

HEAVEN IS NOT MY HOME!

This is the startling title of a book a friend of mine in New Zealand wrote just months before his death from leukemia in 2010, aged just 42. (1). David James Burge was a father of 8 children, married for 18 years, and a pastor for over 15 years. He used to humorously say he was building the Church by biological growth almost single-handedly! At the end of his life David wrote about his hope in Jesus Christ. But he did not believe Jesus was taking him to Heaven when he died! What? Perhaps his illness distorted his mind you may think.

David Burge certainly believed a better world --- a world of heavenly origin and nature --- is coming. But he believed it was coming to transform *this* world. You see, David believed Jesus is coming back as all the prophets, apostles, and our Lord Himself promised, to take over the reins of world government on planet earth. And he believed Jesus is going to raise from the dead to immortality all who have faithfully confessed His name before men. David believed that he himself, by God's grace, would be raised up together with all the believers from all ages, at the moment of Christ's return.

However, according to most popular Christian teaching today, David was mistaken: He is not "asleep" in the dust of the earth waiting for the

resurrection morning. He is very much awake and is in heaven already! What a surprise that must have been when the “real” David left his body and his eyes and ears began to enjoy the celestial realities.

Most Christians today believe their eternal destiny is Heaven way up there somewhere, and they will get there either immediately when they die (they only await their resurrection body which will be re-united with their “soul” when Jesus returns), or if they are alive when Jesus returns, they will be taken to their heavenly mansions forevermore. Good-bye earth!

It does not cross their minds that in the Bible Heaven is not said to be the destiny of the believer. No, I did not make a typing error in that last sentence. And yes, you read that sentence correctly. *The Bible does not say Heaven is the destiny of the Christian!*

Before you think that I, along with David, have a screw loose somewhere and am completely unhinged, let me quote no less a scholar than N.T. Wright, who is considered a contemporary ‘heavy weight’ when it comes to ‘orthodox’ Biblical scholarship:

“It comes as something of a shock when people are told what is in fact the case: that there is very little in the Bible about ‘going to heaven

when you die', and not a lot about a post mortem hell either. The medieval pictures of heaven and hell, boosted though not created by Dante's classic work, have exercised a huge influence on western Christian imagination. Many Christians grow up assuming that whenever the New Testament speaks of 'heaven' it refers to the place to which the saved will go after death ... when they find Jesus talking about 'entering the kingdom of heaven', they have their assumptions confirmed, and suppose that he is indeed talking about 'how to go to heaven when you die', which is certainly not what ... Jesus has in mind...

"But the language of heaven in the New Testament doesn't work that way. 'God's Kingdom' in the preaching of Jesus refers, not to post-mortem destiny, not to our escape from this world into another one, but about God's sovereign rule coming 'on earth as it is in heaven.'" (2)

Tom Wright's entire book goes on to demonstrate how the modern Church has imbibed "blatant Platonism" and promotes a "flagrant Platonic" world-view in her presentation of the doctrine of salvation whose goal is to get souls to Heaven. Wright calls talk about 'souls going to heaven' as a

“Platonic downgrading” of our physical bodies and of our material world, all created originally as “very good” by the Creator. In the Biblical world-view our bodies are not just the outer shells encasing the real you and the real me --- ‘the soul’ --- and “the idea that every human possesses an immortal soul, which is the ‘real’ part of [us] finds little support in the Bible.” (3)

Wow. That’s a warning shot being fired over the bow of the good ship Church if ever there was one! In light of these claims an honest examination of our traditional understanding of Eternity, Heaven and Hell, the nature of man, and indeed the Gospel message itself is in need of urgent attention. And it is a very practical question, for what we think about death, and what lies beyond it, is the key to right living now and to right thinking about everything else, surely?

I agree with Burge and Wright (and a host of other excellent NT scholars by the way) that Jesus and his apostles and the early NT church believed our destiny is to be right here on a renewed earth in what they constantly called the Kingdom of God. But let’s not get ahead of ourselves.

TWO RELATED DOCTRINES.

Each doctrine we hold is related to, and determines, our whole Christian world-view. Jesus stated that on the first two great commands

--- to love the one God and our neighbour as ourselves --- all the Law and the prophets “hang”, or are “suspended” (Matt. 22: 40). Get the foundation clasp right, and the glory and wisdom of God will hang around our lives like a gorgeous pearl necklace hangs around the neck. If the clasp is faulty all we get is a lot of beads on the floor and we can spend the rest of our lives trying to find and string them coherently back together.

So, in relation to our current topic as to whether or not Heaven is our home, we need to understand there are a number of critical components (pearls of great price?) we must get in place before coming to a definitive answer. The first question concerns the nature of man and whether we have an immortal soul. The second question concerns the Gospel message and whether it is an appeal to escape planet earth and be saved for heaven. And essential to both of these issues is that which concerns the nature and character of God Himself. Over the next few articles we will explore these matters and try to clear the fog.

ONLY GOD IS IMMORTAL.

It is a foundational truth that the God of the Bible is the Creator of all things. Everything that exists is here because of His will and power. Everything exists for His ultimate glory:

“Worthy art Thou, our Lord God, to receive glory and honour and power; for Thou didst create all things, and because of Thy will they existed, and were created” (Rev. 4:5 NASB).

The apostle Paul writes in First Timothy 1: 17, that “the only God” is “immortal”. The word here strictly means “incorruptible”. God is not like His creation, in that His existence depends on nothing or nobody outside Himself. He alone stands outside of time, matter and space as the Eternal One, not subject to the physical laws He made.

A couple of chapters later Paul repeats that He Who is the “only Sovereign, the King of kings and the Lord of lords *alone* possesses immortality...” (1 Tim. 6:15-16). This time the original word strictly means never dying, unable to die. Putting Paul’s two statements together, we learn the one true God “alone” possesses the quality of incorruptibility and immortality. Therefore no other creature in heaven or earth, or anywhere else, whether angel or demon, and certainly not man, inherently possesses immortality.

All creatures great and small thus derive their existence and life from God as a gracious gift. Jesus himself understood that even his life and existence were a gift from the Father (proving he cannot be the one immortal God):

“For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in himself” (John 5:26).

Indeed, the unanimous NT witness is that it was God Who fathered Jesus in Mary (Lk. 1:35), and Who raised Jesus from his state of decay and corruption (Acts 2: 24f), and Who has now rewarded him with the gift of being the first ever man to receive immortality (1 Cor. 15).

This inevitably means man does not inherently possess an “immortal soul”. It is axiomatic: God “alone possesses immortality”. God alone “cannot die”. There is no other creature in that class.

DOES MAN HAVE A SOUL?

Even to ask this question is a dead give-away that our minds are already influenced by Greek [pagan] philosophy, rather than Biblical [Hebrew] revelation. Plato believed souls came from heaven to reside in men in this world of matter. He believed our physical bodies are but ‘vain shadows’ of earth and like prison-houses that chained our eternal souls to this world. Happily, death would release the real person, the ‘soul’, into the heavens beyond. For Plato, death was an eagerly anticipated escape from all that was foul and worthless. For Plato death was salvation! Consequently, the Greeks believed man could consciously survive without a body because man

has a soul. Modern Christian doctrine has effectively swallowed this thinking, hook, line and sinker, because it's commonly believed that God breathed into Adam an immortal soul:

“The LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living *nephesh*” (Gen. 2:7).

But does this mean God really breathed into Adam an “immortal soul”? The Hebrew word here is translated as soul (KJV), or being (NASB, NIV, RSV). However, what is hidden to our English eyes is that the word *nephesh* has already occurred in the Genesis account of the creation *four times* before we get to Adam. In Genesis 1 all conscious animals are also described as *nepheshes*, that is, “souls” in King James language ... whether of sea or land animals. However, here our English versions translate the same word as creatures (Gen. 1: 20-21,24).

The noun *nephesh* is from the Hebrew verb *naphash* meaning “to breathe”. Hence, a *nephesh* or ‘soul’ is any creature that breathes. Which is why the word is applied to sea and land animals four times before Genesis comes to man!

Man is thus defined along with the animals as being a *nephesh*, that is, a soul, a living being, or a creature that has conscious life in itself. To the

Hebrew mind then, man does not *have* a soul --- man *is* a soul, that is, a living, breathing being.

Take a look at these verses a couple of chapters on:

“And all flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; of all that was on dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died” (Gen. 7:21-22).

Here both breath and spirit (*neshamah* and *ruach*) occur together and are applied as equal descriptions of both man and animals. Like it or not the animals have the very same “*breath of the spirit of life*” that you and I have.

Nevertheless, for many the question remains: When God breathed into the clay did He impart (for the want of a better description) a “spirit entity” into man by which man is animated and through which man thinks and lives? Well, consider this fact. If you really are an “immortal soul” who continues to think after you die (that is, if you are a being animated by an inner “spirit being” who is living separately from your body and thinking independently through your brain), why do you lose all consciousness when you become concussed? If a knock to our head --- a far lesser event than death! --- renders us totally unconscious, what makes us imagine that the far

more permanent event of death to the whole physical body should not mean we will be totally unconscious forever, unless of course, God raises us up on that resurrection morning? The Scripture says in the day you die your “thoughts perish”, and that includes your thoughts about God, for “the dead do not praise God”. Rather, “they go down into silence” (Ps. 115:17)!

So Adam was not created with inherent immortality, with an immortal soul. He was a living creature, a breathing being with the potential through obedience to gain immortality. The Old Testament teaches God gave Adam the option of *becoming immortal* on the condition that he continue to obey God’s command not to eat of the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil. His immortality was thus *conditional*, and definitely not natural and not inherent to himself.

DEATH OF THE SOUL.

There is further proof man does not have an immortal soul. God Himself defines what happens when man dies:

“For you are dust, and to dust you shall return”
(Gen. 3:19).

Like it or not God says, “you are dust”. That is, you are of the earth. And when God says, “to dust you shall return”, He gives no hint that just the earth

part of “you” goes to dissolution in the ground, but the really important and vital part of “you” survives and shall ascend to heaven in consciousness. The judgment that God pronounces is the destruction of the ‘soul’, the ‘self’ in death, because “you” dissolve into dust. Which means that without your body “you” do not continue to exist. Death dissolves “you” into dust.

Well, after Adam sinned and God pronounced the judgement of death upon him, didn't Adam continue to live for hundreds of years more? Doesn't this prove that Adam only died “spiritually” and that one may continue to live even though in a state of death?

This idea comes from God's warning to Adam that, “in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die” (Gen. 2:17). We know that in the day Adam ate he did not die immediately. So on this basis isn't it wrong not to consider that man by nature has two parts ... one part mortal and corruptible which is the body, and one part spiritual and eternal which is the inner soul?

Nice question. The answer is found by looking at other similar Hebrew examples of parallel statement. For instance, king Solomon confines Shimei to house arrest:

“Build yourself a house in Jerusalem and live there, and do not go out from there to any

place. For it will happen on the day you go out and cross over the brook Kidron, you will know for certain that you shall surely die..." (I Kings 2:36-37).

Now it happened sometime after the king's threat of the certain judgment of death that two of Shimei's slaves escaped and fled from Jerusalem to Gath. Shimei recklessly crossed the Kidron in pursuit of his escapees. However, upon his return to Jerusalem king Solomon carried out his judgement and had Shimei executed.

This is a precise parallel to God saying to Adam that in the day they disobeyed Him they would surely die. Disobedience in both cases brought about sure and certain death, though the sentence was delayed till a future time --- in the case of Shimei some days, perhaps weeks later --- and in the case of Adam some hundreds of years later. But both parties knew the day they disobeyed, sentence was passed, and death was certain.

The 'spiritual' sense in which Adam felt the inevitability of his mortality was in his immediate sense of guilt and fear by hiding from the Presence of God, his feeling his own shame in nakedness, his fractured relationship with his wife, and even the curse of thorns and unfulfilled labour in his battle for survival. In that sense Adam died spiritually. From the day Adam sinned he was subject to a

process of dying. He lived as a sinner *in* death. Death was the power dominating his life, and to that extent a *present* reality (cf. Rom. 7:24, “Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?”) We know this instinctively for a darling baby is born to die, already sentenced to death.

However, such spiritual death was not actual death itself, for God had clearly defined death as the dissolution of all of “you” into the dust. *Without your body there is no “you”, for you are a living soul only while you are in the body!* If we object to this stark truth, perhaps it proves how successfully the Serpent still whispers in our ears,

“You surely shall not die” (Gen. 3: 4)!

Satan’s lie is persuasively preached in most churches today. We are assured, “In the day you die, ‘you’ don’t *really* die. For the day you die the ‘real you’ will be in Paradise and your eyes will there and then be opened to the eternal glories of heaven.” N. T. Wright truthfully says, “Plato remains the most influential thinker in the history of the western world.” (4) But who whispered *this* idea into Plato’s ear that death is escape from the body and not the dissolution of the self?

On the day Adam & Eve sinned, their fate was sealed. In fact, the Hebrew reads, “dying, you shall die” (Gen. 2:17). Adam & Eve experienced a process of death ultimately to end in irreversible

dissolution of their beings. Mortality is then, both a process and a destination.

However, there was still a potential problem. What if man now ate from the Tree of Life? It seems Adam could avoid the inevitability of death and live forever in his rebellious condition. The Tree of Life could still have the power to grant him immortality. But the possibility of such “natural immortality” for sinful man was so horrendous that God Himself could not even talk about it. Have you ever noticed God’s unfinished sentence in Genesis 3:22?

“Then the LORD God said, ‘Behold, the man has become one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever -“

The hyphen in our English Bibles alerts us to the fact this is an unfinished sentence. It’s as if the thought of an immortal sinner was too shocking even for God to think about. So God had to drive him from the Garden and protect re-entry by placing the Cherubim with their flashing swords there:

“Because this passage of Scripture clearly stated that man still had the potential to live forever, even in his fallen state, it suggests that the immortality of man was always dependent on access to the Tree of Life. This made his immortality conditional...which means that

man could not have been naturally immortal. Man had no immunity from death once he was expelled from the garden ...” (5).

This exclusion from the Tree of Life means that man will now die outside the Garden, banished as an alien from the enjoyment of the life and presence of God. In the words of the famous German martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer,

“...Adam only reaches out for the fruit of the tree of life after he has fallen prey to death...Adam has eaten of the tree of knowledge, but the thirst for the tree of life, which this fruit has given him, remains unquenched...The tree of life is guarded by the power of death; it remains untouchable, divinely unapproachable.” (6)

Ultimately, at the end of his life when Adam died physically he was no longer a soul, a *nephesh*, a breathing creature. This is the consistent teaching throughout the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament. Admittedly, given how far Platonic philosophy has infiltrated our Western culture, one or two verses on first glance might appear to contradict this picture. For instance,

“Then the dust shall return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it” (Ecc. 12: 7).

However, this is a clear case of translator's preference. The Hebrew *ruach* is translated various ways depending on context. It is variously translated as Spirit, spirit, wind, breath, air, breeze, temper, courage. (7) With such a wide range of possibilities which best fits Ecclesiastes here --- the classic Greek idea of the real "you", your inner spirit winging its way up to heaven when your body dies, or the Hebrew idea that "you" perish when your body dies? Let's turn back a few chapters and see how the translators treat an interesting parallel sentence:

"I said to myself concerning the sons of men, 'God has surely tested them in order for them to see that they are but beasts.' For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity" (Ecc. 3:18-19).

Here, the context forces the translators to interpret *ruach* to mean 'breath', because it is obvious animals do not have immortal souls or spirits (though some are attracted by this idea). So is there any good reason why consistency should not indicate that all Ecclesiastes 12:7 is saying, is that when we die our bodies return to dust, and the breath by which God animated the person returns

to God who made it? Remember that when God breathed into man “the breath of life” man became a living being. So, at physical death, when God removes that breath, man ceases to be a living being, a whole self, or a “you”. Ecclesiastes 12: 7 offers no support for man possessing an immortal soul or spirit.

Confirmation is given in Psalm 104: 29, “You take away their spirit they expire, and return to their dust.” (NASB translation with marginal note reading “Or, *breath*). When God takes away the “spirit” that is, the breath, there is no difference between men and animals. Both alike “return to their dust” --- not up to heaven.

There are many verses where such Hebrew thinking tends to be clouded if not obscured by translators:

“Do not trust in princes, in mortal man, in whom there is no salvation. His spirit departs, he returns to the earth; in that very day his thoughts perish” (Ps. 146: 3-4).

If you are a Greek Platonist whose notion is that man possesses an eternal soul waiting for escape and salvation into the heavens at death, then you will prefer *ruach* here to mean spirit. But if you are a Hebrew-minded reader who understands the Genesis revelation of man’s being a soul only while embodied, you will immediately understand the

Psalmist simply means that man is a mortal creature whose breath at physical death leaves him. You will note the internal “safety net” guarding this truth is that at death “he” himself, the whole person, “returns to the earth” and that at that very moment of physical dissolution “his thoughts perish”, which is to say, “he” is not conscious! It is impossible to be both conscious and unconscious at the same time, and the implication is it is impossible to be both mortal and immortal at the same time.

The entire teaching of the nature of mortal man in the Old Testament may be summed up in the familiar text:

“For the life [*nephesh*] of the flesh is in the blood and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls [*nephesh*]; for it is the blood by reason of the life [*nephesh*] that makes atonement” (Lev. 17:11).

Observe carefully: The *nephesh* of the body is in the blood! This is God’s own comment, and means it is the blood that gives the creature “soul-life”. This is very Hebrew (and very scientific too!). But to our Western ears it’s rather awkward saying, “the soul of the flesh is in the blood”. Plato would not accept this verse, because for him the soul does not belong to the physical. However, the consistent

OT witness is that man himself is a soul and when physically dead he has ceased to exist.

THE NEW TESTAMENT.

The New Testament builds on the Hebrew belief that man does not inherently possess an immortal soul. Left to himself without Divine intervention man is a mortal being whose destiny is death in the grave. James writes, “the body without the spirit is dead” (James 2:26). (Actually, there is no definite article before the word *pneumatōs* here, so James wrote, “the body without a spirit is dead.”) In light of the OT background we have briefly surveyed, would it not be a better choice to translate James to mean ... “the body without a breath is dead”? Which is to say, you are dead when you stop breathing!

Thus, when Jesus raises Jairus’ twelve year old daughter, taking her by the hand and saying, “Child, arise”, we read:

“And her spirit returned, and she rose up immediately ...” (Luke 8:55).

That is a legitimate translation, but it gives the impression to our Greek-infused minds that “she” came back to re-inhabit her body. Given what we have seen in the Hebrew Bible, it would not only be legitimate but more in keeping with the whole tenor of the Genesis account to read it as, “And her

breath returned” (as for e.g. per the New Living Translation and the New American Bible versions).

Even Jesus himself at the point of his death on the cross prayed, “Father, into Thy Hands I commit my spirit” (Lk. 23:46). Some translations say he prayed, “Into Thy Hands I commit my soul.” Others that he simply prayed, “Father, into Thy Hands I commit my breath”, that is, my very life and being! Well, if you want to believe that Jesus was not really dead in the tomb but was busy in Hades preaching to “the spirits” of conscious dead men, then you will believe the spirit of Jesus was active during death. (I have devoted a whole section to this question in my book.) (8)

Given the Bible’s consistent witness that God alone possesses immortality and that man does not possess an inherent immortal part called the soul, what hope is there for man’s hopeless, lost, perishing condition? Can this curse of our mortality be reversed? Yes! In the words of the apostle Paul, “thanks be unto God who gives us the victory through Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 7:25).

The Gospel Brings Immortality.

The astoundingly good news is that in His great love for us, God has intervened mightily for us through His Son, Jesus Christ:

“He has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His

own purpose and grace which was granted us ... by the appearing of our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:9-10).

If it took the gospel of Jesus Christ to bring immortality to light, then it stands to reason that prior to the gospel of Christ, man did not possess immortality! (I put that sentence in italics so it can sink in.) If I may borrow the excellent way Bieleski expresses this:

“The glimmer of hope that was expressed in the Old Testament is finally and fully realised in Jesus, ‘For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son also gives life to whom he wishes’ (John 5:21). This verse is important, because it explains that being given life and being raised from the dead are synonymous terms. The dead are only given life when they are raised from the dead by the Father, which contradicts the idea that man naturally continues to exist beyond the grave. In other words, for man to receive life by being raised from the dead, he must actually be dead.” (9)

The apostle Paul agrees that even now the Christian believer does not yet possess immortality. We await the return of Christ and the resurrection when,

“This perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality” (I Cor. 15:53).

That is the literal rendering from the Greek text. Now see if you can pick the difference with other translations that take liberties with the text. For instance, the NRSV reads:

“For this perishable body must put on imperishability, and this mortal body must put on immortality” (I Cor. 15:53).

So, did you spot the difference? That’s right, they have added the unwarranted word “body” --- twice. This gives the modern reader the impression that it’s only the body that is perishable and mortal. But the apostle Paul understands man’s entire being and total nature is perishable and that no part of him is inherently immortal. We will put on immortality and incorruptibility only when Christ returns from heaven in the future.

Although the Old Testament has no special word for “immortality”, there are two Greek words in the NT that correspond to the idea. We introduced them earlier from the book of First Timothy where they are applied to “the only God”. First, *athanasia* means “not able to die”, that is, immortality. Secondly, *aphtharsia* means “incorruptible”, or imperishable and therefore, enduring.

It is significant in every single case where these two words are applied to human beings they speak about a **future** state that believers in Jesus are still waiting for. God gives immortality and incorruptibility to Christians at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ when the resurrection takes place.

This is in complete agreement with the teaching of Paul's lord and master, Jesus. Jesus said,

“Those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead ... cannot die anymore... and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection” (Luke 20:35-36).

Thus, the only way to obtain immortality (eternal life) in the Age to come is via the resurrection from the dead. (This is obviously where Paul got his teaching!) As we said earlier, only God possess these qualities inherently, but He will graciously give them to His people on that great resurrection morning. Jesus “the first-born from the dead” (Col. 1:18) is our pattern and hope, “the first-fruits of those who are asleep” (I Cor. 15: 20). For,

“When Christ who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory” (Col. 3:4).

No Second Coming of Jesus equals no waking glory!

But What About My Heavenly Mansion?

“But”, you may ask, “didn’t Jesus say that in his Father’s house are many dwelling places (mansions)? And didn’t he promise he was going to prepare a place for us, and that he would come again, and receive us to Himself, so that where he is, there we may be also?” (John 14: 2-3).

Perhaps I should close this article by letting my friend David Burge answer your good question:

“One passage often used to teach that the eternal home of the redeemed will be in heaven is John 14: 2-3. But is the Father’s house heaven? The word “house” can mean a residence or dwelling, either literally or figuratively. It can also mean a family or household, or even a kingdom. Moses was a faithful servant “in all God’s house” (Heb. 3:5), though Moses definitely served God on earth, not in heaven. Believers are now members of God’s household (Eph. 2: 19; I Tim. 3:15; I Pet. 4:17), or literally “God’s house” (Heb. 3:6), sometimes pictured as a temple (I Cor. 3:9,16,17; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21; I Pet. 2:4-5).

“The Greek word “place” (*topos*) can and does at times mean position or office. Thus Jesus is even now preparing a place, a position or an office, for each of his followers, in his kingdom still to be established on earth. Jesus did say, “I

will come back”. Come back to where if not to the earth?

“A translation issue has complicated the reading of this text. Jesus probably did not say, “I will take you to be with me” (implying that believers must go somewhere). It is equally accurate to translate in such a way as to have Jesus say, “I will receive you to myself.” The end result, Jesus says, is that “you also may be where I am”, in his kingdom, on the earth.”
(10)

Or, in the words of N. T. Wright:

“We notice ... how drastically different this is from all those would-be Christian scenarios in which the end of the world story is the Christian going off to heaven as a soul, naked and unadorned, to meet its maker in fear and trembling...it is not we who go to heaven; it is heaven that comes to earth.” (11)

All of which is simply to say: Heaven is not our Home! Rather, heaven is the place God’s promises are securely stored up for us in our Saviour, Jesus Christ. When Jesus comes back, those promises will become reality on this earth. So, we will not be bored sitting on clouds “up there” playing harps. We will be creatively active

in ruling as joint-heirs with Christ in bodies that will never grow old, sick, weak or die, helping to extend God's Sovereign rule over His creation. God has an amazing kingdom-plan for us and for His physical world. At last the prayer will be fulfilled when God the Father's will is going to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Heaven is coming to earth. Wow! Now there's a message worth sharing.

To be continued

1. Burge, David James. *Heaven is Not My Home*.
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3. Ibid, p. 39.
4. Wright, Ibid. p.100
5. Bieleski, Michael. *A Biblical Anthropology*. Mishma Publications. 2004. p. 12
6. Ibid, p. 14 as quoted by Bieleski.
7. Vine, W.E., Unger, M.F., & White, W. 1996.
8. "Another Hope" in *They Never Told Me This in Church!*
9. Bieleski, M. Ibid. p. 55-56.
10. Burge, David James. Ibid. p. 144.
11. Wright, N.T. Ibid. p. 104-105.