

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

**BOOKLET SEVEN
PART FOUR
REVELATION IN GLORY**



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- 1. Revelation in Glory, This Life and Life Hereafter**
- 2. Revelation in Glory, The Joy of Death and Heaven**

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1. Revelation in Glory, This Life and Life Hereafter

We have now arrived at the grand climax of our subject, and well may we beg the Lord to enlarge our hearts that we may take in a soul-rapturing view thereof. Having traced out—most imperfectly—the revelation which God has made of Himself in the created universe, in the moral nature of man, in His shaping of human history, in His incarnate Son, in the sacred Scriptures, and in the saving discovery which He makes of Himself in the souls of His elect at their regeneration and conversion, we shall now endeavour to contemplate something of that manifestation which the Triune God will make in and through Christ unto His saints *in Heaven*. That experiential knowledge of and communion with God which the believer has here on earth is indeed a real, affectionate and blessed one, so that at times he is lifted out of himself and made to rejoice with joy unspeakable—yet it is but an earnest and a foretaste of what he shall enjoy hereafter! At death he enters into a life which amply compensates for all the trials and tribulations he experiences in this world. Said one who had endured persecution in every form: “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18).

The profession of the Gospel subjects the believer to peculiar hardships, for it requires him to deny self, take up his cross daily, and serve under the banner of One who is despised and

rejected of men generally. To follow the example which Christ has left us involves having fellowship with His sufferings and enduring His reproach, and the more fully we be conformed to His holy image the more shall we be hated, ridiculed and opposed by the world—especially by its graceless professors. In certain periods of history, and in some countries today, particularly fierce and sore persecution was experienced by the saints; but everywhere and in all generations they have found, in different ways and degrees that, all who are determined to live godly in Christ Jesus “shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). Yet that is only one side of the present experience of Christians: they also enjoy a peace which passeth all understanding, and have blessed fellowship with Christ as He walks and talks with them along the way. Moreover, “the hope which is laid up for them in Heaven,” whereof they have heard in the Word of the truth of the Gospel (Col. 1:5), causes them, like Moses of old, to “esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward” and by faith “endured, as seeing Him who is invisible” (Heb. 11:26. 27).

Such is the experience of God’s people, and ought to be so increasingly by all of them: looking off from the things seen and temporal unto those which are unseen and eternal. With the eye of faith fixed steadfastly upon the Captain of their salvation, they should run with patience the race set before them. Though a very small part of this world be their portion, they are to “look for a City which hath foundations, whose Maker and Builder is God.” Though called upon to suffer temporal losses for Christ’s sake, they are to remember that in Heaven, “they have a better and enduring substance.” If they be the objects of scorn and infamy, they can rejoice that their names are written in Heaven, and will yet be honoured by Christ, not only before the Father and the holy angels, but before an assembled universe He will not be ashamed to call brethren. If their affections be really set upon things above, then having food and raiment they will

therewith be content. If they have the assurance they are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, it will be a small matter when worms of the earth cast out their names as evil and shun their company. If believing anticipations of the glorious future be theirs, then the joy of the Lord will be their strength.

If the would-be disciple of Christ is enjoined to sit down first and count *the cost* (Luke 14:28), let him also make an inventory of the *compensations*. How rich those compensations are, how great “the recompense of the reward” is, may be estimated by many considerations:

1. From the contrast presented by our present sufferings. “For our *light* affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding eternal *weight* of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17). The sufferings of God’s people in this world are, considered in themselves, often very heavy and grievous, and in many cases long protracted. If, therefore, they be “light” when set over against their future bliss, how great that bliss must be! The paucity of human language to express it is seen in the piling up of one term upon another: it is a “weight,” it is an “exceeding weight,” even a “far more exceeding weight,” yea, it is an “eternal weight of glory.”

2. From the Divine promises. “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you . . . for great is your reward in Heaven” (Matthew 5:11-12): who can gauge what *He* terms “great!” “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matthew 13:43). “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Matthew 25:21).

3. From our relationship to God. The saints are designated His children and heirs, and it is not possible for Almighty God to invest created beings with higher honour than that. This sonship is not that which pertains to them as creatures, and which in a lower sense other creatures share—but rather is it a peculiar privilege and dignity which belongs to them as new creatures in Christ Jesus. As such they are nearer and dearer unto God than the unfallen angels. Therefore the riches of the saints are to be

estimated by the riches of God Himself!

4. From the declared purpose of God. “And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might *show* the exceeding riches of His grace, in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6, 7). If, then, God has designed to make a lavish display of the fullness of His favour unto His people, how surpassingly glorious will such a demonstration of it be! As another has said, “When the Monarch of the universe declares His purpose of showing how much He loves His people, the utmost stretch of imagination will struggle in vain to form even a slight conception of their glory.”

5. From the saints being God’s inheritance. All creatures are God’s property, but the saints are His in a peculiar sense. They are expressly denominated “God’s heritage” (1 Pet. 5:3), which imports that all other things compared with them are trifling in His view. On them He sets His heart, loving them with an everlasting love, valuing them above the angels. That affords another standard by which we may measure their future felicity. Well might the Apostle pray that the eyes of our understanding should be enlightened, that we might know, “what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” (Eph. 1:18). According as God has glory in the saints, they themselves will be glorious.

6. From the love which Christ bears them. Of that love they have the fullest proof in His infinite condescension to become incarnate for their sakes, in the unparalleled humiliation into which He entered in His producing for them a perfect robe of righteousness, and in His making a full atonement for all their sins. That involved not only a life of poverty and shame, of enduring the contradiction of sinners against Himself, but of suffering the wrath of God in their stead. Such love defies description and is beyond human comprehension. If He so loved us when we were enemies, what will He not bestow on us as His friends and brethren!

7. From the reward God has bestowed upon Christ. This also affords us a criterion by which we may gauge what awaits the saints. The stupendous achievements of Christ have been duly recognized by the Father and richly recompensed. That reward is one which is proportioned to the dignity of His person, one which is answerable to the revenue of honour and praise which His infinitely meritorious work brought to God, and which is commensurate with the unparalleled sufferings He endured and the sacrifice He made. When God gives He does so—as in all His other actions—in accord with whom and what He is. He has highly exalted the Redeemer, and given Him the name which is above every name. In John 17:22 we find the Lord Jesus making mention to the Father of “the glory which Thou hast given Me.” Oh, what a transcendent and supernal glory that will be! And that glory He *shares* with His beloved people: “the glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them!” That which pertains to the heavenly Bridegroom is also the portion of His Bride. “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with My Father in His throne” (Rev. 3:21). The Head and His members form one body, and therefore, “when He who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3:4).

While the Scriptures make no attempt to gratify a carnal curiosity concerning the nature and occupations of that life into which the regenerate enter when they pass out of this world, yet sufficient *is* told them to feed hope and gladden their hearts. While it is stated that “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him” (1 Cor. 2:9), let it not be overlooked that the same passage goes on to say, “But God *hath revealed them* unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God” (verse 10). Yes, He has, to no inconsiderable extent, graciously revealed the same in the Word of Truth, and while we are to beware of lusting to be, “wise above what is written,” we should spare no pains to be

made wise to what *is* written. If the unregenerate go to such trouble and expense in manufacturing telescopes and erecting observatories in order to examine the stellar planets, and take such delight in each fresh discovery they make, yet never expect to personally *possess* those distant stars, how intense should be *our* interest in those glories of Heaven which will soon be ours forever!

Not only has God been pleased to reveal to His people something of the blissful future awaiting them, but even while still, in this vale of tears, He favours them at times with real *foretastes* of the same. Though at present we are able to form only the most imperfect and indistinct ideas of the saints' felicity in Heaven, nevertheless, in those moments of high elevation of soul, when the believer is abstracted from external things and absorbed with contemplating the perfections of God, he joins heartily with the Psalmist in exclaiming, "Whom have I in Heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee" (Psa. 73:25). Not only at conversion, when the soul rejoices in the knowledge of sins forgiven and of his being accepted in the Beloved, but afterwards, in seasons of intimate fellowship with the Lord, the conscious motions of sin are suppressed, and he is sensible only of the exercise of holy desires, love and joy. Such an experience is a real "earnest" of that which he will enjoy to a far greater degree when he is delivered from the body of this death (indwelling corruptions) and is "present with the Lord," no longer viewing Him through a mirror, but beholding Him "face to face."

It is at the second coming of Christ or at death that the believer in Him enters into the glorified state, and therefore, before examining what Holy Writ has to say upon the latter, we propose to enter into some detail on what it teaches concerning his dissolution. Since the vast majority of the redeemed enter Heaven through the portals of death—for they have been doing so for almost 6,000 years, and the New Testament seems to intimate there will be very few indeed of them upon earth at the

Redeemer's return—it is appropriate that we should do so. Moreover, there is a real need for us to, for in certain quarters scarcely anything has been given out, either orally or in writing, for the instruction and comfort of God's people upon the dying of the saint. Not only does nature shrink from the experience, and unbelief paint it in black, but the Devil is not inactive in seeking to strike terror into their hearts. Not a few have been deprived of the blessed teaching of the Word thereon, because they have been erroneously led to believe that for a Christian to think much about death, or seek to prepare himself for it, is dishonouring to Christ and utterly inconsistent with "looking for that blessed hope" and living in the daily expectation of His glorious appearing.

That there is no real inconsistency between the two things is clear from many considerations. Whether the Saviour will return before "the millennium" or not until the close of earth's history—whether His coming be "imminent," or whether certain events must first take place—this is sure—that the Apostle Paul was among the number of those who "waited for God's Son from Heaven" (1 Thess. 1:10). Nevertheless, that did not deter him from communicating a most comforting and assuring description of what takes place at the death of a Christian (2 Cor. 5:1-8). Let us also point out that when exhorting the New Testament saints to run with patience the race which is set before them, the first motive which the Holy Spirit supplies for the same is to remind them that they are "compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses" (Heb. 12: 1)—the reference being to those whose testimony is described in the previous chapter, of whom it is said, "these all *died in faith*" (Heb. 11:13), and where the triumphant deaths of Isaac, Jacob and Joseph are most blessedly depicted (verses 20-22). We propose, then, to dwell upon the death of a child of God, the accompaniments or attendants of the same, and the glorious sequel thereto.

One of the distinguishing features of the Holy Scriptures and one of the many proofs of their Divine inspiration is their

blessed illumination of the grave and the revelation they vouchsafe concerning the hereafter. The light of nature and the best of pagan philosophy could provide no certainty about the next life. The famous Aristotle, when contemplating death, is said to have expressed himself thus: "*Anxius vixi, dubius morioa, nesci quo vado,*" which signifies, "I have lived in anxiety, I am dying in doubtfulness, and know not where I am going." How delightful the contrast of a Christian who can affirm, "having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better" (Phil. 1:23). How profoundly thankful should we be unto God for His Holy Word! It not only reveals to us the way of salvation, makes clear the believer's path of duty, but it irradiates the valley of shadows and lifts a cover of the veil, affording to us a view of Immanuel's land. If God's people made a more prayerful and believing study of and meditated upon what the Word teaches about their departure from this world and their Homegoing, death would not only be divested of its terrors, but would be welcomed by them.

That there is a radical difference between the death of a believer and of an unbeliever is clear from many passages. "The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death" (Prov. 14:32), upon which Thomas Boston well said: "This text looks like the cloud between the Israelites and the Egyptians: having a dark side towards the latter and a bright side towards the former. It represents death like Pharaoh's jailer, bringing the chief butler and the chief baker out of prison: the one restored to his office, and the other to be led to his execution. It shows the difference between the godly and ungodly in their death: who, as they act a very different part in life, so in death have a very different exit. . . The righteous are not driven away as chaff before the wind, but led away as a bride to the marriage chamber, carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. The righteous man dies not in a sinful state, but in a holy state. He goes not away in sin, but out of it. In his life he was putting off the old man, changing his prison

garments; and now the remaining rags of them are removed, and he is adorned with robes of glory. He has hope in his death: the well-founded expectation of better things than he ever had in this world.”

Proverbs 14:32 is but one of many passages in the earlier Scriptures which evince that the Old Testament saints were far from being in the dark regarding death or what lay beyond it. They knew that in God’s presence is “fullness of joy, at Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore” (Psa. 16:11). Said David, “I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness” (Psa. 17:15). And again, “Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD *forever*” (Psa. 23:6). It is true that life and immortality have been brought more fully to light through the Gospel (2 Tim. 1:10), nevertheless, it is clear that from the dawn of human history, the light of Divine revelation had, for the saints, illuminated the tomb. “Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory” (Psa. 73:24), which, as a summary, goes as far as anything taught in the New Testament. “Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake: some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2). And therefore, it is said of all those who died in faith that, having seen the promises of God afar off, they “were persuaded of them and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Heb. 11:13).

Before proceeding further, let us face the question, *Why* does a child of God die? Since physical death be one of the consequences of sin, and since the Lord Jesus has paid the whole of its wages, and therefore put it away for His people, why should any of them have to enter the grave? A number of reputable writers whom we have consulted deem that a great and insoluble mystery, while others evade it by saying that such presents no greater problem than sin’s remaining in us after regeneration. But neither of those things should present any

difficulty: both are designed for God's glory and their good. As Proverbs 14:32 shows, there is a vast difference between the death of the righteous and that of the wicked. Death is not sent to the former as a *penal* infliction, but comes to him as a friend—to free him from all further sorrow and suffering—to induct the heir of glory into his inheritance. Why should a Christian die? sufficient for the disciple to be as his Master, and “made conformable unto His death.” What a fearful hardship had the saints from Pentecost onwards been obliged to remain on earth till the end of time! Surely it is an act of Divine *love* to remove them from the vale of tears! But could not God have translated them to Heaven without seeing death, like He did Enoch and Elijah? Yes, but they were exceptions; and in such case Christ would not have the glory of raising their bodies from the dust and fashioning them like unto the body of His glory!

2. Revelation in Glory, The Joy of Death and Heaven

We are now to consider some of the details revealed in Scripture about the death of a child of God. It is a most important and practical subject, and, though a solemn one, a very blessed one too; for it is then that the saint enters into glory. Let it be pointed out that if we are prepared for God's summons to pass from this life, then, whether His messenger be death or the appearing of the Lord of life, we shall be equally ready. On the other hand, those who are unprepared for death, yet profess to be daily looking for that Blessed Hope, are woefully deceiving themselves that *they* will be among the number who shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. What we have here said requires no proof: it is self-evident that since a saint's departure from this scene is in order for him to enter the *presence of God*, that if he be prepared for *that*, it can make no difference to his soul whether death or Christ personally be the one to conduct him thither. Let the Christian make his calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1:10) by ascertaining that he has a valid title to Heaven through Christ (Rom. 5:11) and a personal

meetness by the miracle of the new birth (John 3:5; Col. 1:12), and he has no good reason to dread either death or the Redeemer's return.

Death may be defined as the dissolution of that union which exists between the constituent elements of human nature: it is a separating of the immaterial part of man from the material, an emerging of the soul from the body. But that severance in the Christian for a while produces no separation of either his soul or his body from the Lord Jesus. The union there is between the redeemed and regenerate members of Christ's mystical body and their glorious Head is indissoluble and endless, and is both the basis and security of every blessing they enjoy in time and eternity. His people are as truly His in death as in life. Their union with Christ is the same, nor is their interest in Him lessened. As the beloved Hawker said, "The covenant rots not in the grave, however their bodies moulder into dust." Moreover, that separation which the believer sustains of soul and body at death is but for a season; and among other blessings with which it is accompanied, will be amply compensated on the resurrection morning, when an everlasting union shall be effected between them, nevermore to be broken.

Let us now consider four expressions used in the New Testament in connection with the death of a believer, none of which, be it noted, contains the least suggestion of an experience to be dreaded. (1). The Apostle Paul spoke of his decease as a *departing* from this world: "having a desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better" (Phil. 1:23). Young's concordance defines the word as signifying "to loose up (an anchor)." It is a nautical term, which describes a vessel leaving her temporary moorings. The figure is a suggestive and picturesque one. The hour for sailing has arrived. The anchor is weighed, the gangway raised, the ropes are released, and fond farewells are said and waved to beloved friends who have come to see us off. The ship now moves gently away from the quay, down the river, into the vast reaches of the ocean beyond. *That*

is what death is to a Christian: a loosening of those moorings which bound him to the earth, a gliding out into a life of freedom, a going forth unto another Country. This same figure is used again in “the *time* of my departure is at hand” (2 Tim. 4:6)—the exact hour of sailing has been Divinely appointed!

(2). The Apostle Peter likened his impending dissolution unto the *taking down* of a *tent*: “knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me” (2 Pet. 1:14, and, compare with John 21:18, 19). In the previous verse he had similarly spoken of his body, declaring that he would continue urging upon the saints their obligations and duties “as long as I am in this tabernacle,” or better “tent.” The body, for whose wants the majority of our fellows are as anxious as though it were the whole man, is but a tent. The figure is a very suggestive one. A “tent” is a frail structure, designed only for temporary occupation, is suited for use in the wilderness, and is exchanged for a “house eternal in the heavens.” In the verse Peter employed a mixed metaphor, as Paul did in 2 Corinthians 5:1-4, where the breaking up of the earthly house of our tabernacle is spoken of as our being “unclothed.” Here, then, is the Christian concept of death: it is no more terrible or distressing than the removing of a tent (which is easily taken down), or the putting off of our garments when retiring to rest—to be resumed at the dawn of a new day!

(3). Death is likened unto an *exodus*. The term is used first in connection with our Saviour: when He was transfigured before His disciples on the holy mount, there talked with Him Moses and Elijah, “who spake of His *decease*, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:31). The Greek word is *exodus* and is found again in Hebrews 11:22, where it is recorded that, “By faith Joseph when he was a dying [in Egypt] made mention of the departing [exodus] of the children of Israel.” It is hardly to be thought that Moses and Elijah would confine their speech unto Christ’s death, but would rather converse upon “the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should

follow” (1 Peter 1:11). Dr. Lightfoot was of the opinion that Christ’s exodus included His ascension, pointing out that Israel’s exodus from Egypt was a “triumphant and victorious one.” The term literally means “exit,” and Thomas Manton regards its scope in Luke 9:31, as including Christ’s death, resurrection (Acts 2:24) and ascension (Luke 24:51). Peter also made use of the same term when he referred to his *own* “decease” or exodus (2 Pet. 1:15), thereby giving it a general application unto *all* of God’s people.

Here, then, is another simple but suggestive figure to express the blessedness of a believer’s departure from this life. Like the previous one, this also imports the going forth on a journey; but, in addition, the leaving behind of the house of bondage and the making for the promised inheritance—the antitypical Canaan. There is a striking analogy between the death of a Christian and Israel’s emancipation from the cruel slavery of Pharaoh. One of the distinct features of the Christian’s life in this world is his groaning under the burden of indwelling sin (Rom. 8:23; 2 Cor. 5:2), a crying “who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” But death is, for him, a snapping of his fetters, an escaping from the bonds that hold him, a going forth from sin and sorrow into freedom and immortality. Israel’s exodus from Egypt was a leaving behind of all their enemies, and such is death for the saint: the world, the flesh, the Devil—all that opposes God and hinders him forever done with. Israel’s exodus included their safe passage through the Red Sea, a crossing over unto the farther shore, their faces turned unto the land of milk and honey. How eagerly should the Christian welcome death!

(4). The death of God’s people is likened unto a *sleep*. This is the most familiar figure of all, and since it is used much more frequently in the Scriptures, and because certain errorists have perverted its meaning, we will dwell longer upon it. To the saints in his day the Apostle said, “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep” (1 Thess. 4:13). We regard it as a mistake to restrict that to their

bodies: obviously it is their *persons* (“them”) which are “asleep;” yet that by no means warrants the conclusion which some have drawn—that at death the soul passes into a state of total inactivity and unconsciousness. Such a verse proves too much for the case of “soul sleeping,” for it would make it teach that the soul *died* with the body, since “sleep” is here an image of death; which would be in direct variance with our Lord’s words, “Fear not them which are able to kill the body, and are *not able* to kill the soul” (Matthew 10:28). Even in this life, when the body is soundly asleep, the soul or mind is not inactive, as our dreams manifestly evidence.

Whether or not Luke 16:19-31, is a “parable,” certain it is that our Lord was there setting forth the condition of both the righteous and the unrighteous immediately after death, and if their souls then pass into a state of oblivion His language would be utterly misleading where He declared the one to be “comforted” and the other “tormented” (verse 25). So, too, His promise to the dying thief had been meaningless unless he was to enjoy the company of Christ in Paradise *that day* and enter upon all the delights of that place. Further, it would not be true that “death” is one of the things which is unable to separate believers from receiving manifestations of God’s love and their enjoyment of the same (Rom. 8:38, 39) if they pass from this world into a state of insensibility. Again, Paul, who was favoured with such intimate and precious fellowship with Christ in this world, had never been in any “strait” between his desire to remain in the flesh for the sake of his converts and his longing to “depart,” had the latter alternative meant the complete suspension of all his faculties, without any communion with God. Nor had he spoken of “the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb. 12:23) if they are without life and light, peace and joy, immediately after death.

While rejecting the false glosses put upon this figurative expression, let us be careful the enemy does not rob us of its true import, and thereby deprive us of the comfort it contains. Was it

not for the consolation of His disciples (and all His people) that the Saviour said: "I go to awake our friend Lazarus out of his *sleep*" (John 11:11)? Again, we are told that after the first Christian martyr had knelt down and prayed for his enemies, he "fell asleep" (Acts 7:60)! How much more was conveyed by *that* statement of the inspired historian than had he merely said that Stephen *expired!* Amid the curses of his foes, and while their stones were crushing the life from his body, he "fell asleep." Inexpressibly blessed is that! As the sleep of the body brings welcome relief when it is racked with pain, so death delivers from spiritual warfare and puts an end to all the wounding of the believer's soul by indwelling sin. As sleep gives rest from the toils and burdens of the day, so that we are oblivious to the perplexities and trials which harass our waking hours, so death for the saint puts an end to all the things which occasioned him anxiety and distress down here: he is released, henceforth, from all cares and troubles.

No doubt the principal idea which this figure should convey to us is the entire *harmlessness* of death. What is there in sleep to dread? Instead of being an object of horror, it is a merciful provision of God's for which we should be most grateful. It comes to us not as a rough and terrifying foe, but approaches gently as a kind friend. Christ has removed the "sting" from death (1 Cor. 15:56, 57), and therefore it can no more harm one of His redeemed than could a hornet whose power to injure has been destroyed. In employing this comforting metaphor, God would have His people assured that they have nothing more to fear from the article of death than in lying down on their beds to slumber. Again—sleep is of but *brief duration*: a few hours of repose, and then we arise refreshed and reinvigorated for the duties of another day. In like manner, death is but a sleep, an entering into rest, and resurrection will be the restoration and glorification of our bodies. Finally, death is likened to a sleep to intimate *how easily* the Lord will quicken our mortal bodies. The sceptic may ridicule as an impossibility the truth of

resurrection, but to Christ it will be simpler than waking a sleeper. A slumbering person is aroused most easily by one *speaking* to him, and “the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall *hear* His voice” (John 5:28)!

In addition to those figurative expressions, which so manifestly depict the harmlessness of death, God has made many plain statements in His Word for the comfort and assurance of His saints. It is evident from Genesis 15 that He preached the Gospel to Abraham in clear terms: not only the basic doctrine of justification by faith and the righteousness which is imputed to the believer, but also that state of blessedness into which all His people enter immediately upon their death. First, He made known to the “father” or prototype of all the faithful of what Heaven is and wherein the happiness of the saints consists: “I am thy Shield” in this life, “and thy exceeding great Reward” in the life to come (verse 1). For as Thomas Goodwin pointed out, “Reward is after the finishing of work, and what is this reward but the blessedness of Heaven? Christ Himself says no other, nor no more, of it, ‘The Lord is the portion of Mine inheritance.’ For the joy that was set before Him, He endured the Cross knowing that ‘in Thy presence is fullness of joy.’” Second, God informed him what the condition of his soul should be: “thou shalt go to thy fathers *in peace*” (verse 15). No wonder Balaam said, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his” (Num. 23:10).

What a blessed declaration is this: “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints” (Psa. 116:15)—then certainly it ought not to be dreadful in theirs! That verse presents an aspect of our subject which is all too little considered by Christians. They look at it, as at most other things, too much from the human angle—but here we have what may be termed the Godward side of a believer’s death—it is *precious* in His sight! The Hebrew word *yaqar* is rendered “costly” in 1 Kings 5:17, “honourable” in Psalm 45:9, “excellent” in Psalm 36:7. It

occurs again in “precious stones” (1 Kings 10:10), yea, is used of Christ Himself—“a precious Cornerstone.” Whatever form it takes, and no matter what be the attendant circumstances, such is the death of His people unto the Lord: an honourable, costly, excellent, precious thing. Note well the words, “in the sight of the LORD:” His eyes are fixed upon them in a peculiar and special manner. Their death is precious unto Him because it releases them from sin and sorrow, because it is sanctified by His own death for them, because it is a taking unto *His immediate presence* those upon whom He set His heart from all eternity, because they are the trophies of His own victory, and because they then “enter into the joy of their Lord.”

In the closing verses of 1 Corinthians 3 a number of things are mentioned as pertaining to God’s children: “all things are yours: whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, *or death*, or things present, or things to come; all are yours.” Those words were first addressed to shame some who sought pre-eminence in the house of God and whose affections were too much set upon things on the earth; yet they are full of instruction and comfort for us today. The ministry of God’s servants, the things God has provided for us in the world, life *or death*, are equally ours. Death is ours not by way of punishment and curse, but as a privilege and blessing. It is ours not as an enemy, but as a friend. It is our conquered foe, and is not to be feared, for it has neither strength nor sting to harm us: Christ, our victorious Captain, has disarmed it of both—“He hath abolished [rendered null and void] death” (2 Tim. 1:10). Life and death are administered by God so as to fulfil His gracious designs unto His people. Death is theirs because they share in Christ’s triumphs over it, because it furthers their interests and ministers to their wellbeing, because it is a means of their inexpressible advantage, removing them from a world of ills, conducting them into a world of glory and bliss.

What a word is this: “And I heard a voice from Heaven, saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the

Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Rev. 14:13). Here was a special and immediate revelation from Heaven. It was to be placed upon imperishable record for the comfort of believers to the end of time. “*Blessed* are the dead:” pronounced so by God, happy in themselves. *Not* “blessed shall they be,” at the *resurrection* morning, though that *will* be their case; but “blessed *are*” they at the moment. Why? Because they “die in the Lord:” whether conscious of the fact or not, they die in union and communion with Him, His smile of approbation resting upon them. To die in the Lord is “to die in the favour of God, in a state of peace with Him as members of His mystical body” (Thomas Manton). But more: they are blessed “from henceforth,” without delay or cessation, which at once gives the lie to their lapsing into a state of entire unconsciousness. “Yea, saith the Spirit.” Here is solemn confirmation: the Holy Spirit maketh affidavit” (Thomas Manton). They “rest from their labours:” not only the toils of their temporal callings, but their conflicts with sin. “And their works do follow them:” we carry nothing out of the world with us but the conscience and comfort of what we have done for God” (Thomas Manton).

We continue by borrowing a few thoughts (though clothing them mostly in our own language) from Thomas Boston’s counsels on why a Christian should be reconciled to death, and then how to prepare for it. Some dread the prospect of leaving behind their wives and children in this cold world: yet they have a reliable Guardian to commit them unto. Says He, “Leave thy fatherless children: I will preserve them alive, and let thy widows trust in Me” (Jer. 49:11). But death will remove me from my dearest friends! True, yet it will conduct you unto your best Friend; and if those you leave are God’s children, *you will meet them again in Heaven*. But the approach and pains of death are sometimes very dreadful! Not nearly so terrible as pangs of conscience caused by apprehensions of Divine wrath—remember that each pang of bodily disease brings you a step

nearer unto a soul made every whit whole. But I am naturally timorous, and the very thoughts of death alarm me! Then familiarize yourself with it by frequent meditations thereon, and especially view the bright side of the cloud, and by faith look beyond it.

That there may be a readier disposition of heart and preparedness of mind, make it your care to “have always a conscience void of offense toward God and men” (Acts 24:16). Walk closely with God, maintain a diligent and strict course in the way of His precepts; and because of the infirmities which cleave to us in this present state, renew your repentance daily and be ever washing in that Fountain which has been opened for sin and for uncleanness. Be constantly engaged in weaning your heart from this world. Let the mantle of earthly enjoyments hang loosely upon you, that it may be easily dropped when the summons comes to depart for Heaven. Set your affections, more and more, upon things above, and pass through this wilderness scene as a stranger and pilgrim. We are ready for Heaven when our heart is *there* before us (Mathew 6:21). Be diligent in laying up evidences of your title to Heaven, for the neglect of so doing renders uncomfortable the dying pillar of many a Christian. Grieve not the Holy Spirit, so that *He* will bear witness with *your* spirit that you are a child of God (Rom. 8:16).

Though our specific subject is that revelation with which God favours His people in Heaven, yet because the great majority of them pass thereto through the door of *death*, and since quite a number of our readers have been denied the comforting teaching of Scripture thereon, we have taken the opportunity to write upon the same. We come now to consider some of the *accompaniments* of a Christian’s death.

1. Among these, *first* place must be given unto *the presence of the Lord* with him at that time. While it is blessedly true that He never leaves nor forsakes them, being with them “alway” (Matthew 28:20), yet He is with them in a *special manner* at certain crucial times. This idea seems to be clearly

borne out by the statement that God is “a *very* present help in trouble” (Psa. 46:1), as though He draws nearest of all to us in the seasons of acutest need. Do we not have an illustration and example of that fact when the three Hebrews were cast alive into Babylon’s furnace, and the king beheld Another walking with them in the midst of the fire? “And the form of the fourth is like the Son of God” said he (Dan. 3:25).

Again—has not the Lord declared, “Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name: thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee” (Isa. 43:1, 2). How blessedly that was demonstrated at the Red Sea, where God so gloriously showed Himself strong on behalf of His people; and again at the Jordan, which was more definitely a figure of the safe passage of believers through death. Was not the passing of Israel dry shod through Jordan into Canaan a blessed adumbration of the saints’ harmless exit from this world and entrance into their everlasting inheritance? As Jehovah manifested Himself most conspicuously on those occasions, so— whether perceived by them or not—He is, in a most particular sense, present with His beloved ones as they walk through the valley of the shadow of death. Said the Psalmist, “I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me: Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me” (Psa. 23:4). Thy rod and Thy staff: “by which Thou governs and rules Thy flock—the emblems of Thy sovereignty and of Thy gracious care” (Spurgeon).

The meaning of those figures is plain: it is by His Word and Spirit that the good Shepherd governs and cares for His sheep, and is their “comfort” in the hour of their supreme crisis. That the believer *is granted* a special supply of the Divine Comforter at that hour can scarcely be doubted. “The Spirit was given us for that purpose, as a brother is said to be ‘born for adversity’ (Prov. 17:17). Certainly He who was given for a comfort to you all through your life long, and has delivered you out of all your distresses and fears, will carry you through this;

and though your heart should for a while fail you, together with your flesh, yet God and His Spirit will not fail you (Psa. 73:26). The interest of the Spirit's own glory moves Him. No captain rejoices more to bring his vessel home into harbour, after he has sailed it safely through so many storms, than the Holy Spirit rejoices to bring a soul He has wrought upon and who was committed to His trust, safe to Heaven" (Thomas Goodwin). Let it be noted that "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ" is given not only in life but also in death (Phil. 1:19, 20)!

2. *The soul is rid of sin.* There shall in no wise enter into the new Jerusalem "anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination" (Rev. 21:27). No serpent shall find admittance into the celestial paradise, nor will any who are still polluted by him. Not only the holiness of God, but the happiness of the saints also require that they be freed from all evil ere they enter Heaven, or otherwise their bliss would be marred. Their communion with and delighting themselves in the Lord is hindered down here by the sin which still cleaves to them. From the moment of the new birth until the moment a regenerated person leaves this world, "the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh," and since those two principles of action are "contrary the one to the other" it follows that he "cannot do the things that he would" (Gal. 5:17), and daily has he occasion to lament, "O wretched man that I am." Even when the power of God subdues the ragings of sin within His children, they are not delivered from its inbeing. But when the Divine summons to the soul comes to depart hence, it is entirely delivered from inbred corruption. The conflict is then ended; the victory over sin is complete. No propensity to evil remains, no guilt of conscience or defilement shall ever again be contracted.

"Although the whole troop of evils, like the army of Egypt, will pursue me (as it did Israel) to the borders of the sea, death ends the warfare—"The Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever" (Exod. 14:13). O the inconceivable blessedness which immediately opens at death to

every redeemed and regenerated child of God!” (Robert Hawker). Yet it is not death itself which effects this blessed purification of the soul. That is evident not only from the cases of Enoch and Elijah, who were caught up to Heaven without dying, but of those saints, too, who will be alive on earth at the personal return of Christ (1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:17). No, it is produced by the supernatural operation of God. It is the Lord Himself fitting His “temple” (2 Cor. 6:16) for His fuller and final possession. It is to be noted that Christ cleansed the temple at Jerusalem twice: at the beginning of His ministry (John 2:15-17) and again near the close thereof (Luke 19:45), which adumbrated His twofold cleansing of the hearts of His redeemed. At conversion they are purged from the love, the guilt, and the dominion of sin; at death they are delivered from its very inbeing and presence.

3. *Enlarging of their faculties.* We regard that expression, “the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb. 12:23), as denoting not only their being purged of all evil and misery, but also of their being capacitated to take in immeasurably more good and happiness than ever they did previously. Sin has not only greatly impaired the vitality and functions of the body, but it has considerably injured the health and defiled and limited the faculties of the soul; and therefore the latter will experience a grand elevation when rid of the incubus of sin. As the resurrected body will be possessed of powers far transcending its present ones, so when the soul is glorified its faculties will be much greater—the understanding no longer beclouded, the affections purified, the will emancipated. In its present state the soul, even when engaged in spiritual acts, is sadly cramped and hampered, but upon its dismissing from the body, the Holy Spirit will strengthen, enlarge, and elevate the faculties of the soul, raising them up to a suitability and harmony with their new life in Heaven. Then will the believer know even as he is known (1 Cor. 13:12).

It was, we believe, to this gracious operation of the Spirit that

David referred in Psalm 23:5, where, after describing his passage through the valley of the shadow of death and before mentioning his dwelling in the house of the Lord forever, he declared: “Thou anointest my head with oil: my cup runneth over.” In Old Testament typology “oil” was the outstanding type of the Holy Spirit (compare with 1 John 2:27), and as the Lord Jesus was anointed by the Spirit at the beginning of His ministry (Acts 10:38) and again at the completion of it (Psa. 45:7; Acts 2:33), so the believer is anointed by Him first at conversion (2 Cor. 1:21, 22) and then receives a fuller infusion of Him at death. Then it is that mortality is “swallowed up of life” (2 Cor. 5:4)—words which are “as applicable unto the condition of the soul then, as at the resurrection they are applicable to the condition of the body” (Thomas Goodwin). As that eminent expositor pointed out: “In 1 Corinthians 15, where the change of the body is insisted on, Paul says, ‘For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality’ (verses 53-54), but here he says ‘swallowed up of life,’ (2 Cor. 5:4) which is the proper happiness of the soul.” We will condense below the rest of his remarks thereon.

“Though the soul in the substance of it be immortal, yet take the condition of life which it now leads and it may be most truly said to have a ‘mortality’ adhering to it, yea, inhering in it as the adjunct of it. There is a mortal state the person is in. There is an animal life, as one calls it; there is a dying life, a life of death, in which as to a great part the soul now lives; and it is this present state, or this dying life of the soul, which causes believers to ‘groan, being burdened,’ and which the Apostle here terms ‘mortality,’ but which he assures us will, at its dismissal from the body, be ‘swallowed up of life’—that which is life only, and only deserves the name of *life*: the true and eternal life, life indeed. For what is life? ‘This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent’ (John 17:3). It is a peculiar life of living in God, as knowing Him and seeing Him face to face.” The soul which

hitherto had been so trammelled by sin shall then be taken into a life so rich, so full, so overflowing with abundance, as to rid it in a moment of all misery and imperfection, freeing and perfecting all its faculties.

4. *Perfuming of their persons.* This too is intimated in Psalm 23, a part of which we have somewhat anticipated. It seems to us that each experience described in verses 4-6 receives a general fulfilment throughout the life of a saint, and a particular one at his death. Thus, “though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death” well expresses his journey through the wilderness, for though men term this world, “the land of the living,” it would be far more accurate to designate it “the land of the dying.” The shadow of the grave is cast heavily across it; nevertheless, such language also suitably describes the believer’s passage through the article of death. “I will fear no evil:” why should he? A “valley,” in contrast with a “mountain,” suggests *easy travel*, and a “shadow” cannot harm him! Moreover, the “shadow” necessarily presupposes the presence of *light*. Unbelief may talk of “the dark valley of death”—not so David. It was far otherwise with him: the Light of life (John 8:12) was there, as his words acknowledge: “for *Thou* art with me”—to support, to guard, to comfort, to rejoice. “With me” now in a peculiarly intimate and special way.

The One present was Jehovah, whom David knew and owned as “*my* Shepherd” in the opening verse. But observe a striking alteration in his language in the latter part of the Psalm. In the first three verses all the pronouns referring to the Lord are in the third person: “*He* maketh me to lie down in green pastures. *He* leadeth me. *He* restoreth my soul.” But in the last three verses David changes to the second person: “*Thou* art with me. Thy rod [not “His” rod] and Thy staff. *Thou* preparest a table before me, *Thou* anointest my head.” Why the variation? Ah, there is something inexpressibly blessed in that change. During life the believer speaks *of* the Lord—“He leadeth me;” but as he enters the valley of the shadow he speaks *to* the Lord, for He is there

by his side! How much we miss through our careless and hurried reading of God's Word! How we need to weigh and ponder every jot and tittle in it. Sometimes the tense of the verb, at others the number of the noun marks that which is most important for us to observe; here the change of pronouns brings out a precious line of truth.

Having acknowledged the presence of the good Shepherd in the valley and the comfort derived from His gracious care, the Psalmist next went on to say: "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies." In Scripture, the "table" always speaks of fellowship, and that of the most intimate kind (Luke 22:21), and here it tells of the Lord's communion with the dying saint, and the loving and full provision He has made to supply his every need. His "enemies" may refer to the forces of evil, who would make their final assault upon him if they could. But they are prevented from doing so, for God has promised "the end of that man is *peace*" (Psa. 37:37). His enemies are not only thwarted, but mocked by the Lord in this "table." Then as he emerges from the valley, the believer exclaims, "Thou anointest my head with oil"—as Moses did the heads of the priests as they were on the point of entering upon their tabernacle privileges and duties (Exod. 28:41; 29:7), thereby preparing them for the presence of God. Thus the Redeemer puts upon the soul His own blessed fragrance as it enters into the courts above. Then David exultantly declared, "and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever." Thus this remarkable Psalm portrays the saint's happy life (verses 1-3), comfortable death (verses 4, 5), and blissful eternity (verse 6).

5. *An angelic convoy.* This is clear from our Lord's statement in Luke 16:22: "And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom." Abraham is the father of all them that believe (Rom. 4:11), and is here shown to be in Paradise. His "bosom" speaks of the place of peculiar privilege (John 1:18; 13:23): the once-despised beggar, counted unworthy of a seat at the rich man's table on earth, is

accorded a position of honour on high—placed next to the eminent Patriarch. The same gracious provision has God made for the safe conduct of each of His people in their journey from earth to Heaven: “He shalt give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways” (Psa. 91:11). Angelic ministry occupies, most probably, a far more extensive place in the lives of believers than any of them realize. “These encamp about them in the time of their life, and surely will not depart in the day of their death. These happy ministering spirits are attendants on the Lord’s bride, and will doubtless carry her safely home to His house. The Captain of the saints’ salvation is the Captain of this holy guard: He was their Guide even unto death, and He will be their Guide through it, too” (Thomas Boston).

What we are now considering presents another most blessed though little-known contrast between the death of the righteous and the death of the unrighteous. The souls of the former are carried to Heaven by the holy angels, the souls of the latter are seized by demons and taken to Hell. In Luke 12:20, Christ declared that God would say to the rich boaster, “Thou fool, this night do *they* require thy soul” (margin, and see Greek). Upon which, after affirming, “the devils take others’ souls away,” Thomas Goodwin, the Puritan, asked: “Who are *they*?” And his answer, “Hell is a prison (1 Pet. 3:19) and the judge delivers to the officer, and the officer casts into prison (Luke 12:58). This ‘officer’ is the Devil that hales souls to that prison.” In this convoy or guard of angels for the redeemed, saints are conformed to their Head, when He was “carried up to Heaven” (Luke 24:5 1). “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: The Lord is among them . . . Thou hast ascended on high” (Psa. 68:17, 18). “Angels were the chariots in which Christ rode, and these the guard that attends believers” (John Gill). Thus, the soul of the saint is conducted *in state* from his earthly house to his heavenly abode.

Immediately after death, without any interval of waiting either long or short, the ransomed soul is inducted into Paradise. The

heir of glory enters at once upon his eternal inheritance: “absent from the body, present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8). This needs emphasizing in certain quarters, where the idea seems to obtain that the glorification of the saint’s soul awaits the time of the glorification of his body. We do not like to see Protestants employing the term “intermediate state” (in contrast with “the eternal state”), for it savours too much of the imaginary “Limbo” of the Romanists; greatly preferring the “disembodied” and the “resurrection state.” Immediately at death spirits of just men are “made perfect” in knowledge, in holiness, in blessedness. Mortality is then “swallowed up of life:” as Thomas Goodwin expressed it, the soul “is now all life and joy in God the Fountain of life.” As we shall seek to show, the request of Christ in John 17:24, receives its fulfilment in the experience of His redeemed as soon as they leave this earth—the beatific vision is then theirs.

In the very moment of his dismissal from the body, the Saviour receives His redeemed into the actual possession of that eternal heritage which He has purchased for them. It was this reception for which the expiring Stephen made request when he said, “Lord Jesus receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59), and as Thomas Goodwin pointed out: “He not only receives it into His own bosom, but He brings it to God and presents it to Him with a joy infinitely more abounding than can be in us. Then it is that Christ is glorified and rejoices in us, and so we may be said rather to die to the Lord and His interest than to ours.” Then it is that He “sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied.” While at a later date Christ will present the entire company of His people to Himself a glorious Church, “not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing” (Eph. 5:27), yet He does so to each individual member of it at death, as His words to the dying thief clearly implied. Oh, what praise is due unto Him for having extracted the sting from death and robbed it of all its terrors! What cause have we to exclaim, “Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!”

What has been before us should surely make it easier to bear the trials through which a Christian may now be passing: at longest they are but for a moment in comparison with the eternity of bliss awaiting him. How faith should feed upon and hope anticipate the same! With what contentment should such a prospect fill us! What little reason have we to envy the deluded worshippers of Mammon, even though such now be clothed in purple and fine linen and fare sumptuously every day. How the contemplation of what God has prepared for them that love Him should wean their hearts from the perishing baubles of this world. How the certainty of being “with Christ” *forever* should make them desire to depart from this scene. How the knowledge that at death they will be forever done with sin and sorrow should make them willing to die. Why should any believer be reluctant to long to go unto the eternal Lover of his soul, especially when he learns from Scripture what full provision God has made for his passage to Him and that it is an easy and pleasant one? Oh, that all our ambitions and longings may be swallowed up in that of the Psalmist’s: “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD” (27:4).

The seventh of eight booklets.

Booklet Seven Contents

Part Four

- 1. Revelation in Glory,
This Life and Life Hereafter**
- 2. Revelation in Glory,
The Joy of Death and Heaven**

