The Pilgrim's Quest

"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and ***confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims*** *on the earth. For they that say such things* ***declare plainly that they seek a country.***" (Heb. 11:13,14)

Pilgrim's Quest Bible Church
Pastor Garry E. Huff

" And I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."

Psalm 23
vs. 6b

The Psalmist now presents the crowning, final destination of that great journey of the good Shepherd with His sheep. It is His own personal dwelling. From the commencement of this journey when the Shepherd first sought the sheep on the "mountains bleak and bare," the desire of the inner most thoughts of His heart was to bring the sheep safely to His home in order that they might dwell with Him forever. This is that "expected end" and that "expected hope" given to every one of His sheep.

We must realize, however, that such a journey with the Shepherd is a unique privilege and a marvelous honor. Not all souls that arrive in heaven have been on such a journey. Such are the souls who have died prenatal or died as a young child in that innocent state without any knowledge of God's universal laws. These are those who did not actively, willfully, or knowingly transgress God's commandments. These precious souls, "of such is the kingdom of God", arrive in the presence of the Lord from natural disasters, wars, persecutions, sickness, diseases, miscarriages, and even from crimes of abortion or pagan sacrifices of the heathen to their false gods. These make up probably the greatest multitude who are not accountable to the demands of God's law and are saved by God's grace, love, and favor alone. They would never know the desolate mountains of sin neither the journey to the Shepherd's house. They arrived at God's house from a completely

innocent life and are guiltless before God.

And yes, there are others who arrive in God's presence having accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior in their final hour facing death. Those like the thief on the cross who died beside the Lord Jesus while paying for his crimes of sin and heard the loving, forgiving Lord say, "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise." He believed on the Lord and was saved by God's favor in the last hours of life. These are the "brands plucked from the burning" who know fully the Savior but not as the Shepherd for life's journey.

There will be only a remnant - "a little flock" - who have been chosen to be with the Shepherd for the journey to His home. Such a journey is one with many privileges and blessings. From the green pastures and still waters to the valley of death's shadow and a tableland surrounded by enemies, all the while walking step by step with the good Shepherd. Whatever sorrows of sadness, whatever joyful gladness, every day has been ordered of the Lord and accompanied with His unrelenting presence. How could one ever be in despair or overwhelmed with doubt or fear? When the sheep fix their eyes upon the Shepherd all else vanishes away!

What a high honor the journey affords to know the Shepherd; to know him intimately and personally; to know His heart of love; to know Him in a way that only a daily life of communion could offer. Thus, yielding to His influence, the life changes. The Sheep become verily like the Shepherd himself. The cleansings, the washings, the separatings, the anointings all provide the opportunity to mold, form, and be shaped in the pattern of the Shepherd. What a wonder! to be ***complete in Him and prepared*** for the place He has prepared for His flock!

And yet, there is something about nearing the journey's end that as one looks back at the path taken, the heart swells up with great gratitude, thankfulness, and appreciation for the His pointed care, love, kindness, and all that the Shepherd has personally done. Every burden, every gift, every trial, every test, every sorrow, every joy, every part of the journey has been profitable, good, and ***a blessing.*** These things have only knit the heart of the Shepherd with the heart of His sheep to be inseparable for all eternity. And yes, the sheep long with great desire for the homeland of the Shepherd!

There is a story about a special breed of sheep in New Zealand who were chosen to be exhibited at one of the World's Fairs. The journey would be treacherous across two oceans and thousands of miles from home. Every caution had to be taken. Every care had to be provided for. Selected caretakers and veterinarians had to be chosen. With plenty of grass and fresh water the sheep were transported by ship safely to their destination and displayed before the eyes of the nations of the world. After completing the appointed days, the great task for their safe return home commenced. Once again the proper necessities were provided. Those in charge took their places and the long journey began . All seemed to go well even after enduring the storms at sea and the constant rolling of the ship. However, about a week out from their destination, the sheep suddenly stopped eating. Those in charge became alarmed and a search was undertaken to solve this problem. The food was inspected. It was fine. The water was tested. It too was okay. But no matter what they did the sheep would not eat. Did the sheep contract a disease at the fair? No, that was not it. Were the sheep suffering from some kind of seasickness? That was not it either. All efforts to solve this riddle failed. Finally to their amazement, they discovered that the sheep could smell the grass of their homeland because the prevailing winds were blowing towards the ship, even that far out at sea. The ship was close enough so that the smell of fresh grass of their homeland made the sheep long for the pastures they knew so well. The food stores of grass just would not satisfy any more. Only New Zealand grass would do. They were simply homesick!

One of the great discoveries the Psalmist reveals is that through the Divine leading and guiding of the Shepherd, the sheep are going home. The Shepherd's home is now their home. They have tasted of that land by the presence of their Shepherd. And now they are nearing that final home. This home is a heavenly home where all tears of sorrow are wiped away; a land without sickness, pain, toil, or trouble, a land abundant with love, peace, and joy. Here, departed loved ones are reunited once again.

Above all else, the Shepherd will be revealed in all His glory, splendor, and majesty - the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world who came to redeem the lost sheep by His blood and made it possible for this triumphant finale of the Shepherd with His sheep.

This is not my place of resting -

This is not my place of resting, --
Mine's a city yet to come;
Onward to it I am hasting --
On to my eternal home.

In it all is light and glory;
O'er it shines a nightless day:
Every trace of sin's sad story,
All the curse, hath passed away.

There the Lamb, our Shepherd, leads us,
By the streams of life along, --
On the freshest pastures feeds us,
Turns our sighing into song.

Soon we pass this desert dreary,
Soon we bid farewell to pain;
Never more are sad or weary,
Never, never sin again!

Horatio Bonar

Verses for Thought of Heart:

"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if *it were* not *so,* I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, *there* ye may be also." *(John 14:1-3)*

"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 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: for the former things are passed away." *(Rev. 21:2-4)*

"And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne ... stood a Lamb as it had been slain, ... And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" *(Rev 5:6, 9)*