

TOUGH QUESTIONS
ABOUT HEAVEN...

FREDDY HAYLER

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CHAPTER ONE

ABOVE IT ALL . . .

*But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built . . .
Hearken therefore unto the supplications of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, which they shall make toward this place: hear thou from thy dwelling place, even from heaven; and when thou hearest, forgive.*

2 Chronicles 6:18, 21

The new earth position . . .

Many Christians confuse the coming new earth with the place where God dwells – Heaven. Although some Bible teachers teach that the new Heaven and the new earth are one and the same, I believe the Bible teaches that there will be a difference between the new Heaven and the new earth. The Bible is clear that they are two separate entities . . .

And I saw a new Heaven *and* a new earth: for the first Heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

Revelation 21:1

Notice the Scriptures above uses the conjunction *and* as a transitional connective to show that they are two different things. Many Bible scholars believe that the restored earth will never become Heaven. The reason why the new earth cannot be one and the same as Heaven is because the Bible always talks about things from Heaven descending to the new earth.

Quite frankly, Heaven is where the Father dwells and His Throne is so immense that the new earth could not contain it! But He has prepared a celestial city and a new earth for the righteous where His Son shall rule and reign. For example, the Bible speaks of the sparkling Crystal City of the New Jerusalem “descending from Heaven” to the newly constituted earth. The Bible says that the earth and the redeemed there will walk “under its light . . .”

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, *descending* out of Heaven from God, Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.

Revelation 21:11

The Bible clearly indicates that this glorious, sparkling, beautiful metropolis is already under construction and being ready for its final descent to the new earth! Rejoice saints! For we are about to be gloriously invaded from on High!

But Jerusalem *which is above* is free, which is the mother of us all.

Galatians 4:26

And the Bible says that Heaven is exalted above the mountains and the highest places of earth . . .

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall *be exalted above* the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

Isaiah 2:2

Regardless of your viewpoint, the new earth (or newly refurbished earth) will be a glorious place and Heaven will remain a definite place and locality which is far above it!

The Restitution of all things . . .

Whether newly created or totally "restored," the final state of believers in Christ will be preceded by the passing away of this present earth and the appearance of a new creation in the *aion* (age) to come . . .

And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, *in the regeneration* when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Matthew 19:28

Whom the Heaven must receive until the *times of restitution of all things*, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

Acts 3:21

And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the *removing* of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Hebrews 12:27

Looking for and hasting unto the coming of *the day of God*, wherein the Heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with

fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for *new Heavens and a new earth*, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

2 Peter 3:12-13

And I saw a new Heaven and a new earth: for the first Heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of Heaven of God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.

Revelation 21:1-2 (ASV)

In the new creation, there will be Christians of all positions of authority. The Bible speaks of the redeemed even “judging the angels . . .”

Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? How much more things that pertain to this life?

1 Corinthians 6:2-3

Rejuvenated!

These Scriptures tend to support the view that there will be a totally newly reconstituted earth and new Heaven as soon as all Scriptures is fulfilled [Matthew 24:14]. The final step will be the adorning of the new earth and the sparkling and joyous “New Jerusalem.”

Above it all!

Again, the New Jerusalem will descend “down from Heaven” as a lavish, beautiful, bejeweled city which will rest upon the freshly rejuvenated Earth (or new Earth!). Whether a Christian believes in a totally new, recreated Heaven and Earth [2 Peter 3:7-13; Revelation 20:11; 21:1] or whether one believes in a renewal or refurbishing of the existing Heaven and Earth [Psalm 102:26, 27; Hebrews 1:10-12; Hebrews 12:26-28], in the final analysis, Heaven and the New Jerusalem will be a glorious beauty! What an awesome sight it will be to behold the Son of Man returning to the earth with the heavenly hosts and with an innumerable company of the angels of paradise!

The “immense” New Jerusalem . . .

In the Book of Revelation, the New Jerusalem is described as being constructed by God Himself and is 1500 miles square. To get an idea of the size of this “place,” Jerusalem is defined in Scriptures as 33 *stadia* but the New Jerusalem will be 12,000 *stadia*! Quite a difference in size and ratio! This heavenly city will be *incomprehensibly* immense!

Cities of glory . . .

Not only will there be beautiful heavenly countryside and lovely villages but Heaven will have glorious cities of great magnitude as well. These cities will contain the most beautiful, architectural edifices one can ever imagine! In the vision and songs contained in this book, you hear of heavenly buildings that are glorious to look upon and which are very large and full of the happy inhabitants of Heaven for they have been designed and constructed long ago in eternity past by the eternal God.

City lights . . .

Unlike the earth's dismal cities which emit only a low, dirty, dim light and whose urban sprawl looks meager upon the earth, Heaven's celestial city is a big, bright and glorious creation – clean and pure – as bright as a transparent icicle in the sunshine of a winter morning! The celestial city of God is lighted with God's glory even as the multi-colored light-rays and beams of God's glory forever illuminate its crystal palaces and palatial gardens. This lighted, heavenly metropolis is beautiful beyond the imagination!

No need for G.E.!

Long before G.E., God brought all good things to light! In Heaven, there is no need for nuclear power plants, water dams or any other generator of electricity. There is a system of illumination in Heaven which is intrinsic in every object in Heaven – for all is lit with God's glory. Heaven appears as a grand prism inherent with Divine light of the glory of God. It is no wonder that the modern founder of electricity, Thomas Edison, when departing from this life, exclaimed to his wife as he pointed upwards . . . “there's something very bright and beautiful over there.” If anyone appreciated the bright and brilliant glory lighting of Heaven, it was Thomas Edison!

The “love-energy principle . . .

In Heaven, everything is sustained and monitored by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. The primary attribute or fruit of the Spirit is love [Galatians 5:22-23] . . .

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:2

Although believers on earth operate by this principle to some extent, in Heaven the heavenly state will be totally perfected through this law of life principle. However, until the final enemy of death is destroyed upon the Second Coming of Christ, the Church must still war against “interruptions” from the enemy and persevere when the stream of God's life seems partly occluded by certain things. Although our life on earth is now subject to accidents, unrest, evil, violence, strife, etc., all life in Heaven will operate under a new set of celestial rules. In Paradise there will be unabated, eternal communion with God, the angels and the redeemed. All who dwell there will live and operate by totally new laws of celestial physics.

Some have called this new law of life the *love-energy* principle. In other words, God's glory and love will directly energize and animate all life that exists in Heaven. And this principle should now already be operating to an intense degree in Christians who now live on earth. My younger daughter's philosophy of life was very simple and was a similar view that was held by one of the greatest philosophers and theologians who ever lived. When it came down right to it, his favorite song lyrics were quite axiomatic ("Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so") and answered all the questions that life would ever put to him. Anyway, my youngest daughter Rebekah used to say (at age 5) "if all believers lived their lives like fuzzy little love bubbles ☺, the whole world would be saved!"

In other words, all of us should witness the gospel of Christ, aglow with His love, kindness, gentleness and joy! After all, our spirit man is now seated in heavenly places with Christ Jesus so we are connected to the unlimited realm of God's love even while we live on the earth.

Let's start walking in the force and energy of this love which empowers all of Heaven with life and vibrancy. For love is the life force of Heaven . . .

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

Romans 8:2

In Galatians 5:22, the Bible says that one of the main fruits of the Holy Spirit is love. Christians are commanded by Christ to operate through the law of love. Being a "good" Christian and obtaining eternal life is truly not something we can "earn" or achieve by good works alone. However, *what we can do is to surrender* to the infinite love, grace and power of the Holy Spirit who will enable us to live the life of Christ now and forever. God's Love is the greatest life force in the universe – love never fails!

Love never faileth . . .

1 Corinthians 13:8a

Surrender to His love today and let the Spirit of God love others through you. If you do, your heart will be prepared for Heaven . . .

You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.

Matthew 22:37 (NLT)

Remember, the love of God is the most essential thing we need to prepare us for Heaven . . .

Now we see things imperfectly as in a poor mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God knows

me now. There are three things that will endure – faith, hope, and love – and the greatest of these is love.

1 Corinthians 13:12, 13 (NLT)

Love is listed as the first fruit of the Holy Spirit. Love is the true test of what is of Heaven and what is not . . .

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.

1 John 4:7, 8, 13

The true test of whether someone is born again from above is whether or not they operate in the Spirit of God's unconditional, *agape* love.

The eternal force of love . . .

You see, my friend, in Heaven the Holy Spirit will totally energize you with the spirit of love. The ultimate purpose of every believer is to operate and live by the law and love of Christ. Again, it's not that the *love-energy* principle is not already working through the Holy Spirit in born-again believers in this world. It's just that this law of life principle will operate as an *unabated force* of glory in Heaven. For example, on earth our natural surroundings and circumstances may not always be so kind to us. Others whom we love unconditionally may not always love us the same way in return.

Aslan's house . . .

Regardless of one's view of certain aspects of C.S. Lewis' theology, his basic message is clear – Christ and righteousness will overcome evil. His books are full of wonderful imagery and like Bunyan, Lewis' works stand as a champion for the cause of Christ. C.S. Lewis perceptively understood that because of original sin, there is incompleteness in this fallen world. But Paradise will be a much friendlier milieu. In Heaven, the lion will lay down with the lamb. In the land of Narnia, Lewis proposes that even the animals in Heaven talk and communicate. Not surprising!

In Aslan's country there will be stability and peace. In paradise there will be a springtime renewal and thaw of things which have been made cold by Lucifer's revenge. In paradise, all spiritual things, angels and physical things will forever remain in their proper God-ordained order. Unpredictable accidents and calamities – destructive acts of nature – cannot and will not occur there. Unlike on earth, saints in Heaven will never have to claim Psalm 91 for protection! For even original sin and lucifer, the fallen one, could not shake that which is unshakable – even God's own abode . . .

But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of *just men made perfect*, whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also Heaven. And this word, yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.

Hebrews 12:22, 23, 26-29

God our Father is a loving and holy consuming fire and the earthly residue of any evil or sin present in us will be “incinerated” in the blink of an eye while in His presence. Heaven shall never be moved by sin or the devil! You see, my friend, in Heaven and in the New Jerusalem, nothing can or will be shaken by sin or the devil! For Jesus sits on His Throne of total victory! Through the Holy Spirit and through the power of His blood, we are complete in Him!

One day soon even our earthly bodies will be resurrected into His glorious likeness and completeness. Like the angels of paradise, in Heaven our bodies will never tire or grow old, whereas on earth our temporal bodies are subject to getting tired every day. In Paradise there are no such limits. On earth, we are subject to trials and tribulations and all sorts of temptations but in Heaven none of these impediments exist. The resurrected body will operate under totally new laws and with incredible capacities that will be fueled solely by the love and grace of God. In short, the resurrection body will be enlivened through the love and glory of God.

A revival of heavenly love . . .

If we are going to see Heaven meet earth, we ourselves must first experience His holy love which originates from Heaven. We must increasingly spend more time in prayer and in His loving Presence to know of His meek and lowly ways. We must allow Him to prepare our hearts for Heaven by continually abiding in the love of Jesus and if we are going to experience a powerful revival, it will be primarily of His holy love. The time is short; we must begin to love God with all our heart. We must also begin immediately to love our neighbor and even our enemies as ourselves. And we must do this every day in practical and tangible ways.

Love vs. lust . . .

It has been said that . . .

“Lust cannot wait to get, but love can wait to give.”

Fallen nature always does things for others and for God in order to receive some *benefit in return*. Fallen, self-centered man always has “motives.” It loves vanity and enjoys being appreciated by others. But love is selfless and is constant and is satisfied only in *pleasing God*. It serves others unconditionally and selflessly. And isn't this the supreme law of Heaven and earth – to love God, to love our neighbor, and to love our enemies?

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Matthew 22:37-39

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.

Matthew 5:45-48

Oh, my friend, begin to allow God's love to energize and empower your life by drawing aside from the world and others who would distract you from spending time in His presence. Then there will not be so much “spiritual culture shock” when you enter Heaven's palaces of love and glory!

Populating Heaven . . .

Did you not know, O beloved, that the earth is but God's “birthing place” to populate the entire heavenly universe? Jesus said . . .

For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in Heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

Matthew 22:31-32

Thus, every Christian family is immeasurably strategic to God's future plan for each Christian family carries the awesome responsibility of raising righteous, eternal seed. It is imperative that godly parents procreate and raise children with godly character who will not only be fit to serve Christ in this world but also in the next. Since there is no biological reproduction in Heaven, earth represents God's plan for population growth of Heaven! In other words, God's ultimate goal is to increase the size of His happy celestial family!

And it was only right that God--who made everything and for whom everything was made--should bring his many children into glory. Through the suffering of Jesus, God made him a perfect leader, one fit to bring them into their salvation.

Hebrews 2:10

All the redeemed out of all the nations will flow unto Him!

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of Heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

Daniel 7:13-14

In the last days, the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem will become the most important place on earth. People from all over the world will go there to worship. Many nations will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the Temple of the God of Israel. There he will teach us his ways, so that we may obey him." For in those days the Lord's teaching and his word will go out from Jerusalem. The Lord will settle international disputes. All the nations will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. All wars will stop, and military training will come to an end.

Isaiah 2:2-4 (NLT)

(See also Psalm 122:1; Psalm 36:9) Unfortunately, through the principle of the law of sin and death, satan is also endeavoring to enlarge his dark kingdom . . .

Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.

Isaiah 5:14

But for those of you who will trust Christ with your life, the Bible says that all things will work together for good. His enabling grace will cause you to persevere until the end. For Christians, God works all things for good and it seems that sometimes this life with its trials exists in order to create some sort of longing in all of us for a better world. It is the Father's plan that through love, patience and suffering, we as His beloved children will become more refined in holy character and in patience. Are these not the character traits of our Lord as well? And didn't Christ endure the same type of suffering with a victorious and glorious outcome?

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:2

Born to fly . . .

As the lyric goes, “like stars across the sky, we were born to shine.” We were also born to fly. May we all keep our eyes on the joyous Throne of the Father so that, like Jesus, we will live victoriously and endure all the tests that this life will put to us. Like a jetliner soaring high above the storm clouds, one’s perspective is totally changed when we learn through worship to soar in Christ above it all. There we can abide with the holy angels of paradise and forever sing the angels’ song to the glory of the Son.

CHAPTER TWO WILL PETS BE IN HEAVEN?

Thanks to animation technology, in the newly released movie Narnia the screenwriters and producers showed animals talking with people and with one another. But this is not as far-fetched as some might suppose . . .

God loves His animal creation . . .

Will your pet be in Heaven? First of all, I believe that there is a good chance a believer’s pet will be in Heaven. It’s amazing how many folks are asking this question nowadays. But let me state this emphatically – nobody knows for sure because the Bible is flat silent on the issue. In other words, there are no Scriptures that emphatically states that “a Christian’s pet will be in Heaven.” Conversely, there are no Scriptures that outright say to the contrary that pets will *not* be in Heaven. Thus, we enter this little “gray area” of personal opinion on the matter. This may be an interesting subject to contemplate but nobody should claim it as a “Christian doctrine.” Therefore, I should like to offer my opinion on this topic and will attempt to avoid marring a Biblical theology on the subject.

First of all, God is a personal, loving Savior who pays close attention to every little detail and keenly understands every one of your heart’s desires. God created everything good. He does everything well! God is so loving and He is so intimately acquainted with all your ways. He knows your likes and your dislikes. For example, many Christians enjoy

the companionship of animals that God has created. For did not our Lord create the loving, purring, housecat for a little child?

My daughters have four cats. We also have a little beagle named “Li’l Buddy.” In a recent newspaper survey a majority claims that cats are now clawing their way to the top over dogs as far as popularity. My daughters have agreed with the results of this recent poll. I’m not so sure. Either way, it would be tough never to see Li’l Buddy again. I think God is concerned about that, too. I know some teach that an animal does not have a spirit like a human. This may be true. But it doesn’t prevent God from reconstituting that same animal in the future on a perfectly recreated earth!

Many have pets that they are quite fond of. This is quite natural since God created these creatures for mankind’s companionship and enjoyment. God takes pets very seriously. As a matter of fact, God even uses the way a person treats their pets as a spiritual “benchmark” – He calls a person who loves their pet “a righteous man” and He calls someone who mistreats their pets . . . “wicked . . .”

A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

Proverbs 12:10

Your pet is so important to God. He judges a person as good or evil in regards to how they treat their pet. How do you relate to your pet? Are you a faithful and caring steward to the animal God has entrusted you with? I ask you, are you kind as God is kind? For kindness is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. Yes, precious saint, God cares about your pet even as you do. It’s okay to pray for your pets and to ask God to watch over them –and to hope they will one day be on a newly restored earth. And if per chance God has not ordained such to be, the joys of Heaven will be so great that it won’t really matter anyway.

Will my pet be in Heaven?

Scriptural inferences: although the Bible is not clear on this subject we must remember that with God *nothing* is impossible . . .

For with God *nothing* shall be impossible.

Luke 1:37

Behold, I am the Lord, the God of *all flesh*: is there any thing too hard for me?

Jeremiah 32:27

Despite this, there are some who teach that an animal does not possess an eternal spirit and therefore, our pets will not be in Heaven. I don’t adhere to this view and even if I did, I could not imagine such loving pets not being recreated on the new earth. If those who claim that an animal possesses no spirit are correct and that there will be no restored

pets in Heaven, why not consider the possibility that they will be restored upon the “new earth?” After all, the Bible says that there will be a restitution of all things . . .

Whom the Heaven must receive until the times of restitution of *all things*, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

Acts 3:21

After all, whatever is dear to you is dear to God your Father.

Sincerely, it is *my humble opinion* that animals will be totally restored upon the new earth after the *restitution of all things*. Now to claim my opinion as “gospel” would be reckless and irresponsible. But I think I have a right to give *my opinion* on the matter. I believe that the “all things” in the verse above includes all precious animals of God’s creation as well.

Since the Bible is not totally clear on this subject, there will obviously always be some conjecture concerning this matter – at least, until Jesus comes, that is. Of course, one could say that I have a vested interest in this. I must confess this is absolutely true. After all, my family owns four cats, a beagle, six parakeets, two mini-parrots and sixty fish!

I’m thankful that nothing is impossible with God. For if something that God has created has become so dear to your heart, it is certainly within God’s ability to preserve and recreate that animal you love so much once again. Remember, child of God, God put myriad beautiful and friendly animals in the original Garden of Eden. He put them there as companions for creation’s first couple. Why would God not then do the same in the new Garden of Eden? After all, He gave Adam and Eve the desires of their heart . . .

Delight yourself also in the Lord; and he shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

Psalms 37: 4-5

And God does not “forget” anything – even little birds!

Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?

Luke 12:6

The principle for us as believers is . . . *anything loved by you that’s of God, is important to God as well*. Certainly animals are “of God” for they were created by Him for our enjoyment on earth. And there exists animals in Heaven as well. It appears that Jesus has some pet animals of his own for He will return riding His own white horse!

And I saw, and behold a *white horse*: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

Revelation 6:2

And I saw Heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

Revelation 19:11

I'm sure that Jesus takes good care of His horses in Heaven and relates to them kindly. I'm sure they have lovely names and that Christ respects all the fearfully and wonderfully made living creations of God. Notice that when God came to translate Elijah into Heaven, He sent "horses of fire" and a chariot of fire . . .

And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and *horses* of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into Heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.

2 Kings 2:11-12

Some of the cherubim-like, angelic creatures described for us in the bible often are said to possess animal-like features. It appears that God loves animal-like features. I mean, who else but God could have created the loving, adorable and humble little face of a beagle. There is a small part of God's own loving personality in the loyal and faithful love of a little dog. He likes them so much that He designed some of the angelic Cherubim after them. God is not speaking metaphorically here!

And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind. And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle. And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

Revelation 4:7-8

As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.

Ezekiel 1:10

The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

Daniel 7:4

Again, some may teach that God is only speaking an analogy here but I don't think so. Jesus will come riding a literal white horse with many other heavenly hosts who will be riding their own horses.

God loves your pets too!

It is my opinion that even as God loves you, because you love your pet, He loves your pet! God's interest in animals is obvious throughout the Bible. As we have said earlier, for several decades He directed Noah to build a massive ark in order to preserve his family as well as the animals. At one point in history, mankind lived so wickedly that God decided to drown all of humanity. But He had a plan to save *all His animals* along with one righteous family who He knew would take care of them all. It is sad to consider that man can be so evil that God prefers animals over men at certain times in history. When you look at some of the evil characters in the world today, sadly, it is all too often true that many animals appear morally better in their demeanor!

In summary, the Bible has given us many clues which lead me to conclude that pets could very well be restored upon the new earth. And if per chance your pets aren't there, Heaven is so glorious it won't matter! Bottom line – anything that is dear to your heart that is of God is dear to God's heart as well.

CHAPTER THREE THE HEAVENLY PRINCIPLE OF IDENTITY . . .

Christian metaphysics . . .

In Heaven, you will be able to fully recognize not only Christ, but yourself and your loved ones. God loves variety. Like the angels of Heaven, your own individual body possesses in its appearance the *essence of uniqueness*. This is why cloning is so abhorrent to God and why He will not allow it to become a foolproof success in human society.

You see, God has made man after His own image. God has caused the physical characteristics of each eternal individual to be conjoined with the soulical characteristics which truly make a totally unique individual. Through science and technology, man has gone into areas that God is not pleased with. Man may learn how to mimic the human genome, but they cannot create an eternal soul. Human science may one day produce a human clone but it will never be the exact replica of the original person – spirit, soul and

body. Eventually this practice will lead to weird mutations which God will wipe out one way or the other. It will lead to both physical and psychological deformities and will attract the judgment of God like a magnet!

Besides, it is God who has ordained the DNA which determines the eternal uniqueness of each individual. But man cannot breathe the spirit of life into a person nor will God be manipulated by man to do so. So it is only a matter of time before He will cut human history short in this diabolical drift. Christians need to pray and intercede more than ever before.

If mankind and its governments do not begin to tightly regulate this potentially destructive and demonic branch of modern science, God will do so directly! As in other times and epochs in history, God will deal with the vanity of men with sadly devastating and earth-shattering effects. He is patient and kind but He will not allow His creation to be further marred by fallen men and devils. Thus we need to pray for godly government and for the fear of the Lord in all our scientific endeavors. In the sight of a Holy Father, the whole earth and its inhabitants may be expendable . . . but God's laws of righteousness are not!

The “identity” principle . . .

Jesus said in the gospels that we are to be anxious for nothing. He promised that He would clothe us even as He has clothed the lily of the fields. Some folks are always worrying about what Heaven will be like and what they will look like in Heaven, etc. One thing for sure, Jesus will continue to clothe you and will preserve you whole and in part even as He has done on earth.

You see, in Heaven you maintain your identity and your unique personality. In other words, when you get to Heaven you will not stop being *you*. God will preserve your mind, your memory and even your same bodily features. You might look younger and in a more perfect form but you will still be you. Some have said that people in Heaven will be the same age as Jesus when He received His resurrection body at age 33. Others believe we will look even younger. One thing for sure, you will readily be able to recognize family members and other people you knew and loved on earth and all of you will be in perfect body. Your heavenly body will be beautiful, luminous, incorruptible, agile and enduring. It will be able to do things it could not do on earth. It will be able to hear things that it could not hear on earth.

Colors in Paradise. . .

On earth, the senses by which we can perceive beauty are limited. In Heaven you will be able to see vivid colors never before imagined. All of this is simply because Jesus loves you and me so much. Those who were blind on earth will see. Those who were physically marred by an accident on earth will be physically restored and made beautiful. You will recognize all of them and see that Jesus has carefully preserved and taken care of each one. Families shall reunite and when the glorious family reunions are over, after

everyone has completed many hugs and embraces, you will have just finished your first day in Glory!

Future upgrades . . .

As frail as your earthly body may seem, it has within it the seeds of eternity.

Principle: *The identity of your future is present in your body.*

Like an infinitely unique fingerprint, your body and your appearance are how you are recognized even in Heaven. God and His holy angelic librarians keep careful records regarding your entire being and appearance – not to mention keeping track of all your actions, thoughts and deeds. Christianity is a very unique religion. It is the only religion that specifically describes the nature of a believer's body after death. It is the only religion that describes Heaven to the extent to which it does. Christianity is a very real or tangible religion, for God is a very *tangible* God.

Microns of uniqueness . . .

On a “macro-scale,” He created a very tangible, very large, three-dimensional universe of time, space, matter and energy. So too on a “micro-scale.” He gave you a body – a specific body like no one else. You are totally unique!

No one has ever existed like you before. You are a rare and chosen vessel precious to God. Like a fingerprint, your entire body is your permanent identity both to God and to others. In the same way, God will never separate your identity from your body. However, there will be some “upgrades.” In other words, in Heaven your body will be perfected in many wonderful ways.

Uniquely “You” . . .

Child of God, you are very special. “You” will always be “You” – God ordained it this way. No forensics will ever be needed in Heaven! And there will never be any “accidents of nature” there. And although one day you will be perfected, you will retain the beauty of your uniqueness forever. It is true. God not only loves you the way you *are*, but He loves you the way you *will be*.

Heaven is not “weird” . . .

A lot of other religions (especially Eastern and oriental religions) do not understand the Christian concept of infinite, unique, eternal and personal identity. Pantheism, which claims that the universe is God and God is the universe, is an impersonal and unbiblical concept. The belief of reincarnation which teaches that a man or a woman goes through an eternity of life cycles is both nonsensical and non-biblical. To think that a man can recycle into a cow, bird, fish, or even an insect is absurd.

Earth religions . . .

Don't worry about coming back to earth as a rock or a tree. Heaven disdains what most earthly religions think about Paradise. Heaven is not pleased when men worship animate objects like trees or inanimate objects like rocks. And watch out for those Wiccans! Their views of Heaven and the afterlife are the weirdest.

Man is so unique in that he is created in God's own image. He has living within him the eternal "spark" of God. Although God's animal creation is a precious wonder, to teach that a person's soul will return to earth one day in the form of an animal or an insect is utter nonsense – an idea hatched from the regions of Hell. The doctrine of reincarnation is a doctrine of devils. This is why a poor Indian villager will starve to death while a "holy cow" – a veritable t-bone steak, stands right in front of him! The devil has always enjoyed taking advantage of the ignorance of fallen man by degrading God's highest creation to the level of plants, animals and even rocks!

God is alive and well . . .

To teach that "god is an unconscious state of being or matter which encompasses the entire universe" is a devilish lie which demeans the true image of the personal and all-powerful God. There is no such thing as God existing as some disembodied, omnipresent, defused, "unintelligent brahm." As a matter of fact, most religions do not adhere to any doctrine regarding the bodily resurrection of each individual person. They do, however, have demonic and illogical conceptions regarding the total loss of identity of an individual in death. For example, the Hindu sees his individual soul as just "one drop" of water that upon death, simply falls into a vast river which then flows into a great ocean.

But the Bible teaches no such thing! For to lose one's form is to virtually lose one's identity and hence, his own self-consciousness. Consciousness informs us of the simplicity that God has created us as an individual soul with unity and identity and purpose. We are conscious moral agents before God. Why should we be surprised at this? God Himself is a person who is self-conscious, intelligent and a voluntary moral agent and we have been created in His image even though our finite minds cannot fully comprehend His immensity and infinity. Unlike Eastern concepts which describe God as diffused and everywhere like air or space, God has a definite body, form and a tangible place where He dwells. And once a person dies, afterwards comes the judgment . . .

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment . . .

Hebrews 9:27

Heaven is glorious . . .

Below are some testimonies of sincere believers who have seen the other side. As you can see, Heaven is glorious beyond description . . .

Heaven

*I looked past the curtain of time,
And saw up the beautiful stairs
Ten thousand bright angels in glory
All dressed in white raiment so fair.
“The battle is over,” I heard them,
Their voices rang out o’er the air.
With palm leaves they shouted “Hosanna,”
His glory forever we’ll share.
Our troubles and toiling is over,
The tempter is under our feet.
He’s cast down in darkness forever
While we walk the beautiful streets.
The flowers will bloom on forever,
The leaves of the trees evergreen.
No night will come to our city
For it’s lightened by Heaven’s bright beam.
As we stroll through the garden of Heaven
And smell the lilies so sweet,
We’ll clasp the hands of our loved ones,
As He says, “May your joy be complete.”
As He shows us each one to our mansions
And we move in forever to stay,
The children will play by the fountain,
Our treasures will never decay.
We’ll visit each other in Heaven,
So often I’ll knock at your door.
We can sit on the porch of your mansion
And look out o’er the beautiful shore.
We can talk of God’s blessings for ages,
For time up there will never end.
We’ll all have plenty in Heaven,
I’ll be just as rich as you then.
The ole ship of Zion is anchored,
They’re stepping onto the shore.
“The journey is ended,” they shouted,
“We’ll never sail seas any more.”
As all of God’s children pass through;
At last we hear Jesus say softly,
“I came here to fix this for you.”*

■ *Author Unknown*

From the testimony above we can see that we serve a very personal God who has already established a very personal residence for us in glory. God knows our likes and our dislikes. In Heaven, He gives us all the desires of our heart forever. He does all things well. He does all things with utmost beauty and nothing He has created appears strange or out of the ordinary – even when related to our own experience of living on the earth which He created. Below is the joyous testimony of another precious saint who has already seen the celestial beauty of Glory land . . .

It seemed that my entire spirit was in a perfect rapture of delight. I asked the elder, who seemed to take delight in remaining with me, how I was to account for this rapturous joy which was increasing so constantly in my soul, until I felt I would break out in shouting and hallelujahs. He said, "The spirit of God is in the atmosphere of Heaven; His joy becomes ours on a larger scale than what we ever knew while in our flesh. The great joy that you feel now is only a little foretaste of what you feel when you are ushered into the city and about the Throne. Upon this I quickly remembered the Scriptures where the prophet said: "In thy Presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore." (Psalms 16:11) A feeling of praise was continually crowding up in my soul for utterance. I wanted to praise God, for ever giving me an existence and still more for my salvation from sin, for changing my heart and bringing me into this glory. The trees were so beautiful beyond anything I had ever seen. Their form was so symmetrical and lovely, with no dead or withered branches. I said with feelings of deepest praise "Oh how wonderfully God has provided for us! Twelve kinds of fruit on each tree, ripening their fruit every month and the leaves never withering! Wonderful!"

— Elwood Scott from "*Paradise the Holy City and the Glory of the Throne*"

Precious memories . . .

No one today – not even philosophers, epistemologists, scientists or doctors can explain the stream of human consciousness. But God created the human consciousness in order to create the perception of past, present and future. For example, your memory is simply a record of your distant past – which is your present consciousness on a "dimmer" basis. This is why people with amnesia lose their identity – they have no recollection of their past experiences and memories.

The Christian God, the God of the Bible, is a real and personal God. For example, God is so concerned about our own identity that He has created our memories not only to define our present consciousness but also to retain (in a *dimmer* fashion), our precious and emotional heartfelt memories. If the past experiences of our life are as "present" as our current experiences, we as individuals would have no concept of past, present or future . . .

I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

Psalms 139:14

We are fearfully and wonderfully made. In other words, without the brain's complex function of memory, we could not be able to distinguish between the past and the present. *The memory provides a "break point" between what is past and what is present.* As a matter of fact, without it history would be nonsensical and no one would have a clue to comprehending their past, present or future – there would be no possibility of internalized comprehension of an individual's past experiences. As a result, one would lose consciousness of their own identity. But our personal and loving God is quite capable of

maintaining all of our memories, past experiences (those worth keeping) and emotions. Thankfully as far as our own sin, failures and hurts experienced in this life, He will give us divine forgetfulness!

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.

Isaiah 65:17

As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

Psalms 103:12

In Heaven there will be no more tears or sorrow because there will be no remembrance of past failure and trauma . . .

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.

Revelation 21:4

He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it.

Isaiah 25:8

Celestial uniqueness . . .

Your personal existence, your memory, your consciousness and identity are all important to God. And although God possesses incommunicable attributes Himself such as self-existence (He is the *causa Sui* – the Uncaused One), infinity, immensity, eternity and immutability, for some reason only known to Himself, He has chosen to be a very kind and personal God. And He has blessed each one of us with His grace to know Him personally through His Word and through the life of Jesus. God will preserve you and your Christian loved ones and will keep all of you forever. He even will preserve your precious memories.

Reunion beyond the galaxies . . .

Mothers and sons, fathers and children, old friends meeting again. The glory and joy of the occasion excelled anything I had yet known. The charioteers now kindly invited us all

to take passage with them. We accepted, of course, with thankfulness, their offers of kindness and were soon within the chariots and the whole multitude was praising God. In a few moments we were flying with great speed toward the city gate, following the course of the river. "The light toward the city which I had seen on my first arrival, grew more and more glorious as we neared the city. We were rolling along at such great rapidity the wheels were noiseless and the chariots without a jar. The appearance of the landscape on either side seemed at a distance like a sea of glass mingled with fire; but a closer examination it seemed that it was immortal. Flowers of unfading glory, and with an endless variety of colors, many of which I had never seen anything before to which I could compare them and their indescribable loveliness attracted universal attention. We saw thousands of angels and happy spirits passing in all directions; but all I saw seemed very joyous and happy in their work. I thought of the word of the Lord: "He maketh his angels spirits and His ministers a flaming fire."

— Elwood Scott from "*Paradise the Holy City and the Glory of the Throne*"

These testimonies should remind us all of the words of the apostle Paul . . .

Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.

1 Corinthians 13:12

Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

Revelation 22:14

No, my friend, don't believe some of the things you may have heard about Heaven. For Heaven is not a strange place but it is a beautiful, perfect and familiar place!

He's not a UFO! . . .

People need to read their bible. There are some pretty strange notions of God and Heaven floating out there today. Our modern society watches all too much occult, horror and science fiction. Modern man's mind has all too often become an imaginary cesspool regarding the pure and beautiful image of the true God. God should not be thought of some humanly contrived alien or as some self-existent entity from another planet (like many of the science fiction movies portray Him and more recently as some cults have). Nor should He be imagined as simply some kind of energy force or unintelligible, disembodied, diffused spirit empowering the entire universe through "unconscious" waves of energy.

Not science fiction . . .

No, my friend, God and Heaven are not some weird concepts from another world. They are not to be thought of spaced-out religious theories devised by a deceived and foolish person! The Scriptures assure us of His goodness, His love, His grace, His truthfulness, His wisdom, His holiness, His patience, His mercy, His righteousness, His justice, His sovereignty, and His free will. Anything God has created is highly organized and “together” and is first class! You and I were created like God in that we also possess the God-like attributes of free will, moral choice, and self-consciousness. God has ordained “uniqueness” and the reality of individual consciousness is what distinguishes you and me from everyone else.

Self preservation!

Each of you is created with a unique identity and permanence of soul that God will preserve. And although God is physically the natural Father of all men, He only becomes a spiritual Father of those who believe in His Son. You see, your personality and life is important to God. For if a person loses his self-consciousness at some point in the future, how would he/she know they ever existed?

The thought of not “being” is inconceivable – even most philosophers agree with that! Even common sense tells you that. I mean, were it possible that any of us at any point were to become forever unconscious; nothing would matter because you would never know you had existed in the first place! In other words, you could never “not exist” or you would have never known that you existed. It is an impossible proposition to have never known at some point you were conscious.

God is aware of you . . .

No, my friend, God is always thinking of you, He is always aware and conscious of you, and He had made your conscious eternal, even as He is eternal. Jesus said that He has even numbered the hairs of your head.

When you sleep at night, the only reason why you are aware that you are unconscious is when you are awakened to consciousness. Regardless of your doctrine, after death, at some point in eternity, it is a logical imperative that God must at some point, awaken all souls to their *eternal* self-existence. Remember, there are poor souls who love evil right now in Hell who are *conscious* of their punishments and wish right now that they were not conscious at all. However, they chose evil and as a result of their choices, they are in Hell. But God expects better things of you!

God will keep your “izzing – fizzing!”

As we have said, no philosopher, theologian, doctor, physician, scientist or psychologist has ever been able to adequately explain the human consciousness. Believe it or not, even string theory cannot explain it! Of course some string theorists have tried to make themselves gods and goddesses of a new and entertaining branch of “contemporary pop” physics. One thing for sure, the Bible is clear that God is light and that He God pulls

every string of light in the universe. He controls all particles of light – even your own! He can easily maintain the records of “light” which are part of your very being.

Urban truths . . .

As they say on the street... “Bro, you *iz* the man!” You know there is deep, scriptural truth to that statement! The fact is, you *is*, you are, and you always will be . . . you! Even before you were born in this world, your spirit, your unique personality and even your appearance was conceived in Heaven.

Brothers and sisters, rejoice! Yield to God today! He is trustworthy! Rejoice and yield. For the Father from the beginning has orchestrated God’s plan for your life. One great revivalist most certainly was secure in this fact . . .

“I am as an arrow flying through the air...a spirit sent from God, returning to God.”

— John Wesley

God only has you “shooting” through this life for a short season. But rest in the fact that God Himself is your first cause and will keep your individual personality complete for eternity.

You *Iz* !

There are some aspects to urban philosophy that are true. In other words, the totality of your life experiences will be kept completely intact by the power of God. Your sins will be washed away and forgotten by both you and God and you will only remember all the wonderful aspects of life and of salvation that you experienced while living on earth. This includes your memory (especially the good memories!), your emotions and your will.

Solomon knew that consciousness was created by God. This is why it cannot be explained by man . . .

For as a man thinketh in his heart, so he is.

Proverbs 23:7

To be or not to be? In non-Elizabethan language, I should like to answer that question in urban terminology... you *is* and always will be!

The glass-of-water analogy . . .

As we have said, Christianity is a unique belief system. It is the only religion that specifically talks of a real place called Heaven. It is the only religion that is specific about the afterlife and the believers’ resurrected body. Christianity alone places

incredible emphasis on the preservation of the unique identity and personality of every soul that has ever lived in history.

So then, let's further examine why this "identity principle" is such an important doctrine for the Christian believer in this hour. There is much false doctrine circulating around the Church in these days. We must stick to biblical foundations regarding the personal resurrection of each and every believer.

No "dispersion" of identity . . .

Sadly, a lot of Eastern thought has seeped into our Judeo-Christian culture via Hindu yoga and New Age thought. These are the doctrines of demons who love to confuse and promote such nonsense as "you are unified with the universe." The problem with this is that you are not one with the physical universe, however you should be one with the living God of creation. Devils love animism.

So, the identity principle is central to Christian thought. Let me illustrate what I mean when I speak of identity. For example, let's say you have placed a glass of water on your nightstand before retiring one evening. In your own mind, that glass of water has an "identity." In the middle of the night, if you become thirsty, you will remember its identity and will be able to take a drink from it. Obviously, God created your memory for that purpose.

However, if a family member came into your room while you were asleep and removed that glass of water and then emptied it into the ocean, the water molecules in that glass would disperse and become "lost" in the immensity of the sea. I ask then, "Where is the glass of water's identity now?" I tell you it is lost and dispersed forever. Thus, when you got up to drink some of that water in the middle of the night, you probably would have wondered what happened to it.

Death -- the grand delusion . . .

However, unlike that glass of water, the word of God assures us that each and every person will retain their identity forever – whether it is good or evil. And at the judgment, you'll be raised from the dead, one way or the other. *The idea that death is the succession of self-consciousness is the greatest delusion of them all!*

And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.

Hebrews 9:27

So it is with a person's soul. In Heaven, a believer will have a glorified body similar in appearance to what they possessed on earth. Only in Heaven, the earthly body will be transformed into a glorious and perfect heavenly body which is full of life and light. *This heavenly body will be identifiable both to God, angels, and to all others for all eternity.* Some have said the age of this glorious body will be between 18 to 21 years old. Others

believe that the body will be the same age of the resurrected body of Jesus – which was 33 years old! No one knows for sure. In any event, the body will be restored to a youthful and vibrant appearance and will possess capacities far exceeding those of the earthly.

You are not just a “drop” in the bucket to God!

It is our nature to question why God would be so interested in us. His great love is inconceivable. Yet, Jesus said . . .

Not even a sparrow, worth only half a penny, can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are more valuable to him than a whole flock of sparrows.

Matthew 10: 30-31 (NLT)

The Psalmist asked the same question that many ask today . . .

What is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

Psalms 8: 4

You were always on *His* mind . . .

The country singer knew a deep truth. When you love someone passionately, in fact, they will always be on your mind. What you love and exalt, you think about a lot. Can you believe that you are truly the center of a loving God's constant attention? Yes, God is intimately aware of you at all times. You may think how can such an all-powerful and omnipotent God who is so busy with running the universe remember all your ways and have you always on His mind? Because He is an all-knowing and loving, kind God and because He is God, He can do this. Nothing is impossible with God.

God does not want you to fear anything – especially your future [2 Timothy 1:7]. You see, my friend, God does not want any of His people to fear persecution, martyrdom, or even death. Brother Lawrence once wrote that for a Christian, death was the greatest and most ecstatic experience that could ever happen. You are special to Him and no matter what the future holds, no matter what circumstances or tribulations arise, He is ever mindful of you and at any point is ready to transport you into Paradise. No matter what the trial or test, His grace will be more than sufficient enough for you to endure anything [1 Corinthians 10:13] . . .

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.*

Romans 8:37-39

You are more than an ice cube! . . .

I like analogies, so here's another one! We can learn a lot from an ordinary ice cube. Let's take another example of how special your identity is to God. If we take an ice cube and then thaw it out, the once identifiable ice cube will immediately lose its unique identity. Further, if the water that formally made up the ice cube is heated, it will evaporate into steam and will change its form again and therefore it will forever lose its original identity. Although the substance of the water molecules that made up the ice cube remains in existence (H₂O), it remains only in the lowest form of *its identity*.

But you are certainly more valuable than a melted ice cube! For instance, if an individual diamond is to be taken and ground into powder and scattered across a vast wilderness, the "substance" of the diamond particles remains but its continuity, its original image and identity are gone forever. Yet, other religions teach unbiblical and nonsensical theories, thinking it's cool and hip. They teach this "one drop in the ocean" stuff and think they're new age/cutting edge.

People have gotten confused. Even amongst religious folk, I am sure you have heard other erroneous concepts of Paradise such as . . . "Heaven is in your mind, . . ." "Heaven is a state of being . . ." "Heaven is here and now . . . it is the state of your heart" or "Heaven is having peace on earth," or "the Virgin Islands is Heaven," etc. Okay, maybe the Virgin Islands is Heaven after all – but Christians who live down there at least need to stop boasting about it!

The greatest delusion of life is the concept of permanent death or extinction. Listen, dear saint, I tell you even if a person's earthly body is crushed or burned or dispersed across the entire earth or even if it is ground into dust – God Almighty, by His omnipotent and omniscient power, shall restore that person's unique identity at the glorious resurrection of the dead. God can do anything! God will do it!

Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?

Jeremiah 32:27

For with God nothing shall be impossible.

Luke 1:37

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice . . .

John 5:28

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.**

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

Revelation 20:13

My friend, God is faithful and He will preserve both you and your loved one's identity and personhood forever. Just make sure you accept Christ as Savior so you end up when you belong – in Heaven!

More than meets the eye . . .

Possessing a heavenly perspective is an important thing for a believer. Consider that the thief on the cross, found not only abundant grace but he received an all expenses paid trip and one-way ticket to Heaven – an instant transport to Paradise! *What may have appeared to others as the most painful and devastating end to a short and tragic life was truly His greatest blessing and the very culmination of why He was born . . .*

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.

Luke 23:43

On the surface, the thief on the Cross did not appear to have a good future. Man looks on the outside appearance but God looks on the heart. Don't ever be deceived regarding what appears to be an untimely death of a believer. God dwells outside the realm of time, space and dimension. In fact, He already sees each of our individual lives consummated. He already knows what choices we will make and in which direction we will head. He knew when we would be born and He knew when we would die.

The divine Flower Picker . . .

You've heard it said, "God is in control." Sometimes out of His mercy, He takes some unexpectedly. Many wonder why. Could it not be that He is picking a flower in full bloom? God has been out picking a lot of flowers these days. He is sparing righteous souls from what is to come. Sometimes He has shortened the lifespan of a believer so that future rewards are not entirely lost and out of His mercy to limit their punishment . . .

The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart: and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.

Isaiah 57:1

Sometimes God will even use a young person's death in order to bring eternal life into the lives of so many others . . .

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.

John 12:24

Heaven's eye-view . . .

If we could but see things from Heaven's side, it would all make so much glorious sense! I'm sure the Roman soldiers and crowds that stood nearby thought to themselves . . . "What a sad and tragic life this criminal lived. Certainly this young man will go to Hell. What a thief and a crook! And this Jesus who claims to be the Son of God . . . well, he can't even come down off the Cross!" So much for public opinion . . .

You are someone special!

No matter what the future holds, God loves you and has your best in mind. No fear! That's the blessed state that Jesus wants His believers to abide in. With all the end-times terrorism, travel alerts, plagues and calamities, satan will do everything he can to try and keep Christians "safe at home." Fear is one of the main techniques he employs to prevent world missions and evangelization.

God wants you to have a strong self-image in Him. He wants you to understand your unlimited authority in Christ over evil and every devil from Hell. He wants you to know that you have power over sickness and disease and over wicked and unreasonable men [Psalm 91:1-10; Matthew 8:17; Luke 10:1-15; Ephesians 6:18-20; 1 Peter 2:23-24]. God wants you to know that He will preserve you not only in this life but in the next life. He wants you to live a long and fruitful life on earth and experience life with Him forever in eternity.

No fear . . .

And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Heb 2:15

Jesus said, fear not! The Christian should not even fear death. The Holy Spirit is well able to "*Heavenize*" your heart, your home, your neighborhood, your city or nation. But if the bondage of the fear of death dominates (and that is what most people fear most – losing their own identities, their sense of well-being and their existence), the purpose of the whole church can be stymied. For example, the deep faith and religious conviction sustained many Englishmen doing the brutal bombings of the Nazis during World War II. Because of their faith in Christ, they did not fear death and were able to sustain themselves through the ordeal and thus defeat Nazi Germany.

The fact is, your memories, your ego, your self-consciousness, your personality are all important to God. God has a lot invested in you! God wants you to see your good future and by doing so, build your self-esteem in Christ here on earth. He wants you to feel secure about your future destiny with Him.

The power of the resurrection . . .

There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. . .so also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption . . . It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. . . The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. . . . 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. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

I Corinthians 15:40, 42, 47-49, 51-55

According to the gospel of Luke, the first thing Jesus said to His disciples after He first appeared to them after His Resurrection was . . . “It is I.” Indirectly He was telling them . . . “Look, it’s Me, I’m still the same person you knew. Although he possessed a powerful resurrected body Jesus was still saying to them . . . “Look it is Me. I’m the same person and I’m your friend. Don’t be afraid.” In other words, He was telling them even as He did not lose His own identity after His “death,” neither would they! This is one of the ways that Christ encouraged His disciples after His resurrection. He is a “down-to-earth” God! On the shores of Galilee He even prepared for them a fresh fish dinner because He knew they were hungry.

Once again, the Bible is clear about the believer’s destiny – not only on earth, but also in Heaven. The Lord wants you be assured that the ethereal body of a believer will be restored perfectly and beautifully. He wants you to be certain that you will be able to recognize, not only Jesus, but your own self, your loved ones and your friends in Heaven. You may also recall that Peter, James and John were able (by the Spirit) to recognize Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration . . .

And after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and brought them up into an high mountain apart, And He was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him.

Matthew 17: 1-3

You may recall that the first New Testament resurrection occurred when Jesus Christ died upon the Cross and when His Spirit ascended to His Father . . .

Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

Matthew 27: 50-53

Those precious saints of old, which came out of their graves, had been totally made whole and were fully recognizable by many who saw them in the Holy City!

The seven-year miracle . . .

Many of you have heard it said . . . *“First the natural, then the spiritual . . .”*

Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.

1 Corinthians 15:46

You see, my friend, God will often teach us a spiritual truth by giving us a natural example. Oftentimes, the physical laws of God’s created universe show us the way God’s spiritual universe operates. The resurrection, Heaven, Paradise – none of this should be hard for any of us to believe!

Take the magnificent creation of the human body. Even secular scientists and biologists tell us that every seven years the human body miraculously and totally recycles or literally “recreates” itself. Did you know that there is not one single cell remaining in your body that was present there seven years earlier? Through the Master’s ancient design, the Spirit of God created the spirit of man and synergistically combined man’s spirit with the human genome. God patterned and created the highest form of His creation – man – by combining the two with the breath of life . . .

But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground. And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Genesis 2:6-7

Irreducible complexity . . .

Scientists now know that there is no such thing as a “single, simple cell.” For each individual, living cell is made up of millions of complex, integrated components that actually communicate with each other. As a CD player can “read” the digital audio data compressed into a CD disk, so too can a cell read its own DNA commands. Incredible! Even the smallest particles of God’s creation cannot be reduced to being called “simple.”

God holds the strings . . .

This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light . . .

1 John 1:5

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

Colossians 1:16-17

Physicists used to think the atom with its neutrons, protons, electrons and quarks were the smallest entities. But now they have discovered, or at least theorized, that there are even smaller elements of infinitesimally-small multi-colored light particles called “strings.” Apparently these tiny strings of energy or light particles make up the foundation blocks for the entire universe. From the smallest atom to the largest galaxy – all things are comprised of these strings.

The human body and consciousness is the most complex and highest form of creation. It is a wonderful example of “irreducible complexity.” For example, God has designed the human DNA to act as a “central control” in preserving and maintaining a person’s *physical* form and identity throughout their entire life. Although, such commands have been partially disrupted through sin and the fall of Adam, God still did not totally withdraw His image, beauty and presence from mankind.

If the Spirit of God, monitoring and maintaining life and self-consciousness was withdrawn for a moment, the human being would be reduced to a robotic “blob” of physical matter.

But the Bible says we are fearfully and wonderfully made and have been set afire with the life of His Spirit. Consider the seven-year cycle of the human body, that is, if a person is seventy years old, that means he has been recreated or remade out of totally new cells/material – *ten times!*

Yet the body without the Spirit is dead and if the body be dead and dispersed, the person would have no identity. But nothing is impossible with God!

And he said, The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

Luke 18:27

It is only because God has put within the human body the spirit of a man that the physical body is animated and possesses God-breathed life . . .

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Genesis 2:7

For as the body without the spirit is dead . . .

James 2:26a

Since Adam's fall, when the spirit and soul of a person departs, it is true that the body temporarily returns to its lowest form of chemical elements and is dispersed as dust. On earth, the identity of that person's body will be *temporarily* "lost . . ."

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

Genesis 3:19

Until the *body* is raised up at the Second Coming of Christ, it will remain dispersed and dead in the grave until gloriously raised by the power of God. God is the only One who is truly able to give the straw man a brain and the tin man a heart. But God can do much more than that! God can speak a creative word – even to the dusty, disintegrated remains of a precious saint's body that thousands of years ago once lived on this earth. In an instant, God will command every molecule of that person's body to come back together! The soul and the spirit which are present with the Lord will then be supernaturally reunited through the power of God at the resurrection and restitution of all things.

The final enemy is death . . .

Although the curse of the law has been removed from the redeemed on earth, the final enemy of the Church (which is the presence of death in the world) will be defeated *only by Christ* at His Second Coming . . .

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

Galatians 3:13

For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

1 Corinthians 15:25-26

Jesus is the “Anointed One” who alone gives the Holy Spirit without measure and who alone can raise the dead . . .

And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.

Isaiah 10:27

It is the Anointing of the Anointed One that alone can remove burdens in this life and can destroy death and call those things which be not as though they were . . .

. . . even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.

Romans 4:17b

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. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:55-57

God alone can call forth the molecules and dust particles which were once a body and can raise it from the dead. He alone can “bara” [Heb.] – that is, He can create something out of nothing if He needs to!

In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth . . . and God said, Let there be light: and there was light.

Genesis 1:1, 3

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN THE ETERNAL CONDITION OF LOVE . . .

Heavenly perfection . . .

Jesus said that if you were angry with your brother without a cause, you were like a murderer who was near to going to Hell. There is a spirit of perfect love which exists in Heaven. Love is the true sign of whether or not Christ's resurrection life resides within us. Love is the true sign of election . . .

We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

1 John 3:14-15

If you desire to spend eternity with God in Heaven you must learn to love as He loves. The greatest love is to love God and to love what God loves. To love God and to love others is to walk in perfection before God [Matthew 22:37]. Please don't misunderstand me, when I talk about perfection I'm not talking about a spirit of *perfectionism* that reeks from a heart that is self-centered. I'm not talking about a *works-centered* perfection. I'm not talking about human pride or effort either. What I am talking about is that abiding in a spirit of Christ's love will help you walk "perfect" before the Lord.

What I'm not taking about here is the false contemporary, evangelical notion that somehow "perfect" simply means "mature." Maturity is only one aspect of the word perfect. When the Bible talks about maturity, it's talking about a walk with the Lord that no longer succumbs to sin. That's the perfection/maturity Jesus is talking about.

It's about heavenly standing . . .

Sure we are saved by grace. However let no one think they can sit back on their laurels and expect to rule and reign with Christ without walking in obedience. "Job placement" in Heaven is determined directly by our obedience on earth . . .

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.

Luke 16:10

Do as I say – not as I do . . .

There's a revival coming. Heaven is about to stop all hypocritical leaders right in their tracks! For too long, the precious and sincere believers have had to endure the moral

garbage and hypocrisy springing forth polluted waters over Christian television. Mega-church pastors and so-called apostles and self-entitled profits have been poor role models for our Christian youth.

Too many preachers today are committing the sins of deception and adultery while claiming that “the gifts and calling of God are irrevocable.” Many of their followers justify their leaders’ moral hypocrisies and weakly defend them by saying things like, “We see the man, but we also see the anointing.” What a bunch of bunk! Here’s what Paul had to say on the matter . . .

An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?

Romans 2:20-23

Hypocritical preachers are much disliked in Heaven. Only the devil is hated worse. Many who think they will be in Heaven will not be, and many more who think they will be exalted there will find themselves just barely getting in! As a matter of fact the outskirts of Heaven will be filled with carnal Christian leadership. There they will undergo lengthy training and discipline from the angels. Too many professed church leaders are falling into immorality. Many of their children have become a brood of wicked immoral kids who use their notoriety to teach other Christian kids about perversion and pornography. This is sad indeed.

My wife and I once attended the ministry of a nationally-known marriage counselor in a television complex in Virginia Beach. It turned out that this marriage counselor was having an affair from his wife even while teaching a group of newly-weds “the principles of Christian marriage.” “Maximum marriage,” he called it. The problem is the body of Christ today is full of such hypocrites, who claim to be leaders and who supposedly operate in the gifts of the Spirit, yet they’re not even born again! And what does this say about our need to pray for our Christian leaders!

Eternal rewards are also directly linked to whether we are *obedient* or *disobedient* to the commands of Christ. You see there is great liberty in walking perfectly before the Father – walking in God’s Presence with a heart that doesn’t want to do anything to offend His sweet Holy Spirit. Walking in God’s love and perfection is liberating! Not wanting to offend God in any way is the spirit of a perfect man or woman. It is difficult to continually hear weakly contrived defenses and unrighteous justifications for the immorality of professed Christian leaders. For a loyal staffer to simply say, “We see the man (i.e., his carnality, temper, duplicity, etc.) but we also see the anointing” is a cop-out! To say that life is short and people need to live a little is nothing but an

excuse for liberality. To label in a denigrating way someone who is living holy as “hard core” only reveals that person’s compromising position.

Do as I say, not as I do . . .

That seems to be the motto of many Christian leaders today. They preach one thing in public, but live a double life in private. I must tell you that hypocritical preachers are some of the most disliked people in Heaven. It is a sad and tragic fact that many who think they will be in Heaven will be not, and many more who think they will be exalted will find themselves just getting in to the outskirts of Paradise. There they will need further training and discipline from angels. Too many professed church leaders are falling into gross immorality. Too many of them have raised an ungodly brood of wicked offspring who will eventually take over their evangelical/charismatic enterprise.

Things that keep you out of Paradise . . .

I personally know of a famous marriage counselor and author who taught on Christian television for many years and who had seminars at CBN who while he taught others to be faithful to their wives was unfaithful to his own. When he finally divorced his wife he claimed it was God’s will and that he would rather go to hell than have to stay with her. Assuredly he has prophesied his destiny correctly!

Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?

Romans 2:21-23

I am tired of hearing weakly-contrived defenses with unrighteous justifications for the actions of immoral professed Christian leaders. The spirit of God is grieved when professed Christians defend their sin by saying things such as, “Life is short, and people need to lighten up, life is hard enough, so what if people sin a little, or people need to live a little, etc.” Let’s face it, when professed Christians say these things it’s an obvious excuse for their own liberality and private immorality.

It doesn’t mean you won’t make mistakes nor does it mean that you won’t occasionally fail the Lord. However if you do sin or fail God, you will quickly run back to His loving arms, repent and there find His favor.

This also means that if you see something ungodly on TV, you turn it off and you don’t continually revisit that particular program. Let’s get specific here. The choice is yours. You can live a carnal life and either not make it into Heaven at all or when you get there, you will be stuck living on the outskirts. You can either fill up the cup of your reward or you can watch your rewards burn before your eyes . . .

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

1 Corinthians 3:13-15

I hear a lot of people say, "I just want to get in or I 'm just thankful that I'm saved." But few realize how serious and awesome it is to see eternal rewards either being given to you on a gold platter by angels or being burned up before your eyes. Few contemplate the eternal disappointment because they only sought after a "fire insurance" kind of salvation . . .

Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

Luke 6:23

For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.

Matthew 16:27

Why then dwell on the outskirts of glory when you can sit in His Temple? Do not be fooled . . .

They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but *it shall be given to them* for whom it is prepared.

Mark 10:37-40

Your works wrought through the grace of God are important to Heaven's tribunal. You should therefore desire to fervently obey Christ and choose to live above sin so that you may secure a favored position in Heaven and rule and reign with Christ from the Holy Mount . . .

He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and

murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

Revelation 21:7-8

However this requires cultivating a deep and abiding fellowship with Him. For His loving Holy Spirit will cause you to do the “little things” in life which please both God and others. This will cause you to be thankful to God even in performing the smallest, unnoticed tasks for Him. Again we are not advocating a “works-oriented” salvation. But let’s face it, Jesus said that a good tree would sooner or later bring forth the good fruits of His grace.

Heavenly preaching restored . . .

If ever the contemporary church needed accurate preaching, it is today. This is especially true in the area of true and false conversion. It seems like most meetings today feature an upbeat, contemporary musical presentation followed by a personal prophecy for everyone that tells them how great their future will be. There’s virtually no mention of the traditional biblical words of conversion, repentance, wickedness, sin, judgment and hell.

Let me give you an example. One evening after a revival meeting, George Whitfield was walking the streets of Boston when a drunkard approached him. Remember that George Whitfield was a contemporary of John Wesley. Whitfield was the Calvinist who believed in election and eternal security whereas Wesley believed a person could lose their salvation. Anyway, this drunkard approached Whitfield and said to the evangelist in a drunken stupor . . . “*God bless you, Reverend Whitfield. I’m one of your converts from the crusade you had here last year.*” To this Whitfield sadly responded, “*Well, sir, you certainly are one of **my converts** for truly you are not a convert of Jesus Christ.*”

You see the old-time revivalists believed in true repentance. They preached that a sinner needed to understand what he was repenting *from* and what he was repenting *to*. Sometimes today’s preachers actually tell folks to repent but they don’t tell them what to repent from specifically – they are afraid to name specific sins for fear of offending their ministry followers. One thing for sure, Wesley and Whitfield believed the same thing – that if a professed Christian remained in *habitual*, unrepentant sin, they were either not elect to begin with or they had been saved and walked away from Christ. For either doctrinal viewpoint, the results are not good for a person who loves sin. Of course, they distinguish between the *habitual* sins of the unsaved, professed Christian and the *occasional* sins of a truly saved convert.

There is a spirit of perfection in Heaven. Everything in Heaven is perfectly made, smooth and beautiful to behold. Everything in Heaven is clean, neat and in order. For example, let’s talk about cleanliness before the Lord. Does your bedroom or office on earth look neat and tidy before the hosts of Heaven? Or is it disorganized, unkempt or untidy? Does your room look like a room from Heaven or does it look like a room out of

Hell? So too, in a moral sense, God wants this spirit of holy excellence and perfection to be in the heart of every believer. And what is this spirit of perfection? It is the spirit of the unconditional agape love of God. It is the spirit of holiness that loves to obey His commands. Jesus said if we love Him we will keep His commandments . . .

If ye love me, keep my commandments.

John 14:15

Part of walking in perfection is not only to love external cleanliness and order but also to love inward cleanliness and order. Again part of walking in a spirit of love and perfection is to be courteous and to possess manners that are worthy of a Christian. John Wesley taught that common manners and holiness were inextricably connected. Our current culture is hellish in the way people treat each other and relate to each other. People are prideful, selfish, brash, ambitious, and egocentric. This is opposite to the spirit of love in Christ Jesus. The spirit of rudeness, self-centeredness and confusion does not please God. Such a spirit would be an unwelcome guest in Glory. I must tell you, you better start loving Christ and others now so that you will not be disappointed at the judgment seat.

Heavenly courtesy . . .

In Heaven, all the angels and heavenly hosts interact with such gentleness, courtesy and selflessness. If holy manners, courtesies and social etiquette are so paramount in Heaven, why would anyone think that they are not important in the Christian life on earth? Holy manners are vital to God. There is a whole host of social manners and etiquette that the modern church has simply lost. Since the Church is the salt of the earth because she has not modeled for the world social graces the world has become a much more rude and animalistic place in this hour. Simply listening to others and truly caring about what they have to say is one way to show love to others. Why not start by trying to do this here and now? Pray that God gives you a spirit of charity, love and graciousness. God and those around you will appreciate it! And you will be ready in your own spirit for Heaven.

It seems that a lot of ministries are so fiercely competitive nowadays and ambitious that they are willing to climb over others to get what they want. Everyone's clamoring to be on TV and to build a partner base. The world sees this and thinks that it's sick. The Lord thinks it's sick too!

For instance, my wife's family was in the diplomatic service and she was trained in utmost courtesies, protocol and decorum. I was coming from a totally different background so I had a lot to learn about these things myself. But that's part of maturing in Christ. That's part of preparing one's heart to dwell in Heaven's society.

For example, opening the car door for your wife or assisting an elderly person are other examples of showing courtesy. There are too many principles of courtesy to mention here. But basically, a spirit of courtesy is representative of Christ's spirit of love and

servitude. Everyday courtesies are a reflection of a heart that is motivated by the love of Jesus and a love for others. Therefore I challenge you to forsake all spirits of competition, jealousy and ambition and begin to love and serve others at once.

Again, if a professed Christian dresses seductively, that is not love. Do not think for a moment that God does not see a heart as wicked that desires to display a “hint of cleavage.” Or when you sit down on a platform does your dress expose your body in a way that is not godly? Modern Christian women today can argue all they want about their so-called “liberty” but the ancient godly women dressed in a way that would cover the body. There’s no cultural argument here. The Scriptures are clear that modesty in dress is an important area of courtesy to others. How you dress *does* matter to God. The Scriptures are clear on this. If you’re willing to wear an outfit that will draw attention to yourself, you are walking in a spirit of hell-bound seduction – not love!

Conditions of the heavenly state . . .

The angels of paradise are holy and loyal to God. If we as believers are going to dwell with them, we too must learn loyal and holy through the grace of Jesus Christ. This means at some point, we must be willing to totally surrender to the Holy Spirit and be made perfect in His love. At some point, we must learn to love what God loves and hate what God hates.

The great Puritan and Wesleyan preachers taught the principle of occasional sin versus habitual sin. A sincere Christian may *occasionally* sin but if the Spirit of Christ dwell in them, they will not be able to stay in that sin for very long [Psalm 51:1ff]. Because of their true love for Jesus they will feel that they absolutely must repent – for they can no longer offend the One they truly love! Someone who truly loves Christ will not be able to offend Him for long. The adulterer who says “it was God’s will for me to divorce my spouse” is deceived. The professed Christian who will not forgive his enemies or who maligns the character of another; the professed Christian who steals or lies or who is mean to others is deceived. God’s grace is amazing but there is still human responsibility and God expects us at some point in our lives to yield to His will.

The Great Awakeners of the past taught that a professed Christian who continued in a state of habitual sin was deceived. The great revivalists called this state of deception in a professed believer – a *peculiar form of righteousness*. This is the grievous state of the heart of a believer who has been deceived and has taken the false position where they flatter themselves by believing things such as . . . “I am not a bad person. God will wink at my sin. He knows my heart. He knows I love Him even though I have a “problem” loving this pet sin of mine. I’m His special favorite. After all, there are a lot of other people out there who are a lot worse than me!” The problem with this reasoning is that this person thinks that God judges sin like they would. They erroneously think that God thinks altogether like them . . .

. . . Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.

Psalms 50:21b

This sad soul may profess Christ with their mouth but their heart denies Him. Such a person would not enjoy the pure atmosphere of Heaven anyway since the evil they love will not be present there – there will be no vanity, pride, anger, perversion, deception, cruelty or lust, etc. Their sinful appetites are more suited for another realm. For if a person’s predisposition on earth is to love sin, what difference would it make if that person was suddenly translated to a different place?

Quality not quantity . . .

A lot of the contemporary church today has it all wrong. God is not into numbers as men are. In the book of Genesis He was willing to drown the whole world in a flood of epic proportions because of mankind’s propensity for sin. Oftentimes sinners justify their sinning by saying such things as . . . “Oh come on, the *whole* world can’t be wrong, I mean, *you’re* not perfect either. Besides, *everybody* I know sins and nobody’s perfect. Everybody can’t be wrong.” No, my friend, you are wrong for everyone can be wrong and God alone is right. As the Word says, “Let every man be a liar but God’s Word be true.”

As Jesus said, the road that leads to destruction is broad and many go that way but the way to eternal life is narrow (not difficult!) and few there be that find it. I’ve actually heard preachers try to twist this text but I for one will not dare to mince one of the Master’s sober sayings. Listen friend, if Noah had bought into that logic, he and his family also would have perished in the deluge! It doesn’t matter if there are eight billion people on the earth who love sin and only eight who are righteous. Christ will condemn 7,999,999,992 wicked souls in the blink of an eye in order to spare Heaven its peace, order and joy . . .

And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.

Luke 17:26-27

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Matthew 7:13-14

This is not to say that this is a scenario that would ever actually occur for God is loving and merciful and the book of Revelation promises us there will be millions of the

redeemed in Heaven. For the Bible says that Christ will return with millions of His saints. However the point I'm making is that God will never compromise His principles of holiness and justice. Just as we would not invite an unrepentant serial killer to stay with our own family nor will God expose the peace and joy of His family in Heaven to any habitual sinner or moral felon.

Even on earth, governments separate the wicked from the righteous through the prison systems. So too, Jesus will separate the sheep from the goats. Jesus will not allow one soul with a love for sin through the gates of Glory. There is no *magic wand* waiting at the gates which instantly changes a person's soul to love righteousness. They must choose to love God here and now and develop a godly character by yielding to God's grace.

Someone who habitually stays in a state of bondage may need deliverance from demonic oppression in their soul. However there are times when someone selfishly claims Christ as Savior but will not yield to Him the sins of the flesh such as anger, hatred, unforgiveness, bitterness, witchcraft, sexual perversion, adultery, lying, murder, stealing, etc. . .

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that *they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Galatians 5:20-21

Grace abuse . . .

The Bible teaches that souls who have an appetite and a love for sin will not feel at home in Heaven anyway. For in Heaven, righteousness reigns . . .

Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie . . . and there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Revelation 21:27; 22:15

Some of you reading this book need to get down on your hands and knees right now and totally repent of your false profession of Christ. You need to totally surrender to His love, holiness and enabling grace. Many will act like they've known Jesus all along and will try to "fake" their way into Heaven. However on earth, they never submitted to His Lordship. For example, on the Day of Judgment, many will claim that they went forward at a crusade

and accepted Christ as Savior. They will plead that they believed in eternal security and “once saved, always saved, etc.” They will say they were a “good person” and were outstanding citizens, etc. Yet because they loved sin and worldliness more than they loved God, their shallow pleading of “Lord” will not be enough to save them . . .

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father, which is in Heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Matthew 7:22-23

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Matthew 7:14

God is no pushover . . .

One conference speaker says that you need to “rediscover the real you.” Another “hot” best-selling author and pastor supposedly has the “keys” for a master plan for success for your life. Still another television preacher is testifying how it took her five years to “find herself.” Because many do not have a vibrant faith with God, they have succumbed to borrowing from contemporary psychology and positive thinking – “gospelizing it up.” Through “positive preaching,” some endeavor today to make the way to Heaven broader and wider than it really is. Many well-meaning, full-gospel leaders have unwittingly embraced this new form of “positive New Evangelicalism” in an attempt to seek unity. I, for one, will not compromise the Bible doctrine of holiness and power in order to gain the recognition and acceptance of secularized evangelicals and compromised Charismatics.

Their attitude shows no fear of God and no respect for God’s Word. We must never trifle with the solemn words of Jesus Christ! And although it is true that living perfect in this fallen world is difficult at times, that doesn’t change the fact that Christian perfection in love and in holy character should be our goal as believers . . .

But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the *spirits of just men made perfect* . . .

Hebrews 12:23

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.

Matthew 5:48

The fact is I would rather err on the side of holiness than on the side of licentiousness. There is just way too much risk in trying to stretch the Scriptures to conform to a worldly or ungodly lifestyle. And why would anyone who loves God want to knowingly displease Him in any way? There is an old saying that goes something like this . . .

“Legalism will kill you but license will kill you quicker!”

There is error in the extremes. God delights in balance—a combination of his sovereign grace working with a yielded will. It is true I have never met a perfect person on this earth. Yet, I still believe God sees our hearts and knows whether or not we love the blessed doctrine of holiness. I have known men and women of God who have been pretty close to living a perfect Christian life.

I for one personally believe in “Wesleyan holiness.” I honestly believe that God can empower us by His grace to live above sin if we abide in His grace and in His presence. And if we occasionally fail, we should not feel overly concerned but simply and gently recall our soul to God and His presence. He loves us and when we do fail, He will always patiently wait for us and tenderly forgive us as we return to Him.

As I have said, I have met men and women of God who would not dare to sin against Christ deliberately. In some sense their character had been “perfected” because they would never knowingly do anything to displease the heavenly Father. Their heart motive is to never offend Him in any way. They have entered the school of God’s discipline and habitually refuse to succumb to temptation. The true saint trembles at the thought of losing His presence. You see, as a mature believer through prayer in His blood and through the power of His blood, they have learned to live above demonic oppression . . .

I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

1 John 2:14

Sin no longer has any allure for them. The enemy’s temptations are nil. Sin is not a temptation for them. Like their Savior who came down from Heaven, they hate iniquity and love righteousness . . .

But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. *Thou hast loved*

righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Hebrews 1:8-9

True saints bound for Heaven have become “heavenized” by the Holy Spirit. They have learned to gently and continually yield to His grace. Their Jesus-like character will place them in a high position in Heaven. This is our blessed goal – to become Christlike and to love even the sanctifying process of it all. Sometimes the journey is as important as the destination. One thing for sure, what has not been perfected in a believer’s heart on earth will eventually be perfected by fire in Heaven. In Heaven, we will be fully perfected in spirit, character and in our bodies . . .

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

1 Corinthians 3:15

Walking in the heavenly state . . .

We must remember that living in this world is like going to school – we as believers are all being tested and prepared for Heaven. It is comforting to know that as pilgrims on earth, when we do stumble we have an Advocate with the Father – *if we truly repent and turn from sin . . .*

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness . . . My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

1 John 1:7, 9; 2:1

But let none ever construe God’s grace as a license to sin – for sin shall never have dominion over a true saint [Romans 6:13-15]. No true believer could ever enjoy or stay in habitual sin for long. For only a pig can enjoy the muck and the mire. A pig may confess that it lives as clean as a fastidious feline – but the pig would be lying. You see, their natures are totally different.

The “perfect” heavenly citizen . . .

Just because most people don’t live “perfectly” before the Lord doesn’t mean such a moral disposition of the heart is not attainable. It’s one thing for a preacher to teach the fact that most Christians do not live a perfect life; it’s quite another thing to teach that living a perfect life before the Lord is *impossible*. Can a Christian have a perfect heart before the Lord? Jesus answers us in His Word by giving us a resounding, yes!

To say that God Almighty cannot keep a Christian from sin is to actually weaken the concept of His grace. For God's grace is all-powerful. Again, to imply that God Almighty cannot keep us by His enabling grace is to falsely charge Jesus with giving us commandments that we could not possibly keep. Would you or I as an earthly parent give our children a commandment that they could not keep and yet discipline them when they could not keep it? We would consider this child abuse and to charge God with the same is to accuse Him of "parent abuse."

Sure John said to the newly converted that "if any man said he had no sin, he was a liar" but this is simply an acknowledgement that all of us as sinners must continually throw ourselves before the Cross of Calvary and continually abide in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Bible says we have been made the righteousness of God through Christ Jesus. We need to get a grasp of this. For to say that our sin and our flesh is more powerful than the Holy Spirit is blasphemous. Should sin therefore abound? God forbid! Let God's grace abound!

Let us therefore cast away all religious thinking regarding the doctrine of Christian perfection. Tragically, many today like to define the word "perfect" as meaning in some generalistic sense "mature." However, God and the Bible have defined what "mature" means and it is quite different from the contemporary definition . . .

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect.

Matthew 5:48

The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master.

Luke 6:40

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection . . .

Hebrews 6:1a

Is it then possible for Christians to walk in holy and perfect character before the Lord? You may ask how? By God's grace I tell you! For the divine lawgiver Himself, the Holy One of Israel even now dwells within our hearts. And as we yield to Him, *He* will enable us to walk perfectly before Him . . .

And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

2 Corinthians 12:9

In Christianity, it is not about the “we” but it’s all about the HE! Yet our goal is still the same as it was for Father Abraham . . .

And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou *perfect*.

Genesis 17:1

God has given us a divine Helper – even His Holy spirit of grace! All we must do is simply yield to Him and allow Him to live holy through us. It’s a question of surrender, not works!

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 4:16

Paradise regained . . .

It is this author’s humble opinion that the way any Christian should prepare for Christ’s second coming – whether it be through the rapture or by your own physical death – is to presently love His sweet presence, love to hear His voice and to practice the sweet hour of prayer. There are too many prayerless “spots” today supposedly worshipping God on our platforms. But through prayer and by absolute surrender, Daniel kept himself unspotted from the world.

The life of Daniel is a great example of how God can counteract the devil’s schemes through a yielded vessel. For the devil desires innocence to be corrupted in order to eternally devour a soul that was once the bearer of Gods’ light and turn it into a soul that becomes utter nothingness and which is cast into outer darkness . . .

These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

Jude 1:12-13

Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Matthew 22:13

But God's light is pure and holy. God's fire is healing and sanctifying and does not destroy or hurt. Satan consumes. But God is looking for a body to fill and not to consume. God's fire always gives life and abundance and gives it freely to all who love the true Light – even Jesus Christ. Unfortunately the natural fallen mind of man neither discerns nor comprehends this. This is why there are so many sinners and so few saints. But Daniel understood the fire of God . . .

A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

Daniel 7:10

He understood that in order to walk in wisdom and understanding – to walk in visions and dreams, he must spend time in God's presence and separate himself from the strange fire of the popular culture he lived in. He knew he must regain the pure and innocent heavenly image of God that was lost in Eden. How about you? Are you living your life with one eye on Heaven? Do you consider yourself just a pilgrim passing through performing the righteous works of Christ? Do you love the sweet Spirit of heavenly purity? Do you know and love the Spirit of holiness which is the very Spirit that regulates all of Heaven? Is your heart prepared for Heaven?