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Where is Home?

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John Denver sung, "Almost Heaven, West Virginia". I have heard people from Kentucky say, "I like to stand on the southern edge of Indiana and look across into the Promised Land. But no one is more proud of their State than Texans. Some of them are so impressed with their birthplace that they do not want to live anywhere else.

Many people are born, grow up, and die in the same location. There is no question as to where they will be buried. Others move around a great deal in life. But when they die the whole family knows they will be brought back to their home town for burial. No doubt this gives people a sense of belonging. They know where they are from and where they will eventually end up.

Recently people have become even more interested in their home prior to their birth. That is, they want to use their DNA to determine what nation and region their ancestors hail from. They want to know the little town in a faraway land where their great, great, great, great, great grandfather was born. This helps them to know who they are.

Other people are not so well tied to a place or a family. They do not know who their father was. Their parent has no knowledge of their ancestors. Some grow up in an orphan's home and have no knowledge of either birth parent. Where do these people belong? Where should they be buried?

My wife and I have often discussed the resting place for our bodies. I came from Illinois. I have not closeness to family there. I have no interest in returning to the state. My wife is from Indiana. She wants to not be an inconvenience to her kids in things like visiting her gravesite. At the time of this writing we have one daughter in Illinois and one in Indiana. Our son-in-laws are from California and China. Their parents are in Texas and Florida. Where do our bodies belong?

Actually, I give little thought to the place of my burial or my ancestors. What I want to do is get home to Heaven. The Bible teaches that when we die our spirits return to God. It appears to me this would be Paradise. At the final resurrection our body will be altered, reunited with our spirit, and will go to Heaven to be with God. He can find my body wherever it is.

Ecclesiastes 12 describes the process of aging in very poetic language. The teeth fail, the eyesight dims, the balance departs, and the strength diminishes. Eccl 12:6 and 7 depicts the eventual death we all must face. Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. Several interpretations have been given of the first part of death. I see it as relating to getting water from the well. The cord is loose from the bucket. The bowl the water was put into is broken as well as the pitcher. The wheel that held the cord and lowered the bucket is broken as well. Life giving water can no longer be obtained. The body is drying up. Some focus on this as the separation of the body and the spirit which is clearly depicted in the end. The body returns to the dust while the spirit moves on to God.

Luke 16 contains the story of the rich man and Lazarus. It shows us where the spirits go. The wicked people have a spirit that goes to torment. The righteous go to Paradise (called Abraham's bosom in the text).

Home, it is a warm sounding word. It is a comfort to us after a hard day's work. It is a familiar goal after traveling far on vacation. It is where those we love most are found.

Heaven is the ultimate home for the Christian. After his labors on earth are completed, after he has traveled in this place he was passing through in life, then he will return to Him who he loves the most. He will be with God for eternity.

For all the good and happiness we find on earth, we always recognize it is not lasting. The new car gets rusty. The child grows up and moves away. The job ends at retirement. The people we love pass away before we do. As Solomon wrote at the end of Ecclesiastes, our health fails. One of the great things about heaven is it has greater joy than anything on earth and it will never end. There is no decaying like on earth. There is no separation. There is no disappointment from an expected outcome.

Rev 21 gives us a picture of heaven reserved for the true members of His church. 3 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 be their God. 4 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: for the former things are passed away. 5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

This place will put us in the presence of God. We will not travel to worship. The tabernacle is there. We will not have the tears, the sorrow, the pain, or the death we experience from time to time on earth. All the distasteful things of earth are gone, and all things are new. This is an accurate depiction of Heaven and has been written down for all generations. Won't it be wonderful to finally get home. moorevillecoc.com

Drawing Strength from The Courage of Others

by Bill Hall

How thankful we should be for wonderful examples of courage that spur us on to greater strength in the Lord's service.

Paul was just such an example: "And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear" (Phil. 1:14). These brethren, formerly timid and reticent, were drawing strength from the courage of Paul.

Other examples abound. Stephen's plea, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," surely had for its source of strength the forgiving spirit of the Lord (Acts 7:60). The Thessalonian church found a source of strength in the example of the churches in Judea (1 Thess. 2:14). The Philippian church, a model of courage and conviction, could no doubt trace much of its strength back to the wonderful example of patience and equanimity demonstrated by Paul and Silas while in their midst. The Hebrew Christians were admonished to "remember them that had the rule over you, men that spake unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith" (Heb. 13:7).

Christians of this generation are similarly drawing strength from the courage of others. Young men who refuse to miss services of the church to play on a ball team; young women who refuse to be seen in public in scanty attire; businessmen who would lose their jobs rather than compromise their convictions; women who continue to adorn themselves in "meek and quiet spirits" whatever the sophisticated world thinks or says of them; sick people who bear their afflictions with patience and faith; elderly people who continue to attend worship when they are hardly able to go anywhere else; dying people who demonstrate how Christians ought to die; all

are sources of strength and courage for others as they face similar circumstances. These all share a common spirit with the great characters of the Bible: they see in their temptations, trials, afflictions, and persecutions a special opportunity to be like Christ, to demonstrate their fidelity to Him, and to provide a source of strength for those who might be weak and wavering around them. They seize the opportunity and stand, and all of us are stronger because of them. Of these courageous people this world truly is not worthy.

Are we, however, to be always on the receiving end of the strength of others? As we draw strength from the courage of others, we must in turn become sources of strength and courage.

Others look to us. Each of us has a "charge to keep," "God to glorify," and "a present age to serve."

