

Heaven in Comparison With the Universe

by A. C. Rose

HEAVEN is one of the words most frequently used by Christians. The Scriptures are full of references to it.

Where is Heaven?

It is easy to answer generally, "Where God is," but it is possible to give more detailed answers. For instance it is "above." The Lord Jesus said, "I am from above." He "came down from Heaven" (John 6.38). God "looks down," and some day we shall be "caught up" (1 Thess. 4.17). Heaven is God's dwelling place, and the earth is His footstool. The ascending Lord went *up* on His way Home to prepare a Place for us.

It is true that Heaven and the Heaven of heavens cannot contain the Eternal God so that He dwells in humble and contrite hearts, but these are the outposts of His Empire, His throne is established in Heaven, and the Heavens do rule.

The Universe and Heaven.

The modern mind is greatly occupied with the dimensions of the universe. Telescopes reveal the almost infinite fields of space, sown with worlds. We are told there are as many stars in the sky as there are grains of sand upon all the seashores of the world. Long ago the Scripture spoke in the same terms of sand and stars. We are told amazing things about the size and composition of other worlds, so that the mind reels in an attempt to comprehend a globe 180,000 miles in diameter.

Allowing the necessary margin for human error and the effect of unknown factors, we believe that when we look up into the starry skies we are actually looking into the Heavens. Somewhere, there, are the many Mansions and the hosts of the Redeemer who have crossed the flood, and the shining ranks of angel legions.

"And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,
Steals on the ear the distant triumph song,
And hearts are brave again, and arms are strong.
Alleluia!"

The Stars and Heaven.

It is said that none of the stars can possibly support life owing to the tremendous temperatures existing. This is nonsense. Human life as we

experience it is not standard. The standard is that other, eternal life, which is not to be regarded in terms of temperatures. Heat and light are variations of the same phenomenon, and we know that the King of kings dwells in light unapproachable.

It is probable that our thoughts of Heaven are too materialistic. The life to come is intensely spiritual. The language of the Apocalypse is the graphic language of parable, using earthly shadows to teach Heavenly substance. We shall err if we expect the substance to be limited by the shadows.

The Nursery of Heaven.

Therefore, far from allowing the vastness of the universe to overwhelm us with a sense of our own insignificance, we look up past creation, to a faithful Creator, and we say, "Abba, Father!" We bow in adoration before Him because of His so great love to one of the least of His worlds, destined to be eternally famous as the birthplace of His Son and the nursery of Heaven.

What is Heaven?

We have seen that there is ample room in the universe for such a place. There, we believe, the spirits of believers find their place of rest. Released from the swaddling bands of the body, they are "with Christ, which is very far better" than any earthly best—even the Lord's table. There the servants of God serve Him perfectly, there His children love Him perfectly, there His priests worship Him perfectly. Every problem is solved, every question is answered, every fear is wiped, and God is all and in all (1 Cor. 15.28).

Three Things in Heaven.

True, it is the place of JUDGMENT; but not of condemnation, for Christians. Let us not shrink from this, but rather look forward to the final test of fire and the revelation of every secret thing. But what about that—! and that—? Well, it will be settled once and for all, and *grace* will be given even to suffer loss.

Heaven is the place of SONG. Music will be restored to its rightful place as the expression of worship, and every ear and voice will be tuned. It is the place of FELLOWSHIP. Shall we know one another there? Surely we are to know as we are known (1 Cor. 13.12). It would be ignorance not to know. We are to see our Lord, and to be "like Him," but that does not mean we shall lose our personality. The likeness is that with which the child resembles his parent. All that constitutes life here is but the type of the life eternal. These are kindergarten days of preparation for

Heavenly responsibilities.

The Infinity of Our Home.

Resurrection will equip us with spiritual bodies suited to our new environment. The limitations of our earthly being will have gone. There will be infinite capacity for joy and love.

"Ah! think! to step on shore and that shore Heaven
That where He is there we too shall be!
To see His face who never failed us here,
Whose blood washed all our crimson sins away;
To pass from pain and sorrow to His own side,
And there for ever, ever to abide!"

When is it? "Absent ... present." What could be more simple. "To wake up and find it glory!" This is not to say that we at once enter upon all our new experiences. It is probable that many of these await the last act of redemption when we shall be clothed with celestial bodies. But we shall be at Home immediately with angels for our servants. Now they wait upon us, unwearied, invisible; then we shall see them in their beauty and thank them for their guardian care. There is but a step between us and Glory. The veil is thin, the time is short, it behooves us to be men of the girt loin and burning lamp. If He comes what joy to cheat old death! If not the utmost that can happen is a last wrestle with a well-known enemy, and then the victor's song:

"For Zion is our Home:
Jerusalem, the city of our God.
O happy Home! O happy children there!
O blissful mansions of our Father's house!
O walks surpassing Eden to delight:
Here are the harvests reaped once sown in tears:
Here is the banquet of the wine of heaven,
Riches of glory incorruptible,
Crowns, amaranthine crowns of victory,
The voice of harpers harping with their harps,
The anthem of the holy Cherubim,
The crystal river of the Spirit's joy,
The Bridal palace of the Prince of Peace,
The Holiest of Holies—God is here."

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