

Redemption

Revelation 21: 4.

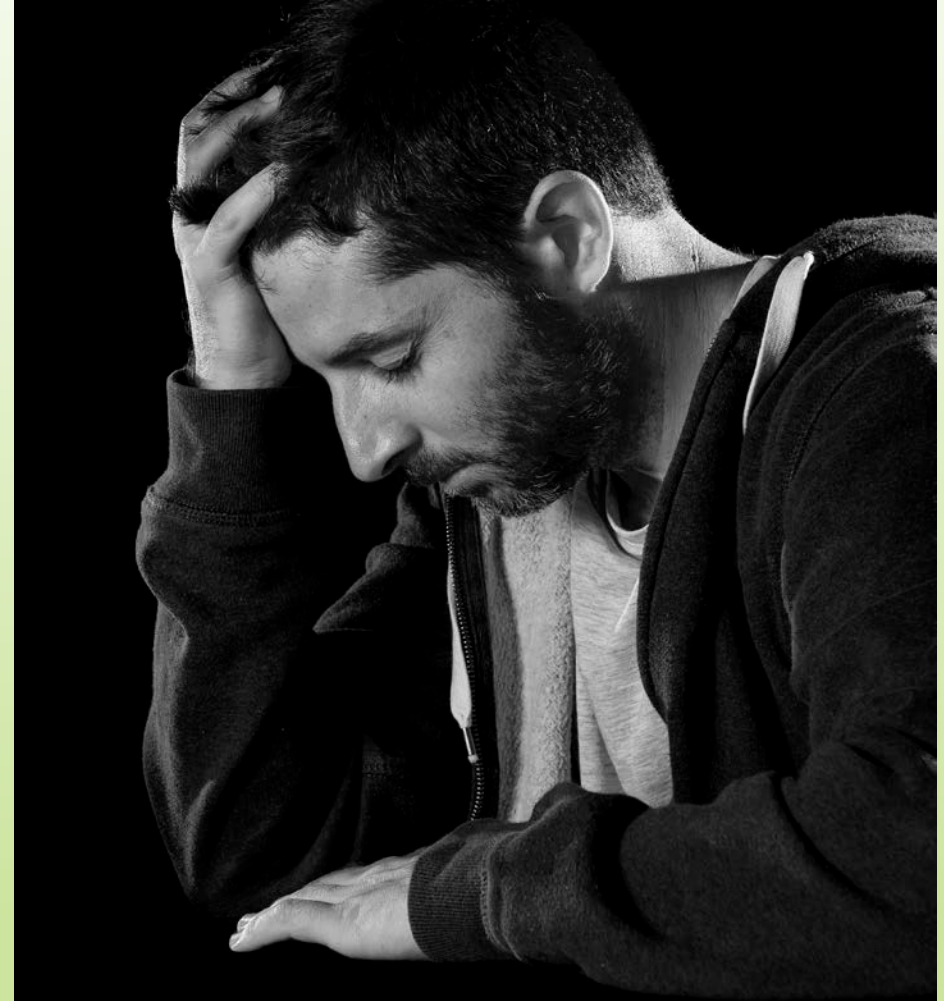


“And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away”
Revelation 21: 4.



I. Introduction: HOPE FOR THE END OF SUFFERING

The most difficult question for human beings is to reconcile the goodness of God with the overwhelming presence of evil and suffering. The book of Revelation brings to the reality God's promise for the end of suffering.

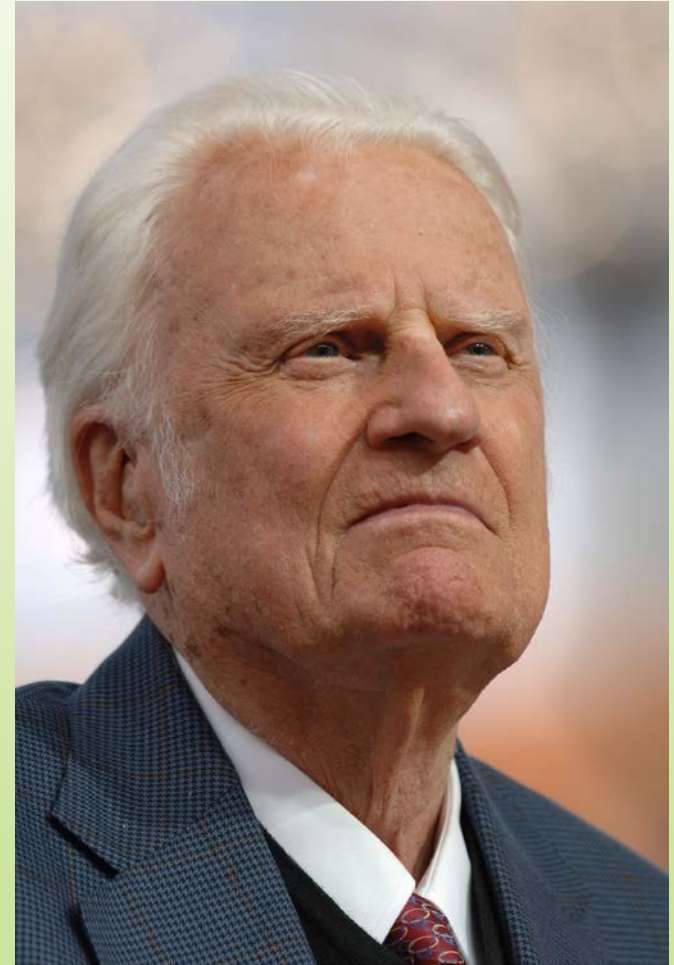


“There have been times when I think we do not desire heaven but more often I find myself wondering whether, in our heart of hearts, we have ever desired anything else.” – C.S. Lewis



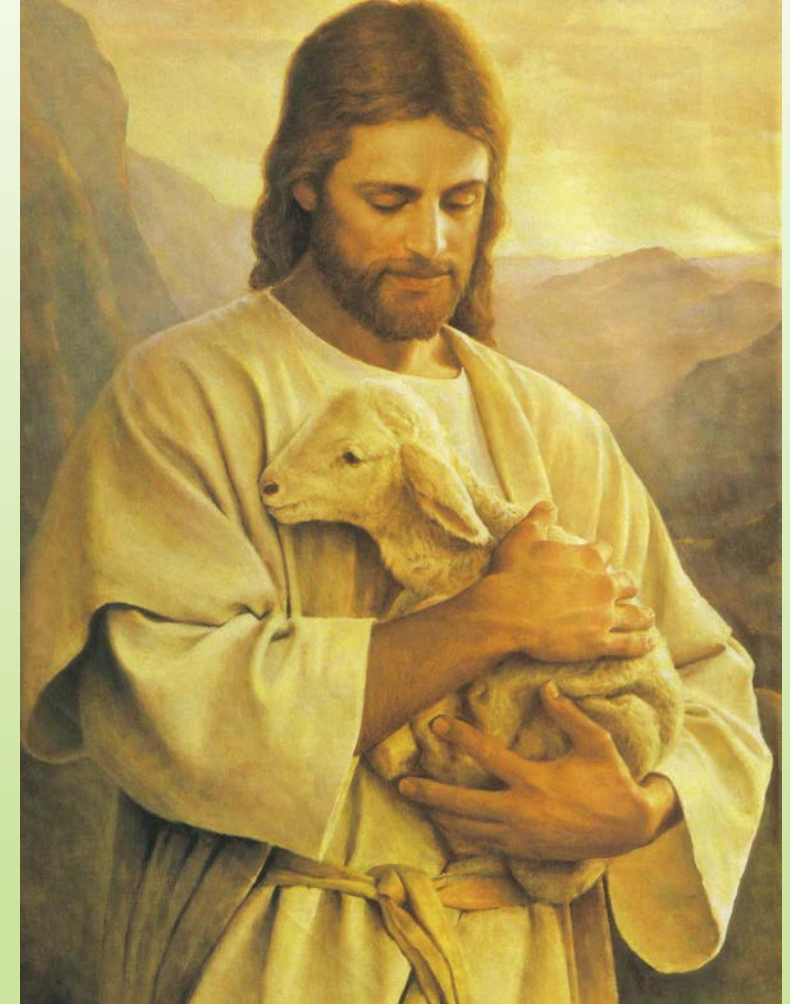
"My home is in Heaven. I'm just traveling
through this world."

Billy Graham



“Suffering is unbearable if you aren’t certain that God is for you and with you.”

Tim Keller, *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*, p. 58.



“While the promise of heaven helped the early Christians endure some of the worst sufferings possible, most of us have such a misunderstanding of heaven that we don’t see it as a legitimate way to help us endure in our present sufferings. The picture of our future reality in heaven is not a bunch of people with wings singing songs on clouds, but a real, deep intimacy with Jesus as we celebrate and enjoy Him with glorified bodies on the physical new earth without pain, suffering, sin, Satan, death, or sadness. This is our hope and it is the only way Paul can honestly say in Romans 8:18, “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”

Brad Sarian

"The true telos of the human life is not happiness but resurrection joy. The way to this destination, this joy takes not the long way around suffering but walks directly through it."
Kevin Antlitz



“Faith cannot dull pain; it rarely ends suffering. Yet, faith does something else in the face of suffering. It shows that the pain is real and the solitude is not.”
Casey Cep



“For those who love God the end of suffering will come when Jesus comes. While waiting for His coming, may the hope for the end of suffering create in us the beginning of compassion for those who are hurt by the presence of evil.”
(DS)



II. Context



Our text belongs to the 6th part of the book of Revelation. In this essential part we see the end of Babylon, of the Satanic trinity, and the disappearing of evil. Obviously, God's judgment is bringing the good news of the end of suffering.



Structure of the Book of Revelation

Introduction	7 Churches	7 Seals	7 Trumpets	Central Vision	7 Bowls	Babylon	Jerusalem	Conclusion
1: 1 - 8	1: 9 – 3: 22	4: 1 – 8: 1	8: 2 – 11: 19	12: 1 – 14: 20	15: 1–16: 21	17: 1 – 21: 8	21: 8–22: 5	22: 6–22: 21
Jesus Alpha And Omega “Things which must take place”	Ephesus Smyrna Pergamos Thyatira Sardis Philadelphia Laodicea	White Horse Red Horse Black Horse Pale Horse Souls under the altar Earthquake 144.000 Silence	1/3 of destruction Earth Sea Rivers/springs Moon/stars Sun/smoke Hour/day/month Voices/heaven	Message in 10 parts about the judgment	Total damage Mark/beast Earth Sea Rivers/springs Sun/smoke Throne/beast Euphrates Earthquake	I will show you... Babylon the Great Come out of her “New Earth”	New Jerusalem No sinners No temple “They shall see His face”	Jesus Alpha And Omega “Things which must take place”
“Behold, He is coming with clouds”	The Church is protected	The Church is sealed for the time of the crisis	Warning of the Trumpets Context of Yom Kippur	The Judgment has come	The Result of the judgment	“I will show you the judgment of the harlot... Babylon	“I will show you the bride, Jerusalem	“Surely, I am coming quickly”

In the text of Revelation 21: 1 – 8 we can discover three parts. The first aspect of the vision confirms God's recreation (new heaven and new earth), the absence of sea (everything that was negative in the experience of God's people [cf. Ez. 26: 19 – 21; Isaiah 27: 1; 51: 9. 10; Habacuq 3:10; Flood; Revelation 13: 1], and the new city of Jerusalem. All three elements confirm that the eternity will be filled with joy, love, and peace.



Structure of Revelation 21: 1 - 8

I. JOHN'S VISION OF THE NEW REALITY

i.	1a	New Heaven and New Earth
ii.	1b	Absence of Sea
iii.	2	The Holy City

II. THE HEARING OF JOHN REGARDING THE NEW REALITY

i.	3	LIVING IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD ("Tabernacle of God with Men")
ii.	4a	END OF SUFFERING ("No more death, sorrow, crying, and pain")
iii.	4b	THE PAST IS IN THE PAST ("The former things have passed away")

III. SEVEN WORDS OF GOD

i.	5a	WORD ABOUT THE NEW REALITY ("I make all things new")
ii.	5b	TRUTHFULNESS OF THE LOUD VOICE ("These words are true and faithful")
iii.	6a	WORD ANNOUNCING THE END OF SUFFERING ("It is done")
iv.	6b	WORD PRESENTING GOD HIMSELF ("I'm Alpha and Omega")
v.	6c	WORD TO THOSE WHO ARE THIRSTY ("I will give of the fountain of the water of life")
vi.	7	WORD OF BLESSING TO THE OVERCOMERS
vii.	8	WORD OF CURSING TO THOSE WHO DON'T OVERCOME

The second part of the Revelation 21: 1 – 8 presents an audio message. After the vision of John, we have the hearing of a loud voice, with the explanation of the new reality. Three elements are important: Living in God's presence forever; disappearing of suffering, and the burial of the past. All events contributing to bring torment, anguish, and pain, will be eliminated.



The seven words of God end the Great Controversy. The same words that Jesus pronounced on the cross are there. It is done with evil. It is done with trouble and disorder. The conclusion confirms that from that Great Controversy will come only two groups of people: the overcomers and those who refused God's solution. For them, the only future is the second death.

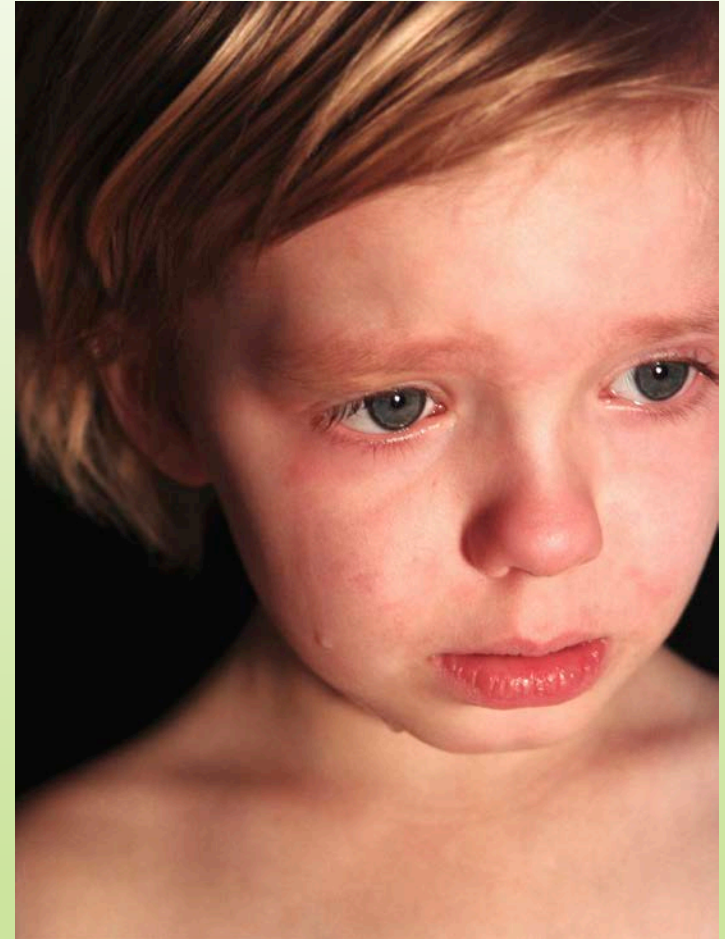


III. Evil has no future. Love will overcome all enemies and will continue to reign forever. This is the good news of Jesus' victory, His death and His resurrection.



1. From the perspective of
eternity, our tears are temporary

“And God will wipe away every tear from
their eyes”



“We need never be
ashamed of our tears.”
Charles Dickens, Great
Expectations



“We may speak about a place where there are no tears, no death, no fear, no night; but those are just the benefits of heaven. The beauty of heaven is seeing God.”
Max Lucado



“We began with the mystery, not just of suffering but of suffering in a world supposedly created by a loving God. How to get God off the hook? God's answer is Jesus. Jesus is not God off the hook but God on the hook. That's why the doctrine of the divinity of Christ is crucial: If that is not God there on the cross but only a good man, then God is not on the hook, on the cross, in our suffering. And if God is not on the hook, then God is off the hook. How could he sit there in heaven and ignore our tears?... Our part is to receive that work and let it work itself out in and through our lives, including our tears. We offer it up to him, and he really takes it and uses it in ways so powerful that we would be flattened with wonder if we knew them now.”

Peter Kreeft

2. Death, the last enemy, will be eliminated very soon

“There shall be no more death”



"If Paul calls death the 'last enemy'(I Cor. 15.26), then the opposite is also true: that the risen Christ, and with him the resurrection hope, must be declared to be the enemy of death and of a world that puts up with death. Faith takes up this contradiction and thus becomes itself a contradiction to the world of death. That is why faith, wherever it develops into hope, causes not rest but unrest, not patience but impatience. It does not calm the unquiet heart, but is itself this unquiet heart in man. Those who hope in Christ can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it. Peace with God means conflict with the world, for the goad of the promised future stabs inexorably into the flesh of every unfulfilled present."

Jurgen Moltmann, Theology of Hope

"Christ was a willing victim killed in the place of others to destroy the power of death. That's something God promised way back in the Old Testament : "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death. Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (Hosea 13:14, NIV) Death's sting is gone because the last enemy, death, has been conquered by Jesus. The best part is that we, too, can conquer death if we put our trust and hope in Christ."
Sam O'Neil



“It is by means of Christ’s death and resurrection that the two evils introduced into the world at the time of the Fall are overcome. Christ’s death on the cross is God’s solution to the problem of sin, and Christ’s resurrection from the grave is God’s solution to the problem of death... Death has wielded its reign of terror over man since the Fall. The resurrection of Jesus sets into motion the eschatological events that will culminate in the resurrection of his people, an event which will mark the final defeat of death itself.”

Keith Mathison

3. There is the certitude that
sorrow, crying, and pain will
disappear forever

“Nor sorrow, crying, and pain”



"Listen to God with a broken heart. He is not only the doctor who mends it, but also the father who wipes away the tears."
Criss Jami



If sadness is a place, then the joy is a place too. And that place is Heaven
“We were talking the other evening about the phrases one uses when trying to comfort someone who is in distress. I told him that in English we sometimes say, 'I've been there.' This was unclear to him at first-I've been where? But I explained that deep grief sometimes is almost like a specific location, a coordinate on a map of time. When you are standing in that forest of sorrow, you cannot imagine that you could ever find your way to a better place. But if someone can assure you that they themselves have stood in that same place, and now have moved on, sometimes this will bring hope.

'So sadness is a place?' Giovanni asked.

'Sometimes people live there for years,' I said.”

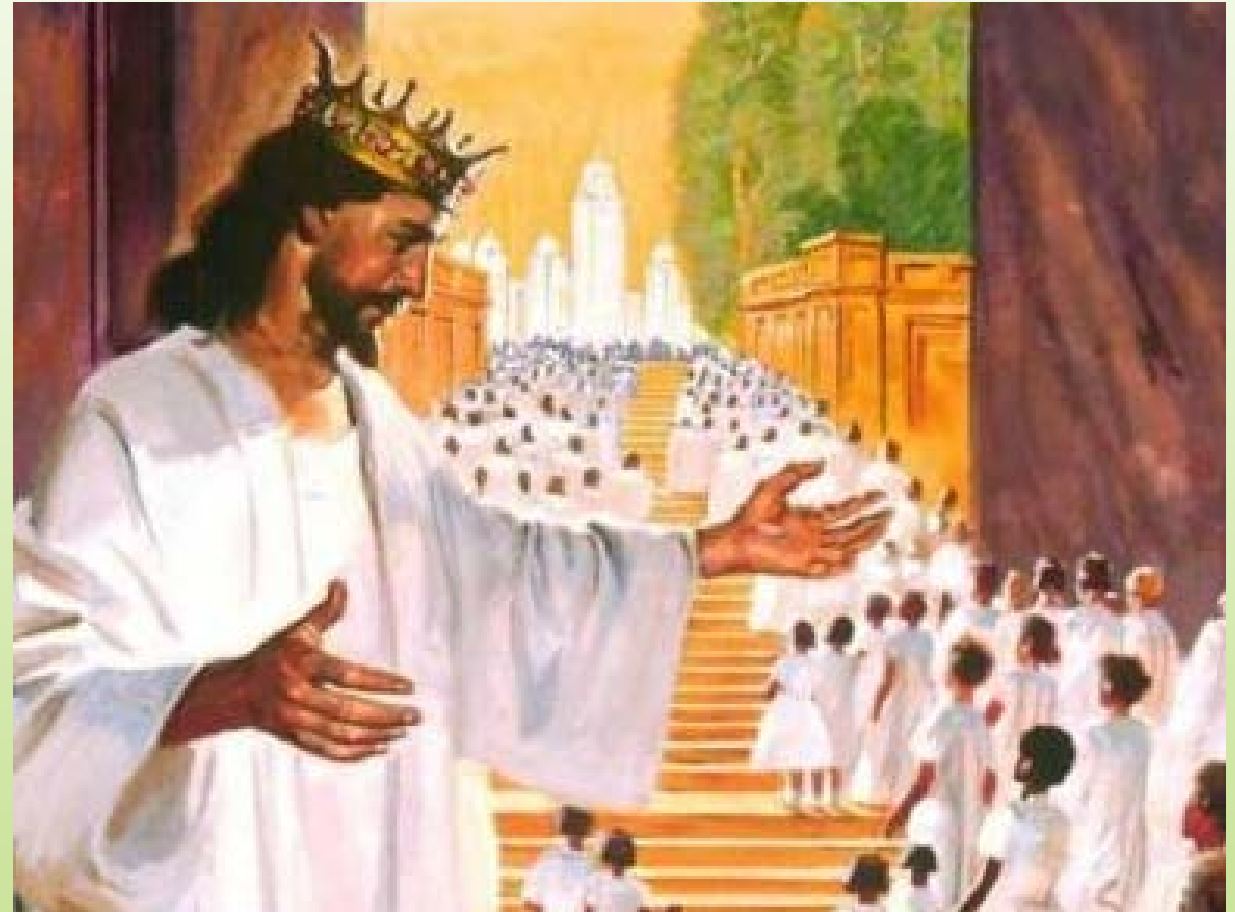
Elizabeth Gilbert, *Eat, Pray, Love*

"Time doesn't heal anything, especially not pain and suffering. Time creates a distance between us and the event of suffering, but has no power to heal the heart. Only God can heal our heart during our life on this planet by making us able to continue to face problems and challenges. But His healing today is just partial. We are not completely satisfied with the temporary healing. We are longing for the day where the evil will disappear and where joy, peace, and love will reign forever."
(DS)



4. Our world, as we
know it, with all its
imperfections, will
cease to exist

"For the former things have
passed away"



“Aim at heaven and
you will get earth
thrown in. Aim at
earth and you get
neither.”

C.S. Lewis



"The Bible does not teach that the final state of glory is one of disembodied spirits. Plato and his kin wanted it that way because they thought the body was a drag on the freedom of the spirit. But the Bible teaches a very different destiny for God's people. God will make all things new—including our bodies. Revelation 21: 4 points in this direction: "He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." No more death. No more pain. No more tears. What that means is that the body we know now will be changed. Because it dies. And it hurts. And it cries. If death is gone and pain is gone and tears are gone, then the body as we know it here is gone."

John Piper

"This new and blessed state will be free from all trouble and sorrow; for, 1. All the effects of former trouble shall be done away. They have been often before in tears, by reason of sin, of affliction, of the calamities of the church; but now all tears shall be wiped away; no signs, no remembrance of former sorrows shall remain, any further than to make their present felicity the greater. God himself, as their tender Father, with his own kind hand, shall wipe away the tears of his children; and they would not have been without those tears when God shall come and wipe them away. 2. All the causes of future sorrow shall be for ever removed: There shall be neither death nor pain; and therefore no sorrow nor crying; these are things incident to that state in which they were before, but now all former things have passed away."

Matthew Henry

V. Conclusion



“You cannot take with you into the city of God the pleasures of this life, neither the riches of the world. All who enter that city will enter it as conquerors. If you will sing the song of triumph and victory as overcomers, you must first learn here the art of conquering self and sin. And should you not do what you can in order to obtain the heavenly riches which can never be taken from you? to secure the heavenly land where there is no more poverty, no more sickness, no more pain, and no more death? But we shall not go to that holy Heaven as guilty, shamefaced, condemned criminals, but as joint heirs with Jesus Christ. You should keep Heaven before your eyes, and not allow the glitter and tinsel of this earth to eclipse its glory. The most beautiful places upon earth will soon be shaken down, the richest houses will fall, the gold and silver be cast to the moles and to the bats, but heavenly things will endure forever.”

Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, September 15, 1887, par. 2.

"At the entrance to the site (Dachau in Germany) was a wrought iron gate with the words "Arbeit Macht Frei," which means "Work Makes One Free." What a twisted message for a place where such heinous crimes took place! As I have learned over the years, it is the truth that makes one free. "And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:32 , New Revised Standard Version). The most moving part of my visit was a series of still standing ovens where the bodies of dead prisoners had been cremated. It still retained the distinct odor of death. Looking back, I take comfort in the knowledge that all such suffering will end. For it says in Revelation 21:4 : "And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." In the not-too-distant future, our great, powerful and awesome God will take over the imperfect governments of this world and usher in His perfect government that will never fail and will show mankind a better way. God hasten that day!" Ray Prater

"To us is given the promise of eternal life - but to us, the dead. A blessed resurrection is proclaimed to us - meantime we are surrounded by decay. We are called righteous - and yet sin lives in us. We hear of ineffable blessedness - but meantime we are here oppressed by infinite misery. We are promised abundance of all good things - yet we are rich only in hunger and thirst. What would become of us if we did not take our stand on hope, and if our heart did not hasten beyond this world through the midst of the darkness upon the path illumined by the word and Spirit of God!"

John Calvin, on Heb. 11.1.

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