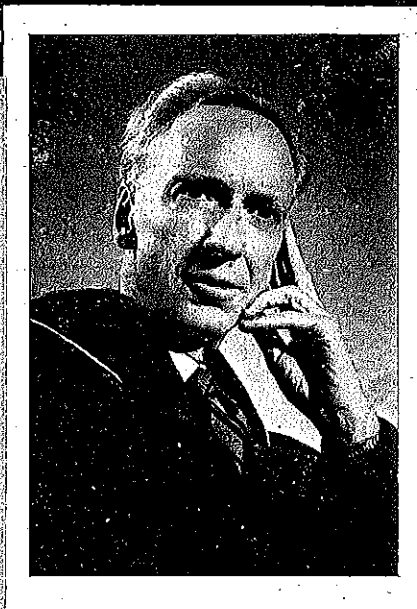


**THE COUNTRY  
I LOVE BEST**



OSWALD J. SMITH

## Not These, But Him

Rev. Oswald J. Smith

B. D. Ackley

1. 'Twas not the church that saved my soul, Nor yet my life so free from sin;  
2. 'Twas not my works that saved my soul, Nor yet my zeal, my pray'rs, my tears;  
3. 'Twas not the law that saved my soul, Nor yet the deeds of vir-tus done;

'Twas Je-sus Christ, the Lamb of God, He res-cued me, He took me in,  
'Twas Je-sus Christ, the Son of God, He bore my sins, He calmed my fears.  
'Twas Je-sus Christ, the Gift of God, He bled, He died, my soul He won.

### CHORUS

Oh, hal-le-lu-jah, praise His name! 'Twas Je-sus Christ who made me whole;

He res-cued me from sin and shame, He bled, He died, He saved my soul.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE COUNTRY I LOVE BEST

**D**URING the past years of my life I have visited many different countries—forty-four to be exact. To some of these countries I have gone again and again, to others but once. Some I have enjoyed, others I have disliked. In very few have I felt at home. Always I have longed to return to Canada, my native land.

There are a few countries like those of North America, where it is possible to have any kind of climate and scenery desired; where there is an abundance of everything and but little to fear. To these countries thousands in Europe and other lands long to go. They yearn for freedom from want and from totalitarian governments.

But there is not a country in the world where any one of us would want to live for ever. Even in the country we love best there is so much sin, so much crime and lawlessness, so much drunkenness, debauchery and selfishness, that we long for a better environment. War and bloodshed, poverty, sickness and death have brought us such sorrow and heartache that we feel like strangers and foreigners in a world that is not our home.

Let me tell you of a country where there are no tears or heartaches, a country where there is no sickness, pain or death. It is a country free from war and bloodshed, where no one is poor and none are rich. The people who live in this country never get tired; they carry no burdens and they never grow old. No one ever says goodbye, for separations are unknown, and there are no disappointments.

In the country of which I am speaking there is no sin, for no one ever does wrong. There are no accidents of

any kind. You will travel for thousands of miles and never see a cemetery or meet a funeral procession. There are no undertakers and no morgues. You will never see crêpe on the doors, for no one ever dies. There they need no grave-diggers, and coffins are unknown. The clothes that are worn are bright and glistening, and no one dresses in mourning.

I know a country where nothing ever spoils; the flowers never lose their fragrance and the leaves are always green. There are no thunder-storms, no erupting volcanoes, and no earthquakes. Upon those fair shores hurricanes and tidal waves never beat. There are no germs or fevers, no pestilences of any kind. The sun never shines and yet it is always light, for there is no night there. It is never too hot and never too cold. The temperature is exactly right. No clouds ever darken the sky, and harsh winds never blow.

There are no drunkards in this country, for no one ever drinks, and tobacco is unknown. None are immoral; men as well as women are pure. There are no illegitimate babies. Prisons, jails and reformatories never darken the landscape. Doors have no locks and windows no bars, for thieves and robbers never enter there. No lustful books are read, and as for unclean pictures they are never seen. There are no apartments, for all live in homes. No taxes are paid and rents are unknown.

Yes, and let me tell you something else. There are no cripples to be seen anywhere. None are deformed or lame. Nor is anyone blind, deaf or dumb. Hence, homes for incurables have never been built, for all are healthy, all are well and strong. No beggars clutter the streets, for none are destitute and all have enough. Leprosy and cancer, palsy and tuberculosis are words that this country has never heard. No asylums are there, for none are feeble-minded. Doctors are never needed and hospitals are unknown.

You ask me how I know all this? Have I been there? No, I have not yet had the privilege of visiting this wonderful country of which I speak, but others have. And One, at least, who has lived there for a long, long time, has come and told me a great deal about it. He has now gone back again, for He was very lonely and often homesick when He was here. But one of these days He is coming back again, and meanwhile He has promised me a trip to His native land. Ever since He told me about it I have been longing to go. And from what He says, I am sure I will never want to come back. I have decided to make His country mine. In fact, I have already taken out my citizenship papers.

I cannot understand why everyone does not want to go. But they don't. Many, I find, like their own country better, and prefer to indulge in the sins to which they are accustomed, even though it means heart-ache and suffering, sorrow and disappointment. I cannot understand it, but it is true. I tell them about this country and they only laugh. They do not believe me, and if they do, they don't care. I cannot persuade them to go with me. Some day the quota will be full and then it will be too late. How foolish they are!

#### A MARVELLOUS CITY

In this country there is a marvellous city, a city larger by far than any city I have ever seen, and beautiful beyond description. This city is 1,500 miles wide, 1,500 miles long and, most amazing of all, it is 1,500 miles high. I don't know whether it is a square or a cube, but it doesn't matter, for it staggers my imagination anyway. It would cover the whole of the United States from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, and from the Atlantic Ocean almost to the mountains—this one city. And then it is so high that if it were divided into stories, each one a hundred feet above the other, it would be so commodious that there would be room in abundance

for all people of all ages. The wall around it measures 216 feet in height and it is made of jasper. It is supported by twelve foundations named after the twelve apostles, and these foundations are overlaid with all kinds of precious stones. What a city!

The light that illuminates it is like the radiance of a jasper stone. It is entered through gates of which there are twelve, each one guarded by an angel. These twelve gates are named after the twelve tribes of Israel, and there are three on each of the four sides of the city. Each gate is a single pearl. The city itself is of pure gold, and there is a wide boulevard running through it, thousands of miles in length, also made of gold, a gold that resembles clear glass. What a glorious city!

There is a beautiful river in the city that flows all the way from the throne of the King and winds around in every direction. Its clear, pure water is never contaminated. On the river's side stands a tree, full of life and capable of bringing healing to multiplied thousands beyond the city's walls. It is a city that no curse has ever blighted, and where nothing ever withers or decays.

At the very heart of the city is the glittering palace of the King. His throne is surrounded by a gorgeous rainbow, similar to an emerald. At the foot of the throne are twenty-four seats, each one occupied by holy beings dressed in white, and on the head of every one is a golden crown. The approach to the throne looks like a pavement of clear, crystal glass. Four magnificent beings stand on guard and chant praises to the King, before whom they kneel in worship. How I wish I could describe it, but I cannot. Words are so inadequate. You will have to see it for yourself.

Jesus called this amazing city "The New Jerusalem", and "The Holy City". At other times He spoke of it as "My Father's House". What a beautiful expression! David, you remember, designated it "The House of the Lord". Then, too, Jesus said that it contained many

rooms, or places of abode. So that it is really and truly a home, both commodious and beautiful. Generally it is alluded to as "heaven", and while there are many references to it in a Book called the Bible, there is only one full and complete description of it, and that is in the last two chapters.

These chapters tell us that only those who qualify are allowed to enter this wonderful city. No defilement is allowed. No liars are permitted within its jasper walls. All unbelievers are barred. Murderers, spiritual mediums, and those who indulge in immorality of any kind are kept out.

#### WHERE IS HEAVEN?

Where will it be located, this enchanted city? From this same Book, in Isaiah lxx. 17, lvi. 22; 2 Peter iii. 7, 12, 13, we get a lot of light. One of these days, we are informed, this earth of ours and the atmosphere that surrounds it is to be destroyed, not by water, but by fire. As long as there is a rainbow in the sky we are assured that the earth will never again be destroyed by water as it was in the days of Noah; but we are told most definitely that it will be destroyed by fire, and that then a new earth, with a new atmosphere, will take its place. Here are some of the predictions:

"The heavens and the earth are kept in store, reserved unto fire. The heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth. Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. The new heavens and the new earth which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord. I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away."

There are but two things stated about this new earth.

*First*, there will be "no more sea". Now the sea separates. In the new earth the inhabitants will never be separated from one another. There will be no oceans. *Second*, righteousness. "Wherein dwelleth righteousness", is the way it is stated. In this world there is very little righteousness, but when God re-creates the earth, righteousness will prevail. What a joy it is to know that sin at last will be gone and that righteousness will triumph.

Now it is on this new earth, an earth without a sea and characterised by righteousness, that the city I have been describing is to be located. Here is the prediction: "And I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and shall be their God" (Rev. xxi. 3).

So the King Himself will dwell among men in this city on the new earth. "And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads" (Rev. xxii. 4).

Best of all, Jesus, our Lord, will be there, but oh, how different from what He was when last He was here. I cannot improve on John's picture of Him, for he saw Him in His glory, and he says He was "clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength" (Rev. i. 13-16).

"Fear not," He cries with triumphant voice, "I am the first and the last; I am he that liveth and was dead;

and, behold, I am alive for evermore" (Rev. i. 17, 18). Hallelujah! What a victory!

This, my friends, is heaven. This is the city in the country of which I have been telling you, the City of God. Do you not want to go there? Remember, it is a prepared place but it is for a prepared people. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord," declares God, "that they may rest from their labours" (Rev. xiv. 13). So to enjoy the promised rest and happiness you must "die in the Lord". And if you should die out of the Lord, heaven will never be yours.

To "die in the Lord" you must have the Lord. You must accept him as your Saviour. And then you must live in the Lord. If you are now in the Lord and if you are living in the Lord, then you will some day "die in the Lord". He must be yours first down here, and you must be His. Then you will go to that country and dwell in that city through all the countless ages of Eternity.

#### WHAT ABOUT OUR LOVED ONES?

I wonder how they live, those who have already gone to this wonderful country? What do they do, how much do they know; do they remember us down here, and will we recognise them when we see them again? I am thinking of my little sister, Hazel, who left me when she was only ten. Perhaps you, too, are thinking of someone, a mother, a husband, or a very dear friend, and you long to know more about them.

Let me say that we can know nothing but what is revealed in God's Word. All else is idle speculation and uncertainty. Séances cannot help us. Spiritual mediums, Satan's emissaries, can only lead us astray. Human philosophy is vain and senseless. Only God knows. Then "to the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. viii. 20).



FIRST, ARE THEY CONSCIOUS OR HAVE THEY  
GONE TO SLEEP?

"So great a crowd of witnesses" (Heb. xii. 1). Who are they? Why, they are the heroes of faith in chapter eleven. Are they asleep, then? Not if they are watching us as we run the Christian race. Not if they are witnesses.

Abraham, Samuel, Moses, and the martyrs of Revelation, were all alive, active, and conscious after death. They did not sleep.

"I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," said Jesus (Matt. xxii. 32). He is the God of those who are alive and know it.

"Blessed (happy) are the dead" (Rev. xiii. 14). How could they be happy—or miserable—if they were unconscious, if they were asleep? One has to be awake and conscious to experience happiness.

In Isaiah xiv. 9-11, the dead are moved, stirred up—they speak. How then can they be unconscious; how can they be asleep? So too in Luke xvi. 19-31.

Revelation vi. 9-11 states that the dead cry with loud voices. Then they must be awake. Certainly they are not unconscious.

"To depart and be with Christ . . . is far better" (Phil. i. 23).

Of what value would such a statement be if they were not conscious? How would they know they were with Christ if they were asleep? Is Christ now asleep, or is He alive and conscious? You know as well as I do that He is sitting on His Father's throne, interceding for us. If He were asleep He would be lying down and He would not be interceding. They are with Him and they know it. Hence it is far better. How could it be far better if they were asleep? Better then to be serving Him here. No, my friends, your departed loved ones are not asleep; they are alive and conscious.

"Where I am, there you may be also" (John xiv. 3). "Be with me where I am" (John xvii. 24). "Thou shalt follow me afterwards" (John xiii. 36).

Precious promises, these! Our loved ones who die in Christ follow Him to where He has gone. They are with Him and they know it. Otherwise, of what value would it be to be there? Consciousness is essential to knowledge. It is this incentive that makes us long to go there. We want to be with Him.

"Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke xxiii. 43).

Wonderful promise! That very day, the day they died, the thief was to be with Him. To lie down in sleep? No, a thousand times, no! To see Him and to know Him. To recognise Him and to rejoice with Him. And it was all to take place that very day. Words could not express it better; and any changing of the punctuation will only do violence to the text.

"Absent from the body, present with the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 8).

That settles it. That dear one of yours—for years he was present in the body and absent from his Lord. Now he is gone. The body, his tabernacle, the tent or house in which he lived his earthly life, is cold and still. That is because the tenant has moved out. Where is he? With Christ—present, or at home, with the Lord. And when you visit the grave, you must not say, "Father lies here". That would not be true. Only the house with which you were familiar lies crumbling beneath your feet. He himself is gone. And now, in a more glorious life, in a new world, strong, well and happy, he is with the Saviour whom he loved. Absent from the body but consciously present with the Lord. They do not sleep, for "his servants shall serve him". They live as they have never lived before. Why, then, mourn as those who have no hope?

SECOND, DO THEY REMEMBER US, OR ARE WE FORGOTTEN?

Did Joseph ever for a moment forget Jacob, his father or his brothers, when he was in Pharaoh's palace?

Did Moses forget his brethren, the children of Israel, when he was the son of Pharaoh's daughter?

Did the little Israelite maiden forget her loved ones and the prophet Elisha when she was in the mansion of Naaman, the Syrian?

How could they forget? "Love never faileth." Do we cease loving when we go to another country?

Are we not urged to run with patience the race set before us because of the cloud of witnesses watching from above? (Heb. xii. 1). Who are they, those who are so tremendously interested in what we are doing? Why, they are the saints and prophets of all the ages. They are our loved ones who have gone on before. Are you not conscious of them? Do you know that they can never, never forget you, and that they are watching and praying for you as you struggle on towards the goal? Are they not waiting even now for your coming? How can they be completely satisfied until you join them?

Of course they know. They rejoice in your victories and they are cheered by the news they get of your triumphs in Christ. We do not forget the countries from which we emigrate, no matter how long ago it was. We cannot forget the scenes of our childhood and the friends we knew in early life. We think of them, oh, so often. I am sure that those who have gone on before are thinking of us; they cannot forget. We are ever in their thoughts.

*I want you to know you are never forgotten,  
I think of you constantly all the day long;  
The things you have said will remain with me ever,  
Your presence is with me although you are gone.*

THIRD, WILL WE RECOGNISE THEM WHEN WE SEE THEM AGAIN?

David, you remember, in speaking of his little child, exclaimed: "I shall go to him." Does that mean that he will be able to find him, one tiny baby, among the millions in heaven; then, when he does find him, recognise him as his? It does. David did go to him and David has been with him, even now, for many, many centuries. He didn't say he would go where he had gone; he said he would go to *him*. If David would know him again, when he had only seen him a few days, surely you and I will know our loved ones who were with us for years before they left.

Did not the three disciples recognise Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration? Most certainly they did, even though they had never seen them in the flesh.

Did not Saul recognise Samuel when God permitted him to return to earth? Unquestionably he did.

Did not Mary recognise Jesus after His resurrection? You know she did.

Yes, and the disciples, they also knew Him when they saw Him again.

Stephen, too, saw Him and recognised Him in the Glory.

Again and again we have the expression "gathered to his people"; in the Old Testament Scriptures. What does it mean? Exactly what it says. Isaac and Jacob were both gathered to their people, their own kith and kin, and the members of their own families.

Jacob said he would go to his son. Not to the grave, mark you, for his son had been, as he thought, devoured by wild beasts and was not even in a grave. No, he said he would go to his son. Would he not recognise him when he saw him? Of course he would.

Dear heart, why despair? He hasn't gone for ever. She hasn't left you for good. You will meet again.

Those eyes into which you gazed in love, you will gaze into once more. That voice you used to hear, you will hear it again. The one with whom you walked on earth, you will walk with in heaven. Love can never die. Love is eternal. A little while and the curtain will be drawn aside for you to enter and they will be there to welcome you Home.

#### THE CITY OF GOD

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain" (Rev. xxi. 3-4).

"There shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. xxii. 3-5).

"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. vii. 16-17).

This, then, is the Country about which I have been trying to tell you. Do you not now want to go? Do you know any other like it? Why not start to get ready for the journey? It isn't difficult. Just open your heart to Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Country, and let Him come in and save you. Then you, too, will love it as I do. And one of these days, when the journey of life has ended, you will enter the pearly gates of that beautiful City and dwell there for ever more.

## CHAPTER II

### THERE IS NO DIFFERENCE

**R**OMANS iii. 22-3: "There is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Strange words, these, but true nevertheless. "There is no difference." What do they mean?

#### ONLY TWO

There are only two companies of people in this world today: those who are guilty and those who are not guilty, the saved and the lost, the sinners and the saints. And you, my friend, belong to one or the other. You are either a Christian or you are not a Christian.

There are only two ways: the Broad Way that leads to destruction and death, and the Narrow Way that leads to heaven and eternal life. And you, my fellow traveller, are on the one or the other, the Broad or the Narrow, for there is no third—no way between—you are either travelling to heaven or to hell.

There are only two Masters, God and the Devil, and you are serving either one or the other, for "no man can serve two masters". Therefore, let me ask you: To which company do you belong? Where are you going? Whom are you serving?

Over the one group is written the word "guilty", and over the other "not guilty", and "there is no difference". It matters not whether you have been very good or very bad, whether you consider yourself a great sinner or a small sinner; you are either guilty or not guilty, and must stand with all the rest in your allotted place.

You may have your name on the rolls of a thousand churches, you may be the most active worker in the