

The Biblical Doctrine of Heaven

Course Introduction

This course is intended to meet a renewed interest in what the Bible teaches about heaven. Non-Christians in many cultures are asking what Christians teach about the destiny of the believer after death. Many religions have nothing to say about the afterlife, nor do they mention any such place as heaven. But the Christians a clear and definite hope and assurance of heaven. We all need to have a better understanding of what this hope is and how it relates to our Christian faith and life. This course gives a thorough study of what the Bible has to say about heaven.

This study also deals with the reasons why many in modern times have repudiated the idea of heaven. Related subjects, such as the intermediate state, the kingdom of heaven and the New Jerusalem are discussed. The emphasis on heaven in the songs and hymns of the church is also considered. The author of the textbook, a well-known evangelical scholar, teacher and writer brings us truths about heaven that are both eternal and practical.

The second coming of Jesus Christ is a “blessed hope” (Titus 2:13) for committed Christians. But what is it that makes the event a blessed hope? Is it only the fact that we will be with Jesus? The communion that we have with Him now could hardly be improved upon, except for the fact that after He comes and gathers us unto himself, the trials and troubles that come upon us because of sin and Satan will be at an end. And that is just what heaven will be: direct, personal communion with Jesus Christ without the devious and determined attempts of Satan to interrupt and destroy that communion. It is because of heaven that the second coming of Christ is a blessed hope.

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Objectives

The purpose of this course is to show what a prominent place heaven is given in the Scriptures, thus demonstrating that it is worthy of our close attention. This study looks at heaven, not only as the abode of God and the angels, but as the future home of the believer. Our study will also draw attention to the possibility of a heavenly life now and let us see what our inheritance and reward in heaven really is.

After you have mastered the knowledge treated in the textbook and this study guide, you should be able to:

1. Give scriptural and logical answers to those who do not believe in the idea of heaven.
2. Show the relationship of God the Father and Jesus the Son to heaven.
3. Describe the present inhabitants of heaven and discuss their activities.
4. Explain the meaning of the term “the kingdom of heaven” as used in the Gospel of Matthew
5. Recount the possibilities of a heavenly life in the present earthly existence of Christians.
6. Describe the intermediate state of Christians between death and the general resurrection.
7. Distinguish between the concepts of rewards (which the Christian receives without any work on his part).
8. Describe what redeemed saints will be doing after being ushered into an eternal existence in heaven.
9. Demonstrate the role that heaven plays in the Book of Revelation.

10. Explain the reality of the new heavens and the new earth and how they come about.

11. Describe the Holy City and explain its role throughout eternity.

Biblical Doctrine of Heaven

The Nature of Heaven

To some people, even some professing Christians, heaven takes on the attributes of a mythical wonderland. They see it as a lure to hold the interest of Christians whose lives on earth are difficult and demanding. Unfortunately the reality of heaven is not strong enough to create excitement and anticipation for many who have been blessed with affluence and contentment. Yet heaven should be part of the “blessed hope”.

Heaven and the Heavens

The major concern of our study is not on the physical heavens or the universe so you may be tempted to skip over some of the statistical details rather lightly. Don’t do it. Just thinking about the size and the age of the universe is a meditation experience that should lead to spontaneous worship of the great Creator who made everything in such magnitude. You might very profitably draw from the vast array of statistics two or three facts about the size of the universe that could be used in some future opportunity for sharing the greatness of God. How do you say 6,600,000,000,000,000,000 (the weight of the earth)? Either 6.6 sextillion tons or 6 sextillion 600 quintillion tons. The table of numbers in your dictionary will help you read or pronounce these huge numbers.

In this lesson as well as in later lessons, you will note the Latin phrase *creation ex nihilo*. Remember that it means simply “creation out of nothing.” There have been many theories through the centuries concerning what the universe as we know it was made from. Scientists struggle with the question too, for the material realities with which they

work demand a prior source of energy or matter. But God made everything out of nothing. That's a great God!

If we have any questions in our minds about the magnificence and perfection that will be a part of heaven, a little word study should settle the matter. We use the word *heavenly* in speaking of other things than heaven. What idea do we convey by that usage? The last paragraph of the chapter in the textbook treats the matter well. The word *heavenly* literally means that the thing called heavenly partakes in some way of the very character of God.

Is there any better description of heavenly things on earth than the words of James 1:17? "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

Heaven as God's Abode

Does a Spirit need a specific place in which to live? Probably not. Since the Scriptures declare that God is everywhere-on earth as well as in heaven- why should there be any concern about the abode of God? While logic might lead us to diminish the importance of assigning a place of habitation to God, the Scriptures do clearly speak of heaven as the place where God's presence exists in a slightly different way than His general omnipresence. Being able to locate the special presence of God in a location such as heaven may also help us with our limited understanding to comprehend the reality of this supernatural being.

The Incarnate Christ and Heaven

We readily understand that heaven is the abode of God, but is only when we contemplate the relationship of the incarnate Jesus Christ that the concept produces the pleasant, attractive feelings that make us desire to be in heaven someday. Co a study of the relationship of Jesus to heaven can be a very profitable study.

Before Jesus came to earth as the incarnate Son of God, He was in heaven with the Father. Very little mention is made in Scripture of this preincarnate existence in heaven,

and so the period is given only two paragraphs in the textbook. The story of the Christ child coming to earth is a familiar one to all Christians. But the continuing relationship of Jesus to heaven throughout His earthly ministry worthy of more detailed study. It may be that we today could have a more vital relationship with heaven and its power if we sought to pattern our prayer life and exercise of faith after the example of Jesus.

But the relationship of Jesus Christ to heaven following the Ascension and continuing to the present time provides the real inspiration for a victorious Christian life. Just think, even as you struggle with the demands, and sometimes even the drudgery, of a course of study like this, Jesus Christ is at the right hand of the Father. He has sent the Holy Spirit to make the truth you are studying come alive. What an encouragement to know that we have a direct relationship with heaven right now through our great High Priest, Jesus. Not only is Christ our High Priest, He is our Intercessor and Mediator.

The Present Inhabitants of Heaven

There is currently a great interest in books and testimonies about angels. Some of the accounts are exciting, to say the least. Angels really exist, and it is very possible that they are more active in our affairs than we realize. But a word of caution is in order. We should not overemphasize any single doctrine- whether it be angels, gifts, tongues, or anything else- to the point that it gets out of balance with all of the gospel. And certainly we should not run from one exciting account of the appearance of angels to another just for the thrill that it gives us. To do that would be just like the people who run from one preacher evangelist to another but never settle down to become stable members of a local church. God expects us to be faithful in all things.

A Reality for the Redeemed

It is one thing to know all facts about heaven as they can be determined from Scripture. It is an entirely different thing to know what heaven means now and some day will mean for you, for me and for all of the redeemed.

The present life is a life of preparation for the next life. Yet too many Christians live as though they can make last-minute preparations for heaven in the final hours of life. But doesn't it make sense that our joy in heaven will be in proportion to the extent that we have begun living the life of heaven here- not physically but in attitude and dedication?

There are a lot of theories about the state and activity of the soul between physical death and the resurrection of the body (when Christ returns for His bride). Purgatory and soul sleep have been proposed by some well-intentioned persons. But neither of these erroneous views can be supported from Scripture.

How do you view the Christian's claim to heaven? Is it a reward for faithful service? Or is it something we inherit just because we are members of the family of God? You know of course that both ideas are found in Scripture.

Would you be content to float on fluffy clouds and play a harp as your main activities in heaven? If you are studying this course at the end of a long, hard day of physical or mental labor, that prospect may sound inviting. But such inactivity would soon become tiresome. The activity of the redeemed in heaven will be exciting and challenging.

A Heavenly Life Now

The first is an important point of clarification on the meaning of the term "kingdom of heaven." You may be using a study Bible that takes a strong dispensational position in the explanatory notes. If the one you use tries to make a distinction between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. Because the term "kingdom of heaven" is used to regularly in Matthew, but not in the other Gospels that record the same incidents and teachings of Jesus.

How would you characterize a heavenly life on earth? It can be summarized in one idea: obedience or doing the will of God. A heavenly life now must of necessity have some similarity with actual life in heaven, and the distinguishing feature of life in heaven

seems to be that all the angels do the will of God completely and perfectly. To the extent that we are able to live a life of obedience and submission to God, we will be living a heavenly life now.

Is it possible to live a heavenly life now? There is no sin in heaven, so there can be no disobedience there. But things are quite different on earth, for Satan is “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2). Yet God has overcome Satan, and to the extent that we yield to His work in our lives, we can be obedient to Him rather than to the evil one. The better we learn that lesson of obedience to God, the better prepared we will be to rule and reign with Christ in the future.

An annual checkup may be sufficient to keep us informed on the state of our physical health, but an annual checkup is not sufficient when it comes to our spiritual health. We must continually watch for signs of spiritual ill health and take immediate steps to correct any deficiencies that we detect. As you study chapter 8 of the textbook, take inventory of your obedience does not end there. Have you obeyed the voice of God in the things that He has told you to do in the past week or month? Are you doing right now all that His Spirit has prompted you to do? If you are an obedient disciple, you will know the truth.

Jesus said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). But verse 31 needs to be quoted first. “If you hold my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free,” (NIV). Holding to the teachings of Jesus is obeying them and continuing as a disciple. Are you living a heavenly life?

The Intermediate State

The Bible does not give a detailed explanation of what happens to the believer’s soul during this time, and this has prompted some speculation and the development of some extra-biblical theories. So we cannot come to this study with a dogmatic certainty

about everything concerning the intermediate state. But we likewise must not be misled by some of the erroneous explanations that have been developed by people and churches. Where the Bible is silent, we must be cautious in giving definitive answers.

Two unscriptural explanations have been given widespread support and attention over the centuries. One is the view that after death man goes to purgatory where a process of purification makes him fit for heaven. The other is the belief in soul sleep or the unconscious state of the soul until the resurrection. Do you know what churches hold each of these views? You are very likely to run into members of these churches and it would be helpful to know beforehand what they believe concerning the intermediate state.

The following verses are central to the evangelical belief that the believer's soul at death goes immediately into the presence of God.

- Matthew 22:31-32
- Luke 23:43
- Luke 23:46
- Acts 7:59
- Philippians 1:23-24
- 2 Corinthians 4:16-18
- 2 Corinthians 5:1-5

Heaven as Inheritance and as Reward

“There is no such thing as a free lunch.” “Success comes to the man who works for it.” “God provides us all things, but we must labor to get them.” “Nobody gets a free ride.”

How many times have you heard expressions like these—or even said some of them yourself? But have you ever heard someone say, “Success comes if you can just wait long enough,”? We believe the work-reward concept, but we only refer humorously

to the death of a rich uncle or looking for our ship to come in. We are conditioned to expect success only if we put diligent effort into the search for that success.

But it works both ways in the Kingdom. God does expect some things from us, and if we fulfill these expectations, we will be richly rewarded—certainly in the next life and sometimes even in this life. God honors and rewards obedience to His Word. But just when we begin to feel self-satisfied at our affluence and good fortune, thinking that it is a reward for our faithfulness and obedience, God reminds us that the blessings we enjoy are not because of our strength or effort; they are the inheritance that comes to us simply because we as children of God have been declared heirs and receive the blessings we have as the bounty of God's goodness—not because of our work.

Both concepts—rewards and the inheritance—contain valuable truth. We are wrong if we think that God will give us everything just because we have confessed Him as Lord and Savior. He expects our loving service and obedience as evidence of that commitment. So we must work for Him as though our entire future with Him will be a reward which depends on how we labor for Him. Also we must count all our efforts as nothing as we remind ourselves that everything we will receive in eternal bliss is the unearned inheritance that He or His own volition has chosen to give to us—with no strings attached. Throughout the eternal ages, we shall be rejoicing and worshipping because of our inheritance. We will see that we have received far more than what would be an appropriate reward for our small and feeble effort. Praise God that He gives us far more than what we have earned.

Redouble your efforts for Him, but do not take any credit to yourself when “reward” comes, whether now or in the next life. There will be no pride in heaven, but it becomes a spiritual temptation here when success comes. Have you learned to work for the Kingdom as though everything depended on you and then give the credit and glory to God because He is totally responsible for any success you may enjoy?

Activity of the Redeemed in Heaven

Worship, service, exercising authority, fellowship, learning, and rest—which of these activities or occupations in heaven holds the greatest anticipation and delight for you? Rest? Are you sure you are not now trying to do too much in your own strength? Fellowship? As a social creature you must enjoy mingling and sharing with others. Exercising authority? Normally the one who desires to exercise authority is power hungry, but that won't be the case in heaven. You might look forward to the learning experiences in heaven, especially since you have voluntarily chosen to improve your knowledge through this correspondence study on heaven.

Does service to God and others in heaven capture your imagination? If it does, you are probably one of the few who has learned the difficult lessons of humility and service in this life. But worship will probably be the primary activity throughout the ages that we will dwell in heaven. Hopefully, you have learned to worship here and feel comfortable and happy doing it. If you have progressed to that point in your spiritual life already, heaven should even now be a blessed anticipation.

Do you feel comfortable using the following expressions in your worship? According to Revelation 19:1-7, these are some of the things you and I will be saying:

Hallelujah; Salvation, and glory, and honor, and power unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are his judgements...Hallelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him.

This expression of worship will come in response to the voice that comes out from the throne, "Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great" (Revelation 19:5). Does this encouragement to worship sound anything like a prophetic utterance or an interpretation that you might hear in a public worship service? The Lord certainly wants to prepare us for the worship of heaven.

All of us are unprofitable servants; some are just more unprofitable than others. That's the way it is now. But in heaven our service will be perfect—and very profitable. Won't it be wonderful there!

The authority we exercise will be pure and untarnished by human pride and selfishness. Our fellowship will be perfect, without the self-conscious awkwardness that so often colors relationships here on earth. Yes, it will be wonderful there!

Rest—perfect refreshing rest.

Won't it be perfect there, having no burdens to bear? Joyously singing with heart bells all ringing, O won't it be wonderful there? --James Rowe

Heaven in a New Age

What is so exciting about heaven? What can you do on streets of gold that you can't do on the streets of asphalt? I believe there will be streets of gold in heaven. The bible says so. But if I get there and find out that the description was an image to help me understand what a beautiful place it is, I won't be disappointed. The real presence of Jesus himself is the important thing. "So shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17)

Streets of gold have special meaning for adults who have struggled for years to earn sufficient money to provide food, shelter, and clothing for a growing family. Gold so plentiful that you walk on it rather than spend it to buy the necessities of life! Heavenly streets of gold is an excellent reminder of the day when troubles and struggles will be behind.

But younger people can look forward to heaven with anticipation too. Isaiah said it first, then Paul quoted it many years later: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9; Isaiah 64:4). The application can be made to spiritual blessings now, but how much greater are the things He is preparing for us in heaven! Heaven will not be an interruption or an end to the enjoyable things of life. Rather, it will be the fulfillment of all good and proper desires we have had in this life.

Heaven in the Book of Revelation

John the Revelator was permitted to see into the future, and heaven plays an important part in what he saw. He saw things happening in the celestial heavens. He entered (in his vision) into the very heaven which is the abode of God. He saw thrones and special creatures surrounding the throne of God. He saw the angels' activity as they carried out the commands of God.

John saw the relationship between things that were happening in heaven and simultaneous activities on earth. What he saw was not science fiction. It was the climactic struggle between God and the principalities and powers of darkness. When these two forces collide, the foundations of the earth will be shaken. All men and women will be victorious.

The extent to which the descriptions in Revelations are literal or symbolic will be made plain to us as we participate in the glorious events. After the marriage between the saints and the Lamb in heaven (while the Tribulation envelopes the earth), the Groom goes forth to claim all of His kingdom. He rides on a white horse, followed by the saints, also on white horses (Revelation 19:11, 14). He is also accompanied by the angels as He comes from heaven in His glory (Matthew 25:31).

Observe carefully the references to thrones throughout the Book of Revelation. As Wilbur Smith, the author of the textbook, notes, a throne implies government with adequate power. The power of the throne may be challenged, but if the throne endures, it has overcome all opposing forces. Thank the Lord that the one that remains steadfast and unmovable, even after the thrones of Satan are cast down, is throne of God. Heaven is that throne of God (Matthew 5:34).

The New Heavens and the New Earth

Revelation 20 ends with the Great White Throne Judgment, the saddest scene in the entire Bible. Chapter 21 begins with John's view of a new heaven and a new earth. The Holy City, the New Jerusalem, is coming down from God out of the now heavens to rest on the new earth.

To find out how the new heavens and earth come about, we must compare Revelation 21:1 with Isaiah 65:17 and 2 Peter 3:10-13. Peter gives the best details on how it will happen: “The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat” (3:10).

Does the heaven which is God’s abode pass away at this time? As the textbook points out, it is only the physical world and universe as we know them that are affected by this cataclysmic renovation. God himself is eternal and unchangeable. His special abode, the third heaven, must enjoy the same permanence. It is the natural world and the celestial heavens, the domain ruled for so long by “the prince of the power of the air,” that needs to experience its own redemption or transformation from a world under a curse to a resurrected world. Every vestige of sin and evil will be purged.

The mind runs in many directions attempting to contemplate what will cause the great noise and the fervent heat. But recent developments and discoveries in our atomic age, we no longer have difficulty imagining how it might happen. Just the right adjustment of atoms and molecules by the Creator of everything could ignite the greatest conflagration anyone could imagine. The entire universe could become an exploding, flaming sun from which a new creation could be formed. We may not know just how it will happen, but we have no difficulty understanding that it will happen.

Just think of what will be consumed in the great holocaust that destroys the old heavens and earth and replaces them with a fresh creation. Pain and suffering will finally come to a permanent end. Death will be no more. Tears and unhappiness will no longer detract from the beauty and joys of life.

Fire is a terrible destroyer. We fear its power to reduce to rubble all the dreams and possessions that we have worked so hard to acquire. But the fervent heat of this fire will be a blessing, for it will once and for all destroy the curse that has corrupted the world since Adam and Eve first sinned. The final victory we have waited so long to realize will actually be ours forever.

The Holy City

The Bible says nothing more about the origin of the Holy City than that it comes “from God out of heaven.” From Revelation 21 and 22 we glean the following evidence of its majesty, either symbolic or real: crystal clear light; precious stones in the walls; pure, transparent gold construction; a pure river supporting a virtual paradise; and perpetual divine light. But even more significant is what will be missing from the city: tears, death, sorrow, pain, evil persons, night, and the curse man had previously lived under.

The description of eternity with Christ ends with only a brief glimpse of the Holy City. And rightly so! We are just introduced to the excitement of the magnificence of eternity. Only at that time will we see and hear that which we are told we cannot now grasp: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (1 Corinthians 2:9).

This certainly must be the city Abraham was searching for, “a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrews 11:10). How this idea was implanted in the mind and heart of Abraham, we are not told. We can only speculate that long before the prophecy of this future Holy City had been given, long before the founding of the old Jerusalem from which the new Jerusalem takes its name, way back in the beginning of God’s developing plan of salvation, the Holy Spirit dropped into Abraham’s heart, and the hearts of many patriarchs after him, a suggestion or an incomplete vision that looked forward to the splendid and glorious Holy City. Man has only to stand back and see God’s plan for His people unfold in the fullness of His time.

It is difficult to explain or interpret all of the details about the Holy City. But it is exciting to try, and certainly God would not tempt us with vague outlines and then order us not to try to fit them into a meaningful whole. What about the size and shape of the city? How many people could fit into a 12,000 furlong cube? The suggestion that the form is a pyramid is feasible, for the three-dimensional size would then fit together with some of the other details of the city. Archaeology has found that the Greek furlong was

shorter than the English furlong. It was a little over 606 feet, thus making each side of the city about 1,387 miles. These measurements, however, are no limitation on the number who could live in the city. The realm of the spirit is not subject to physical limitations. And the saints will certainly not be confined to the City proper for all eternity.

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The Biblical Doctrine of Heaven

- I. The meaning of "heaven" and "heavens" in the Bible
 - A. The Hebrew word "shamayem" which means "the heights"
 - B. The Greek word "ouranos" which means "that which is raised up"
 - C. The English word "heaven" which means "that which is above"
 - D. Biblical heavens
 - 1. The atmospheric heaven- the heaven immediately above us in which we live and move
 - 2. The stellar heavens which includes the entire universe (the second heaven)

3. The heavens of heavens- the abode of God- the third heaven

II. Heaven, the Abode of God

- A. The habitation of God - El Elyon – God Most High
- B. The tabernacle of God- Christ, the minister of the Sanctuary (Hebrews 8:2; 9:11)
- C. The church is also the habitation of God (Ephesians 2:22)
- D. House – Greek “oikos” – the dwelling place of God on earth – “Thy Father’s house”
- E. Temple – God and the Lamb are the Temple of the Holy City of Jerusalem
- F. Sanctuary – the holiest part of the temple
- G. The Throne of God – the throne of His glory
 - 1. All the above words set forth four concepts concerning our future life
 - a. Intimate relationship of individuals
 - b. Enjoys the most intimate fellowship with God
 - c. The fellowship will abide forever
 - d. Will not change due to sickness or death
- H. Glory – the hope of glory – heaven
- I. The omnipresence of God – He fills the heavens and the earth

III. Heaven is a Place (John 14:1-6)

- A. “In My Father’s house are many mansions...” It is a place of habitation. We can live and make our eternal home there.
- B. Heaven is a prepared place for every born-again believer.
- C. “I am the way, the truth and the life” of heaven for all believers.

D. “No one comes to the Father (or heaven) except through Me.

IV. The relationship of the Incarnate Christ to heaven

A. If “in Christ” we are not resurrected and seated in heaven with all His glory, then it would not be important

B. Christ was in heaven from all eternity before His incarnation. (John 1:1; 17:5 – “The glory which I had with thee before the world.”)

C. Christ came down from heaven at the time of his advent. “He that descended out of heaven” (John 3:13)

D. Jesus was the Bread of life which came down from heaven (John 6:33:51)

E. Three utterances from heaven confirming the claims of the Incarnate Christ

1. At the baptism of Jesus, the three synoptic gospels declare, “He is the Son of God.”

2. Likewise, all three writers of the synoptic gospels state they heard a voice declaring, “He is the Son of God” at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:5)

3. Peter bore witness to this voice. Also John 12:28 – “I have glorified it and will glorify it again.”

4. Christ ascended into heaven – “I go unto My Father.” (John 14:12)
“I ascend to My Father.” (John 20:17)

F. The intercessory work of our Lord in heaven

1. Jesus is our Intercessor in heaven (Hebrews 7:25)

2. Jesus is carrying out His High Priestly ministry

3. He is the Mediator of the New Covenant

4. He is our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek, Who represents man before God. He brings the prayers of the believers to God and secures access to God for man.

5. Jesus ascended back to heaven to His father. He will descend again from heaven at His second advent

V. The present inhabitants of heaven (Hebrews 12:22-23)

A. An innumerable company of angels

B. The church of the first-born who are registered in heaven

C. Spirits of just men made complete – all Old Testament saints

D. Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant

E. God, the Father and the Holy Spirit

1. The Bride of Christ – the church will live in the New Jerusalem

2. The Old Testament saints will occupy the new earth (Isaiah 65:22)

3. The tribulation and millennial saints will also occupy the heaven on earth outside the New Jerusalem, the eternal home of the Bride of Christ (Matthew 25:31). All of the inhabitants of the new earth will have access to the Holy City, where twelve gates of pearl will never be closed (Revelation 21:24-26). The angels will serve the bride and the nations. The angels worship and serve God first and foremost. The Lamb's wife (the church) will be busy worshipping and serving the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. We will have perfect glorified bodies at this time and therefore, perfect minds. Throughout eternity, we will be learning about all the wonders of God. Paul said, "That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus," (Ephesians 2:7).

“Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor entered into heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him...” (1 Corinthians 2:9). It will take ages for God to show us the greatness of His Grace.

Heaven—Home of the Saints

Heaven Is A Place (John 14:1-6)

It is a fact that heaven is an actual place. It is as real as the country in which you were born, as real as any place on earth. It is called a “city...whose builder and maker is God” (Hebrew 11:10), “a better, that is a heavenly country” (Hebrew 11:16). It is above the earth (1 King 8:23), and it is where God the Father dwells (Matthew 5:16). Heaven is called God the Father’s throne (Matthew 5:34); the Lord Jesus Christ is there now, seated with God the Father upon the Father’s eternal, heavenly throne (1 Peter 3:22; Revelation 3:21).

There Are Three Heavens

Besides the planet called heaven where God dwells (Genesis 21:17; 22:11, 15; 2 Corinthians 12:1-3; Deuteronomy 26:15; 1 Kings 8:30, 38, 43, 49), there are two other spheres called Heaven. Paul speaks of three heavens (2 Corinthians 12:1-3). The third Heaven is here called the paradise where God lives. The other two heavens are: the clouds (Genesis 1:8; 7:23; 8:2; Job 38:9, 34; Isaiah 14:14; Jeremiah 51:16), and the starry space between the Earth and the planet Heaven (Genesis 1:15-20; 22:17; Isaiah 14:12-14; Psalm 8:3).

Heaven is the Capital of the Universe

Heaven is the capital of the universe, for God has His capital city, the New Jerusalem, His capitol building, the Heavenly Temple or Tabernacle, and His throne in the Temple in Heaven. This city is described by John in Revelation 21-22. This capital city will continue to be in Heaven until the end of the Millennium and then it will be moved from the planet Heaven to the planet Earth (Revelation 21:2, 9-21). Many

Scriptures speak of God's throne being in Heaven (Psalm 103:19; Revelation 4:1-2). That God has a real temple in Heaven is clear from Revelation 4-5; 11:19; 14:17; 16:17.

The Location of the Planet Heaven is in the Northern Part of the Universe (Isaiah 14:12-14)

In this Scripture we are told that Lucifer led a rebellion into Heaven into the sides of the north. In Psalm 75:6-7 we are told that promotion comes not from the south, east, or west, but from the Lord and therefore from the north.

Heaven is the Saint's Place (Colossians 3:1-4)

Heaven is a place prepared for the saints of God. A saint is one who, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, has been spiritually born into the family of God. "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26). We become saints when "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7); at the same time the blood of Jesus Christ sanctifies—sets the believer apart for His purpose (Hebrew 13:12).

The society of Heaven will be select. There are many kinds of aristocracy in this world, but the aristocracy of Heaven will be one of holiness. The humblest sinner who repents will be an aristocrat there.

The humblest sinner who, while in this life, trusts in Jesus Christ will be an exalted member of the Heavenly Family there.

The Eternal City is for those who have made reservations here, for those who have trusted in Jesus Christ, God's Son. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people, and preparation is made in the here and now of everyday life.

Writing to the Colossians, Paul said, "If then you were raised with Christ,

(a) "Seek those (heavenly) things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God" (Colossians 3:1). Christ, after His resurrection, entered into heaven itself, "now to appear we have 'boldness to enter into the holiest (heaven) by the blood of Jesus'" (Hebrew 10:19), to seek heavenly things.

“For through Him (Christ) we both (Jew and Gentile) have access by one Spirit (the Holy Spirit) to the Father,” (Ephesians 2:18). The least saint has access into the very presence of God in heaven, to seek every heavenly blessing that God offers to the greatest saint. We do not have to wait until after death to enjoy some of the heavenly benefits—they can be ours now.

(b) “Set your mind on things above, not on the things on the earth,” (Colossians 3:2). “Earthly things are temporal, but heavenly things are eternal,” (2 Corinthians 4:18). James warns saints not to be double-minded. He said that a doubter is a “double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8). Jesus declared, “No one can serve two masters...’You cannot serve God and mammon (money)’” (Matthew 6:24).

Before you were saved, your mind was set on earthly things. You had earthly goals and were in love with the things of this world. But now, as a saint, you are “not (to) love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever,” (1 John 2:15-17). Set your mind on heavenly things.

(c) “For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3). Before you became a saint, you were dead to God in sin (Isaiah 59:1; Ephesians 2:1-6). Now you are a saint, dead to sin in God. As saints in God we are able to regard ourselves as “dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:11). Count it so, because it is so according to the Scriptures (Roman 6:6, 7; Galatians 2:20).

First, the saint’s life is “hidden with Christ”—this is safety. Second, the saint’s life is “hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3)—this double safety. Third, the saint is “sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13-14)—this is triple safety. The believer is sealed by the Holy Spirit, hidden with Christ in God. This is heavenly safety in the Holy Trinity. To strengthen your faith in this heavenly fact see John 10:27 and Romans 8:35-39.

(d) “When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory” (Colossians 3:4). The saints will bask in glory of God forever and ever.

Heaven is an Eternal Place—What is it Like?

Heaven contains many dwelling places. John, in Revelation, visits God’s residence first. Using only the inadequate and antiquated language of earth, he describes a throne standing at the epicenter of the expanseless Heaven, on which was seated the measureless God. God’s appearance was dazzling—like a magnificent multi-colored display of brilliant jewels. The throne was bathed in the brilliance of a resplendent rainbow.

Twenty-four other thrones stretched out beyond the central throne, containing all redeemed humanity’s representatives—the elders in magnificent white robes with crowns of gold upon their heads.

Heaven’s majesty and wonder are accentuated with the periodic peals of thunder and flashes of lightning that originate from within the throne.

The Holy Spirit is there in His perfect fullness, represented by seven great lamps of fire.

Jesus is there, and when He first appears to John in Heaven, since the redemptive program is not yet complete, He appears as a Lamb that was slain.

The sound of music, music without discord, accompanied by magnificent harps, reverberates in true high fidelity across Heaven. The elders and the angelic beings are joined by many angels and ultimately by every living creature in Heaven and on earth, singing, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.”

As God fills Heaven and earth, so will this celestial music.

Heaven’s High Rise

John describes our house as a city—a place for corporate living, a city with walls and gates and streets and rivers, with buildings and people. A city without flaw, whose architect and builder was God.

John uses a metaphor of consummate tenderness when he describes its radiant beauty as “a bride adorned for her husband.”

He describes its origin when he says it came down out of heaven from God.

He describes its character when he calls it the Holy City.

He describes its residents when he says it is the Tabernacle of God and the redeemed of all ages.

He describes its splendor as that of having the glory of God and its brilliance as that of a dazzling, priceless jewel.

He describes its immense size as 1500 miles wide and 1500 miles long or 2,250,000 square miles at the base and 1500 miles or 780,000 stories high—enough room to comfortably accommodate a hundred thousand million people—more than all the people who have ever lived.

It has some unique and engaging features:

Magnificent, lasting tributes to the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel and to the twelve apostles of our Lord.

For those who may be wondering whether or not we will remember what happened on earth and in life, it is interesting to note that God has already included some memorials in the eternal city.

The city has its own indirect lighting system, which requires no solar energy, nuclear energy, or hydroelectric power. The resplendent glory of both God the Father and God the Son shall illumine our city and not it only but also the entire new earth. The sun and the moon as we know them today will be extinct.

There will be no darkness.

There will be no evil.

There will be no famine and no drought since the city contains its own adequate water and food supply.

It is especially interesting to us earthbound people that our place in Heaven's High-Rise is already prepared, and since it is part of our inheritance it comes at no cost to us.

Its view in all directions promises to be breathtaking.

Its glittering gold-paved street, polished to appear like transparent glass will be magnificent.

Since there will be no pain in heaven, there will be no hospitals.

Since there will be no death, there will be no cemeteries.

Since there will be no tears, there will be no sorrow.

And since there will be no sin, there will be no regret.

One other thing will be missing. No church building or temple will be there. In their place will be both the Father and the Son. All spiritual activity will revolve around the Persons rather than a structure.

Will We Know Each Other In Heaven?

Certainly! If anything we will know each other better. Now our knowledge is limited—we know only in part; but there shall we know even as we are known.

Jesus promised that in Heaven many shall come from all directions and sit down to eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.

On the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter, James, and John immediately recognized Moses and Elijah, though both had lived more than 900 years before.

In each of these instances there is no hint of the need for an introduction.

What Will We Look Like?

Better! We won't be disembodied spirits. We won't be angelic creatures with wings. We will lose our gender since we will be neither male nor female; just children—children of God.

Since our bodies will be raised to house our spirits, there will probably be some resemblance to our past life. Jesus was able to prove the reality of His resurrection by His crucifixion scars. And yet we will be different. Since our resurrected body will be designed for a new dimension, it will not be limited by space and time, and, like Jesus' body, will pass through space with the speed of thought.

The New Heaven, the New Earth and the New Jerusalem

The new heaven, the new earth, and the New Jerusalem are the beginning of God's eternal kingdom—including heaven on earth. It is not the Millennium viewed in retrospect. This future kingdom will come to an end after one thousand years (Revelation 20:7). But the inhabitants of the new heaven, the new earth, and the New Jerusalem, along with the new things God will create, will never end, but “shall reign forever and ever” (Revelation 22:5).

(1) The New Heaven. God will create a new, pure atmosphere for His new earth and New Jerusalem. No longer will Satan be the “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2); the air will be clean and there will be no more storms. Satan and all his demons will be in the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10)

(2) The New Earth. Under the curse of sin (Genesis 3:17-19) the old earth will be destroyed by fire (2 Peter 3:10). The Lord will create a new earth and there will be no more sea (Revelation 21:1). With the curse lifted, every foot of the earth will become suitable for habitation. The new heaven and the new earth will then be ready for the Holy City.

(3) The New Jerusalem. The old Jerusalem, which was built by man, will be destroyed by fire with the rest of the earth. The New Jerusalem will be the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, our God and Savior. He said, “In My Father's house are many

mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you. 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,” (John 14: 2, 3). The New Jerusalem is the bride’s eternal dwelling place, created for her by the Lord Jesus Christ. “One of the seven angels” spoke to John, saying, “‘Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.’ And he (the angel) carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heave from God,” (Revelation 21:9). The bride, the Lamb’s Wife, will be in the New Jerusalem when it descends from heaven, to become the capital of heaven on earth. John describes the New Jerusalem magnificently (Revelation 21:9-27)

(a) The Dimensions. The exact specifications defy comprehension: 12,000 furlongs (or 1,500 miles) square. “Its length, breadth and height are equal.” Try to visualize a city of “pure gold, like clear (flawless) glass,” 6,000 miles around and 1,500 miles high—in square miles covering more than half of the United States (Revelation 21:15-18). Many believe the city will be in the shape of a pyramid, other, in the form of a cube.

(b) The Wall. It “had a great and high wall” (216 feet all) made of jasper, a pure stone believed to be a diamond. Each of the four walls will have three gates with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written thereon. Each of the twelve gates, which shall never be closed, will be made of pearl, with an angel at each gate (Revelation 21:12, 17, 21, 25).

(c) The Foundations. The wall will have twelve foundations, adorned with many assorted precious stones; on the foundations will be the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb (Revelation 21:14, 19, 20).

(d) The Street. “The street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass,” (Revelation 21:21).

(e) The Temple. There will be no structural temple in the new heaven, new earth, or the New Jerusalem. John said, “I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple” (Revelation 21:22). Therefore, this new heaven and new earth are not a kingdom viewed in retrospect, for there will be a newly structured temple in the Great Tribulation (Matthew 24:15; Daniel 9:27), and in the Millennium (Revelation 15:8).

(f) The River of Life. “And he (the angel) showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as a crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Revelation 22:1). This crystal river of life will flow out from the New Jerusalem to the nations of the new earth.

(g) The Tree of Life. “On either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month,” (Revelation 22:1, 2; Genesis 3:24). Yes, we will eat and drink in heaven.

(h) The New Eternal Light. This new heaven on earth will have a light. It will be “like a jasper tone, clear as crystal” (Revelation 21:11, 23, 24). The glory of God will light the city, and the nations. “And there shall be no night there: they need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever,” (Revelation 22:5). The glory of God’s essence will light the heaven, the earth, and the Holy city. The Lord Jesus Christ gave Peter, James, and John a glimpse of His glory on the mountain when He talked with Moses and Elijah, where He “was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light,” (Matthew 17:1-3). In God’s new order, the bride and the nations of the world will bask in the effulgence of His glory, which will be the eternal light of the world. “This is the message which we have heard from him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all,” (1 John 1:5). “There shall be no night there,” (Revelation 22:5)—we will never need sleep in heaven because God will be with His people forever and ever.

The Biblical Doctrine of Heaven

Test

1. True or False. In the Bible there are three different heavens mentioned.
2. True or False. The third heaven is the habitation of God.
3. True or False. One of the greatest activities of heaven will be worship.
4. True or False. The fact that the heavens of the present will be down away with by fire and will be recreated as found in 2 Peter Chapter 3.
5. True or False. The description of the New City of Jerusalem is found in Revelation Chapter 17.
6. True or False. The new City of Jerusalem will be three-dimensional: 12 miles in each direction.
7. True or False. The Hebrew word for heaven is “shamayem” which means “the heights.”
8. True or False. The inhabitants of heaven are found in the Book of Hebrews Chapter 12.
9. True or False. The foundations of the walls of the New City of Jerusalem are built on the names of the twelve apostles of the Lord.
10. True or False. In the new earth there will be no more seas.

Biblical Doctrine of Heaven

Exit Outcomes

1. Write a two-paper on the New City of Jerusalem
2. Write a one-page paper on John’s description of heaven in Revelation Chapters 1-7.

3. Write a two-page paper on the activities of heaven and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.
4. Write a one-page paper on what you think heaven will be like.