



HEAVEN IN MY HEART

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"Another parable he put forth to them, saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches.'"

– Matthew 13: 31-32

Basically, there are three kingdoms: the kingdom of God, man and Satan. Whereas the kingdom of God is in heaven, man lives on earth exercising dominion in God's behalf and Satan's kingdom is suspended mid-air between heaven and earth. That is why Satan is called the Prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2: 2; 6: 10-12). Satan only exercises dominion on earth because man fell into sin and as such forfeited his dominion to him. It is this lost dominion that Jesus came to restore back to man.

John the Baptist came as a forerunner of the Lord Jesus Christ primarily to proclaim that the kingdom of heaven was approaching (Matthew 3: 1-2). The Lord Jesus Christ Himself also took over from where John the Baptist stopped preaching the gospel of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 4: 17). There is

therefore no gospel without the mention of heaven. The common trend now of preaching the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ without any mention of the kingdom of heaven is dangerous. It is one booby trap of the devil that occupies men with the merry-go-round of empty religious activities and leaving out its essence. Or what becomes of a Christian who does not make heaven eventually. It's a disaster of unimaginable magnitude. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself asks the question:

"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? – Mark 8: 36-37

Heaven is the whole essence of our faith; not money, material wealth or any other thing this world could afford!

The Bible compares the kingdom of heaven to the grain of mustard seed. This seed we are told is the smallest and least of all seeds yet, it is one of the mightiest trees in the forest when fully-grown. Once, the whole of humanity was corrupted by sin but God sent His Son as a pure seed from heaven and sowed Him on earth that He might afterwards reap a holy harvest from the world. Jesus therefore came as a true seed of heaven sown into our corrupt and depraved world. This seed is sown in the hearts of men at conversion and once sown starts to grow until maturity when it takes over both the kingdom of man and that of Satan. This in itself is a mystery that many men still don't understand. This divine purpose of God is clearly expressed in the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ when He taught us to pray:

"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven..." – Matthew 6: 9-10

Every regenerated man has the seed of heaven in his heart. These are people who though presently live on earth see themselves as citizens of heaven. They are not governed anymore by the law of sin and death at work in the world but by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. They live each day more conscious of heaven than their earthly surroundings. They have their hearts in heaven because that is their home where their treasures are. Father Abraham was one of such saints of old. The Bible testifies that his vision transcends this terrestrial plane, he

was ever looking for that city with foundation whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11: 10).

The late country musician Jim Reeves also distinguished himself among contemporary saints in this regard when he sang:

*'This world is not my home, I am just passing through,
If heaven's not my home, then Lord what would I do,
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.'*

He also sang:

*'Some glad morning when this life is old, I'll fly away.
To a land on God's celestial throne, I'll fly away.
I'll fly away O glory; I'll fly away.
When I die, Halleluyah bye and bye, I'll fly away.'*

And yet,

*'Across the bridge, there's no more sorrow.
Across the bridge, there's no more pain.
The sun will shine across the river.
And we'll never be unhappy again.'*

And, just like he sang, he did fly away as he died afterwards in a plane crash and that song has remained evergreen since then touching many lives and reminding us all that it won't all end here.

Although many people in the world now throng the churches, we are not all heaven-conscious. It cannot be said of all that they have the seed of heaven sown in their hearts. Many modern Christians are now so carnal in their thoughts and worldly in their outlook that they have forgotten about heaven altogether. These people have allowed the devil to so amplify the seventy, one hundred or perhaps a hundred and twenty years of earthly life that they have lost sight of eternity with God. Many who seek God now only do so for the sole aim of meeting their physical needs. This is unfortunate! Many have now reduced all matters of faith to bread and butter, and money matters only. Many preachers even rarely mention

heaven in their sermons now. Many now live as if there is no heaven and all would end here on earth. This is a great mistake!

The Bible clearly warns that:

"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable." – 1Corinthians 15: 19

"For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come." – Hebrews 13: 14

In just a short while every man or woman once vibrant and bubbling with life would be old and spent. Soon man's earthly life shall be over and every soul shall return to God his Maker to account for how he has lived.

Whereas teachings about hell deter men from sin, thoughts of heaven serve as good incentive to believers for the practise of righteousness. The failure of the church in this generation to properly teach about heaven and hell is a major factor responsible for the high level of moral decadence in the world, which is already creeping into the church also. We therefore need to understand the distinguishing features between those who have the seed of heaven in them and mere churchgoers who are not interested in God and His kingdom. In the end, Jesus would come to separate between the two groups.

These people have a strong vision and focus of heaven in their hearts all the time. Like Abraham, they see beyond the physical realm and live as strangers on earth (Hebrews 11: 8-10, 13-14). Like Jesus stated in Jn.17: 16: they know they only live in the world; they are not of the world. They have a strong passion or desire to be in God's presence all the time. Their longing is best described by the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 42: 1-2:

"As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?"

They are never afraid of death. These are the people who could say like Paul that:

"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." – Philippians 1: 21

They live every day in hope of the return of Christ the Bridegroom of the Church who would give them rest from their labour and justly reward the righteous and punish the wicked. Whereas the world is dying as a result of greed, covetousness, materialism and love of money, these people enjoy lasting peace that comes from godly contentment. Instead of joining the rat race in the world to chase material wealth, they choose to lay up their treasures in heaven as they give to God's work and by being good to their fellowmen. They are prayerful and watchful, being on the lookout for the second coming of the Son of God and prepare for it. They therefore keep themselves from defilement and entanglement of sin. They maintain pure hearts, clear conscience and clean hands as they wait patiently for the Lord. They are indeed blessed, and ultimately, they shall see God (Matthew 5: 8).

We all need to carefully examine ourselves in the light of Scripture and be sure we have heaven in our hearts and consciously prepare for it.