

THE BIBLE IS ENOUGH!

By Roelf L. Ruffner

“I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Cor. 12:2-4).

In my short life I have seen, read and heard of many examples of misplaced religious enthusiasm. I am not writing about the faithful that have a fire in their hearts for God and His word (cf. Psa.119:97). I refer to those who misuse and abuse the God-given thirst all men have for the Divine. People claiming they have seen an angel, God the Father, Jesus, the devil, demons, and the perennial favorite among Roman Catholics - the Virgin Mary. In the last few years there have been a slew of books and movies made about folks claiming that they have visited Heaven and even Hell. One such case was Alex Malarkey who chronicled his supposed experience in the book, *The Boy Who Came Back From Heaven: A True Story*, co-authored with his father, Kevin, who was a denominational preacher in Nebraska.

The book told the story of how six year old Alex was in a terrible car accident in 2004 which left him a quadriplegic. He claimed he died in the accident and was transported to Heaven where, among other fantastical things, he saw angels and heard the voice of God. He claims he returned from Heaven and in 2009 the book was released. It sold over a million copies. In 2010 it was made into a successful movie, *Heaven Is For Real*.

Even at first glance this book is erroneous in many ways. The first error promulgated in this book/movie is the false teaching that when one dies they go directly to Heaven or Hell. Yet the New Testament teaches that they go first to Hades, the unseen waiting place for the dead, which is divided into Paradise for the righteous and Tartarus for the unrighteous (cf. Luke 16:19-31). There all the dead await the Judgment when the final sentencing to Hell for the wicked and the eternal reward of Heaven for the righteous will take place. “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10).

Secondly, this account assumes that the living can visit Heaven and return. Yet the rich man in Jesus’ true account

of the rich man and Lazarus was told by Abraham when he beckoned Lazarus to visit him and relieve him of his torments, "And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence" (Luke 16:26). When Jesus raised righteous Lazarus from the dead after having been four days in Paradise, the New Testament is silent about any stories of Lazarus's impressions of the Hadean world. Likewise the apostle Paul may have visited Paradise but dared not report a word of his experience (2 Cor. 12:4). Yet men and women assume the right to speak of something which Paul would not.

In 2012 Alex's mother, Beth (Now divorced from his father.) relayed in interviews that the whole account was made up. And Alex, now a teenager, this year issued this honest and revealing statement:

"I did not die. I did not go to Heaven," Alex wrote. He continued, "I said I went to heaven because I thought it would get me attention. When I made the claims that I did, I had never read the Bible. People have profited from lies, and continue to. They should read the Bible, which is enough. The Bible is the only source of truth. Anything written by man cannot be infallible."

He concluded, "Those who market these materials must be called to repent and hold the Bible as enough." (As summarized in a National Public Radio article.)

Yes, dear reader, the Bible is enough! We do not need so-called witnessing, contemplative prayer, testimonials, subjective experiences, church manuals, séances, visions, modern day revelations or even "another testament of Jesus Christ" (i.e. the Book of Mormon) to show us the way to Heaven and how to avoid Hell. That which says less than the Holy Bible says about these places is not enough and that which tries to add to what the Holy Spirit has given in the Scriptures is too much (Rev. 21:18,19). "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished (emphasis mine - RLR) unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

My prayers and best wishes go out to young Alex and his mother. May they continue to search the Scriptures for the true way to see Heaven after this life is over (John 8:31, 32; Acts 17:11).

<http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2015/01/15/377589757/boy-says-he-didn-t-go-to-heaven-publisher-says-it-will-pull-book> as of March 9, 2015.