

PEARLS FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE FOR OUR LITTLE ONES

BY THE REV. M. J. WATSON, S.J.,
Author of 'Within the Soul,' and 'The Story of Burke and Wills.'

"Unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."—St. Matt. xviii. 3.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

'Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in Heaven.'—St. Matt. v. 12.

Our beloved Lord, my dearest, tells us to rejoice in the thought of the bright and beautiful home which He has prepared for us in heaven, a home which, though at present invisible, has as real an existence as this earth where we live. The thought of heaven fills the heart with hope, separates its affections from earthly things, and inspires a longing for the sight of the Living God. Yet how the world talks! It thinks highly of this present life which must soon end in death, and it thinks as little as it possibly can of the life to come. It counted rich Dives, who, clothed in fine linen and purple, feasted luxuriously every day, as a man of much consequence, a man to be greatly envied, and it despised the just man Lazarus because he was poor and begged his bread. Yet Lazarus, our Lord tells us, was, after death, borne by angels into Abraham's bosom, and the rich man died and was buried in hell.

Though Holy Scripture speaks much of heaven, the tongues of men and of angels can give us no perfect description of the reward which God has prepared for all who persevere to the end in His love and service. That reward is called 'a kingdom,' 'a heavenly kingdom,' 'an eternal kingdom,' 'a most blessed kingdom.' It must, then, be a reward exceeding great. In this world no monarch is so bountiful as to bestow a kingdom in recompense of faithful service; and were one found able and willing to do so, yet the kingdom bestowed would not be a heavenly kingdom, or eternal or most blessed. How glorious and happy is that kingdom in which Christ reigns with His Angels and Saints! What is this earth compared to it! And earth surely is very beautiful and shows forth strikingly the power, wisdom, and majesty of God. Yet earth is but a place of exile, it is the abode not of the just only, but also of the wicked, the enemies of the Creator; and very just are St. Augustine's words: 'If Thou, O Lord, dost such great things for us in our prison, what wilt Thou give us in our palace?' If both Thy enemies and friends are so well provided for in this life, what wilt Thy friends receive in the life to come? O my Lord and God, Thou art a great God, and great is the multitude of Thy magnificence and sweetness! And as there is no end of Thy greatness, nor number of Thy mercies, nor depth of Thy wisdom, nor measure of Thy goodness, so is there no end, number, depth, length, greatness, or measure of Thy rewards to them that love Thee and do fight for Thee.' (Solid. c. 21.)

St. John the Evangelist, who saw 'the holy city, the new Jerusalem,' has sought with earthly images to describe its splendor and beauty. He says that he was taken up into a great and high mountain and before him were unfolded the glories of the holy city. The city walls were of green jasper, and their foundations were of sapphires, emeralds, and all kinds of precious stones. The gates were made of great pearls, and the city itself and the streets were of gold so pure that it resembled clear glass. There shall be no night there, nor shall the city have need of the sun or moon to shine in it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the splendor of the Lamb is the lamp thereof. He was shown also the river of life flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, that river which inebriates the Blessed with unspeakable and purest joys, and, by making them

immortal, gives them security of never losing those delights. God shall there wipe away all tears from their eyes; they shall no more hunger or thirst; neither shall the sun fall on them nor any heat; and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow; for the former evil things of earth are passed away. And the Blessed shall see God face to face, and in that Beatific Vision which is ever new, they shall be inundated with bliss, they shall be plunged in the boundless ocean of the joy of the Lord. And they shall adore Him, casting their crowns of gold before His throne and singing: 'To Him that sitteth on the throne and to the Lamb benediction and honor and glory and power for ever and ever.' How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! Better is one day in Thy courts above thousands in the tabernacles of sinners. Oh, grant us to walk in innocence here on earth that we may come at last to see Thy beauty and to enter into the glorious inheritance which Thou hast promised!

In heaven we shall see the Adorable Trinity, the Father Who created us for that great reward, the Son Who redeemed us, and the Holy Ghost Who by His grace sanctified our souls and gave us final perseverance, the Three Divine Persons Who while they are really distinct from one another are but God. We shall see, also, Jesus, our Saviour, our Brother, our best and truest Friend. We shall gaze upon the wondrous loveliness of His Humanity which fills heaven with the beams of its glory. What a joy to look on Him on Whom the angels delight to gaze! We shall see our own Mother Mary—we shall dwell and converse and rejoice with her for ever. We shall see St. Joseph and the Holy Angels, especially the kind and loving Guardian Spirit who watched over us and brought us through the dangers of earth and led us safely to heaven. We shall meet the Apostles and the martyrs who have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. We shall be united for ever with all the Saints whom we honored in this world, with St. Patrick and St. Brigid, with St. Benedict, St. Dominic, and St. Francis of Assisi, with St. Ignatius and St. Francis Xavier, with St. Aloysius, St. John Berchmans, and St. Stanislaus Kostka, with St. Agnes, St. Catherine, and St. Mary Magdalen. What a joy will it not be to find again all our friends, whom on earth we, perhaps, too much wept! In heaven we shall rejoin father and mother, brothers and sisters, all relatives and all acquaintances—what a meeting will be there! What welcomes! What sweet gladness! 'What a joy,' says St. Cyprian, 'will it be both to them and to us to meet and solace ourselves together.'

To gain this surpassing reward, let us, as the Scripture says, 'flee from sin as from the face of a serpent,' praying, with all confidence, to the Sacred Heart of Jesus for strength to resist temptation, to persevere in God's grace, and to die a good death. The Holy Spirit says: 'Expect the Lord, do manfully, and let thy heart take courage; and wait thou for the Lord.' (Ps. xxvi. 14.)

Prayer to be Said Often.

One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. (Ps. xxvi.)

Hymn: The Beauty of Heaven.

Jerusalem, Jerusalem!

Thy streets are paved with gold;
Thy pearly halls and palaces
Are glorious to behold.
Thy walls of jasper are inlaid
With every precious gem;
How pure, how lovely is the sight
Of our Jerusalem!

Jerusalem, Jerusalem!

Thou city of the skies,
Dear city of our King and God,
Dear object of our sighs!
How blest, how blest are thine abodes,
And those who dwell in them!
Thrice welcome here, the thought so dear
Of our Jerusalem!