

Heaven Above, and Heaven Below.

BY REV. C. H. RUSSELL.

"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, neither shall the heat parch them."

Jordan is a very narrow stream. It made a sort of boundary for Canaan; but it hardly sufficed to divide it from the rest of the world, since a part of the possessions of Israel was on the eastern side of it.

I start by reminding you of this, because we are very apt to imagine that we must endure a kind of purgatory while we are on earth, and then, if we are believers, we may break loose into heaven after we have passed through the gates of glory.

Listen a while, ye children of God; for I speak to you, and not to others. To unbelievers, what can I say? They know nothing of spiritual things, and will not believe them, though a man should show them unto them.

At this moment you are already, in many respects, the same as you ever will be. I might almost repeat this passage in the Revelation concerning some of you at this very hour: "What are these? and whence came they? These are they that came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

"Beloved, you are now elect according to the foreknowledge of God, and you are the called according to His purpose." Already you are as much forgiven as you will be when you stand without fault before the throne of God.

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Look ye, beloved; the inheritance that is to be yours to-morrow, is in very truth, yours to-day; for in Christ Jesus you have received the inheritance, and you have the earnest of it in the present possession of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in you.

This I have conducted you to my two texts, which I have put together as an illustration of what I would teach. In the New Testament text we have the heavenly state above; and in the Old Testament text we have the state of the Lord's flock while on the way to their eternal rest. Very singular, to my mind,

is the sameness of the description of the flock in the field, and the flock feeding in the ways. The verses are almost word for word the same. When John would describe the white-robed host, he can say no more of them than Isaiah said of the pilgrim band, led by the God of mercy.

I. First, let us consider the heavenly state above. The beloved John tells us that he saw the angels of God. Children of poverty, your straits of bread will soon be ended, and your care shall end in plenty. The worst hunger is that of the heart; and this will be unknown above.

There is a ravenous hunger, fierce as a wolf, which possesses all those men; all the world cannot satisfy the greed. A thousand worlds would be scarce a mouthful for their lust. Now, in heaven there are no sinful and selfish desires. The ravaging of covetousness, of ambition enters not the sacred gate. In glory there are no desires which should not be, and those desires which should be are also tempered or so fulfilled that they can never become the cause of sorrow or pain; for, "they shall hunger no more."

And as there is in heaven a supply for every need, so there the removal of every ill. Thus saith the Spirit, "Neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat." We are such poor creatures that excess of good soon becomes evil to us. I love the sun; if you had ever seen it shining in the clear blue heavens, you would not wonder that I speak with enthusiasm. Life, joy, and health stream from it in lands where it is enough of pleasure to bask in its beams.

How peaceful and serene you enjoyed, when we may say, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again;" but when we go beyond temporal supplies, and live upon God Himself, the soul receives a draught of far truer and more enduring refreshment; even as our Lord Jesus said to the woman at the well, "I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."

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First, here is a promise that every want shall be supplied. "They shall not hunger nor thirst." If we are the Lord's, people and are trusting in Him, this shall be true in every possible sense. Literally, "your bread shall be given you, your water shall be sure." You shall have no anxious thought concerning what you shall eat and what you shall drink.

But, mark you, if you should know the trials of poverty, and should be greatly tried, and brought very low in temporal things, yet the Lord's presence and sensible consolations shall so sustain you that spiritually and inwardly you shall know neither hunger nor thirst. Many saints have found riches in poverty, ease in labor, rest in pain, and delight in affliction.

Our Lord can so adapt our minds to our circumstances, that the bitter is sweet, and the burden is light. Paul speaks of the saints to be sorrowful, yet always rejoicing. Note well that the sorrow has an "as" connected with it; but the rejoicing is a fact. "They shall not hunger nor thirst." If you live in God, you shall have no ungratified desire. "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

do not mean that the saints find a full content in this world's goods, but that they find such content in God, that with them or without them they live in wealth. A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of that which he possesses; and many a man who has had next to nothing, but who has seen with eyes or handled with hands, has been very rich in the kingdom of the Most High.

Next, there is such a thing as having every desire of the heart satisfied in this wilderness. "Neither shall the heat nor sun smite them." Suppose God favors you with prosperity; if you live near to God you will not be rendered proud or worldly-minded by your prosperity.

Further, it is said, that on earth we may enjoy the leading of the Lord. See how it is put: "For He that hath mercy on them shall lead them." Here we are not quite told the words of the Revelation, for there we read, "The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall lead them." Yet the sense is but another shade of the same meaning. Oh, but that is a sweet, sweet name: is it not? "He that hath mercy on them." It has saved the souls of a few, and yet he will stumble. It is not the road, but the Lord that keepeth the pilgrim's foot.

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