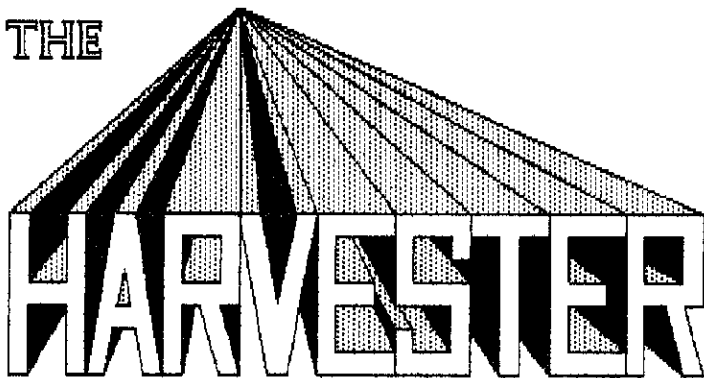


THE



"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest." (Luke 10:2)

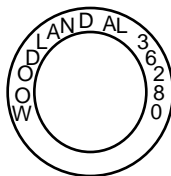
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No. 176

THREE HEAVENS

Heaven is usually thought of as referring to the future dwelling place of the righteous. However, the expression is used in a variety of ways in the Bible. The Apostle Paul speaks of the "third heaven" which he identified was paradise. *"I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago ... such an one caught up to the third heaven ... How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter"* (II Cor. 12:2-4). He evidently thought there were three

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heavens. The Bible identifies these three heavens in the following ways:

1. The Atmospheric Heaven: Gen. 1:6-8 says, *"And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters. And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so. And God called the firmament Heaven."* The word firmament refers to the atmosphere that surrounds this earth. This belt of air was to divide the water which is on the earth from the water in the clouds above the earth as we read in Gen. 7:11, 8:2. In Gen. 1:20 God says, *"Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven."* This blanket of air which we breathe is called atmosphere and extends twenty miles above the earth. This is the first heaven.

2. The Stellar or Celestial Heaven: A second way that the term heaven is used in the Bible is to identify the place of the sun, moon and stars, or what we call today "Outer Space." In scores of references to these heavenly bodies they are stated as being in the heavens. When God created the sun and moon, Gen. 1:14, He said, *"Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven."* Gen. 15:5; Deut. 4:19. The stars are said to be in heaven. David wrote in Psalms 8:3-4, *"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son*

of man, that thou visitest him?" The celestial bodies are in the second heaven.

3. The third description of heaven is a very personal term "the Father's House." In comforting His disciples, Jesus told them that in His Father's House were many mansions waiting them. The word 'mansions' literally means "Abiding places." On earth man is pictured as a wanderer seeking a better city, a better country. In the Father's House the Christian will be at home. There will be no more wandering; his quest will be over. God shall dwell with them, *"and they shall see his face."* (Rev. 22:4; Rev. 21:3)

Home is where Father is. Heaven will be as real as God is because it is His Home. This is the warmest and most personal description of heaven. Men may find it difficult to relate to the word "country or city" since these can be rather cold, impersonal terms. Every man can relate intellectually and emotionally to home. The Father's House reminds us of an earthly home where mother and father, brothers and sisters, warmth and love are. Death to the Christian will be going home to where his loved one are.

God not only makes heaven appealing to man through the description of the place but He also pictures it as a place where wonderful conditions exist. Rev. 14:13, *"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do*

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follow them." The blessed rest is for those who die *"in the Lord"*. This is in contrast to the wicked who are described as being in restless torment. Read Luke 16:23-24 and Rev. 20:10. Most of our labor and wrestling in this world is against sin, as we find in Eph. 6:10-13. In heaven there will be NO SATAN to oppose us or sin to tempt us. Rom. 8:37-39, *"Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

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[Editor's Note: Our supply of Main Articles is dwindling down again. If you can donate an article, it would be greatly appreciated. Send all contributions to Ray McManus. Thanks!]

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Whose sin was responsible for the Israelite's defeat at Ai?
2. Which of Jesus' 12 disciples kept the money bag?
3. What was Barnabas' other name?
4. In which city did some silversmiths start a riot?
5. Which prophet complained, "I am only a child"?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Who was the seller of purple who gave Paul and Silas a place to stay? LYDIA (Acts 16:14)
2. Who was the crippled son of Jonathan, the son of king Saul? MEPHIBOSHETH (2 Sam. 9:6)
3. Who was the proconsul of Achaia who refused to hear the Jew's case against Paul? GALLIO (Acts 18:14)
4. Who was Abraham's second wife? KETURAH (Gen. 25:1)
5. Who was a "*mighty hunter before the Lord*"? NIMROD (Gen. 10:8)

**"To the world you might be one person,
but to one person you might be the world!"**

THE WINDOW

Two men, both seriously ill, occupied the same hospital room. One man was allowed to sit up in his bed for an hour each afternoon to help drain the fluid from his lungs. His bed was next to the room's only window. The other man had to spend all his time flat on his back.

The men talked for hours on end. They spoke of their wives and families, their homes, their jobs, their involvement in the military service, where they had been on vacation.

Every afternoon when the man in the bed by the window could sit up, he would pass the time by describing to his roommate all the things he could see outside the window. The man in the other bed began to live for those one-hour periods where his world would be broadened and enlivened by all the activity and color of the world outside.

The window overlooked a park with a lovely lake. Ducks and swans played on the water while children sailed their model boats. Young lovers walked arm in arm amidst flowers of every color of the rainbow. Grand old trees graced the landscape, and a fine view of the city skyline could be seen in the distance. As the man by the window described all this in exquisite detail, the man on the other side of the room would close his eyes and imagine the picturesque scene.

One warm afternoon the man by the window described a parade passing by. Although the other man couldn't hear the band --

he could see it. In his mind's eye as the gentleman by the window portrayed it with descriptive words.

Days and weeks passed. One morning, the day nurse arrived to bring water for their baths only to find the lifeless body of the man by the window, who had died peacefully in his sleep. She was saddened and called the hospital attendants to take the body away.

As soon as it seem appropriate, the other man asked if he could be moved next to the window. The nurse was happy to make the switch, and after making sure he was comfortable, she left him alone. Slowly, painfully, he propped himself up on one elbow to take his first look at the world outside. Finally, he would have the joy of seeing it for himself. He strained to slowly turn to look out the window beside the bed. It faced a blank wall.

The man asked the nurse what could have compelled his deceased roommate who had described such things outside this window. The nurse responded that the man was blind and could not even see the wall. She said, "Perhaps he just wanted to encourage you."

Epilogue: There is tremendous happiness in making others happy, despite our own situations. Shared grief is half the sorrow, but happiness when shared, is doubled. If you want to feel rich, just count all the things you have that money can't buy. "Today is a gift, that's why it is called the present."

--COPIED--

submitted by Linda Smith

GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE & TIME</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
August 4 - 6 (F - Su)	New Bethel Church Cullman, AL 7:00pm Fri & Sat	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
August 13 - 16	Rincon, GA	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
August 14 - 18	Owens Rd. Church Prattville, AL	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
August 25 - 27	Valley, AL 7:00pm E.S.T.	Wilbur Bass (Auburn, AL)
Aug. 28 - - Sept. 1	Lily, KY near London, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

* * * * *

FOLLOW THE NEW TESTAMENT PLAN

Hear the Gospel (Rom. 10:17)

Believe the Gospel -- Faith in God and Christ (Heb. 11:6)

Repent of Your Sins (Acts 3:19)

Confess Jesus as the Son of God (Acts 8:37)

Be Baptized for the Remission of Your Sins (Acts 2:38)

Then the Lord Adds You to His Church (Acts 2:47)