

HEAVEN

“My Father’s house”

Key question

What can be known about heaven?

Key text

Revelation 21:1-4

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His peoples, and God Himself shall be among them, and He shall **wipe away every tear from their eyes**; and **there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain**; the first things have passed away.’”

Key Definition

Heaven

Heaven is the final eternal place of rest and full fellowship with God for all who are redeemed in Christ.

Introduction

I Cor.15:19 indicates that if our hope is only in this life, we must be pitied. Heroic self-denial is inspired in part by Christ’s example and also by His promise to those who will share His inheritance in a place being prepared for them (Jn.14:2). The believer is promised an escape from “death” (Jn.8:51, Rev.2:11) in the presence of Christ (II Cor.5:6). This state is commonly called “heaven”.

1. What do Americans believe about heaven? (Time-CNN poll of March 1997 - 3% error)
 - a. 81% believe in heaven as a place where people will be united with God at death.
 - b. 63% believe in hell as a place of eternal punishment.

- c. Only 6% believe that people go to heaven based mostly on the good they do. 34% believed that faith was the key while 57% said both faith and works was necessary.
 - d. 67% think of heaven as “up there”.
 - e. 61% believe that they will go directly to heaven at death.
 - f. 85% believe that heaven is totally different than life on earth.
 - g. 66% believe that only the soul will be in heaven not the body.
 - h. 88% believe that they will meet loved ones in heaven.
2. How is heaven viewed by other faith's?
- a. **Islam** - borrows many ideas from the Bible and adds that it is a place of beautiful, large-eyed companions and youths of perpetual freshness. It speaks of 7 tiers of paradise - Adam is on the first, Jesus is on the fourth, Muhammad is on the seventh.
 - b. **Buddhism** - has as many paradises as there are Buddhas, each is a pleasant way station on the journey to Nirvana (the place of nonbeing).
- A. **The terms for “heaven” (Hebrew - SHAMAYIM, Greek - OURANOS) are used in two ways in Scripture.**
1. Cosmological - “the heavens and the earth” Gen.1:1.
 2. The abode of God - “Our Father who art in heaven” Matt.6:9.
- B. **Characteristics of Heaven**
1. **Inexpressible glory** – There are no analogies or words on this present fallen planet that can prepare us to imagine the full nature of heaven. Heaven promises to be a presentation that will overwhelm our senses of sound, sight, and emotional feeling. **I Cor.2:9-10** “but just as it is written, ‘Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.’” **II Cor.12:4** Paul “was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.” **Rom.8:18** “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.”
 2. **Beholding God face to face** – Those who go there will see God’s face. **Rev.22:4** “and they shall see His face and His name shall be on their foreheads”, **Matt.18:10** “their angels in heaven continually behold the face of My Father who is in heaven.” **I Cor.13:12** “For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.”
 3. **Light** – **Rev.22:5** “And there shall no longer be any night; and they shall not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun because the Lord God shall illumine them; and they shall reign forever and ever.”
 4. **The end of homelessness** – **Jn.14:2-3** “In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” **Heb.11:10** “for he was looking for the city which has foundations whose architect and builder is God.”
 5. **Knowing and seeing fully** – The beauty of sight and understanding will be full and without frustration. **I Cor.13:9-12** “For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but

when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away. . . now I know in part, but then I shall know fully just as I also have been fully known.”

6. **Active service** – The work of those in heaven will be without frustration, exhaustion, or apathy. It will return us to the pre-Fall experience of Adam in that there will be no sin. **Rev.22:3** “and His bond-servants shall serve Him.” The work of those in heaven will be without frustration, exhaustion, or apathy. It will be a return to the pre-Fall experience of Adam in that there will be no sin.
7. **Happiness** – If a joy could be imagined in which one is completely and permanently delivered from all evil, so as to share fully in the abundant good of the One who is incomparably good, that is the joy of heaven. **Ps.16:11** “In Thy presence is fullness of joy”
8. **Freedom from evil** – It goes without saying that heaven will be free of evil with all of the fear, pain, and chaos that go with it. **Rev.22:15** “outside are the dogs and the sorcerers and the immoral persons and the murderers and the idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices lying.”
9. **Absence of temptation** – The appetites that are associated with temptation will be gone in heaven, as all who are there will be fully satisfied. **Rev.7:16** “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; neither shall the sun beat down on them, nor any heat” **I Cor.6:13** “for is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food but God will do away with both of them,”
10. **Rest from struggle** – **Heb.4:9-11** “There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His. Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience.” I take this to mean that our activity in heaven will not exhaust us. **Rev.21:4** “and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.”
11. **Freedom to live** – Fullness of life that is hindered by the Fall of Adam will be restored. **Rev.2:7** “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God” **I Cor.15:54-57** “⁵⁴ But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, *Death is swallowed up in victory,* ⁵⁵ *O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?* ⁵⁶ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; ⁵⁷ but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
12. **Glorified Bodies** - In heaven we will have a body but it will be characterized by power (not weakness), immortality (not mortality), honor (dishonor) **I Cor.15:42-53**. **I Jn.3:2** “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.” (See also theology note file #712 on this web site.)

C. Some commonly asked questions about heaven.

1. **Is heaven a place or a state of being?**
 - a. Heaven is best understood as a new dimension of reality, beyond our comprehension - **I Cor.2:9-10.**

- b. Scriptural attempts to describe heaven use expressions that suggest that:
 1. It will be like this present earth but without evil, blemish or pain.
 2. Resurrection bodies will be able to enjoy certain physical pleasures while being rid of some physical limitations.
 3. It will be rich with the best things of this life.
2. **How much will we remember and know in heaven?**
 - a. We apparently will remember nothing of the old heaven and earth - Isa.65:17.
 - b. We will see many things clearly - I Cor.13:9-12.
3. **Will there be varying rewards in heaven?**
 - a. No one will be disappointed or experience sorrow - Rev.21:4.
 - b. I Cor.3:12-15 suggests that there will be degrees of reward or blessing.
 1. The crown of life - Jas.1:12, Rev.2:10.
 2. The crown of glory - I Pet.5:4, Jn.17:22, Heb.2:9.
 3. The crown of righteousness - II Tim.4:8.
 4. The crown of rejoicing - I Thess.2:19.
 5. The crown of gold - Rev.4:4.

Questions that you should be able to answer.

- 1. Specific facts you should know.**
 - a. What are two ways in which the word “heaven” is used in Scripture?
 - b. Where, in the Bible, do we find references to heaven?
- 2. Issues that you should be able to discuss.**
 - a. Is heaven a place or a state of being?
 - b. How much will we remember and know in heaven?
 - c. Will there be varying rewards in heaven?
- 3. Questions you should wrestle with.**
 - a. In what ways will the “new earth” be like and unlike the old earth?
 - b. Why is there not more said about heaven in Scripture?