

PLACEBO (excerpts)

Rev. Howard Pittman

On August 3, 1979, Howard Pittman, a Baptist minister for 35 years, died while on the operating table during surgery and had a near-death experience. After angels showed him the second and third heavens, he was taken before the very throne of God where he was given a message to share with the world.

The following is an excerpt reprinted by permission from his booklet, Placebo, which documents his amazing near-death experience. You can purchase his booklets at his website.

"When the angels lifted my spirit from my body, they carried me immediately to the second heaven. We did not have to leave that hospital room in order to enter the second heaven. We entered there in that same room where my body was, just passing through a dimension wall. It is a wall which flesh cannot pass through, only spirit.

"As we moved through that dimension wall into the second heaven, I found myself in an entirely different world, far different from anything I had ever imagined.

"When I first arrived in the second heaven, I knew immediately in what direction I must go to reach the third heaven where God was. I don't know how I knew that, but I did. I also knew that if I was going to get my prayer answered, I was going to have to appear before God the Father in the third heaven. I was aware that I was traveling in that spirit world under the protection of the Holy Spirit, and that the angels who were escorting me were also moving about under the protection of the Holy Spirit.

"As we moved about there in that world, I was greatly disappointed that my escorts did not take me in the direction of the third heaven where God was. Instead, we moved in the opposite direction. As we moved from place to place in that world, I learned many things about demons.

"I did things differently in the spirit realm than what we do here in the physical world. For instance, we did not communicate with our mouths and ears, but rather, we communicated with our minds. It was like projecting our words on thought waves and receiving the answer the same way. Although I could still think to myself without projecting, I discovered that this really did not benefit me because the angels could read my mind.

"I could hear different sounds in that world, but I did not hear with my ears. I heard with my mind, but I was still able to "hear" those sounds. When we

traveled, we traveled mostly at what I call the "speed of thought." When we traveled at the "speed of thought", there was no sensation of movement. The angel would say where we were going and we were there. There were other times when we did not travel in that manner, and I was very much aware of movement while traveling. One of those times when I was aware of movement was when they brought me back into the physical world and allowed me to see the demons working here. We moved about here somewhat like floating on a cloud. Still, I had the sensation of movement.

"When we started the tour of the second heaven, the angels began by showing me the different types of demons. Each demon was revealed to me in a form that indicated his area of expertise, and I soon discovered that there is no such thing as a "general practitioner" in all the demon world. The demons are all experts in their fields. They have only one area of expertise which they do very well.

"At one time during this tour of the second heaven, I watched the demons within their own related group and I experienced an awful feeling. It was an overwhelming, oppressive, and morbid feeling. This feeling came to me shortly after I had entered the second heaven and I wondered what was causing it. It was at this time that I learned that the angels could read my mind because my guardian angel said to me, "That feeling you are wondering about is caused by the fact that there is no love in this world." The angel was telling me that in this second heaven there is not one bit of love! Wow! Can you imagine all of those demons serving a master they don't love and the master ruling over beings that he doesn't love? Worse than that, their companions are working together for an eternity and they do not even love each other.

"I started reflecting on what our physical world, called the first heaven, would be like without love. If God had not introduced his love here in our world, then we would be living in a no-love atmosphere like the second heaven. By God giving us his love, we are able to return that love and then love one another. Can you imagine what it would be like in your own home or your community if it was totally void of love?

"My escorts then told me that they wanted me to see demon activity in the outside world. I was then escorted outside the hospital directly through the brick wall into the streets of that city. I was amazed as I watched all the activity of the humans in the physical world. Going about their daily pursuit, they were completely unaware that they were being stalked by beings from the spirit world. I was totally flabbergasted as I watched and horrified as I saw the demons in all shapes and forms as they moved at will among the humans.

"When the angels decided that I had seen enough of the demons at work in this physical world, I was taken back into the second heaven just by passing through the dividing, dimension wall. Once back inside the second heaven, my escort guided me in this direction of the third heaven and I was happy at last. After all,

this was where I had wanted to go all the time. Even at this stage, my physical life was still my primary concern.

"Suddenly we came to a most beautiful place. I know that I've already reported how terrible that second heaven was, so you can imagine how surprising it was to find anything beautiful over there. God would not allow me to retain the memory of why this place was so beautiful. I do remember that it was the most beautiful place I'd ever seen. This place looked like a tunnel, a roadway, a valley or some sort of highway. It had a most brilliant light all its own and was completely surrounded with an invisible shield. I knew that the invisible shield was the protection of the Holy Spirit.

"Walking in this tunnel, or along that roadway, or valley, or whatever, was what appeared to be human beings. I asked my escort who they were. He told me, "They are saints going home." These were the departed spirits of Christians who had died on earth and they were going home. Each of these saints was accompanied by at least one guardian angel and some had a whole host of angels with them.

"I wondered why some saints were accompanied by only one angel and others had many. I was watching as the saints passed through the way that all saints must take to go home. Here it was, the passageway from earth to the third heaven.

"Instead of allowing me to enter, the angel stationed me before the gates, slightly to one side. He instructed me to stay there and watch as the saints were permitted to enter into heaven. As the saints were allowed into heaven, I noticed a strange thing. They were permitted to enter only one at a time. No two were permitted to enter those gates at the same time. I wondered about this but it was never explained to me.

"When the last of the fifty saints had entered into the third heaven, I started to enter but my escort stopped me. He told me that if I entered I could not come out and that I would have to stay there until the Father brought me back. The angels told me that all who enter the third heaven must remain there until brought back to this physical world by Christ himself.

"When the angel said I could not enter unless I stayed. I protested, "But if I can't come out then my body will die! That will defeat my whole purpose!" was my emphatic rebuttal. Still my physical life, even at this point in time, was more important than anything else. My escort told me to stand to one side of the gates and present my case. He assured me that God would hear and answer my request.

"As I stood before the gates, the sense of joy, happiness, and contentment radiated out from heaven. I could feel the warmth it produced and as I stood

there to plead my case, I could feel the awesome power of God.

"Boldly I came before the throne and started out by reminding God what a great life of love, worship, and sacrifice I had lived for him. I told him of all the works I had done reminding him that I had accepted him when I was quite young and that I had served him all my life for all these many years. I reminded him that I was now in trouble and only God could help by granting me an extension of my physical life. God was totally silent while I spoke. When I had completed my request, I heard the real, audible voice of God as God answered me.

"The sound of his voice came down on me from over the gates even before the words hit me. The tone of his anger knocked me on my face as God proceeded to tell me just what kind of life I had really lived. God told me what God really thought of me and even others who did as I had. God pointed out that my faith was dead, that my works were not acceptable, and that I had labored in vain. God told me that it was an abomination for me to live such a life and then dare call it a life of worship.

"I could not believe God was talking to me in this manner! I had served him for years! I thought I had lived a life pleasing to him! As God was enumerating my wrongs, I was sure God had me confused with someone else. There was no strength left in me to even move, let alone protest, yet I was panicking within myself.

"No way God could be talking about me! I just could not believe that what God said was referring to me! All of these years I thought I was doing those works for God! Now God was telling me that what I did, I did for myself. Even as I preached and testified about the saving grace of Jesus Christ, I was doing that only for myself in order that my conscience might be soothed. In essence, my first love and first works were for myself. After MY needs and wants were met or satisfied, in order to soothe my conscience I would set out to do the Lord's work. This made my priorities out of order and unacceptable. Actually, I had become my own false God.

"Only now as I was here before him being chastised did those two portions of scripture become crystal clear to me as to their true meaning. As God told me about my true motives, I could see plainly for the first time how my works were dead. Because God was displaying his wrath toward me, I could not stand nor could I speak. No strength was left within me as I was nothing more than a wet rag lying there writhing in agony.

"It needs to be stated that at no time while God was chastising me did God say I was not saved nor did God say that my name was not in the Lamb's Book of Life. God never mentioned salvation to me at all but only spoke about the works produced through my life. God told me the type of life I lived was an

unacceptable life for a true Christian. As God spoke to me of my dead works, God indicated that there are some people who are not saved but think they are.

"When God was through with me the interview was over as suddenly as one would turn off a faucet. I was not allowed to linger or even reflect on what God said. The angels immediately carried me away as if I were a wet rag having no strength in myself. Totally annihilated, I could not even gather my thoughts.

"The angels carried me back through the second heaven, through the dimension wall, and into the hospital room where my body was lying. It was not until I reached the bed upon which my body lay did I regain my composure. As I regained my composure, I vehemently protested, "No! No!" I told the angels, "God did not answer me! God did not say yes or no to my request! Please, oh please, take me back!" I pleaded with the angels.

"Upon my arrival back before the third heaven, I was brought to the same place from which I had previously pleaded my case. Not nearly so bold this time, I remembered how God's wrath had floored me beforehand. Nevertheless, I had asked God for a favor and God had not answered. Wanting his answer no matter what it was, I timidly started pleading my case again.

"This time God did not knock me down but let me talk. God did not talk to me in anger but started out answering me in a tone of pity. Before it was all over, God was speaking in sorrow.

"Opening my plea by quoting scriptures to God, I began by telling him all about Hezediah. I told God that I figured out that Hezediah was the "good-old-boy" type, that the intentions of his heart were pure, but he seemed to be unable to translate out those intentions into everyday living. Here I was, an insignificant nothing and the smallest creature in all his universe, bartering words with this great and awesome God who had created it all.

"I said, "Father, if You will grant this request, I promise you I will do better the next time."

"The Lord answered me thusly, "Howard Pittman, you have promised before." God did not have to say another word. There they were, all the promises I had made to a holy God in my past entire life. Not one of them remained whole. Somehow, somehow, I had managed to break them all. With nothing left to say, no words in all my vocabulary, nowhere to go, I fell on my knees before him. All I could say was "Amen" to my own condemnation. I knew that if at that moment God would banish me into the pits of hell, it would be just to say "amen" to my own condemnation.

"At that moment God did not demand justice but showed me mercy. The scales fell from my eyes and my soul was suddenly filled with light. That powerful,

awesome, all-consuming God was now not evident. There on that throne dealing with me was my REAL Father. God was no longer a distant God, but a real, genuine Father. The realization of his being my true Father and my best friend came to me for the first time in my life. The wonderful relationship I had enjoyed with my physical father and the wonderful love we shared for each other was suddenly brought to mind yet magnified a thousand fold. For now I was with my real Father, the one who loved me so much that God left all of his creation to deal with me, the prodigal son.

"For the first time in my life, I saw in my mind's eye who God really is. For the first time I met God as God truly is, my real Father, my very best friend. As the realization of who God is flooded my soul, great and painful sorrow also came. Sorrow came when I realized that through disobedience I had hurt my Father. This realization and sorrow produced actual pain which was not just a guilt feeling but actual pain similar to what one would experience in the flesh when one sustains a physical injury. At this point in time, God started dealing with me in sorrow and no longer did the tone of his voice express pity. Instead, the sound was of genuine sorrow. I suddenly realized that God was hurting too. God was hurting because I was hurting. Being a true and just God as God is, God had to allow me to suffer the pain and God could not lift it from me. Although God had to allow me to suffer the pain, God would not allow me to suffer it alone. God the most High, the most Supreme, the Creator of all, the Father of all would not let me suffer alone.

"By this time I suddenly realized that my physical life was not so important after all. What I was really concerned about now was what my Father wanted. His will had suddenly become the first thing of my life and my physical life was no longer important. This is when God gave me back my physical life. Only when I reached a place that my life did not mean anything to me, did God give it back to me. Now that the prodigal son had returned, the Father could talk at last. God could tell me what my trip to heaven was all about and that God had a message God wanted me to tell people on earth.

"I now repeat for you point by point the entire five point message that God gave me to deliver to this world today."

Point number one: "For those who call themselves Christians, this is the Laodicean Church Age in which we live. A high majority of so-called Christians are, in fact, living a deceived life. They talk Jesus and play church, but do not live it. They claim to be Christians and then live like the devil. They have bought the great lie from Satan who tells them that they are alright. He tells them that it is alright to go to church on Sunday and attend mid-week services but as far as the rest of the time is concerned, they are to get all they can out of life. As far as their Christian life is concerned, they believe they are comfortable and have need of nothing and as a result, they are only lukewarm Christians if Christians at all."

Point number two: "Satan is a personal devil."

Point number three: "To the whole world, this is Noah's second day. As it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the days of the coming of the son of man. Humans took no thought of what Noah was saying nor did humans believe that anything was about to change. Humanity could see the storm clouds over the horizon, but yet did not believe the rain was imminent. Notice the close parallel today. Humanity can see all the signs of the last days, yet humanity does not believe that anything will change. He does not believe in the impending coming of our Lord and he does not prepare to meet God."

Point number four: "For those who claim to be Christians, they are supposed to be ambassadors for Christ here on earth. One cannot have any true witness or power in his life unless that one lives his Christian faith at all times, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. To be a true Christian one must live it, not just talk it. To honor God with your lips and not your heart is not acceptable. Those who accept the responsibility of teaching, preaching, or any leadership role have much for which to answer.

Point number five: "God is now in the process of recruiting an army with which God will shake this old world one more time. By working through his soldiers, God will produce great miracles that will shake the established hierarchy of the so-called organized religion that is in this world today. These soldiers that God is now recruiting will demonstrate the power of God to a greater extent than did the disciples in the Pentecostal age. Now the recruitment has begun in earnest because God is about to perform the great miracles through his army that God promised us God would do in the Bible. John the Baptist brought the spirit of Elijah into this world and he did not even know he had it. John denied it, but Jesus confessed that it was so. The purpose of that spirit was to make straight the paths of the coming of the Lord."