

Castles in the Sand

IF WE'RE NOT CAREFUL, WE CAN INVEST A LOT OF ENERGY DEVELOPING PROJECTS THAT HAVE NO ETERNAL VALUE. WE NEED TO BUILD ACCORDING TO GOD'S PLAN, NOT OUR OWN.

Editor's note: The following excerpt is a portion of the record of the Rountrees' visions of heaven and the revelations the Holy Spirit gave them. The excerpt begins right after "Anna" has been directed by an angel to take the path to the throne room and go see her heavenly Father.

Much to my amazement, the path on which I had begun to walk seemed to be in motion, like a conveyor belt or a moving sidewalk. I looked down at my bare feet standing on its smooth, advancing surface.

It was then that I noticed another pair of feet beside mine. I was not traveling alone. I looked up into the face of a large angel.

"Hello," he said formally.

"Hello," I answered.

He was about 7 feet tall, with blonde hair that seemed to have lights in it. Perhaps the light was within him and shone out through his head and then his hair. I could not tell. His face was grave, with a demeanor of authority. He wore a long white robe and had large, strong, white wings.

"Who are you?" I continued.

I am a messenger," the angel replied.

I could feel power emanating from him. "What kind of messages do you deliver?" I asked.

"Promises," he said. "I help to bring God's faithful promises

to mankind.”

“Have you been delivering promises on earth?” I asked aloud.

“Yes,” he said, pausing to weigh his words, “yours.”

“Mine!” I exclaimed.

“Yours,” he reiterated. “When you came into the kingdom, the Lord told you that you would see into heaven, did He not?”

“Yes,” I answered vaguely, looking out over the passing landscape. I was searching my memory. “That was years ago.”

THE PROMISE Then I remembered. When I had come to the Lord 20 years before, it had been a time of miracles. God had spoken several promises to me that related to my life on earth. Although I did not keep these pledges in the forefront of my thoughts, I realized that He was fulfilling most of them daily.

But this one promise, this amazing promise—to see into heaven—had not been fulfilled. At first I looked and longed for its fulfillment; after a time, however, immediate demands crowded out anticipation until truly I had forgotten.

“Nothing happened,” I continued, “and...” My voice trailed off. I started to say that I had forgotten.

“However, God has not forgotten,” the angel said, “and the fullness of time has come.”

I hardly heard him for I was trying to piece together the past with the present.

“Being ignorant of God’s ways does not negate their functioning,” he said. “Of course, great unbelief does hinder.”

“But what does it mean?” I asked, searching his face.

"I do not have the authority to tell you. Ask your Father. The Revealer of Mysteries will reveal this mystery to you."

I was lost in the wonder of it, so he continued, "Our God is faithful and true, and He loves you."

It seems that at times of great impact or distress, one can think of the most unusual things. Suddenly I wanted to know his name.

"What is your name?" I asked.

"Seek for me in Scripture. Your Father wishes you to grow in confirmation from the written Word of all that you see and hear. Seek for my name," he said, and then he was gone.

THE TOUR Before I could adjust to his sudden disappearance, I heard the distinct sound of a voice projected through a megaphone, as on a bus tour: "Pleasant hills, soft turf, cool streams..." I turned to see a winged angel deftly weaving in and out of people farther ahead of me on the moving path, sort of like a ticket collector on a merry-go-round.

He too had on a white robe, but on his head was a blue hat on which was embroidered TOUR GUIDE. Around his waist was a silver belt from which hung a silver coin exchanger.

However, I never saw him ask anyone for the price of the tour. His voice was high and as loud as a barker at a fair; he was pointing out areas of interest in Paradise. "All streams flow from beneath the throne. All proceed from the same source," he said, weaving through a group of people. "We'll stop here so that you can enjoy this site."

The moving path stopped, and people farther up the line got off to look at the view. The tour guide turned to answer someone's question, so I too got off, walked over to a stream and sat beside it.

It was the first time I had been able to look closely at the

flora of Paradise. The grass looked like grass, but its properties were undeniably different. You could walk on it, and it would return to its former position once the pressure had been removed from it. There were several, formal plantings of flower beds near the stream, but again, these were not flowers as we know them on earth. They were perfect.

I stretched out my whole body at the water's edge and put my hand into the stream. Cool. But is it water? I asked myself. No, I thought, I believe it's light. A group of angels passed overhead. They were flying in a wedge formation like a flock of geese. When I returned to look at the water, another face was looking into the stream with me.

THE SAND PILE "Hello," a child's voice said.

I turned and sat up to face her.

"Are you on tour?" she asked.

"Yes," I answered, staring at her. She appeared to be a child of about 5 or 6 years old, but she was shining. She had no wings, and her eyes looked old beyond the years displayed in her small stature.

She wore a pale calico pinafore over a faintly colored, short shift. Her hair was curly and tousled as if from play. She looked like a little girl, but every so often I could see through her arm or leg and knew her to be a spirit. She was intriguing.

"Have you just begun the tour?" she questioned.

"Yes, I think so. Why?" I asked.

"I wanted you to come play with me," she said.

"Play with you?" I asked incredulously.

"In my sand pile," she answered. "Can you come?"

Just then the tour guide walked over to us, and I stood. I was torn between getting to know this small spirit and continuing my tour.

"May I go is your name?" I asked her, bending over to question her as one might question a child.

"Crystal Clear."

"May I go with Crystal Clear for a few minutes?" I asked the tour guide.

"Oh, all right," he said. "Meet us at the almond grove when you finish."

"How will I find it?" I asked.

"Crystal Clear will show you the way."

"Yes, I will," she said excitedly. "Come along with me."

THE LESSON Suddenly we were on a vast shore line, but there was no sea. It looked as though the beach was still there, but no ocean. In the sand were all manner of red and blue children's buckets and shovels.

"Haven't you always wanted to build a sand castle?" she asked.

I chuckled, "Well, not really, Crystal Clear."

"Yes, you have," she continued. "Think about it. You've wanted to build on earth, and all of that is sand. When the tide comes in, it goes away. Even the tools for building remain longer than a sand castle, for the tools are from God.

"But if you use them to build on sand instead of in eternity, what do you have? A waste of time." She shrugged. "You have wanted a sand castle. It's silly really, isn't it?"

"I suppose so," I said quietly. I did not want to admit it, but she was right. I had wanted a home and financial

security—and to accomplish something for God, of course—but I had tunnel vision for the life on earth.

I had Christianized the gospel of the world and bought into my own packaging. It was a bitter thing to hear that the focus of my life had been fleshly and worthless to God and that I had not gotten away with it.

“Do you want to play?” she continued cheerily.

I felt a little sick. I thought I would change the subject.

“Why such a large sand area?” I asked.

“Many want to build on sand, so we let them. It gets it out of their systems, you know. Maybe if you build on the sand right now, you would feel, ‘I’ve done that.’”

“It seems a silly thing to do,” I said stonily.

“Well, yes, it does. However, building on the earth is really the same: silly toys that are long forgotten here, toys that do not even gather dust in the attic but disintegrate and are totally forgotten here. A waste of God’s precious time,” she said much too breezily.

I had the taste of a copper penny in my mouth. “Is it all right if we do not play today?” I asked.

“Oh, all right,” she said. “Do you want to join the tour?”

“I don’t know,” I said, dazed. I felt as though I had been hit by a truck. “I like your name, Crystal Clear,” I said acidly. “It’s apt.”

“Maybe a little rest,” she said, as if she had not heard my remark. “Now, remember to come back to see us. We love you here; do keep in touch.”

She held up her tiny hands, and I held up mine to reciprocate. Light came from hers into mine and knocked me softly

backwards.

I lay on the air, as someone might lie on a gurney while being wheeled through hospital halls. My arms were across my chest, and I floated down the path like a patient returning from surgery.

And so I was. Crystal Clear's words had cut through me like a scalpel, revealing the inanity of my "building projects" and exposing my lack of vision and the shallowness of my heart. As I floated there, I could only pour out my regrets to God and vow never to play in the sand with His tools again.

Read a companion devotional.

"Anna" Rountree is actually a husband-and-wife team who, after years of pastoral ministry, received a visitation of the Lord and recorded it in the book, *The Heavens Opened* (Creation House), from which this excerpt is taken.