

## Misinterpreting the Goal of God's Eternal Purpose

*Heaven—Ain't Goin' There: A Down-to-earth Look at Eternal Life*, by John A. Davies. Cascade Books, 2019.

In *Heaven—Ain't Goin' There: A Down-to-earth Look at Eternal Life* (hereafter *Heaven*), John A. Davies, former principal of Christ College in Sydney, sets out to offer a fresh perspective and biblically based reassessment of the emotionally charged subject and cherished notions of heaven. *Heaven* challenges the virtually unquestioned assumption that a paradisiacal heaven is the “final and eternal abode of our ‘souls’”; it also addresses the belief that heaven is a temporary place for the believers, who are disembodied upon death, to be in, until the return of Christ and the resurrection of their bodies (2). Preferring to let the Bible speak for itself, *Heaven* cautions against a prevalent practice of reading heaven into scriptural portions where it is not warranted and against conflating notions of hope, reward, or eternity with a heavenly destiny (3). *Heaven* performs a deeper reexamination of passages in both Testaments, and especially of John 14, that Christians claim are proof texts for heaven. Despite presenting a fairly accurate debunking of the major erroneous notions about heaven, *Heaven* fails to apply its scriptural discernment to present an accurate biblical alternative which is based on the divine revelation. Instead, *Heaven* proffers a likewise erroneous view of the Christian destiny, one that is ignorant of God's goal in His eternal purpose.

### Properly Interpreting the Father's House in John 14

*Heaven* begins its second chapter by examining the notions of heaven in the Old Testament and concludes that very little support is provided therein for the popular Christian concept of an eternal, heavenly destination after death. There is a plethora of verses in the Old Testament that place God and His activities in the sphere of heaven, but the Old Testament speaks of heaven primarily as God's dwelling place (2 Chron. 30:27; Isa. 40:22) and the seat of His authority (66:1; 1 Kings 22:19). Although it is well established that heaven is God's home and His throne, *Heaven* argues that earth is likewise significant and central to God's purpose and should not be overlooked as part of His goal (8). Specifically, *Heaven* speaks of the interconnection between heaven and earth, of their being “component parts” of a new and future

totality: “Heaven and earth belong together and this will be an important factor in the picture of a reunited heaven and earth as the goal to which creation is moving” (8).

By pointing out how intertwined heaven and earth are, *Heaven* cautions the believers to not hope for merely a heavenly destiny. To this end, *Heaven* points out three examples in the Old Testament that at least cast doubt on the prevalent idea of heaven as the eternal abode for our soul. First, *Heaven* speaks concerning the creation of man in Genesis 2—God forming him from the dust of the ground and breathing into him the spirit of life in order that he might become “a living being” (13)—and that such a man is to be body and soul or spirit, suggesting that God prefers a “more holistic view of eternal life” rather than disembodied spirits returning to God (13). The second involves the creation of Eden as a garden that provides “wonderful relationships, satisfying work and rest, an abundant and rich variety of food, majestic trees, plants, animals, gold, and gems—a cornucopia of delights” (17). That there were around the tree of life protective measures put in by God after the rebellion of mankind as well as restorative prophesies (Gen. 3:14-24) suggests to *Heaven* that He intends to eventually return man to the Edenic paradise. *Heaven's* third and strongest evidence in the Old Testament that disproves an eternal abode for our souls in heaven is the temple, the erection of which was the “culmination of the exodus and conquest experience of the people of God” (19).

Both the temple and its precursor, the tabernacle, symbolize God's desire to dwell in the midst of His people on earth and, correspondingly, represent the place of longing for psalmists and prophets alike (20-21). Rich in symbolism, the temple was to Israel a “mini-cosmos of heaven-and-earth, an ideal world” (20) and holds eschatological implications for God's eternal abode with man. In this chapter *Heaven* also says that the Old Testament shows the possibility of the afterlife beyond Sheol and reveals the hope of resurrection, but neither, *Heaven* argues, are expressed as going to heaven. Likewise, although Isaiah speaks of God's establishment of new heavens and a new earth (65:17; 66:22), he construes it as “the deliverance that God is bringing about for his suffering people...a fresh beginning after the turmoil of exile and devastation”(28).

In chapter 3 *Heaven* analyzes portions in the New Testament that mainstream Christianity purports are evidence

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of heaven being the eternal resting place of God's people. *Heaven* indicates that the expression *kingdom of God*, or *kingdom of heaven*, as preferred by the Gospel of Matthew, does not refer to the "celestial sphere" (33) but rather to a realm with both present and future aspects (33). *Heaven* correctly states that the kingdom in the present is the very presence of Christ as the King (4:17) and that the kingdom "has small beginnings and grows imperceptibly like a mustard seed...(Luke 13:18-21)" (33). *Heaven* disagrees with the notion that the future and more glorious aspect of the kingdom is a heavenly realm, though it has been described as heavenly in nature. Concerning the account of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16, *Heaven* is not persuaded that Lazarus's being comforted in Abraham's bosom and the rich man's being tormented in Hades are real scenarios; it interprets this portion as a teaching concerning heeding the Scriptures and living according to biblical principles, with a view toward the welfare of others (36).

**N**ext, *Heaven* turns to Jesus' only reference to Paradise. In Luke 23 the criminal crucified with Jesus requested: "Jesus, remember me when You come into Your kingdom." The Lord responded with this promise: "Truly I say to you, Today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (vv. 42-43). On the one hand, *Heaven* discredits the thought that the Lord was promising to bring the criminal to a place for a disembodied heavenly existence, noting that, were this the case, Christ could not fulfill His promise, since He was not yet resurrected. On the other hand, *Heaven* argues that the Lord's promise anticipates the future resurrection and a "return to Eden with all that this entails," where the criminal-turned-follower-of-Jesus will share in His "kingly victory in a transformed world" (39).

*Heaven* spends the entirety of chapter 4 refuting the prevailing interpretation of the verses that Christians most often quote to back up their interpretation of heaven—John 14:2-3:

In My Father's house are many abodes; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you to Myself, so that where I am you also may be.

*Heaven* correctly demonstrates that the Father's house in the Lord's words of assurance to the disciples cannot refer to heaven but, rather, to God's dwelling place in the midst of His people, based on the context of the Gospel and the chapter itself. The Father's house in 2:16 refers to the physical temple. However, in verse 19 the Lord alluded to His body, which was to be destroyed and raised in resurrection, thereby pointing to Himself as the real temple, the true dwelling place of God. *Heaven* goes on

to assert that in John 14 the Lord "extend[ed] the meaning of 'my Father's house' to embrace" the Christian community, the new family of God, which, to use Paul's term, is the Body of Christ (45). Then *Heaven* accurately interprets the Greek word *monē* in verse 2 to mean "abodes," "abidings," or "dwelling places" and exposes the erroneous thought of a physical space conveyed by translating the word as "rooms," or "mansions," which is used in some translations. *Heaven* scoffs at the thought that the Lord was giving assurance concerning the adequacy of space for all believers and concerning a "palatial residence" in heaven, a "heavenly abode where each disciple can luxuriate in privacy" (46).

**H***Heaven* also notes that while the abiding in verse 2 is done by Jesus and the Father, the rest of chapter 14 reveals that the Father, Jesus, or the Spirit is the subject wherever verb meaning "remain," "abide," or "dwell" is used (vv. 10, 17, 23, 25) (47) and that the place that the Lord was preparing is the believers as the "new temple-community" (50). Furthermore, *Heaven* indicates that the Lord's going was His "departure by way of the cross as a manifestation of his glory" and that this departure enabled His coming as the Spirit to indwell His disciples (51). Having debunked the prevalent misconception of the Father's house being heaven in John 14, *Heaven* argues that the Father's house is, instead, "the prepared place where God is to dwell with his people" and that this place is "being made a reality through Jesus' death and glorification, enabling the Father and the Son to indwell each disciple through the empowering presence of the Spirit" (58).

### Presenting a Vague Eschatology Ignorant of God's Goal

Perhaps as a consequence of its intense focus on and limitation of its scope to debunking the prevalent concept of going to heaven after death and the concept of heaven as a temporary holding place for disembodied spirits, *Heaven* falls short of exercising a similar intensity and scrutiny concerning the presentation of God's plan as seen in the divine revelation. With some effort, one may piece together from scattered comments throughout the book *Heaven's* vague understanding of eschatology and of God's ultimate goal as it relates to Christian destiny. The result is a dubious explanation of the state of the Christian in the interval between death and the resurrection of the dead, an unclear description and sequencing of the major events during the end times, and an incomplete revelation of the ultimate destiny of God's people, specifically an erroneous interpretation of the New Jerusalem.

### Not Understanding Man's Tripartite Being

*Heaven* denies the possibility of an intermediate state

upon death; particularly, it rejects a “disembodied but conscious and blissful existence in heaven when body and soul are separated for a time, before being reunited at the return of Christ” (102), because this thought goes against the “holistic view of human nature found in the Bible” (103). Oddly, *Heaven* states that it is “misguided” even to question what happens between death and our ultimate resurrection, suggesting that such a question has not only no answer but also no meaning and is akin to a question concerning the state of the cosmos prior to its creation (105-106). *Heaven* postulates that time in the coming age does not progress in a linear fashion and that space-time may not operate in the way that is familiar to us today (105). Pointing out that “with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day,” *Heaven* argues for the possibility that many events could occur in one age without much time elapsing in another (106).

If *Heaven* is to be believed, we are already living in both ages, and no time—at least not in the sense that we are accustomed to—lapses between our death and our resurrection. While *Heaven* is correct to reject the notion of a blissful existence in heaven after death, it fails to take into account the entire biblical record concerning Hades, or its Hebrew equivalent, Sheol, and Paradise when interpreting Luke 16 and 23. Furthermore, by overemphasizing a holistic view of man, *Heaven* incorrectly conflates man’s spirit and soul, failing, especially, to differentiate the function of the spirit and the soul in the believers with regard to their Christian experience in the present age, their reward in the kingdom age, and their destiny in eternity.

*Heaven* views the nature of man as having one part and explains that “*body, soul, and spirit* simply mean we’re looking at what it is to be human from different perspectives” (13). The Scriptures, on the contrary, clearly reveal that man was created with three parts. First Thessalonians 5:23 says, “The God of peace Himself sanctify you wholly, and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Here, the conjunction *and*, mentioned twice, underscores the distinction between the parts—especially between the spirit and the soul (Heb. 4:12), which are often confused to be one and the same. Human bodies enable man to interact with his physical environment, the soul can receive and respond to psychological stimuli, and man’s spirit was uniquely created to correspond to the spiritual realm, especially to contact and to contain God.

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Before the Lord comes back, many Christians will have passed through death; the righteous ones among God’s people in the Old Testament have also passed away. We need to be clear regarding the divine revelation as to where such ones are held prior to the Lord’s return. Luke 16 does not merely instruct us to live an approvable life, as *Heaven* advocates; it also provides details concerning Hades. To be sure, *Heaven* is correct to clarify that Hades is not heaven, but *Heaven* is mistaken when it neglects the proof that Hades is the place under the earth reserved for the disembodied spirits and souls of the dead. In light of other passages, Luke 16 reveals that Hades is of two parts: a pleasant part and a place of torment. The pleasant part, where the beggar is comforted in Abraham’s bosom (vv. 23, 25), is called Paradise (23:43; 2 Cor. 12:4) and is separated by a vast chasm from the place of torment, where the rich man in the parable went (Luke 16:28). The section of Paradise in Hades is the keeping place for the dead New Testament believers and the just Old Testament saints, whereas the section of suffering and torment is reserved for all unbelievers.

Hades and its equivalent Sheol are both said to be under the earth (Matt. 11:23; Acts 2:27, 31; Phil. 2:10-11; Luke 16:23). For example, when Jacob thought that Joseph had been devoured by a wild beast, he lamented, saying, “Surely I will go down to Sheol to my son, mourning” (Gen. 37:35). Even the Lord Himself went to Paradise “in the heart of the earth” for three days and three nights while His physical body was buried in a tomb (Matt. 12:40; 27:59-60; Acts 2:31; Eph. 4:9). This is the reason that prior to His resurrection the Lord could promise the criminal on the cross that he would be with the Lord that very day in Paradise (Luke 23:43). The period that the disembodied dead believers are held in Paradise is temporary; they will be clothed with a transfigured body at the time of Christ’s second coming.

Knowing about our tripartite being is important not only with regard to our experience of Christ in the present age but also for our reward in the kingdom age. In the present age, believers are regenerated in their spirit, are being transformed in their soul, and have the hope of the transfiguration of their body into a glorified body (Rom. 8:23; Phil. 3:21). As *Heaven* correctly points out, all believers will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ, not concerning their salvation from God’s condemnation, which is eternally assured, but concerning whether they will receive a reward or punishment. The crucial matter in this age is the condition of our soul. According to

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Matthew 25, we will be judged by how much oil we are filled with in our vessel, that is, by how much our soul is filled and saturated with the Spirit, which we obtain through transformation. Upon regeneration, we believers are filled with oil in our lamp, that is, have the Spirit dwelling in our spirit (vv. 3-4; Rom. 8:9, 16); it is our soul that now needs to be filled. Man is a vessel made to contain God (9:21, 23).

In this age, while we are living our Christian life on the earth, we need to be the prudent virgins who take oil in our vessels by being transformed in our soul; otherwise, we will not be counted worthy, when we are resurrected, to enter as the prepared bride into the wedding feast with Christ our Bridegroom (Matt. 25:10), which is the marriage dinner of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9). *Heaven* rightly decries the belief that dead believers are transported to heaven; however, in light of Matthew 25, the hope that *Heaven* purveys—that the believers will automatically be in some paradise in the new heaven and new earth when they are resurrected—is equally vain. *Heaven's* reading diminishes the work that Christ as the Spirit is doing in the believers in the present age, which work is to transform them by dispensing the divine life continually into them and making His home in their heart until they reach the stage of maturity and arrive, corporately, at a full-grown man (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 3:17; 4:13). *Heaven's* reading also discounts the cost that believers must pay to gain oil in the present age, which price includes giving up the world, dealing with the self, counting all things as loss on account of Christ, and loving the Lord preeminently. Only mature believers will receive the reward of being in the wedding feast and experience the fullest enjoyment of the Lord; those who are not watchful, like the foolish virgins, will realize that they are short of oil, the filling and saturation of the divine life, and will have to pay that very price after they are resurrected, at which time they will also have to forfeit their glorious reward.

### *The New Jerusalem as the Goal of God's Eternal Purpose*

The source of *Heaven's* erroneous reading is its lack of understanding God's ultimate purpose. A crucial error in *Heaven's* concept of the Christian destiny is the acceptance of the restoration of an Eden-like paradise as God's goal (18, 39). Instead of the hope of "celestial bliss in individualistic terms" that is peddled by many a sermon and hymn (61), *Heaven* states that the hope of God's people is a hope of "the establishment of God's kingdom, his unchallenged rule over the world he made," a hope of "an end to suffering and death, to the groaning of creation," a hope of "seeing the power of Christ's resurrection publicly displayed," and a hope of "the redemption of our bodies in the context of a universal restoration" (61). The key to the realization of this hope is the "res-

urrection of Jesus and his closely associated ascension to the place of authority over all" (61).

While this is generally consistent with biblical teaching, the context to which *Heaven* ascribes this outcome is vastly different from that revealed in the Scriptures. *Heaven* contends that the resurrection of Christ sets in motion not only the salvation of the believers but also the restoration of the world, both of which culminate in His second coming and the resurrection and judgment of the dead, inaugurates His universal kingdom, and eventually ushers in the new heaven and new earth. This universal realm, *Heaven* indicates, is the New Jerusalem, the restored garden of Eden developed and transformed into a physical and glorious city as the culmination of the temple (38). This resplendent realm, according to *Heaven*, is a "fusion of heaven and earth, a restored cosmos" (99). Thus, *Heaven* not only conflates an Edenic paradise with the holy city, the New Jerusalem, but also contends that the restoration of the paradise garden is part of God's eternal plan. Concerning our life in this eternal paradise of heaven and earth, *Heaven* says,

The age to come will give endless opportunities to continue to grow in our love for God and each other, to continue to enjoy and develop God's world, exercising the responsible dominion with which we were originally entrusted—only in a far more enhanced way, and in a way free from any of the drawbacks we now experience due to our own sin or that of others. Eternal life means...life in a wonderfully restored and enhanced world, the kingdom in all its glory. (107)

Moreover, *Heaven* asserts that believers will continue to be transformed from one degree of glory to another degree of glory throughout eternity (107), exposing *Heaven's* misunderstanding of God's complete salvation and its role in God's purpose in the present age.

Seeking to know our Christian destiny is a worthwhile endeavor, and the divine revelation is neither silent nor ambiguous on this matter. Contrary to *Heaven's* proposition, God's ultimate purpose for man does not involve a paradise garden or any other physical place, for that matter. Concerning His creation of man, God clearly stated His intention for man: "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them have dominion" (Gen. 1:26). This divine declaration preceded the planting of the garden of Eden (2:8).

Man in his tripartite being with his virtues was uniquely created to correspond to God's attributes in order to contain and to express Him. Furthermore, man in his creation was intended to represent God with His authority to subdue the satanic rebellion over the usurped earth

and to recover it for God's kingdom. Following man's creation, God placed him before the tree of life, which signifies Christ, who is the embodiment of the Triune God, as the divine life, indicating that God's purpose is fulfilled by man's receiving God as food to become man's constituent (v. 9; John 1:4; 14:6; 15:1). The river that flowed from the garden is seen again in Revelation, where it is the river of water of life, which is a symbol of God in Christ as the Spirit flowing in abundance into God's redeemed people to be their life and life supply (Gen. 2:10; Rev. 22:1).

According to the types revealed in Genesis 1 and 2, their development in the Gospel of John, and their fulfillment in Revelation 21 and 22, God's eternal purpose concerning man primarily involves persons, not a physical place, and is fulfilled by means of life. That the tree of life and the river of life, seen first in Genesis 2:9-10, are developed in their significance in John's Gospel is seen in John 15:5, where the Lord declared that He, the person, is the vine, a tree that grows by spreading its branches, which are the believers, and in John 7:37-39, which unveils that through Christ's resurrection, the Spirit is flowing in the believers' innermost being as rivers, "the many flows of the different aspects of life" (Lee, *Recovery Version*, v. 38, note 2), to quench their thirst. Revelation 22:1-2 says, "He showed me a river of water of life, bright as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the middle of its street. And on this side and on that side of the river was the tree of life." According to the context, this passage is a description of the New Jerusalem. Like the river flowing from Eden that divided into four branches, the river of water of life, signifying the abundance of life of the flowing Spirit, flows to the four corners of the holy city. Growing and spreading on both sides of this river is the tree of life. Concerning the eternal fulfillment of the type seen in Genesis 2:9-10, Witness Lee says,

This tree fulfills for eternity what God intended from the beginning (Gen. 2:9). The tree of life was closed to man because of his fall (Gen. 3:22-24), but it was opened to the believers through the redemption of Christ (Heb. 10:19-20). Today the enjoyment of Christ as the tree of life is the believers' common portion (John 6:35, 57). In the millennial kingdom the enjoyment of Christ as the tree of life will be a dispensational reward to the overcoming believers ([Rev.] 2:7). Eventually, in the new heaven and new earth for eternity, the enjoyment of Christ as the tree of life will be the eternal portion of all

God's redeemed ([Rev. 22:14, 19]). (*Recovery Version*, v. 2, note 1)

Although the fulfillment of God's twofold purpose for man was temporarily delayed by the satanic corruption of man and the problems of sins and death, it was by no means thwarted. The judicial redemption, accomplished by Christ's death, and the organic salvation, salvation in life, made available through His resurrection, are the crucial means not merely to restore the entire universe from the ravages of sin, death, and Satan but primarily to fulfill God's eternal purpose (Eph. 1:7-11; 3:9-11). For God to gain His corporate expression, His people must first be redeemed judicially by His death on the cross so that they are forgiven of their sins, redeemed to be God's possession, and reconciled to God. However, the ultimate purpose of God's salvation of believers is not accomplished by the fulfillment of God's righteous requirement for the forensic justification of sinners through the redemptive death of His Son. Believers must also go on to be saved in life through regeneration, dispositional sanctification, renewing, transformation, conformation, and glorification (Rom. 5:10; Titus 3:5; Rom. 6:19; 12:2; 8:29, 17).

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The relationship that God had with man in the garden of Eden was that of Creator and creature, but God's heart's desire is to have many sons conformed to the image of His firstborn Son for His corporate expression in humanity (Eph. 1:4-5; Rom. 8:28-30). Indeed, believers have been predestinated unto sonship; the Christian destiny is to be the many sons of God, possessing the same life and nature as their heavenly Father. Through His resurrection Christ regenerated all the believers, bringing them into a life relationship and an organic union with God, who is now their Father (1 Pet. 1:3). This is why after His resurrection, the Lord Jesus charged Mary, saying, "Go to My brothers and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God" (John 20:17).

Therefore, in the scheme of God's complete salvation, Christ's resurrection plays a pivotal role because through resurrection Christ became the life-giving Spirit to regenerate the believers to be sons of God and to indwell them so that they in union with Christ may be the Father's house, which is the church as the Body of Christ, consummating in the New Jerusalem as the eternal expression of the Triune God (1 Cor. 15:45; Rom. 8:11; Eph. 4:13, 15). In the present age, the church age, we need to grow and mature spiritually so that we may be co-kings to

reign with Christ in the next age, the kingdom age of a thousand years (Matt. 25:21; Rev. 2:26-27; 20:4, 6).

*Heaven* accurately interprets the Father's house in John 14:2-3 as referring to the many believers, who are the many abodes, or dwelling places, and as the Body of Christ, the expansion of the individual body of Christ, the temple of God (2:19, 21; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; Eph. 2:21-22). However, *Heaven* fails to connect the Body of Christ to the New Jerusalem, which is the ultimate consummation of the Body. Just as the Father's house composed of many abodes refers to the believers in union with Christ, so also the New Jerusalem is a corporate person, not a physical place and certainly not the restored paradise of Eden. Moreover, the New Jerusalem should be distinguished from the new heaven and new earth, which will be the outward setting for the New Jerusalem. The New Jerusalem is the union, mingling, and incorporation of the Triune God with His redeemed, regenerated, transformed, and glorified people as His corporate, universal, and eternal expression.

This holy city is the goal of God's eternal purpose. Ephesians 2:21-22 says, "In whom all the building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling place of God in spirit." This holy temple can grow because it consists of the believers, the many abodes in the Father's house, who are growing day by day by the increase of the divine life within them until they are wholly one with God and are fully manifested as the glorious holy city. This indicates that the believers are not going to the New Jerusalem as a physical city; instead,

they are becoming the New Jerusalem as a mingling of God and man. Whereas the new heaven and new earth are the old heaven and old earth renewed, yet devoid of the life and nature of God, the New Jerusalem is entirely God's new creation composed of divinity and humanity mingled as one entity—the corporate new man filled with the life and nature of God.

### Conclusion

*Heaven* admirably strives to be faithful to the Scriptures by discrediting the prevalent notion of God's people ascending to palatial residences in a heavenly paradise upon death. However, *Heaven* tenders as the Christian destiny a similarly erroneous concept of a restored garden of Eden in a cosmos of the new heaven and new earth. The biblical revelation clearly lays out God's eternal purpose in Genesis 1 and 2 and shows its consummate fulfillment in Revelation 21 and 22: the holy city, the New Jerusalem, as a corporate person expressing God, a divine-human entity for the glorification of God in humanity. By missing this goal, *Heaven* misunderstands God's ultimate desire, which is to be one with His people as His universal expression, thereby misleading believers to a vain hope of an earthly paradise, rather than ushering them into an enjoyment of God's complete salvation, which is in and by life, for the fulfillment of His eternal purpose.

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## The Unresolved Problems of Believers in the Pleasant Section of Hades

What are the saints doing in the Paradise of Hades? They are waiting for resurrection, because the issues of death and maturity in life must be resolved. They are not suffering in Paradise but are resting and waiting. They are waiting for the resurrection and for the issue of the maturity in life to be resolved. They are waiting to receive either reward or punishment before the judgment seat of Christ. Once a believer dies, his spirit and soul go to rest in Paradise. However, this does not mean that there are no more problems. There are at least three issues that must be resolved: resurrection, maturity in life, and the receiving of either reward or punishment before the judgment seat of Christ. Only after these issues are resolved can a believer enter into God's dwelling place in completeness and without problems.

Today when someone dies, there is nothing that can be done about his death. If he is a saved person, he does not go into the flames of Hades, because his sins have been borne by the Lord. He does not suffer by the fire. However, there are still some issues that remain unresolved. Death is an issue that still needs to be resolved because the resurrection has not occurred yet. Furthermore, there are the issues of the maturity in life and the receiving of either reward or punishment according to the Lord's judgment. Therefore, the saved one must wait in the Paradise of Hades for the resurrection and for the resolving of the issues of the maturity in life and for the receiving of either reward or punishment before the judgment seat of Christ.

From *The Way for a Christian to Mature in Life* by Witness Lee, p. 32