



## Heaven Wins: The Truth about God's Love and the Fate of Mankind

### Part #2: What Will Heaven Be Like?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vRlQwSd3jqI>

What will heaven be like? This is a question that is asked of the youngest children to the oldest adults due to the fact that each of us has eternity etched upon our hearts. The reason for this is due to the fact that Scripture gives us a deeper understanding of heaven by supplying seven important facts that we must not ever forget when reflecting on this Biblical truth.

#### Fact #1 – Heaven is Our Home

Each Christian has a deep longing for heaven due to the fact that they have the understanding that this fallen world is not their home. Peter describes this understanding in this manner as he states,

**1 Peter 2:11** (HCSB) – Dear friends, I urge you as strangers and temporary residents to abstain from fleshly desires that war against you.<sup>1</sup>

Peter describes two different times that Christians are “strangers” or “temporary residents.” The same Greek term is used for both of these descriptions and it carries the idea of “a person who for a period of time lives in a place which is not his normal residence.”<sup>2</sup> C. S. Lewis understood the same reality of the temporal nature of our life as he observed,

If you are really a product of a materialistic universe, how is it that you don't feel at home there? . . . Though I do not believe that my desire for Paradise proves that I shall enjoy it, I think it a pretty good indication that such a thing exists and that some men will. . . . If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.<sup>3</sup>

There are other places in the New Testament that describe heaven as the true home of a Christian. The writer of Hebrews talked about Christians martyrs who longed for their true home,

**Hebrews 11:13-14,16** – <sup>13</sup>These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. <sup>14</sup>For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. . . . <sup>16</sup>But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city.

<sup>1</sup> *The Holy Bible: Holman Christian Standard Version*. (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 132.

<sup>3</sup> These quotes from C. S. Lewis are drawn from several sources, all listed at the Web site of the C. S. Lewis Society of California. See [www.lewissociety.org/quotes.php](http://www.lewissociety.org/quotes.php).

Notice that at the end of verse 14, these individuals were seeking their “homeland” also described as their “hometown or the place where they come from which is known as their home.”<sup>4</sup> The Bible consistently tells us what our hearts also confirm: that the earth is our temporary dwelling, but our ultimate home is beyond this world. John MacArthur observes,

The most positive thing about our faith is not what we can see or hold or measure, but the promise that one day we will forever be with the Lord. Christians whose faith does not extend to heaven will have their eyes on the things of this world and will wonder why they are not happier in the Lord. Nothing in this life, including God’s most abundant earthly blessings, will give a believer the satisfaction and joy that come with absolute assurance of future glory.<sup>5</sup>

## Fact #2 – Heaven is a Real Place

The second fact that we must understand about heaven is that it is a real, physical place not just some ethereal region that is intangible. Consider the teaching of Jesus to His disciples on this very subject as He states,

**John 14:1-2,6** – <sup>1</sup>Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. <sup>2</sup>In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?...Jesus said to him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

One of the central reasons why Jesus taught this lesson to His struggling disciples was so that they could take comfort in knowing that their true home was waiting for them and it was real. It was so real that Christ was going ahead of them to show them the way and make the way for them to follow Him there upon the passing from this life into the next. The commentator Gerald L. Borchert observes the confidence we can gain from heaven being a real place as he reflects on the teaching of Christ,

The text immediately catches the readers’ attention, for it begins with a strong prohibition, a negative imperative which carries the meaning of “Do not let your hearts be overcome with turmoil” or perhaps, more colloquially, “Don’t allow yourself to be intimidated by the situation.” This statement is immediately followed by a call to evidence confidence...Jesus knew that his little band could and would be shaken not only by his words concerning his departure but also by the fact that he would soon become the crucified Lamb. Accordingly, he called for them to place their “trust” not in the power evident in the world but in God and in himself.<sup>6</sup>

## Fact #3 – Heaven is Eternal and the Dwelling Place of God

The third fact that we consider is that heaven is both eternal and the dwelling place of God. God the Father establishes this truth throughout the Word of God as He states,

**Isaiah 57:15a** – For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: “I dwell in the high and holy place...”

<sup>4</sup> James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek (New Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

<sup>5</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *Hebrews*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1983), 334.

<sup>6</sup> Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12–21*, vol. 25B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2002), 103.

**Zechariah 2:13** – Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord, for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.

**Psalms 115:3** – Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases.

**Psalms 16:11** – You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

**2 Corinthians 5:1** – For we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

There is an important point to note regarding this fact. Some argue that if God dwells in heaven then He cannot be omnipresent yet we must observe this truth, **“To say that God dwells in heaven is not to say that He is contained there.”** We read in 1 Kings,

**1 Kings 8:27** – But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house that I have built!

Heaven is God’s unique home, His center of operations, and His command post. It is the place where His throne resides. And it is where the most perfect worship of Him occurs. It is in that sense that we say heaven is His dwelling-place.

#### **Fact #4 – Heaven is Our Pursuit**

The fourth fact that we must consider is that Scripture reminds us that the eternal reward of dwelling with the Lord in heaven should be our pursuit in this life as Christians. The reason for this is that as we live for the eternal reward then we live a life that gives glory to God. Consider these passages for a moment,

**Colossians 3:1-4** – <sup>1</sup>If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup>Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. <sup>3</sup>For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup>When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

**2 Corinthians 4:17-18** (HCSB) – <sup>17</sup>For our momentary light affliction is producing for us an absolutely incomparable eternal weight of glory. <sup>18</sup>So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

#### **Fact #5 – We Are Transformed in Heaven**

The fifth fact that we must observe is that we are transformed in heaven into the glorious state that the Lord has intended for us to be like. We are given a new body and a new name in which we will praise God and serve Him in joy with eternity. Consider some of these passages,

**Philippians 3:20-21** – <sup>20</sup>But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup>who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Richard R. Melick points out two significant factors in discussing the idea of our new bodies in heaven.

First, the body is destined for eternity. It should be treated accordingly, and people should not make earthly existence *in the body* their ultimate concern. The tragedy of the false teachers was, in part, that they did just that. They focused on some aspect of the body that would not last beyond this life. Second, Paul's hope involved a physical transformation. His theology included the fact that redemption culminated in a change of the body itself. The spirit was already in a resurrection with Christ; the body awaited that change.<sup>7</sup>

Someday we will have a body of glory, fully suited to the needs of heaven and displaying the glory of Christ himself. This is our hope and should cause us to finish faithfully.

We also observe that with our transformation then we are given a new name written on a white stone. John records the voice of the Lord as he states,

**Revelation 2:17** – He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it.'

During the days of the New Testament, the Romans had a custom of awarding white stones to the victors in athletic contests. A white stone, inscribed with the athlete's name, served as his ticket to a special awards banquet. In the same manner, Christians are given their heavenly reward and enter into eternity to live out their prize with in the presence of the Lord.

### **Fact #6 – The Third Heaven is God's Home and Your Reward**

The study on heaven can at times be confusing because there are places where the term heaven is used in the proper context but many individuals misinterpret its meaning because of the English language.

The Bible refers to heaven about 550 times. It is a subject that God relates to us in a variety of ways so that we will gain a deeper understanding and longing for our eternal home. It is described a garden, city, and even His kingdom where there will be no pain, suffering, tears, or death. Sadly, many theologians, writers, and even Christians have sought to trivialize the existence of heaven by referring to it merely as a symbolic place representing God's presence versus a literal place where we will dwell with God for eternity. Randy Alcorn made this important observation about the teachings on heaven,

Analogies can be pressed too far, but because Scripture makes it clear that Jesus is preparing a place for us, and God's Kingdom will come to Earth, and a physical resurrection awaits us, there is no reason to spiritualize or allegorize all earthly descriptions of Heaven. Indeed, some of them may be simple, factual statements. Too often we've been taught that Heaven is a non-physical realm, which cannot have real gardens, cities, kingdoms, buildings, banquets, or bodies. So we fail to take seriously what Scripture tells us about Heaven as a familiar, physical, tangible place.<sup>8</sup>

The term heaven as found in the Bible refers to one of three different definitions: : sky, abode of God, or universe.

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<sup>7</sup> Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 144.

<sup>8</sup> Alcorn, Randy (2004-10-01). *Heaven* (Alcorn, Randy) (Kindle Locations 559-566). Kindle Edition.

### Definition #1 – The Atmospheric Heaven

The first definition is found as we observe Biblical references to heaven as the atmosphere around the earth or the air that we breathe. One example of this use of the term heaven is found in Isaiah 55:9.

**Isaiah 55:9** (NASB) – “For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.

*This is the first heaven and it refers to the atmosphere around us.*

### Definition #2 – The Planetary Heaven

The second definition of heaven refers to heaven as the dwelling place of the stars, moons, and planets. For example, Genesis 1 says, "God said, Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens.... God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; He made the stars also. One example of this use of the term heaven is found in Genesis chapter one as God describes the creation of the planets and stars.

**Genesis 1:14-17** (NASB) – <sup>14</sup>Then God said, “Let there be lights in the expanse of the heavens to separate the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years; <sup>15</sup>and let them be for lights in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth”; and it was so. <sup>16</sup>God made the two great lights, the greater light to govern the day, and the lesser light to govern the night; *He made* the stars also. <sup>17</sup>God placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth,

*This is the second heaven and it refers to the dwelling place of the planets and stars.*

### Definition #3 – The Divine Heaven

The final definition of heaven is what most people think of when reflecting on the topic of heaven. It refers to the dwelling place of the Lord our God and His holy angels and those saints who have died. One example of this use of heaven can be found in the model prayer that many churches repeat every Sunday.

**Matthew 6:9** (NASB) – Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.’

This is the reference to which Paul refers in 2 Corinthians 12:2 where he states,

**2 Corinthians 12:2** – I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows.

*This is the third heaven and it refers to the dwelling place of God.*

John MacArthur makes these observations about this reference,

Paul was suddenly snatched up into the **third heaven** which, transcending the first (earth’s atmosphere; Deut. 11:11; 1 Kings 8:35; Isa. 55:10) and second (interplanetary and interstellar space; Gen. 15:5; Ps. 8:3; Isa. 13:10) heavens, is the abode of God (1 Kings 8:30; Ps. 33:13–14; Matt. 6:9). The parallelism of the two phrases demands that **Paradise** be equated with **heaven** (see Luke 23:43; cf. Rev. 2:7, which says the Tree of Life is in Paradise with Rev. 22:2, 14, 19, which place it in heaven). The Persian word from which the Greek

word translated **Paradise** derives means “walled garden.” The greatest honor a Persian king could bestow on one of his subjects was to grant him the right to walk with the king in the royal garden in intimate companionship.<sup>9</sup>

## **Fact #7 – Heaven is in the Presence of the King of Kings**

The final fact that we examine in this study deals with the reality that God’s Heavenly Kingdom cannot be separated from the presence our Heavenly King. Some have debated throughout the years regarding the distinction between the present heaven and the final fulfillment of the “New Heaven” as referred to in Revelation.

This distinction is unnecessary due to the fact that the eternal “Heaven” by its simple definition cannot be separated from the presence of the King of Kings. We cannot be in heaven and not be in the presence of our Lord. This is a critical point to make due to Paul’s desire to be present with the Lord in Philippians 1:23 as he states,

**Philippians 1:23** – I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

The point within this text is clear. When a Christian dies then they enter into the presence of Christ their Lord and Savior which for all intensive purposes is heaven. The debate regarding the differences can also be settled by a deeper understanding of a careful analysis of Revelation 21:1-4.

**Revelation 21:1-4** – <sup>1</sup>Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup> And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. <sup>4</sup> He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.”

There are several important observations to make in these verses. Notice these facts from this text,

- **Fact #1** – The Dwelling Place of God is With Man
- **Fact #2** – The Dwelling Place is Where There is No More Mourning, Crying, Pain, and the Former Things Have Passed Away
- **Fact #3** – The New Jerusalem Comes Down from Heaven
- **Fact #4** – The New Heaven and Earth Replace the First Heaven and Earth

These verses proclaim that heaven has always been and will always be where God has dwelled with man (Christians) and they are dwelling with Him as their God. There is a final heaven and earth where God reigns for eternity and His people dwell with Him for eternity.

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<sup>9</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *2 Corinthians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003), 395.

## Conclusion

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Heaven is truly where one dwells in the presence of the Lord for eternity. It is the final home of those who choose to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. It is a real place and our reward for living a faithful life for Christ.

## Remaining Lessons

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The remaining lessons are listed in this chart as a roadmap regarding the course or direction of this class.

<b>Heaven Wins: A Biblical Study on Heaven</b>		
<b>Date</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Summary</b>
<b>October 15, 2014</b>	<b>Facts versus Fables About Heaven</b>	This lesson will examine the modern day myths that we encounter when dealing with the subject of heaven as well as give you ways to answer these myths.
<b>October 22, 2014</b>	<b>What Will We Be Like in Heaven?</b>	This lesson will answer the question, "What will we be like in heaven?" We will examine the Biblical truths on this subject.
<b>November 05, 2014</b>	<b>The Heavenly Host</b>	This lesson will examine the role, characteristics, and nature of the heavenly hosts in heaven.
<b>November 12, 2014</b>	<b>More Heavenly Questions Answered</b>	This lesson will answer several more questions that many encounter when studying the subject of heaven.
<b>November 19, 2014</b>	<b>Living in Light of Heaven</b>	This lesson will address the importance of living this life in light of heaven. We will examine what it means to live for the eternal prize and the glory of God.

### Q U E S T I O N S

How does victory in Christ  
compel us to share the  
Gospel with others?

How can we share the  
Gospel today?