

D.L. Moody:

Like all the other wonderful works of God, this Book bears the sure stamp of its author. It is like Him. Though man plants the seeds, God makes the flowers, and they are perfect and beautiful like Himself. Men wrote what is in the Bible, but the work is God's. The more refined, as a rule, people are, the fonder they are of the flowers, and the better they are, as a rule, the more they love the Bible.

The fondness for flowers refines people, and the love of the Bible makes them better. All that is in the Bible about God, about man, about redemption, and about a future state, agrees with our own ideas of right, with our reasonable fears and with our personal experiences. All the historical things are told in the way that we know the world had of looking at them when they were written. What the Bible tells about heaven is not half so strategic as what Professor Proctor tells about the hosts of stars that are beyond the range of any telescope - yet people very often think that science is all fact, and that religion is only fancy. A great many persons think that Jupiter and many more of the stars around us are inhabited, who cannot bring themselves to believe that there is a life beyond this earth for immortal souls. The true Christian puts faith before reason, and believes that reason always goes wrong when faith is set aside. If people would but read their Bibles more, and study what there is to be found there about Heaven, they would not be as worldly minded as they are. They would not have their hearts set upon things down here, but would seek the imperishable things above.

EARTH THE HOME OF SIN

It seems perfectly reasonable that God should have given us a glimpse of the future, for we are constantly losing some of our friends by death, and the first thought that comes to us is, "where have they gone?" When a loved one is taken away from us, how that thought comes up before us! How we wonder if we will ever see them again, and where and when it will be! Then it is that we turn to this blessed Book, for there is no other book in all the world that can give us the slightest comfort; no other book that can tell us where the loved ones have gone.

Not long ago I met an old friend, and as I took him by the hand and asked after his family, the tears came trickling down his cheeks as he said:

"I haven't any now."

"What," I said, "is your wife dead?"

"Yes sir."

"And all your children, too?"

"Yes, all gone," he said, "and I am left here desolate and alone."

Would any one take from that man the hope, that he will meet his dear ones again? Would any one persuade him that there is not a future where the lost will be found? No, we need not forget our dear loved ones; but we fly cling forever to the enduring hope that there will be a time when we can meet unfettered, and be blest in that land of everlasting suns, where the soul drinks from the living, streams of love that roll by God's high throne. In our inmost hearts there are none of us but have questionings of the future.

"Tell me, my secret soul,
O, tell me, Hope and Faith,
Is there no resting place,
From sorrow, sin and death?
Is there no happy spot
Where mortals may be blest,
Where grief may find a balm,
And weariness a rest?
Faith, Hope and Love - best boons to mortals given -
Waved their bright wings, and whispered:
Yes, in heaven"

There are men who say that there is no heaven. I was once talking with a man who said he thought there was nothing to justify us in believing in any other heaven than we know here on earth. If this is heaven, it is a very strange one - this world of sickness, and sorrow, and sin. I pity from the depths of my heart the man or woman who has that idea.

This world that so many think is heaven, is the home of sin, a hospital of sorrow, a place that has nothing in it to satisfy the soul. Men go all over it and then want to get out of it. The more one sees of the world the less they think of it. People soon grow tired of the best pleasures it has to offer. Some one has said that the world is a stormy sea, whose every wave is strewn with the wrecks of mortals that perish in it. Every time we breathe some one is dying. We all know that we are going to stay here but a very little while. Our life is but a vapor. It is just a mere shadow. We meet one another, as some one has said, salute one another, and pass on and are gone. And another has said, it is just inch of time, and then eternal ages roll on; and it seems to me that it is perfectly reasonable that we should study this book, to find out where we are going, and where our friends are who have gone on before. The longest time man has to live, has no more proportion to eternity than a drop of dew has to the ocean.

CITIES OF THE PAST

Look at the cities of the past. There is Babylon. It was founded by a woman named Semiramis, who had two millions of men at work for years building it. It is nothing but dust now. Nearly a thousand years ago, some historian wrote that the ruins of Nebuchadnezzar's palace were still standing, but men were afraid to go near them because they were full of scorpions and snakes. That's the Sort of ruin that greatness often comes to in our own day. Nineveh is gone. Its towers and bastions have fallen. The traveler who tries to see Carthage, can't see much of it. Corinth, once the seat of luxury and art, is only a shapeless mass. Ephesus long the metropolis of Asia, the Paris of that day, was crowded with buildings as large as the capitol at Washington. I am told it looks more like a neglected graveyard now than anything else. Granada is now the housing place of lions and jackals. It was once very grand, with its twelve gates and towers. The Alhambra, the palace of the Mohammedan kings, was situated there. Probably the animals play with the monarchs' bones. Little pieces of the once grand and beautiful cities of Herculanaeum and Pompeii are now being sold in the shops for relics. Jerusalem, once one of the grandest cities of the universe, is but a shadow of itself. Thebes - for thousands of years, up almost to the coming of Christ, the largest and wealthiest city of the world - is now a mass of decay. Very little of Athens and many more of the proud cities of olden times, remain to tell the story of their downfall. God drives His plowshare through cities, and they are upheaved like furrows in the field. "Behold," says Isaiah, "the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity."

See how Antioch has fallen! When Paul preached there it was a superb metropolis. A wide street, over three miles long, stretching across the entire city, was ornamented with rows of columns and covered galleries, and at every corner stood carved statues to commemorate their great men, whose names even we have never heard. These are never heard of now, but the poor preaching tent-maker who came into its portals, stands out as the grandest character in all history. The finest specimens of Grecian art decorated the shrines of the temples, and the baths and the aqueducts were such as are never approached in elegance now. Men then, as now, were seeking honors and wealth and mighty names, and seeking to enshrine their names and records in perishable clay. Within the walls, we are told, were enclosed mountains over seven hundred feet high, and rocky precipices and deep ravines gave wild and picturesque character to the, city of which no modern city gives us an example. These heights were fortified in a marvelous manner, which gave to them strange startling effects. The vast population of this brilliant city, combining all the art and cultivation of Greece with the levity, the luxury and the superstition of Asia, was as intent on pleasure as the population of any of our great cities are to-day. They had their shows, their games, their races and dances, their sorcerers, puzzlers, buffoons and miracle-workers, and the whole people sought constantly in the theatres and processions, for something to stimulate and gratify the most corrupt desires of the soul.

This is pretty much what we find the masses of the people in our great cities doing now. The place was even worse than Athens, for the so-called worship they indulged in was not only idolatrous, but had mixed up with it the grossest passions to which man descends. It was here that Paul it came to preach the glad tidings of Christ; it was here that his converts were first called Christians, as a nickname; the first time the name, was ever used, all followers of Christ before time having been called "saints " or "brethren." As has been well said, out of that spring at Antioch, a mighty stream has flowed to water the world. Astarte, the "Queen of Heaven," whom they worshipped; Diana, Apollo, the Pharisee and Sadusee, are no more, but the despised Christians yet live. Yet that Heathen City, which would not take Christianity to its heart and keep it, fell. Cities that have not the refining and restraining influences of Christianity well established in them, seldom do amount to much in the long ran. They grow dim in the light of ages. Few of our great cities in this country are a hundred years old as yet. For nearly a thousand years this city prospered; yet it fell.

I do not think that it is wrong for us to think and talk about heaven. I like to locate, heaven, and find out all I

about it. I expect to live there through all eternity. If I was going to dwell in any place in this country, if I was going to make it my home, I would want to inquire about the place, about its climate, about the neighbors I would have, and about everything in fact, that I could learn concerning it. If any of you were going to emigrate, that would be the way you would feel. Well, we are all going to emigrate in a very little while to a country that is very far away. We are going to spend eternity in another world a grand and glorious world where God reigns. Is it not natural, then, that we should look and listen and try to find out who is already there, and what is the route to take? Soon after I was converted, an infidel asked me one day why I looked up when I prayed. He said that heaven was no more above us than below us; that heaven was everywhere. Well, I was greatly bewildered, and the next time I prayed, it seemed almost as if I was praying into the air. Since then I have become better acquainted with the Bible, and I have come to see that heaven is above us; that it is upward and not downward. The spirit of God is everywhere, but God is in heaven, and heaven is above our heads. It does not matter what part of the globe we may stand upon, heaven, is above us.

In 17th chapter of Genesis it says that God went up from Abraham; and in the 3d chapter of John, that he came down from heaven. So, in the 1st chapter of Acts we find that Christ went up into heaven (not down), and a cloud received him out of sight. Thus we see heaven is up. The very arrangement of the firmament about the earth declares the seat of God's glory to be above us. Job says, "Let not God regard it from above," and we find the Psalmist declaring, "the Lord is high above nations, and His glory above the heavens."

Again in Deuteronomy, we find, "who shall go up for us to heaven?" Thus, all through scripture we find that we are given the location of heaven as upward and beyond the firmament. This firmament, with its many bright worlds scattered through, is so vast that heaven must be an extensive realm. Yet this need not surpass us.

It is not for short-sighted man to inquire why God made heaven so extensive that its lights along the way can be seen from any part or side of this little world.

In the 51st chapter of the prophecy of Jeremiah we are told that: He hath made the earth by his power; he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding. Yet, how little we really know of that power, or wisdom or understanding! As it says in the 26th chapter of Job: Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? But the thunder of his power, who can understand?

This is the word of God. As we find in the 42nd chapter of Isaiah: Thus saith God the Lord, he that created the heavens and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth bread unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk within. The discernment of God's power, the messages of heaven, do not always come in great things. We read in the 19th chapter of the first book of Kings:

"And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice."

It is as a still small voice that God speaks to His children.

Some people are trying to find out just how far heaven is away. There is one thing we know about it; that is, that it is not so far away but that God can hear us when we pray. I do not believe there has ever been a tear shed for sin since Adam's fall in Eden to the present time, but God has witnessed that. He is not too far from this earth for us to go to Him; and if there is a sigh that comes from a burdened heart to-day, God will hear that sigh. If there is a cry coming up from a heart broken on account of sin, God will hear that cry. He is not so far away, heaven is not so far away, as to be inaccessible to the smallest child. In the 7th chapter and 14th verse of 2nd Chronicles, we read:

"If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins, and will heal, their land,"

When I was in Dublin, they were telling me about a father who had lost a little boy, and he had not thought about the future, he had been so entirely taken up with this world and its affairs; but when that little boy his only child, died, that father's heart was broken, and every night when he got home from work, they would find him with his tallow candle and his Bible in his room, and he was hunting up all that he could find there about heaven. And someone asked him what he was doing, and he said he was trying to find out where his child had gone, and I think he was a reasonable man. I suppose there is not a man or woman but has dear ones that are gone. Shall

we close this book to-day? Or shall we look into it to try to find where the loved ones are? I was reading, some time ago, an account of a father, a minister, who had lost a child. He had gone to a great many funerals, offering comfort to others in sorrow, but now the iron had entered his own soul, and a brother minister had come to officiate and preach the funeral sermon; and after the minister got through speaking, the father got up, and standing right at the head of the coffin, looking at the face of that loved child that was gone, he said that a few years ago, when he had first come into that parish, as he used to look over the river he took no interest in the people over there, because they were all strangers to him and there were none over there that belonged to his parish. But, he said, a few years ago a young man came into his home, and married his daughter, and she went over the river to live, and when that child went over there, he became suddenly interested in the inhabitants, and every morning as he would get up he would look out of the window and look over there at her home. But now, said he, another child has been taken. She has gone over another river, and heaven seems dearer and nearer to me than it ever has before.

My friends, let us believe this good old Book, that heaven is not a myth, and let us be prepared to follow the dear ones who have gone before. There, and there alone, can we find the peace we seek for.

SEEKING A BETTER COUNTRY

What has been, and is now, one of the strongest feelings in the human heart? Is it not to find some better place, some lovelier spot, than we have now? It is for this that men are seeking everywhere; and yet, they can have it, if they will; but instead of looking down, they must look up to find it. As men grow in knowledge, they vie with each other more and more to make their homes attractive, but the brightest home on earth is but an empty barn, compared with the mansions that are in the skies.

What is it that we look for at the decline and close of life? Is it not some sheltered place, some quiet spot, where if we cannot have constant rest, we may at least have a foretaste of what it is to be. What was it that led Columbus, not knowing what would be his fate, across the unsailed western seas, if it was not the hope of finding a better country? This is what sustained the hearts of the Pilgrim Fathers, driven from their native land by persecution, as they faced an iron-bound, savage coast, with an unexplored territory beyond. They were cheered and upheld by the hope of reaching a free and fruitful country, where they could be at rest and worship God in peace.

Somewhat similar is the Christian's hope of heaven, only it is not an undiscovered country, and in attractions cannot be compared with anything we know on earth. Perhaps nothing but the shortness of our range of sight keeps us from seeing the celestial gates all open to us, and nothing but the deafness of our ears, prevents our hearing the joyful ringing of the bells of heaven. There are constant sounds around us that we cannot hear, and the sky is studded with bright worlds that our eyes have never seen. Little as we know about this bright and radiant land, there are glimpses of its beauty that come to us now and then.

"We may not know how sweet its balmy air,
How bright and fair its flowers;
We may not hear the songs that echo there,
Through these enchanted bowers.

The city's shining towers we may not see
With our dim earthly vision,
For death, the silent warder, keeps the key
That opens the gates elysian.

But sometimes when adown the western sky
A fiery sunset lingers,
Its golden gate swings inward noiselessly,
Unlocked by unseen fingers.

And while they stand a moment half ajar,
Gleams from the inner glory
Stream brightly through the azure vault afar,
And half reveal the story."

It is said by travelers, that in climbing the Alps the houses of far distant villages can be seen with great distinctness, so that sometimes the number of panes of glass in a church window can be counted. The distance looks so short that the place seems almost at hand, but after hours and hours of climbing, it looks no nearer

yet. This is because of the clearness of the atmosphere. By perseverance, however, the place is reached at last, and the tired traveler finds rest. So sometimes we dwell in high altitudes of grace; heaven seems very near, and the hills of Beulah are in full view. At other times the clouds and fogs that come through suffering and sin, cut off our sight. We are just as near heaven in the one case as we are in the other, and we are just as sure of gaining it if we only keep in the path that Christ has trod.

I have read that on the shores of the Adriatic sea, the wives of fishermen, whose husbands have gone far out upon the deep, are in the habit of going down to the seashore at night and singing with their sweet voices the first verse of some beautiful hymn, After they have sung it they listen until they hear brought on the wind, across the sea, the second verse sung by their brave husbands as they are tossed by the gale-and both are happy. Perhaps, if we would listen, we too might hear on this sea-tossed world of ours, some sound, some whisper, borne from afar to tell us there is a heaven which is our home; and when we sing our hymns upon the shores of earth, perhaps we may hear their sweet echoes breaking in music upon the sands of time, and cheering the hearts of those who are pilgrims and strangers along the way. Yet we need to look up-out, beyond this low earth, and to build higher in our thoughts and actions, even here.

You know, when a man is going up in a balloon, he takes in sand as a ballast, and when he wants to mount a little higher, he throws out a little of the ballast, and then he will mount a little higher; he throws out a little more ballast, and he mounts still higher; and the higher he gets the more he throws out-and so the nearer we get to God the more we have to throw out of the things of this world. Let go of them; do not let us first set our hearts and affections on them, but do what the Master tells us_lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. In England I was told of a lady who had been bedridden for years. She was one of those saints that God polishes up for the kingdom; for I believe that there are a good many saints in this world that we never hear about; we never see their names heralded through the press; they live very near the Master; they live very near heaven; and I think it takes a great deal more grace to suffer God's will than it does to do God's will; and if a person lies on a bed of sickness, and suffers cheerfully, it is just as acceptable to God as if they went out and worked in his vineyard.

Now, it was One of those saints, and a lady, who said that for a long time she used to have a great deal of pleasure in watching a bird that came to make its nest near her window. One year it came to make its nest, and it began to make it so low she was afraid something would happen to the young; and every day that she saw that bird busy at work making its nest, she kept saying, "O bird, build higher!" She could that the bird was going to come to grief and disappointment. At last the bird got its nest done,, and laid its eggs and hatched its young; and every morning the lady looked out to see if the nest was there, and she saw the old bird bringing food for the little ones, and she took a great deal of pleasure in looking at it. But one morning she woke up and she looked out and she saw nothing but feathers scattered all around, and she said, "Ah, the cat has got the old bird and all its young." It would have been a mercy to have torn that nest down. That is what God does for us very often just snatches things away before it is too late. Now, I think that is what we want to say to church people_that if you build for time you will be disappointed. God says: Build up yonder. It is a good deal better to have life in Christ and God than any where else. I would rather have my life hid with Christ in God than be in Eden as Adam was. Adam might have remained in Paradise for 16,000 years, and then fallen, but if ours is hid in Christ, how safe!