

KOINONIA KONNECTION

A Publication of Grace Covenant Church

Summer 2006

Volume 7, Issue III

HEAVEN'S GREAT EARTHLY GOOD

"He waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Heb. xi.10

We've all heard the worn accusation: "You're so heavenly minded, you're no earthly good!" The person so accused is assumed to be a Christian so fixated on the blessings of the next life that he compromises his usefulness in this world. His eyes turned toward the clouds, attentive only to the promises and hopes of heaven...but lacking any benefit to the world or the Church.

Frankly, I've rarely met such a person. In my experience, worldliness seems to be man's problem rather than other-worldliness. We are a race ruled by the desires and concerns of the flesh and the world, rather than those of heaven. The great disease of humankind is that he is so very earthly-minded that he is no heavenly good, rather than vice-versa.

Contrary to what some may claim, I believe that thoughts of heaven serve for nothing but good in preparing us to live in this world. Heaven is mentioned a multitude of times in Scripture for just this purpose: to equip us for earthly living in Christ. Consider with me...

Heaven as a reminder of our ultimate identity.
When I was attending university, there was great emphasis placed upon the issue of our Christian calling in the world. Essential to the implications of Reformed theology, we were told, was the so-called "cultural mandate:" an implication of Christ's rule which demands that we go forth and bring every element of culture into submission to Christ.

In and of itself, I had no problem with discussions concerning the "cultural mandate." Yet, there was a grave misuse of the mandate's emphasis upon earthly reform which bordered on heresy. This misapplication of a useful idea was often expressed by making fun of the traditional Gospel hymn which reads: "This world is not my home, I'm just a-passin' through..." I heard people quote that hymn in mockery countless times...sometimes even from the classroom lectern. Perhaps we might view the hymn as a little hokey. But more important than its aesthetic value is the question of whether or not it's biblically false. Does it present us with Gospel truth, or no?

While as a pastor I would probably not suggest including "This Word is Not My Home" in a congregational repertoire for Sunday use, its essential message is a true one: that we are pilgrims in this world, sojourners who are perpetually out of place in a God-cursed culture. Peter has a few words which, I believe, make my point. Having previously labeled the New Testament Church with many of the same names used of Israel in the Old Testament, he then makes the parallel between the Old and New Testament people of God complete by speaking of the New Testament Church as "sojourners and pilgrims." (1 Peter ii.11) Through use of this Scripturally meaningful terminology, Peter is directly affiliating our condition in this life with that of Israel in her wilderness wanderings. Just as Israel was not truly "at home" until he arrived in Canaan, so we are always out of place until we set foot into eternity.

Paul shared Peter's views on the matter: "For our citizenship is in heaven," he says. (Phil.

iii.20) *Heaven is who we are...what we are. Our real, tangible, and historical future in heaven actually defines us as a people, so that we are not firstly defined by our nationality, our color, our culture, or anything else. Our primary identity is in heaven. To lose sight of that is to lose sight of ourselves.*

Heaven as an inspiration to holiness. *Thoughts of heaven may also play a vital role in equipping us in the struggle for holiness. Heaven is the saint's standard of comparison. Heaven is the place where perfection, felicity, beauty, selflessness, and all godly virtues dwell. Heaven, it may be said, is holiness' true home, just as it's our true home. Ask, "Are my attitudes of heaven or are they earthly? Are my thoughts at home in heaven, or would they be out of place? The patterns of my life and behavior, would they be fitting for a citizen of eternity or a citizen of this world?" Such inquiries prove just how practical meditation upon heaven may be!*

But not only may heaven serve as a standard or guideline of behavior, it may also serve as an impetus to holiness in that it inspires thankfulness in the hearts of those who will receive it. If you were to receive some precious gift from somebody, a thing which you could by no means afford on your own, what would your reaction be to such a gift? Wouldn't your tendency, if you had but a scrap of decency in you, be to ask of that person, "What may I do for you?" In the gift of eternal life, you and I have received a gift above and beyond anything we could ever imagine. Our eternal residence will be in a realm in which all the sorrows we have experienced in our lives will be but memories, and all the temptations which have marred us will be left behind. And to think, there will be no end to this condition. We will stand perfectly blessed in the enjoyment of God for all eternity.

When you consider this, does your heart immediately respond, "What may I do for Him that gave me this gift?" I hope so. There's

something for you to worry about if it doesn't. And what is it that God, Who has given you this gift, asks of you? He asks that you obey him. He asks for you to fervently and perpetually pursue holiness. How very practical a contemplation of heaven then becomes in concern to the pursuit of holiness!

Heaven as a sobering dose of reality. *Heaven serves one other practical purpose that I can think of: Heaven reminds us not to expect too much of this life in concern either to happiness or holiness.*

The Apostle Paul, in Romans' eighth chapter, tells us that "the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs until now." (Rom. viii.22) Yet, the Apostle goes on to say that these groanings are not merely for the created order, but for the saints also: "...we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our bodies." (v.23) I find this passage of Scripture so very informative, and solemn. Many folk grow agitated or puzzled because having come to know the Lord, the sorrows and trials of this life yet remain with them. For some, these sorrows and trials even increase in intensity! And, naturally, these ask, "Why?" Here in Paul's words is our answer.

In a way, once we embrace Christ we should expect life's difficulties to grow more acute. While there's no denying the joy of the Lord that gives us strength, there's likewise no denying that our standards and expectations have been radically changed by the Holy Spirit. We have become heaven's citizens with heavenly expectations. Should we be shocked or depressed when the weaknesses of our own lives and relationships grow more forceful in their capacity to disappoint and discourage? The worldling, has no such heavenly expectations. The standards of this world are all he hopes for or ever expects to attain. If he finds
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FAMILIES IN FOCUS

THE WONDER OF ADOPTION – PART 2



Adoption is a wonderful thing as we have seen. How can we be but filled with amazement at the thought that God adopts as His own children those who were by nature of their father the devil. Though man was created by God and were His 'offspring' by creation (Acts 17:28), through the fall of humankind in Adam, man became relationally estranged from God, and being corrupted by sin he no longer bore the image of God in holiness and righteousness.

In God's adoption of sinners we see the greatness of the love of God for lost sinners. They had earned only His displeasure and just wrath. Yet God had made a way, at great cost to Himself, to receive to Himself and to pour out the riches of His love upon them. It is in a small way that this is reflected in the cases of human adoption. Couples pour out love to children not their own in that natural sense, and give evidence of that love in every way that they possibly can, treating their adopted children just as well as parents of their own natural children do. What a privilege of parents, both of natural and of adopted, children to reflect their Father in heaven; what a responsibility that entails!

We saw too that God has established this adoption upon a legal basis, that is, in a way according to His perfect righteousness. Through the substitutionary atonement of Jesus Christ, God does not deny Himself but is just and the justifier of the one who believes in Jesus. There is not a witness in the entire universe that can testify to Gods' adoption of sinners into His family as being illegitimate or unrighteous. (Romans 8:33-39) Again, in the human adoption transaction, certainly in our state and in our age, the legality of any adoption is given due witness. It is a legal transaction that ensures that the parents receive all the rights and privileges of parenting that are

theirs, as if the children were their biological children. Likewise the children have a legal witness of this adoption process so that they would be protected from any outside interference. This ought to serve to their stability and comfort.

There is an aspect to God's adopting of His children that demonstrates clearly the need of parents, both natural and adoptive, of the mighty grace of God. It often happens that children born to their parents have a great physical resemblance to one or the other of their parents. Some children are evidently the children of both their parents, that being manifestly clear just by looking upon them. Recently, one of my daughters was told that she looked just like her dad. We kidded each other as to who was best served by that comment. It does on occasion happen that adopted children look like their adopted parents, but more often than not, it becomes clear by a casual glance that the child is an adopted child through some such obvious differences as perhaps their skin colour. Then there are the mannerisms that children absorb from their parents, everything to the way they hold their heads, the gait that they walk with to their habits and expressions. It becomes obvious to the observer whose children these are.

Outward visual semblance, however, is of no consequent significance. Ultimately it is the nature of the parents, passed on to their children that shows who they are. Even in the cases of adoption, the nature of man shows that the adopted child and the adoptive parents share a commonality. They all have inherited the nature of Adam; the guilt, the corruption, and the curse of Adam becomes evident in the life of all, regardless of the familial relationships. Parents, either natural or adoptive, cannot avoid the

reality of the corrupt nature of their children. And they are powerless to effect a change!

Here is another one of the wonders of God's adoption of sinners into His family; He takes those who are not by nature like Him and adopts and makes them His. He does this in a legal way, but wonder of wonders, He also effects a participation in His holiness and righteousness or as Peter says by the Holy Spirit's inspiration, we are made partakers of His divine nature. (2 Peter 1:2-4) Not that we become divine or share in deity, but only that we share in His holiness and righteousness. It must be noted that there remains a distinct difference between the Sonship of Jesus Christ and the son-ship of Christian believers. Christ is the only begotten Son of God, of the same divine substance as the Father and the Spirit. His adopted children are sons through their union to Christ and they remain His creatures brought into a saving relationship with Him.

This is one of the blessings of spiritual adoption. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs – heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified with together." Romans 8:14-17 God is not only legally able to adopt sinners as His children, but He is mighty and able to effect a moral renovation in the heart of a sinner. God is able to make a sinner into a saint, one who is holy unto the Lord. God's adoption of sinners inevitably and effectually leads to our bearing His image. He does this to those whom He adopts.

It is this effectual work of God in adoption that is the real hope for rearing of adopted children in our families. Actually, it is the only hope for childrearing in the natural family as well. Adoptive parents who desire to see their adopted children embrace the God that they worship, use the very same means that God Himself has appointed to all parents regarding bringing up their children in the fear and nurture of the Lord. They dutifully use those means and at the same time cast themselves upon the Lord whose power alone can change the heart of their dependants. When God in His grace brings about such gospel renewal in the hearts of adopted children we see a great picture of His saving work, a work which magnifies the spiritual adoption of all God's people.

There is not a witness in the entire universe that can testify to Gods' adoption of sinners into His family as being illegitimate or unrighteous.

One other aspect of adoption needs to be mentioned. Adoption is the choice to love someone, usually one in need. A couple 'chooses' to adopt a child, often from an

orphanage, often put there because they are unwanted by their natural parents. What a picture of God's redeeming grace! God has chosen His people from out of a fallen and unlovely human race and has set his love on them. God did not do it because there was anything worthy in men, or any necessity in Him, but because it was His good pleasure to do it. "...having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will" Ephesians 1:5

The next time that we see an adopted child, let us worship our God, our Father in Christ Jesus. Let us be reminded as to our calling as His children. And let us open our hearts with the love of Christ to children who do not experience a father's love.

-by Bill Kroesbergen

YOUTH'S CORNER

Unscramble the letters in each word to discover the bible passage.

YM EHESP ARHE YM CEIVO, NDA I WNOK MEHT,

_____;
DNA HEYT WOLFOL EM. NDA I VIGE MHET

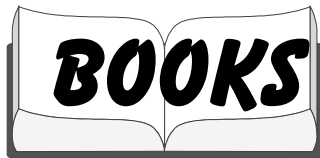
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BOOKS IN REVIEW

This book is written mainly for young peoples but is recommended for parents as well. If we are going to call ourselves Christians, then we should submit to the authority of God's holy Word, the Bible. The Bible makes it

clear-Christians are to marry Christians! In our day we often see Christian young people flirting with disaster by having close relationships with non-Christians that place them in a position of great temptation. Often they give what they believe are plausible excuses for doing so; the foremost of which they would say is evangelism. What they fail to realize is that their emotions are stronger than they realize and Satan uses this method to ensnare them so that eventually they begin to justify (even using the Word of God) their dating or marry a non-Christian. The bottom line must be: Christians do not date or marry non-Christians. Neil Richardson has elegantly and biblically defended, the fact that the Bible, not our emotions and feelings, must be our guide in these most important areas of life. The book can be ordered from Day One Publications in England.

*Courting Disaster:
Should Christians and Non-Christians
Date Each Other?
by Neil Richardson
76 pages*

-by Cope Jonkman



MISSION SPOTLIGHT

GOSPEL FOR ASIA

ABOUT GOSPEL FOR ASIA

Planting Churches in Unreached Areas

In each aspect of Gospel for Asia's ministry, the primary aim is to plant churches among the unreached - those who have never heard the Gospel.

Sending Native Missionaries

Gospel for Asia trains and sends native missionaries because they have proven extremely effective. They are already familiar with the language and culture, and they live at the level of the people they serve, thus removing many social barriers.

100 Percent Goes to the Field

Gospel for Asia sends 100 percent of the money you donate for work on the mission field to the field. Nothing is taken out for administrative expenses.

ABOUT K.P. YOHANNAN

K.P. Yohannan is the founder and president of Gospel for Asia, a mission organization involved in evangelism and church planting in the unreached regions of Asia. Currently Gospel for Asia supports over 14,500 church planters in the heart of the 10/40 Window.

Born in a remote village of South India, K.P. Yohannan's personal journey toward spiritual reality began at the age of eight when he gave his heart to Christ. While he was still a young boy, his mother began fasting each week, praying God would call one of her six sons into full-time Gospel ministry. Her prayers were answered in 1966 when 16 year-old K.P., her youngest, volunteered to serve in North India with Operation Mobilization.

From 1974 to 1979 K.P. attended Criswell Bible College in Dallas, Texas, where he earned his B.A. in Biblical Studies. He was also awarded an honorary doctor of divinity degree from Hindustan Bible College in Madras, India.

During the time he attended Criswell, he pastored a church in Dallas. However, he was unable to forget the millions still lost without Christ in his homeland of India, and knew God was calling him to reach his own people. In 1978 K.P. resigned his pastorate and organized what is now Gospel for Asia.

GFA has grown rapidly and has quickly become one of the most effective mission forces in Asia today. The ministry has expanded beyond India to support native missions in Nepal, Myanmar, and many other Asian nations. At the 54 Gospel for Asia missionary Bible colleges, over 8,000 church planters are being trained to reach the unreached.

In addition to traveling and speaking in North America, K.P. spends half of his time in Asia, consulting with Christian leaders and speaking at missionary gatherings. He's also heard throughout India on a daily Christian radio program.

*K.P. has authored more than 200 books published in India and 5 in the United States, *Revolution in World Missions* (ISBN 0-88419-195-8), *The Road to Reality* (ISBN 0-88419-250-4), *Why the World Waits* (ISBN 0-88419-303-9), *Living in the Light of Eternity* (ISBN 0-9632190-6-5), and *Reflecting His Image* (ISBN 1-56599-999-1).*

He lives near Dallas with his wife Gisela. They have two grown children, Daniel and Sarah.

WHY NATIVE MISSIONS?

Today the reality is... that 97 percent of the world's unreached lives in the 10/40 Window, a rectangular shaped area on our globe extending from West Africa to East Asia, from 10 degrees north to 40 degrees north of the equator. In this part of the world, millions live with little or no chance of ever hearing the Gospel. The Window also encompasses the majority of the world's Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists.

The darkest of all areas within the 10/40 Window is Asia. Over 80,000 die every day without knowing about the love of Jesus Christ. 500,000 villages in India alone have never heard the Gospel.

Although 97 percent of the world's unreached lives in the 10/40 Window, less than .05 percent of our total resources as the Church in the West are being sent to help share the Good News. Truly there is a staggering amount of work to do. However, with native missionaries we can reach them!

With few or no cultural barriers, native missionaries can... readily preach the Gospel to those who, unlike their western counterparts, have never heard. Although native missionaries face do many difficult obstacles as they take the message from village to village, they still have an enormous advantage over their coworkers from non-Asian lands.

Today, over 85 percent of Asian countries do not allow western missionaries to come and freely preach the Gospel and plant churches.

In the eyes of the people, native missionaries do not represent a foreign country or a strange religion. They already know the language or can easily learn a local dialect. A native missionary can be sent out at a fraction of the cost of a Western missionary. In fact, the average cost is only \$1,100 to \$1,800 per year compared to over \$75,000 per year for a foreign missionary. The possibility of reaching Asia's multitudes through native missionaries in our generation is very real as thousands are being trained to plant churches across Asia!

Thousands of native workers... are being trained and sent to the mission fields of Asia every year through Gospel for Asia. But many more are needed if the millions in these countries are to hear the Gospel in our lifetime.

To date 54 Bible colleges have been established in India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and at the Bhutan border. Currently, nearly 9,000 young men and women are currently receiving training.

The quality of GFA students is incredible. Over 98 percent of our graduates minister in places where the Gospel has never before been preached. Frequently, our graduates will establish a new fellowship within their first year on the field.

This incredible fruit from native missions work is being reproduced across Asia! On average, our missionaries establish approximately 15 fellowships every day in Asia among unreached villages and people groups.

But none of this has come easily. Our native missionaries are paying a high price of suffering, hardship and intense persecution to see churches established.

The churches planted in each culture are truly indigenous in character, self-governing, self-propagating and, as soon as possible, self-supporting. Thousands of native brothers and sisters are waiting to be sent. They just need your help!

Your part in winning Asia... is just as important as that of the workers on the field. Although they are willing and eager to go, they are limited by the resources given to provide a small room to rent, food to eat, and Bibles and tracts to distribute.

Without support from Christians around the world, our brothers and sisters in Asia simply would not be able to complete the task of sharing Christ with every village and people group.

It takes only between \$90 and \$150 per month to support a native missionary through Gospel for Asia. You can help support one worker with a monthly donation of \$30. As a sponsor, you are asked to pray regularly for your missionary. When you become a sponsor, your missionary's picture and testimony will be sent to you promptly.

For more information regarding Gospel for Asia, you can visit their website at www.gfa.org

HEAVEN'S GREAT EARTHLY GOOD

(continued from inside front cover)

himself or a matter which concerns him in an above average condition, he counts himself "lucky." Not so heaven's citizen. His standard has become nothing less than perfection. His role-model no one less spotless than Christ Himself. How can life in this shattered world hope not to disappoint! Disappointment in this life and a growing personal holiness live under the same roof.

A final thought. As our meditation comes to a close, I would like you to ask yourself an honest question: "To what degree, if any, does meditation upon heaven play a role in my walk with Christ?" There are some, sadly, who would view such a question as encouraging an "other-worldly" or "impractical" spirituality. Without taking the time getting into the details of such an improper theological position, allow me simply to say that those who would count my question dubious are missing out on one very important fact: that the Bible itself is literally filled with

contemplations of heaven. Truly, heaven stands as one of the more significant objects of discussion in Scripture. One gets the impression, therefore, that the Holy Spirit is very concerned with getting us to think about heaven!

Truth be told, a piety lacking a fervent, heavenly focus is to be gravely pitied. Such a religion will be gray, spiritless, easily discouraged, and worldly in its emphasis. On the other hand, a faith which looks heavenward is not only a more healthy faith, it is, I strongly believe, a TRUE and SAVING FAITH (cf. Heb. xi.10). When a man is a citizen of a kingdom he loves, and is for a time separated from it, he dreams of returning home. He often speaks of it. He constantly thinks upon it. He yearns for his home. It should be no different when a man becomes a citizen of the greatest Kingdom of all. If heavenly yearnings are absent or even despised, perhaps it is because heavenly citizenship is a stranger to us.

-by Pastor Ludt

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