

Daily View

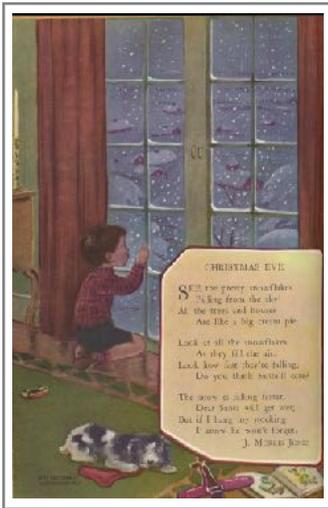
“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today’” Hebrews 3:13

December 23, 2020

“Can we imagine it?”

“**F**ive years from now you'll be the same person you are today except for the books you read and the people you meet.”* I heard that in management seminar in the early 80s and it has stuck with me. But I would add, “and the pictures you dwell on.” Images, whether through art or photography have a huge impact on us.

The pictures on this page come from a book my mother read to me almost daily during my childhood.** These pictures formed an enduring view of Christmas up through my teen years. Before I go on, I'm going to assume that everyone who is



reading this understands that “Christmas” is a secular holiday, not a day on which Christians celebrate the birth of Christ. It is not “Christ-mass” for us. While Jesus’ birth is recorded in Matthew and Luke, no date is assigned to it and there is no command or example of Christians celebrating his birth. It is not, for us, a religious holiday.

Though my father did not forbid it, he was more inclined to ignore the day because *his* mother did not believe they should observe it. That was not uncommon among Christians in those days. One result of this was that dad would often let us open our presents up to a week early, to my mother’s chagrin. My mom loved the season, loved decorating for it and would have gone “whole hog” into it if my dad supported it. But, our actual Christmas experience was rather tepid. Yet,



these pictures, from that old book, defined my view of Christmas Eve and Christmas for a long time.

I've often wondered why I maintained that ideal “vision” even though it bore no resemblance to my reality. We never once had a Christmas like this. None of the several houses we lived in had stairs nor did we ever live for long in a place where it snowed. We didn't even have a dog and, until I was 11 years old, I had no sisters, so I'm not sure how I viewed the doll. But, none of that mattered. I never failed to imagine (or hope or wish), every year, that our Christmas would be like this. These images produced a kind of reality for me.

What do we make of this? This may be a stretch, so forgive me if this application doesn't resonate with you. But I'm thinking if we could get a “picture” of heaven in our minds, similar to the way these images got into my childhood mind, then maybe the effect would be the same as these pictures had on me. Maybe we would desire heaven more because we are, somehow, able to imagine it.

So let's try. Picture this — better, *imagine* it:

Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?”

I said to him, “Sir, you know.”

And he said to me, “These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” *Revelation 7:13-17*

There are many other passages that will help us “picture” heaven (II Corinthians 5:1-4; Philippians 3:20-21; Hebrews 11:13-16; I Peter 1:3-4; Revelation 4, 21 & 22).

It seems logical that if we can get a clear image of heaven in our minds, we would develop a perspective that would serve us well for the rest of our days on earth.

* Attributed to both Charlie Tremendous Jones and UCLA basketball coach, John Wooden. ** *Childcraft* in 15 Volumes, Vol. 2. © 1947. Our copy, after being used by 3 more kids after me, was torn and tattered, with several of my favorite pages missing. This particular volume is rare. I mentioned this in a sermon once and Etta Bicknell, bless her heart, found a pristine copy for me and I am forever grateful to her for that.

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