

WHERE ARE THE DEAD?

(THIRD EDITION)



BY L. S. BRONSON
(Deceased)

AUTHOR OF
EVILS OF THE BALL ROOM UNVEILED; IS THE
WORLD GROWING BETTER? AND
TABLE TALK.

1916

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L. S. BRONSON
"BEING DEAD YET SPEAKETH"

WHERE ARE THE DEAD?



ANY have been the replies to this question, and numerous are the pages that have been written in answer to the inquiry. There is hardly a home in all the world from which there has not been some loved one carried forth to return thither no more. Where are they? is the great question to many.

Time so far has revealed but one reply; and the Bible, the only record man has of his origin and destiny, gives to us the same answer to our question. It is to that volume alone we turn. But before we go further, let us say that these pages are written and directed to those only who are willing to believe the Bible to be the Word of God and are desirous of knowing its truths and believing that it says what it means and means what it says to the children of men, even to the "Whale story."

No opinions of men and no long-spun theories of ancient times from learned commentators shall enter into any of the following pages as evidence to prove our position. The Bible alone shall be the authority. We know that it is sufficient, as the reader will discover, and cannot be overthrown or set aside, unless the scriptures are denied altogether.

It is obviously true that a living man cannot be in two places at the same time. Does it look reasonable to suppose or believe that a dead man can do what the living man cannot do? If we therefore can show, by abundant Bible testimony, where they are at present, shall we not have fairly answered the question? But in order more easily to prepare your mind to receive the Bible account we shall first show where the dead are not, and that the modern idea of their present condition is untrue.

The popular theology of our day tells us that "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord," for at death they begin to know more than ever before and are capable of enjoying far more than when living; that at the hour of death they are immediately wafted by angel hands up to heaven to dwell

forever in unending bliss in the presence of their God. But if on the other hand they have died sinners, they are immediately cast into a burning hell and there tormented through the ceaseless ages of eternity. Does such a religious theory as this, which has made more infidels in the world than any other doctrine Christianity has ever taught, appeal to your affection, sympathy and love? And is it taught in the scriptures?

While we firmly believe that a glorious reward is awaiting the overcomers in the battle against sin and wickedness, and a terrible punishment is as surely awaiting the ungodly for their transgressions, yet we greatly differ with many concerning the time and place where the reward is given and the punishment inflicted. But to discuss these two points is not a part of our purpose in writing these pages.

Where are the dead?

First the negative side of the question. According to the Bible the dead are neither in **heaven** nor **hell**, as the modern theory pictures them. Under the type given in the law of Moses (Lev. 16:17), the high priest went into the Holy of Holies **alone**. For all the congregation (the world) to follow our Lord and great High Priest into heaven, the Most Holy of all, would come far short of teaching the true idea and greatly mar the beauty of the antitype referred to in Leviticus 16:17 and Hebrews 9:24-28.

If the dead, good and bad, go to heaven and hell at death to receive their reward, why should there be a resurrection and a **future day of judgment** to decide what shall be the nature of their recompense? Please answer this question.

The scriptures tell us that God hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world (Acts 17:31). Will He punish and reward before that day arrives? Is God less logical, just and merciful than earthly rulers?

Another proof from the Bible is found in John 3:13. The Savior says, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is **in heaven**." A great many people had died before that day but Jesus says they have none of them ascended to heaven.

Addressing the Scribes and Pharisees in reference to His returning to His Father He said, "Ye shall seek me and

shall not find me; and where I am (at that time) ye cannot come." John 7:34. But I hear the objector suddenly exclaim, "Christ was there speaking to the wicked Jews!" Oh, yes, I know it. The poor Jew! But read the following scripture: "Little children (His disciples), yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come; so now I say to you." John 13:33. What, Christ's disciples shut out of heaven! If they cannot go there any more than the unbelieving Jews, is it safe for us to believe and teach that those who now 'die in the Lord' are permitted such a happy experience? Who is granting such a privilege? Certainly it comes not from the scriptures.

Again, Peter, on the day of Pentecost declared, "David is not ascended into the heavens." Acts 2:34. If the ancient worthies and the apostles are **not in heaven**, little hope have we of going there.

Now about the wicked dead.

They are not now in hell as some are teaching. They are not now being punished. Listen, "The wicked is reserved (kept, laid up) to the day of destruction, they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath." Job 21:30. What day is that? If Peter 2:9 defines that day very clearly to be the future day of judgment. It reads thus: "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation and to reserve (keep) the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." Has that day come yet? If none of the wicked are now suffering the tortures of a burning hell, I hear you ask, "Where are the dead?" Now the answer: **They are all, good and bad, in one place and in one common condition,--in the grave.**

Jesus said, "Marvel not at this (some do) for the hour (or time) is coming in which all that are in the graves (not in heaven or hell) shall hear his voice and come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection (raised up, not brought down) of life and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." John 5:28-29. It is from the grave that humanity comes forth to the day of judgment because it is there humanity is placed at the close of life. If ever they are raised to life again, they come forth from the tomb and not from heaven or hell.

After Lazarus had been dead four days and decomposition had taken place, Martha, his sister, heard that Jesus was coming back to Bethany and she went out to meet Him. Then when Mary was also come where Jesus was, she fell down at his feet and said unto Him, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother (not the house he lived in) had not died." Jesus said unto her, "Thy brother shall live again." Mary said unto Him, "I know that he shall rise (not come down from heaven) again in the resurrection at the last day." Then when Jesus saw her weeping, He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said unto Him, "Lord, come and see." These weeping sisters had not forgotten where they had buried their brother. They had no thought of his being in heaven. These sisters knew as well where their brother was that day, as we all know when we turn from the grave of our buried dead. And when that little company of mourning friends reached the grave, Jesus said, "Take ye away the stone," and when it was removed, Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth," and their brother that was dead, came forth, not from heaven or hell but from the tomb where four days before he had been buried.

Here we find two sisters, living away back in the history of our world nearly 2000 years, who could point the Son of God to the grave where they had buried a beloved brother, and Christ could say, "Lazarus, come forth;" and strangely, in the light of **modern teaching**, the dead obeyed the voice of Jesus and came, not **down** from heaven, but **up** from the tomb.

Should Jesus come to your home and say, "Where have you laid your loved ones? I have come to restore them to you," would you begin to look for Jacob's ladder or would you say, "Come and see," and then walk with Him to yonder cemetery? Would not the Lord find your long lost loved ones yet in the graves where you placed them, just as Jesus and the sisters found their loved one?

When Mary Magdalene had brought sweet spices to anoint Jesus after his death and burial, where did she go expecting to find her Lord? The little company at early dawn went to the sepulcher where three days previously Jesus had been buried. And in the journeying thither there was but one question that troubled their minds. Was it, "Who will bring Christ down from heaven that we may be able to perform our

deed of love and devotion to our Lord?" No, no, not that. But it was, "Who shall roll away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?" where their Lord and Master had been buried.

The little company expected to find Jesus where the sisters and Jesus found Lazarus not long before, and they would not have been disappointed, had He not been raised from the dead.

Where are the dead?

All are now in the dust. In Gen. 3:19, God, speaking to Adam, pronounces the following punishment upon him for disobeying His commandment: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground; for out of it (the ground) wast thou taken; for dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return." To whom is God here speaking? Man---Adam, or Adam's house? He was speaking to the Adam that sinned by breaking God's law; the Adam that was ever to earn his living by the sweat of his brow; the Adam God declared He created out of the dust of the ground; the Adam that was to return to the same place at death. We have no Bible account of any other Adam but the one that sinned and should die for his disobedience and return unto the ground from which he was taken when he was created.

When God would warn Nineveh of its destruction on account of its wickedness, He commanded Jonah, the prophet to go and carry the message. When he refused, it is stated (Jonah 1:17) that God prepared a great fish to swallow him as a punishment for his disobedience. What did God punish? We think it was the MAN JONAH.

In the days of the prophet Isaiah, God commanded him to go and tell Hezekiah to set his house in order for "thou shalt die and not live." Isa. 38:1-4. To whom was God speaking? Was it the house in which Hezekiah lived, as we are sometimes told, or was it he who "wept sore" because of the message that came to his ears from Isaiah? I am foolish enough to believe it was Hezekiah unto whom God added fifteen years of life because of his prayers and tears.

We read in Luke 7:11-12 that as Jesus came into the city of Nain He saw a dead man carried out and he was the only son of his mother and she was a widow. "When the Lord saw her weeping he had compassion on her and He came and

touched the bier and said, "Young man, arise, and he that was dead sat up and began to speak." Here it is declared Christ saw a dead man carried out for burial. Was it a man or the house in which he had been living? The scriptures teach that it was a MAN and he was DEAD and Christ said unto him, Arise, and he that was dead sat up and began to talk. Do you believe these words of scripture to be true?

And Abraham said, "I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes." Gen. 18:27. But it has been asked, "Must we lie down and die like the beast of the field?" God has not left us to choose in all things. It is very evident to an observing eye that we brought nothing into the world, neither can we carry anything out. It is also apparent that we had no voice in the manner of our appearance here or the particular style of our departure. We have only to bow to God's purpose or plan as revealed to us by holy men of God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. II Pet. 1:21. Whether His plans are pleasing to our sensitive natures or not we must submit to God's arrangement, even though we "die like the beasts of the field," if that is His will. What saith the scriptures on this particular point? Hear it: "For that which befalleth the sons of men, befalleth the beast, even one thing (the same thing) befalleth them; (what is it?) as the one dieth, so dieth the other (no difference in the nature and manner of their death), yea, they have all one breath, so that man hath no preeminence above a beast: (why) for all is vanity. All (man and beast) go unto one place (do you believe it?). All are of the dust and all return to dust again." Eccl. 3:19-21. While death and their resting places are the same for man and beast, yet for mankind there is hope and a promise of a resurrection from the dusty grave to a future life, which the beast has no promise or hope of enjoying.

Again, as the book of Job is a favorite authority on funeral occasions in order to give comfort to mourning friends, let us also turn to see what Job has to say on the question. "And why dost thou not pardon my transgressions and take away my iniquity? for now shall I sleep in the dust and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be." Job 7:21. He could be found if in heaven or hell.

"All flesh shall perish together, and man (not his house)

shall turn again to dust." Job 34:15. He could not return to dust if he had never been there or come from there.

Again, "If I (Job, not his house) wait, the grave (not a palace in heaven) is my house: I have made my bed in darkness, I have said to corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister. . . . They shall go down to the bars of the pit when our rest together is in the dust." (Not in heaven). Job 17:13-16. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust." Psa. 103:13-14. But man has forgotten that.

Again, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest." Eccl. 9:10. The writer of the words just quoted well knew, as we also do, aside from our religious theory, that when we reach our grave our knowledge and our wisdom cease and our work is finished. "For to him that is joined to all the living, there is hope (because he is among the living): for a living dog is better than a dead lion (why?). For the living know that they shall die; but the dead know not anything." Eccl. 9:4-5. Many do not believe this now-a-days, do you? "Why died I not from the womb? For now should I have lain still and been quiet. I should have slept; then had I been at rest (in the grave) with kings and counselors of the earth (great men), which built desolate places for themselves; or with princes that hath gold, who fill their houses with silver; or as an hidden untimely birth I had not been; as infants which never saw light. There (in such a condition) the wicked cease from troubling (as in life) and there the weary be at rest. There the prisoners rest together; they hear not (can neither hear nor speak) the voice of the oppressor. The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master." Job 3:11-19.

"Are not my days few? Cease then and let me alone that I may take comfort a little before I go (to heaven? no) whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death, a land of darkness as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order and where the light is as darkness." Job 10:20-23. This is not very much of a heavenly city of light or a glorious land for Job when his life is ended.

The dead are asleep.

Proof: "And when thy (David's) day be fulfilled (or spent) and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers (asleep, not in heaven), I will set up thy seed after thee which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom." 2 Sam. 7:12. "And Hezekiah slept with his fathers and they buried him (in heaven?) in the chiefest of the sepulchers of the sons of David." 2 Chron. 32:33. "And why dost thou not pardon my transgressions and take away my iniquities? for now shall I sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be." Job 7:21. But man dieth (does he?) and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost (life. See margin, Job 11:20.) and where is he?" Now listen to the Bible answer. "As the waters fail from the sea and the floods decayeth and drieth up, so (in like manner) man lieth down and riseth not (until when?) till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake nor be raised out of their sleep." Job 14:10-12. Do you need more proof that the dead are asleep? We have it. "For David (a good man) after he had served his generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers (in the grave, not in heaven), and saw corruption." As did Lazarus.

In speaking of Christ's resurrection, Paul in 1 Cor. 15:6, says, "After that he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some (have gone to heaven? Oh no.) are fallen asleep." Quite a difference in the wording and quite a difference in the meaning conveyed by the language. Let us take the Bible rather than man's theory, for that will do us no good.

"But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep (very many are ignorant concerning them today) that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord (note the authority), that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent (or precede, see Diaglott) them which are (in heaven? No.) asleep (in their graves). For the Lord himself (personally) 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 (not come down) 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, Wherefore comfort one another with these words." 1 Thes. 4:13, 15-16.

The dead praise not the Lord. "For in death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave who shall give thee thanks?" Psa. 6:5. "The dead praise not the Lord (many claim they do) neither any that go down into silence." Psa. 115:17. How different this language is from that we have so often heard from modern teachers on funeral occasions.

Again, "Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he (the man) returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish." Psa. 146:3-4. Again, "For the grave cannot praise thee; death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down (not up) into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living (O, yes, the living), he shall praise thee as I do this day, the father to the children shall make known thy truth." Isa. 28:18-19. "His sons come to honor and he (the dead father) knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them." Job 14:21.

Death is not a friend to the living, as the poet teaches us, when he says, "Death is the gate to endless joy, the opening scenes to heaven," etc. If that thought be true, why, WHY do we one and all, when we see the death angel hovering above our homes, do all we can to prevent his entering our dwellings and taking our loved ones from us? Why do we not greet him as we do all our dear friends who come to our homes and say to him, "God bless you, take them home to glory"? It is because away down deep in our better, truer, more enlightened natures we do not believe a word of such a religious theory!

If it is true that death is the opening gate to heaven for the righteous, it is equally true that it is the opening door to hell for the ungodly. Is such an idea pleasing for your mind to dwell upon, providing any of your relatives and friends were taken from the world unprepared to go? As long as I have lived, I have never heard a person advocate this doctrine who for a moment believed that any of his dear ones had gone to such a place. It is always the unfortunate across the way that has gone there. I cannot call to mind any

marble cutter who has placed this epitaph, "Gone to Hell," on any tombstone I ever examined. Why should he, as it is not true? We all in our sober moments, always (unconsciously perhaps) reach out beyond our religious theories and look upon death as an enemy and not a friend. The Bible teaches this, if the hymn book does not. Listen. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." 1 Cor. 15:26 and Rev. 20:14.

Death came into this world as a punishment for transgression (Gen. 3:19) and not as a reward for righteousness. When its mission is ended, as stated in scripture, Christ is to come and destroy death. "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plague: O grave, I will be thy destruction." Hosea 13:14. Why all this work of Christ, if there is nothing of particular importance in the tomb except the house in which the real man once lived?

Man is mortal. "Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?" Job 4:17. Man must seek for immortality in order to obtain it, or perish in corruption. 2 Pet. 2:11-12. "To them who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honor, immortality, eternal life," is the reward. Rom. 5:7. Why seek for immortality or anything else if we already possess it? Immortality is received and put on at the appearing of Christ when he returns to earth. "Behold, I show you a mystery (It is no longer a mystery after it is revealed), we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye (when?), 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 (not before) shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." 1 Cor. 15:51-54. "The first man Adam was made a living soul (not an immortal soul); the last Adam (Christ) was made a quickening Spirit. The first man (Adam) is of the earth earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall (future) also bear the image of the heavenly." 1 Cor. 15:45-49. But we cannot bear

both the earthly and the heavenly at the same time. Proof: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." "First that which is natural (or mortal), afterwards that which is spiritual (or immortal)." 1 Cor. 15:46.

The change from one to the other comes, not at death as many teach, but at the resurrection. But I hear you say, If no one as yet has gone to heaven or hell, how can any be rewarded at death? The Bible says nothing about any ones being rewarded at that time. Yes, you know it is stated in Rev. 2:16, "Be ye faithful unto death and I will give you a crown of life. Yes, my friend, that is the promise. The faithfulness must continue until death, but does that determine the time when the reward is given? Certainly not. We must look to another scripture to determine that. Here it is: "And behold I come quickly; and my reward is with me to give to every man according as his works shall be." Lev. 22:12. "Behold his reward is with him and his work before him." Isa.40:10.

Is not this sufficient proof to settle the point as to when men are to receive their reward for their deeds in this life? But again you say, It is stated by Christ in Matt. 5:12, "Great is your reward in heaven." Because Christ at the time He spoke these words, declared that the reward was then in heaven, many people have concluded that they must go there to obtain that reward; and they have also made up their minds that at death is a very good time to go. But because it is reserved (preserved) in heaven for you, does it follow that you must go there to obtain it? Paul in 2 Tim. 4:8, tells us just how he expects to secure his crown of life. Hear it: "Henceforth (from now on) there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." Of what day is Paul speaking? The day of Christ's return.

Should you receive word from a Chicago banker that there is a large fortune reserved in his bank for you, would it be absolutely necessary for you to go to Chicago to secure that fortune?

Where, then, are the rewards to be given? "Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed (in heaven? No.) in the earth, much more the wicked and the sinner." Prov. 11:31. "Bless-

ed are the meek, for they shall (future) inherit the earth." Matt. 5:5. "But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." Psa. 37:11. How long shall the meek inherit this earthly possession? As yet they have never possessed and enjoyed many corner lots nor beauty spots of earth. Listen. "The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell therein forever." Psa. 37:29. "The righteous shall never be removed." Prov. 10:30. If these statements be true, we see no opportunity for them to go to heaven. But one says, Such a home, such a reward, would be far too gross for me.

O consistency! Perhaps for more than half a century you have been struggling against thorns, thistles, disease, tears, sorrow, pain and death, and yet, with all this before you, you toil on striving to add acre to acre and farm to farm, never once feeling that these earthly possessions, though resting under the curse of God for the sins of man, are in the least degree gross. But when we give you the Bible picture of the earth 'made new,' the curse removed, a home where there are to be no more tears, sorrow, pain nor death (for the former things are passed away, behold I make all things new. Rev. 21:4-5.); and when we picture to you the city fair with streets of gold and gates of pearl, with river broad 'where goes no galley with oars,' and in the midst of the city and on either side of the river the tree of life with its monthly fruits, and God and the Lamb dwelling in it forever (Rev. 22:23)--- all this perfection of beauty and glory, yet such a home is far too gross for you! O consistency! thou art a jewel!

We will now answer a few objections often urged against our position. Time, and the size of this booklet will not permit us to answer all that might be urged against our position and which are as easily answered as those noted.

First Objection.

"Hath Everlasting Life."

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." John 3:36.

Here we have the possession of everlasting life depend-

ing on a certain belief. Would believing or disbelieving a certain proposition change the nature of an individual being? "He that believeth hath everlasting life." Is it now in the believer's possession? No, is our answer. Where is now that life? Col. 3:7 answers the question. Listen. "For you are dead (to the world) and your (eternal) life is hid with Christ in God." Not in our mortal bodies.

Again in 1 John 5:11, "This is the record that God hath given to us (believers) eternal life, and this life is (now in us? No.) in his Son." It is not yet bestowed on us, but God has promised it to us if we are faithful. When? When His Son returns. "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, eternal life." 1 John 2:25. Again Christ says, "And this is the will of him (the Father) that sent me that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up (not bring him down) at the last day." John 6:40. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Thus we see from the Bible that eternal life is a gift to only a portion of the human family and is not a part of the present nature of any man. You must know your Bible to understand God.

Away back in the garden of Eden, just after our first parents had disobeyed God's law in partaking of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, "Now lest (in that sinful condition) he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever (become immortal sinners), God drove man out of the garden and placed a flaming sword, which turned every way to guard the tree of life." Gen. 3:22-24. "Lest he also eat of it and live forever." Now please tell us when man passed this flaming sword and partook of the tree of life, thereby changing his nature from mortal to immortal.

Again in Matt. 19:16 we read of a young man who came to Jesus, saying, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?" Did Jesus say to that young man, "Son, you have that immortal life nature already in you"? No; He said nothing of the kind, but He did say, "Go, sell all that you have and give to the poor and come follow me." "But the young man went away sorrowful, for he had great riches."

As yet, no man has passed the flaming sword and partaken of the tree of life.

Second Objection.

The Transfiguration.

The second point the objector urges is this. "If Moses and Elias appeared with Christ, Peter, James and John on the mount of transfiguration, they must have returned from the spirit world." There is nothing of the kind even hinted at in all the Bible. As Christ and the apostles were coming down from the mountain after the transfiguration, Jesus charged them, saying, "Tell the vision to no man until the Son of man be risen from the dead."

Jesus called that scene which inspired the hearts of the apostles with joy, devotion, and astonishment, a VISION. Did he not know? Is a vision a reality, or a representation of what has been or may be? In Acts 10:11, Peter declares he saw heaven open and a certain vessel descending unto him as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners and let down to the earth, wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts and creeping things and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." Was all this a reality? And did Peter kill and eat as he was commanded? In the 17th verse we read, "While Peter saw all this, he doubted in his mind what the vision should mean." We all know it was a vision, and yet it taught Peter a great fact, as he afterward stated. Again (Dan. 7:13-14), "I saw in the night vision 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 and obey him." Was that which he saw a reality at the time Daniel saw it in his 'night dream'? Has the time yet arrived since the days of Daniel, when "all nations, people and languages have served him"? But the time will come when that vision will become a reality. The same is true of the vision on the mount of transfiguration. Jesus there revealed to his three disciples the glory and power of his coming kingdom.

Be careful how you hear, what you hear, and how you

read, and do not jump at conclusions in order to sustain a theory of long standing. Error is of no account to any one, but truth is golden to all and loses nothing by examination and exposure to the light of investigation.

Third Objection.

The Thief on the Cross. Lu. 23:42-43.

Next we will venture to notice the oft repeated and much abused request of the dying thief on the cross.

As we approach the subject we are reminded of a sign a carpenter once hung out over his shop door. It read as follows: "All kinds of twisting and turning done here." It is much the same in regard to the above quotation by many religious expounders.

The plainness of the request and the promise given are so apparent to any one desiring the truth that we shall consume very little time and space in it's consideration. The passage referred to reads as follows: "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Remember the exact language of the request. It was not, When thou goest to heaven, remember me; but, When thou comest (back) into thy kingdom, Lord, remember me. "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." With many, these words forever settle the question and prove that all good people go to heaven as soon as they die, notwithstanding the many passages of scripture we have already quoted to the contrary. Well, let me say this and remember the same: If the thief went to paradise, or heaven, THAT day, he went alone. Proof: On the morning of the resurrection, when Mary sought the grave of Jesus to anoint his body and found the tomb empty, Christ appeared before her and said, "Mary." She turned toward him and said, "Master." Jesus said, "Touch me not for I have not yet ascended to my Father." John 20:16-17. Did Christ tell Mary the truth and deceive the thief in not going to paradise with him on the day of his death, as orthodoxy teaches he promised? The word 'today' was used, not to denote the time when the request was to be granted, as many claim, but to give emphasis to the words of the promise. The thief did not ask for a home in heaven, nor to go to paradise; but his

great desire was, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Their condition and surroundings on the day of their crucifixion did not warrant the thought that they were about to enjoy a home of glory, joy and happiness in paradise. Oh, no, not that; but after the suffering on the cross is over; after the dark night of death is past; after the resurrection morn has come, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." This thief seemed to know something about Christ's going into a "far country to receive for himself a kingdom" from the Father and then to return as King, as recorded in Matt. 13:34. It was at that point of time that the thief asked to be remembered.

The original scriptures contained no punctuation marks. Our system of punctuation was invented by Aldus Manutius, a printer of Venice, in the 15th century, and is not inspired. We therefore have a right to place the comma after 'today' instead of before it. This gives the true meaning of the Savior's answer and makes the passage harmonize with other scriptures instead of contradicting them, and according to Rotherham's translation.

But right here I hear you ask, "If Christ did not go with the thief to paradise on the day of their crucifixion, where did he go? We read in Matt. 27 that "When the even was come," Joseph took Jesus from the cross and laid him in his own new tomb, and a seal was placed upon the door. If Jesus did not remain in that tomb the following three days and nights, but went to paradise with the thief, or went to preach to the antediluvian world that perished centuries before, then the words of the Savior spoken to the Pharisees and recorded in Matt. 12:40 could not be true. They read as follows: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so the Son of man must be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

We think Jonah did very little missionary work for the people of Nineveh during the time he was in the whale's belly. As the Roman seal was not broken and the door of Christ's tomb was not opened until angel hands rolled away the stone from the door of the sepulcher on the morning of that third day, we think Christ's journey with the thief to paradise, or his missionary effort among the 'spirits in prison,' the inhabitants of the old world, must have been very

short and greatly disappointing to all. Oh, give us the Bible and the words of Jesus and not theory without proof.

Now, a few words about paradise that we hear so much about. That word is found only three times in the Bible. The first occurrence of the word is found in Luke 23:43 as previously quoted. "I knew such a man, whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell (God knoweth), how that he was caught up (snatched away,---Diaglott) to the third heaven." How he was caught up into paradise and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter. The third use of the word is in Rev. 2:7. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." This tree which is here spoken of as being in the midst of the paradise of God, was at the dawn of creation placed in the garden of Eden on the earth and not in heaven above. Gen. 3:22. We know of no account in all the book of God of its being transported to any other clime. The tree of life and paradise have ever been earth's most beautiful and valuable adornings. In earth's Edenic state, the tree of life was there, and paradise was there, NOT in heaven. And when the new earth's condition appears to gladden the hearts of the overcomers, it will then be there. Rev. 2:7. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Then the prayer of the penitent thief, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom," will be answered.

Fourth Objection.

The Third Heaven and Paradise.

Now for a few moments let us look at the third heaven and paradise of which Paul speaks in 2 Cor. 12:2-4, which reads as follows: "I knew a man in Christ about fourteen years ago, whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell, God knows, such a one caught up (snatched away,---Diaglott) into paradise and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

From these words of Paul it is claimed by many that heaven and paradise spoken of here are one and the same

place; and that heaven is a kind of a three storied place, one above the other, the third one being paradise, the abode of all the saints. That the third heaven and earth and paradise are inseparably connected we are free to admit and believe, but we do not accept the popular combination and arrangement of them.

Does the Bible teach a three storied heaven, one above another? No, it does not. Let us see if we can learn how the scriptures have them arranged. The Bible does speak of three heavens and three earthly conditions, and the order in which they occur. That order is very different from the one given in these days.

Here is the Bible order. "For this they (the scoffers, verse 3) are willingly ignorant of (we find such now), that by the word of God the heavens were of old (Gen. 1:6-9) and the earth standing out of the water and in the water; whereby the world that then was being overflowed with water, perished." 2 Pet. 3:1-7.

Here is the first heaven and earth, destroyed by water. "But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word (of God) are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." Here is the second heaven and earth, to be destroyed by fire. "Nevertheless we, according to his promise (Rom. 8:21-27), look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." 2 Pet. 3:13. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth," etc. Rev. 21:1. Here we find the the third heaven and third earth, not a three storied edifice, one story above another, but one following the other in succession until the third heaven and earth appear, "wherein dwelleth righteousness." There again the tree of life is found growing in the midst of the paradise of God, Rev. 2:7, as in Eden of old, once more yielding its fruit every month for the healing of the nations. Rev. 21:1-2. Is not this harmonious teaching far better than theory without any evidence? Then walk ye in it, and teach the same glorious truth that cannot be denied or overthrown.

Fifth Objection.

Spirits in Prison. 1 Pet. 3:19-21.

This passage of scripture is often popularly and confidently used as proof of a present spiritual world where de-

parted spirits congregate, can hear, understand, and receive instruction from spirit teachers. If there are spirits in a spirit land that as yet has never been located by any one, its inhabitants, according to the Bible, have but little to do and are not capable of doing that. What say the scriptures on this point? Listen: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might (be quick and earnest about it. Why?); for there is no work nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave (not heaven or hell) whither thou goest." Eccl. 9:10. Not very much business going on in the grave where we lay our dead according to the Bible. But to the text. It reads as follows:

"For Christ also once suffered for sin, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened (made alive) by the Spirit; by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."

Here is the wonderful spirit passage in all its spirit fullness and also in its simplicity, and what have we? Let us examine and see.

First, it is stated that Christ suffered for sin, the just for the unjust. He suffered by being put to death in the flesh, but he was quickened (or made alive) by the Spirit of God.

Second, By which (Spirit, not personality),---by the same Spirit of God which brought his Son from the grave, Christ was enabled to do something more. What was it? Answer: It enabled Christ to go and preach to the spirits in prison. When and where did Christ (by God's Spirit) do that preaching? is now the question.

We are very confidently told by many learned teachers that it was during the time between his death and the hour of his resurrection, and that the spirits to whom he preached were the spirits of those destroyed by the flood in Noah's day. Let us see if this popular theory is true. It is stated in the text just when that preaching was done and to whom the message was delivered. Listen: "When once (at one time) the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."

That was the time when, and the place where the preaching by Christ through Noah and the Spirit of God took place, thereby condemning them to death because of their rejecting the warning message delivered unto them. Do you get the thought? If not, read the passage again and see what you find. It has been said, "He who has the darkest vision is the one who will not see." Enough is better than more.

Sixth Objection.

The House of Many Mansions.

"Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:1-2.

This is a very popular text and often chosen to give comfort to mourning friends in the hour of sorrow. The thought they derive and believe they are justified in deriving, from this text is this:

Christ, when he left this world, went to heaven to prepare a place for his chosen ones in that house of many mansions; and that at death he comes to waft them home to glory to enjoy a place he has prepared for his people. "If I go away, I will come (back) again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." Because he has gone to heaven to prepare a house of many mansions (apartments) for the saints, does it follow that it is to be erected and remain where it is being prepared, to all eternity? And that the righteous are to go there at death, or at any other time in order to enjoy its beauty and grandeur? We answer no. Let us give you an illustration. When Solomon would prepare a temple with its many mansions, or compartments, in which his people could serve and worship God, he sent thousands of men into the forests of Lebanon and the marble quarries, and there formed the beams, timbers and marble pillars. When all was prepared and perfected, did Solomon rear the temple there? No. When all was ready, all the parts of the temple were transported to the city of Jerusalem and then, without sound of ax, hammer or any tool (1 Kings 7:

1-7), it appeared in all its beauty and grandeur. So it will be with the house of many mansions which Christ has gone into the "far country" to prepare. And as Solomon brought the temple to Jerusalem, Christ too, will bring the temple (the house of many mansions) down to earth where his people may dwell forever and where the nations may bring their glory and honor into the city, as shown in Rev. 21:24-27, and as pictured in different symbols in the scriptures. One of these descriptive passages we will quote in full (Rev. 21:2-3). "And I, John, saw the Holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." When the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, comes down from God out of heaven, and the tabernacle of God, with its many mansions, appears in the new earth conditions, and Christ is there with his people, and "God himself" shall be with them as above stated, what will there be left in heaven for man to visit or enjoy? It is when Jesus returns, that the people of God are to be rewarded, and not one at a time as death claims them.

"I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." The enjoyment of what Christ has gone to prepare for his people, according to the language here used, all depends upon his return. When he returns, where is he? You say on earth. True. Then if the many mansions he has gone to prepare are forever in heaven, they certainly are beyond the reach of Christ and his people ever to enjoy; for there is not a single text in all the Bible that teaches that Jesus will ever return to heaven after his second coming; but there are many passages, as we have already shown, that he brings his reward with him when he comes. One of these I will quote once more, and close this chapter on the 14th of John. "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me to give to every man according as his work shall be." Rev. 22:12. He comes to earth the second time to reward all and not to transport any to heaven.

Know what your Bible teaches, obey the same, and all will be well.

"King of kings, his sway extending

Over all earth's wide domain;
Justice, love and life unending,
Bring back Paradise again.

Jesus comes, earth's rightful ruler,
Every knee to him shall bend.
Peace shall flow, a gentle river,
Life and joy shall know no end."



