

Beulah Land

by Thomas Cook

The Land of Beulah is a heavenly experience on earth, a state of being where believers live in communion with Christ and experience the presence of God.

Scripture: Joshua 3:17, Psalm 16:11, John 14:23, Ephesians 1:3, Philippians 3:20, Colossians 3:1, Hebrews 3:18, Hebrews 4:9, Hebrews 4:11

Topics: "Heavenly Citizenship", "Spiritual Rest"

Description

Thomas Cook preaches about the Christian experience on earth resembling heaven, where believers can live in a state of 'heavenlies' in Christ Jesus, surrounded by a higher, purer world while still on earth. He emphasizes the concept of 'Beulah Land' as a serene inheritance for all pilgrims, a promised land where believers can experience a taste of heavenly glory and joy in communion with Christ. Cook highlights the importance of entering into God's perfect rest, akin to the rest found in Canaan, which is a present state of spiritual peace and delight in Jesus, the ultimate source of rest and fulfillment.

Transcript

Those who have read Bunyan's immortal allegory will remember how he brings his pilgrims, before they crossed the river of death, into the land of Beulah. In that region they were "clear out of sight of Doubting Castle;" the gates of the Celestial City were full in view, the sun shone by night as well as by day. They heard continually the singing of birds, and in their walks they encountered several groups of the shining ones. As they walked to and fro in this goodly land they found it to be "a most pleasant, mountainous country, beautiful with woods, vineyards, fruits of all sorts, flowers also, with springs and fountains, very delectable to behold." It may seem at first sadly at variance with facts to describe Christian experience on earth in such glowing colors, but there is a high and serene inheritance "common to and for all pilgrims," a promised land, towards which we are beckoned, where, as Dean Alford would say, "Materially we are yet in the body, but in the spirit we are already in heaven -- only waiting for the redemption of the body to be entirely and literally there."

This experience so closely resembles heaven, that St. Paul took the term heaven and transformed it into an adjective-noun -- "the heavenlies" -- and used that term five times in the Epistle to the Ephesians to describe the region called by Bunyan the Land of Beulah. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." See also Ephesians i. 20, ii. 6, iii. 10, vi. 12. When he uses the phrase "heavenly places," the apostle cannot be

referring to heaven itself, because in chapter vi. 12 he speaks of our wrestling with "principalities and powers" and "wicked spirits" in the heavenly places, which must mean that it is an earthly experience, because there are no wicked spirits in heaven. There can be no doubt but that St. Paul had in view a sublime altitude of Christian experience in which the heavenly state is in us and we in it, so that literally in this present life we may live in a world of the unseen.

There is a story told by naturalists of a little insect that lives beneath the slimy pools, and makes for itself a house in the dark waters. In the center of a bubble of air, which it inflates above the water and then takes down with it and moors to a little plant at the bottom of the pool, it lives. There, in its little world of light and air, it breathes, and builds its nest, and rears its young; dwelling below, and yet living above, and breathing the air of the upper world, while all around it are dark waters and slimy depths, and the creatures that come and go around its floating houses of air. This illustrates in some measure what we mean by living in the "heavenly places" in Christ Jesus. As we walk through this dark world of sin and sorrow we have another world about us -- a higher, sweeter, purer world; and while our feet tread the earth below, our hearts and heads are in the heavens, shut in with Christ. We are encompassed with a little world of light and glory which has descended from the skies -- a kind of heavenly cloud in which we live and work like the little insect in its ethereal sphere. Was this not what the apostle meant when he wrote, "Our conversation is in heaven"? Christians need not die to know what heaven is -

The men of grace have found Glory begun below.

We need not anxiously inquire where the "heavenly places" are. It is enough to know they are where Jesus is. The expression refers more to the spiritual atmosphere than to locality. Heaven is a state as well as a place; and just in proportion as we abide in Christ, and live in communion with Him, do we have the earnest and firstfruits of the heavenly glory. The more God enters into our life, the smaller, the less startling will be the change at death. "Weep not for me," said a dying saint to his friends who stood weeping round his bed; "I go to change my place but not my company. I have walked with God on earth, and He is calling me now to walk with Him in heaven."

Though heaven's above and earth's below,

Yet are they but one state,

And each the other with sweet skill

Doth interpenetrate.

-- Faber --

Canaan was to the Jewish people what the "heavenly places" are to us. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews warns the Jews, from the failure of their fathers, not to fail to enter the true rest which was typified by their fathers entering Canaan. Some assume that Canaan is always a type of heaven, and that the rest spoken of eleven times in the chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews refers to the perfect rest of the heavenly world; but the writer of the Epistle speaks of it as a present state -- "We which have believed do enter into rest" -- from which it is obvious that some other rest than that of the perfect rest of heaven is referred to. The Jews had supposed that Canaan was the true rest, but the writer of the Epistle shows that there was a higher rest, of which the temporal rest of Canaan was only a type. "If Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken of another day," yet another day is spoken of. Eight hundred years after

enjoying Canaan, David urged the people, "Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts;" from which it is evident that entering Canaan did not exhaust the meaning of the words, "They shall enter into My rest." That land was a type, but only a type, of the rest which God has provided for His people. Joshua gave the physical, but he could not give the spiritual rest. Only in Jesus, the greater Joshua, can the true, real rest be found. It is only when He Himself, who is exalted into heaven, comes by His Spirit, so fully to possess our hearts, as that He is in us, and we in Him, that we of a truth reach the Beulah Land --

Where dwells the Lord, our Righteousness,

And keeps His own in perfect peace

And everlasting rest.

"The river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," is only a poetical description of the indwelling Comforter whom the Lord Jesus promised to send to His disciples, and through whom the Son of God would manifest Himself unto them, and the Father and the Son make their permanent abode with them. The bliss of heaven is of the same kind as the joy of Divine love shed abroad in the believer's heart, only it is more abundant. The Holy Spirit brings the joy of heaven with Him, and thus the saints above and the saints below drink from the same stream.

Beulah Land is not heaven, but it has been well described as "the suburbs of heaven." Another writer speaks of it as a little heaven to go to heaven in." Mr. Wesley says, "When the Holy Spirit fills the heart of a believer, He feasts the soul with such peace and joy in God as to blot out the remembrance of everything that we called peace and joy before." This may seem strong language, but those who have felt the throb of love and gladness which accompanies the abiding fullness of the Holy Ghost can testify to its correctness. Speaking of the time when she entered this goodly land, Miss Havergal says, "My whole life was lifted into the sunshine, of which all I had previously experienced was but as pale and passing April gleams compared with the fullness of summer glory" -

"I've reached the land of corn and wine,

And all its riches freely mine;

Here shines undimmed our blissful day,

For all my night has passed away.

How meager words are to describe the glory of this inheritance. To dwell where the beloved of the Lord dwell in safety by Him; where the sun shineth night and day; where the atmosphere is too transparent for doubt to live; where duty is transformed into delight; where the mouth is filled with laughter and the tongue with praise; where the soul finds rest from unsatisfied cravings; where triumph over temptation is complete and habitual; where, with joy unspeakable, we see the face of God in open enraptured vision, and are made glad by the assurance, deeply buried in the soul, that we do the things that please Him. "To portray the blessedness of those who have reached these 'heavenly places' is like representing the rainbow by a charcoal sketch."

Oh, the sweetness of this inward spiritual kingdom! Oh, the depths of solid peace, the untroubled repose in God! What liberty is there possessed! What high, sacred, and pure enjoyment reigns! What fragrant breezes from the heavenly climes fill the air! What glorious unveilings of God to the soul! "The light of the

moon has become as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold." The intense sweetness, the superior excellence, and the Divine glory of the perfect love of Jesus can never be exaggerated, nor indeed this promised land testify that even the glowing descriptions of Charles Wesley fall infinitely short of the reality -

Rivers of milk and honey rise, And all the fruits of Paradise In endless plenty grow.

Does the country we have been describing seem to any of our readers like some far-off "Eldorado," instead of a country nigh at hand? There is no need to regard it as a far-off land. No greater mistake could be made than to locate it as lying on the verge of the river, never to be reached until the close of our earthly career. It is nigh unto us.

The unbelieving Israelites remained forty years in the wilderness, when they might have entered their long-promised Canaan in less than a month. After they left Horeb, on the shores of the Red Sea, they consumed only eleven days before the vine-clad hills of Canaan were in full view, but "they could not enter in because of unbelief." "Let us also fear lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." We should say to those who, in God's mercy, have been led through the wilderness, and who are now on the borderland of the Canaan of God's perfect love, so that only the Jordan rolls between, "Let us go up at once and possess it." If faith is the condition, and the only condition, we may enter Beulah Land today. Hence the exhortation, "Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest." The original word for "labour" is not a word signifying long and wearying toil; it is radically the same as that found in the Septuagint version of Joshua iv. 10, "and the people hastened and passed over." The same idea is expressed in the hymn -

O that I might at once go up

No more on this side Jordan stop,

But now the land possess.

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