

Billy Graham: Where I Am

A young man with an incurable disease told me, “I don’t think I would be afraid to die if I knew what to expect after death.” Evidently he had not heard of what God “has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Cor. 2:9).

This young man had within him the fear of death. By nature, we fear the unknown. But the Bible says that the grave is not the end for anyone but rather the beginning of eternity (Is. 1:28-31).

The child of God has no need to fear death. God has not left us with the spirit of hopelessness, for He is “the God of hope” (Rom. 15:13). Death, for the Christian, is overcome by the reality of hope—heaven.

We see this assurance in John. Jesus prepared for His death by telling His disciples He was going away (John 13:36). But they could not fathom what He was telling them. They had walked with Him and fellowshiped together. He was their Teacher and Friend.

Then Jesus spoke some of the most treasured words in Scripture: “Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God. Believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places. If it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you. ... I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, you may be also. You know where I am going, and you know the way” (John 14:1-4).

This was a revelation to the disciples. This is a picture painted with words—for He is the Word. A heavenly home is described in the Greek as a “mansion”—a permanent, eternal abode. As humans we place a great deal of value on our homes. Amid all the changes that will come, when we no longer have an earthly home, we have a promise—we will be with Him forever.

Mystery of Heaven

Heaven seems a mystery to many people. They wonder if heaven is above the lofty clouds, or if heaven will come down to earth. When I am asked, "Where is heaven?" I simply answer: Heaven is where Jesus is. He told His disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you ... that where I am, you may be also!" (John 14:3). So when my earthly life has ended, and you wonder where I've gone, this will be the answer: I will be with Jesus—that's where I am.

What about you? Do you know where you will be when you step into eternity? The ultimate destination is not found in a slick vacation package. The ultimate destination is heaven—found in Jesus Christ. Nothing can transcend this wonderful place. Jesus said, "If a man loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our home with him" (John 14:23).

Nicodemus was a Pharisee who had heard of Jesus and was interested in what He had to say. He said, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher who has come from God. For no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him" (John 3:2).

Jesus changed the conversation from the miracles of which Nicodemus inquired to the miracle of a new life in Christ and said, "Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

Key to Eternal Life

This term "born again" has fascinated people for centuries. It simply means "born from above"—born into the family of God. We are all God's creation, but we are not all God's children. Those who are born only once (physical birth) will experience physical and spiritual death, what the Bible calls the second death. But those who are born twice (physically and spiritually) will die only a physical death because they will be resurrected to life eternal. This is why Jesus came.

Nicodemus could only see human life; Jesus was speaking of spiritual life. What Nicodemus needed was a new heart. No matter how hard Nicodemus worked to live right, he fell short of being born again.

The Bible does not record what happened after their meeting; if the book of John ended there, we might not know what became of Nicodemus. But John 7 tells of a debate that later arose among the Jewish leaders about Jesus (John 7:33-34). Jesus knew the chief priests were planning to seize Him, but He spoke of returning to His heavenly home. Then the Pharisees asked one another if any of them believed Jesus, and Scripture says that Nicodemus spoke up for Him (John 7:47-50). Jesus' words had illuminated Nicodemus's darkened heart.

We don't see Nicodemus again until he appears after Christ's death on the cross, bringing a mixture of spices to use in preparing Jesus' body for burial (John 19:39). Most of Christ's followers had fled, but here we see Nicodemus caring for Him. It seems that even in death's shadow, Nicodemus had eternity on his mind.

A mother and son once lived in a miserable attic. Years before, she had married against her parents' wishes and had gone with her husband to live in a strange land. But her husband soon died, and she managed with great difficulty to secure the bare necessities. The boy's happiest times were when his mother told of her father's house in the old country, a place with grassy lawns, enormous trees, wide porches and delicious meals. The child longed to live there.

One day the postman knocked at the door with a letter. The woman recognized the handwriting and with trembling fingers opened the envelope that held a check and a slip of paper with two words: "Come home."

'Come Home'

A similar experience will come to all who know Christ. Someday

you will receive this brief message: "The Father says come home."

Those who know Christ are not afraid to die. Death is not the grim reaper. Death to the Christian is "going home." No one who has died in the Lord would ever want to come back to this life. To depart and be with Christ, Paul said, "is far better" (Phil. 1:23). The Bible says that we are strangers and pilgrims on earth seeking a homeland, a place prepared for us by God (Heb. 11:16) where the Lord will receive us into "eternal dwellings" (Luke 16:9). I have never known a man or woman to receive Christ and ever regret it.

Perhaps you have never bent your will to God's will and been born again. You can do that now, for He desires that all be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). Right now you can make your decision for Christ and start on the road that leads to a heavenly home.

I pray you settle life's most important question: Where will you spend eternity?

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Billy Graham is a world-renowned preacher, evangelist and author. He has delivered the gospel message to more people face to face than anyone in history and has ministered on every continent of the world in more than 185 countries.

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