

How To Feel “At Home” In Heaven!!

Revelation 14:13-14, “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. And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.”

John is speaking of the reaping of God’s Great Harvest Field, and he Reaper is the One pictured as “One like unto the Son of man – Jesus Christ.”

This passage begins by saying, “Blessed (or Happy) are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; Yes says the Spirit, that **THEY** may **REST FROM THEIR LABORS;** and **THEIR WORKS DO FOLLOW THEM.**”

It is very clear, and made as plain as can be in this passage that Christians are to be “workers,” working in the will of God, and that at death that labor ceases, and a Christian can change nothing from the time up to the resurrection!

Paradise (now in the third Heaven where God dwells --2 Corinthians 12:2 & 4) is a place where saints go to rest from their labors, waiting for the resurrection at the Rapture of the Church, and then their appearance at the Judgment Seat of Christ, where their works, whether good or bad, will appear with them.

1 Corinthians 5:10, “For **WE** must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things **DONE IN THE BODY,** according to that he hath done, whether it be **GOOD** or **BAD.**”

Scripture teaches that those who die “in Christ” are **immediately** present with the Lord in Paradise (The 3rd Heaven) -- They “rest from their labors”

Revelation 14:13, “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.**”

The Bible uses a phrase of Christians who die, saying, “asleep in Christ.” It does not mean that believers, when they die, are in an unconscious state – (the Bible nowhere teaches “soul sleep” – see my study on “Soul-sleep, unscriptural”). But rather, this phrase, “asleep in Christ,” refers to resting from the labors of this present life. The believers’ division of Paradise is described by Jesus in Luke 16:23 as “Abraham’s bosom” -- (a Jewish description of *absolute bliss*) and “a place of comfort” in verse 25.

The “Paradise” side of this place “Sheol [meaning, “place of departed spirits”] was moved from the center of the earth when Jesus died and rose again, leading those held captive there up to the third heaven.

See my study on, “*What Happens When We Die?*”

It seems that Scripture teaches that those “*who die in Christ Jesus*” enter immediately into the presence of the Lord -- in *Paradise*, which is now in the third heaven, to rest until the first resurrection.

The reason I discuss this at this point in our study is to show that believers, at death, “*rest from their labors*” -- and their “*works follow them.*” The works they did for Christ – that is, living in the revealed will of God -- while in this present life -- follows them, and will go into their account when they appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Paul declared that he was “*not disobedient to the heavenly vision*” and, though he is presently “*resting in Paradise*” -- the results of his works -- and influence for Christ -- are still continuing on -- and will carry on until the first resurrection!

Christians who died, that produced good works while in this present life are in Paradise, but the works they did could very well still be bringing forth fruit and going to their account. There may be, also, Christians who produced “*bad*” works, and while they too are in Paradise -- (for remember, we are not saved y works) -- the bad works they did while in this present life, also, maybe producing bad fruit to their account to await the Judgment Seat of Christ.

The Holy Spirit, through Paul’s writings, warns every believer that, after they are saved, to be careful to maintain good works for these things are good and profitable unto men.

Titus 3:8 “*This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.*”

Returning back to our text in Revelation 14, and looking again at verse 14, “*I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.*” Here we have a picture of Jesus Christ as a “*Reaper*” of His field.

Verse 15, *And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.*”

“*The time will come*” when Christ, the Reaper, will “*reap the Harvest of the earth.*” In His hand was a “*sharp sickle.*” The sickle was used for reaping. The farmer does not sow, plant, or cultivate with a sickle. The sickle was for reaping! It was the fist instrument for reaping -- later came the scythe, cradle, drop reaper, binder, and now in this day and age we have the combine that cuts, threshes, and bags the grain in one operation. The sickle referred to here is only a type of a reaper.

The time is coming when the cry will go out, “*Thrust in Your sickle and reap; for the TIME IS COME for Thee to Reap, for the Harvest of the earth is ripe.*”

The vision I would like to emphasize is the fact that the time for growing and developing is over when harvest time comes. Nothing can be changed after the harvest. The crop that is growing can never change itself when once the sickle is put to the planting. ---- The point is: **This present life is our place to prepare for harvest!**

When Jesus returns to earth “to catch His waiting bride away” – or when we die and “sleep in Christ” – we can change nothing before the Judgment Seat of Christ. All the ingredients, factors, or elements needed for growth -- such as, the grace of God, the work of Calvary, and ministry of the Holy Spirit -- cannot change us after we leave this present life, and we are removed from our field of opportunity! That which God planned for us to use in this present life, will not help us after we go to Paradise.

If Jesus should take me out of this present life – am I ready for the Harvest?

The 16th verse of Revelation 14 states, “He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.”

Verses 18-20 states that “later” – after Christ has taken out His own planting in the earth, then clusters of the vine of the earth were to be reaped by an angel, for her grapes are fully ripe – referring, do doubt to the gather of the wicked to face the wrath of God.

Revelation 14:18-20, “And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.”

Revelation 14 pictures Jesus as the Reaper – earlier in the New Testament, Matthew 13 & Luke 8 – (to make the picture complete) – we Jesus as “The Sower.”

Luke 8:4-15, “And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable: A sower went out to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And his disciples asked him, saying, What might this parable be? And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved. They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and

riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."

In this great lesson that Jesus gave of the four kinds of soil, there are only two things that matter -- the seed that is planted and the soil the seed is planted in! Everything about this parable surrounds these two elements.

Herein lies the whole purpose of God!

The disciples saw that a great truth lay within this parable, and asked Jesus "What's was its meaning?" Jesus clearly states that this parable "Unto you it is given **to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God**" (verse 10). Then, Jesus unfolds one of the greatest truths of the Bible, and -- our whole eternal future depend on what we do with this truth!

FIRST, we must note, "*the seed is the Word **of the Kingdom**" (Matthew 13:19). Jesus is not here referring to the word of salvation – but speaking to those, already saved, and God's plan for them within His Kingdom.*

The Great Sower sows good seed -- the truth of the Kingdom of God (or, God's reign in the believer's life) -- and every grain is to bring forth a hundred fold. If there is 100% consecrated soil to receive the good seed, it will yield 100 % its intended purpose. God is a good Farmer; and sows good seed -- and as God sows His seed into the life of the believer, the believer can sow *much*. Some day he will reap from the seed he has sown.

All we will ever take out of this world is born from the Word of God!

Good seed by itself can never bring forth fruitfulness without having good soil to grow and develop in. It takes seed and soil to bring a harvest. The soil that Jesus spoke about is the believer's heart. So, while being only one kind of seed -- *the word of the Kingdom* -- can be sown or fall on four different kinds of soil, upon which its growth will depend. Every believer decides what kind of ground his heart-soil will be, it's a choice of our own will.

Jesus taught about four kinds of hearts upon which the "*word of the kingdom*" falls: (1) the hard-hearted soil, unable to understand, so Satan steals away the seed; (2) the rocky, shallow soil, exerting human enthusiasm that welts under persecution (3) thorny, halfhearted soil, that is crowded out by the cares of this world, and (4) good soil, producing its intended crop.

Jesus is very clear the Satan's purpose is to destroy "*the word of God's Kingdom*" from every producing its God-given purpose! God desires to plant the seed of His Kingdom in the heart of every believer., so that His purpose and plan will be worked out in their life. Satan is against that plan, which is wrapped up in "*the word of the Kingdom,*" and will do everything he possible can to prevent it from producing.

Let's take a close look at what Christ reveals concerning God's program for every believer. What are the dangers of not fulfilling God's Kingdom in our Christian life?

THE HEART-HEARTED SOIL

Jesus' Teaching

1. *"And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up" (Matthew 13:4).*

The Meaning

"Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side" (Matthew 13:18-19).

This heart-soil is so heard, because of traffic over it and it's constant exposure to all kinds of weather, allowing any and all traffic to travel. The seeds will not take root and grow, that is, the *"word of the Kingdom"* does not get down into the depth of the heart because of the hardness of the heart, due to so much traffic. Hearts, like hardened soil, must be broken up and plowed and properly worked and harrowed, if it is ever to produce. If the seed remains on the surface, Satan can remove it from our hearts.

THE SHALLOW HEARTED SOIL

Jesus' Teaching

2. *"Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away" (Matthew 13:5-6).*

The Meaning

"But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended" (Matthew 13:20-21).

"Stony places" is also translated, *"Red-rock."* The Greek word, *"anon"* in verse 20 means *"momentarily."* This heart-soil lacks depth and the *"bed-rock,"* just below the surface of the soil, does not leave room for the seed to grow. This person receives the see – *the word of the kingdom* – with real *"enthusiasm,"* but it is only a *natural* joy and, because the seed cannot put it's roots deep, when difficult times come, it is withered.

THE HALF-HEARTED SOIL

Jesus' Teaching

3. *"And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them" (Matthew 13:7).*

The Meaning

"He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful" (Matthew 13:22).

The reason the *"word of the Kingdom"* does not produce a spiritual harvest in some hearts is because (1) the care of this world, (2) the deceitfulness of riches, and Luke 4:19 adds (3) the lusts of other things.

It is interesting to note that the first soil Jesus warns us of fails because of Satan's opposition; the second soil fails because of the superficiality of the flesh; and the third soil fails because of the attractions of the world.

We have the three reasons for barrenness of the “*reign of God*” in our life -- namely, the Devil, the flesh, and the world!

In this 3rd heart-soil we have two crops struggling for mastery, and the result is -- the “word of the kingdom” is choked. The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of “*other*” things take up the space required for the word to grow.

THE WHOLE HEARTED SOIL

Jesus' Teaching

The Meaning

4.

“But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 13:8-9).

“But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (Matthew 13:23).

The “*germination*” of the seed depends upon the reception of the soil! All the soil considered is good, but there was something that prevented it from being productive.

Our responsibility is to (1) hear the word of the Kingdom; (2) understand the word of the Kingdom; and (3) Bear fruit as a result of the word of the Kingdom!

Look at verse 23 once more -- “*He that received seed into the good ground is he that (1) heareth the word, and (2) understandeth it; which also (3) beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.*”

When we accepted Jesus Christ as our Savior, we were born into the Kingdom of God, all of our sins were forgiven and we were given eternal life, however, God left us in this world in order that we could grow and develop into the image of God’s Son, Jesus Christ. Like seed planted in the ground, the “*Word of God’s Kingdom*” is to grow within our hearts. And someday, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, we will have to give account of responsibility for this growth – or lack of growth!

We were born into this world -- not just to build houses, make money, enjoy the things of this world, get married, raise a family, and then die and be laid in a graveyard with a tombstone over us. We were born into this world to be born-again -- so that we could by the surrender of our will to the work of the Spirit of God, “*be conformed into the image of Jesus Christ*” -- to live in the will of God here in this present life and, finally, for all eternity