occasion. Some examples can be found in Deuteronomy:

Deuteronomy 6:6, 7:11, 8:1, 9:3

And these words, which I command thee this day...

Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes and the judgments, which I command thee this day...

All thee commandments which I command thee this day...

Understand therefore this day...

While Jesus Christ and this malefactor were on the cross dying the malefactor had the good sense to ask Jesus to remember him, in the future, when he came into his kingdom. This re-establishing of his kingdom was not that day, but will be after the gathering together and the resurrections when a new heaven and earth is established, and a new paradise on the earth.

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