

## Introduction

**Ecclesiastes 3:11:** *He has made everything beautiful in its time. He (God) has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end.*

Many true followers of Jesus Christ often have a misconception of what eternity will be like for us. Why?

## How do we know there is a Heaven?

**John 14:2-3:** *“My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*

If this were the only passage we had as to the existence of Heaven and what it will be like, it is enough! What does it tell us?

**Revelation 21:1 – 4:** Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. <sup>2</sup>I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. <sup>4</sup>‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

**1 Corinthians 2:9:** *However, as it is written: “What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived”— the things God has prepared for those who love him...*

**1 Thessalonians 4:16 – 17:** *For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup>After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.*

**2 Corinthians 5:8:** *We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.*

## Who will go to Heaven?

What does the Bible say about who will go to Heaven?

**Matthew 7:13 – 14, 21:** “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. <sup>14</sup>But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. . . Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

Heaven is not our “default” destination—No one goes there automatically.

“If we understood Hell even the slightest bit, none of us would ever say, ‘Go to Hell.’ It’s far too easy to go to Hell. It requires no change of course, no navigational adjustments. We were born with our autopilot set toward Hell. It is nothing to take lightly—Hell is the single greatest tragedy in the universe.” (Heaven by Randy Alcorn, p. 27)

Why do you think hell has become a very common word in conversations today?

### **You can know for sure that you are going to Heaven!**

**John 20:31:** *But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

**1 John 5:11 - 13:** *And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup>Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. <sup>13</sup>I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.*

**John 10:27 – 28:** *“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand.”*

“You are made for a person and a place. Jesus is the person. Heaven is the place. They are a package—you cannot get Heaven without Jesus or Jesus without Heaven.” (Heaven by Randy Alcorn, p. 37)

### **Why is this study about Heaven important?**

- Because most Christians don’t know what the Bible says happens when we die.
- Because a better and more accurate understanding of what awaits us should give us great joy and increased faith and hope.
- Because it clarifies a lot of misunderstanding that is prevalent among true believers.
- Because it helps you live with an eternal perspective, which means the trials and troubles of this life are far less impactful since you’ve “read the last chapter.”

Jonathan Edwards: “Resolved, to endeavor to obtain for myself as much happiness, in the other world, as I possibly can.”

**Psalms 39:4 – 5:** *Show me, LORD, my life’s end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting my life is. You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Everyone is but a breath, even those who seem secure.*

### **Unbiblical ideas about Heaven**

- It is some mystical non-physical place where we live a disembodied existence.
- It is an unending worship service.
- It is where people sit around talking about God all the time.
- Nobody has a job and there’s not much to do.

“I believe there’s one central explanation for why so many of God’s children have such a vague, negative, and uninspired view of Heaven: the work of Satan. . . Some of Satan’s favorite lies are about Heaven.” (Heaven by Randy Alcorn, p. 10)

**Revelation 13:6:** *It (satanic beast) opened its mouth to blaspheme God, and to slander his name and his dwelling place and those who live in heaven.*

Satan was kicked out of Heaven. Little wonder that he hates the truth that we will be spending eternity there.

What we are told in God's Word gives us more than enough information to create in us a realistic and very hopeful and even expectant and exciting anticipation of what is in store for us when we are in Heaven.

**1 Corinthians 2:9-10a:** *However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived" the things God has prepared for those who love him—these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.*

**Colossians 3:1:** *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*

We are to set our hearts on Christ and that place where he is now seated.

C.S. Lewis: "Most of us find it very difficult to want 'Heaven' at all—except in so far as 'Heaven' means meeting again our friends who have died. One reason for this difficulty is that we have not been trained: our whole education tends to fix our minds on this world. Another reason is that when the real want for Heaven is present in us, we do not recognize it."

### **The "present Heaven"**

When a loved one in Christ dies, where do they go?

**1 Thessalonians 4:13:** *Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.*

Paul elsewhere makes it clear that the soul and spirit are conscious even after death.

**Philippians 1:21 – 24:** *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. <sup>22</sup> If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! <sup>23</sup> I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; <sup>24</sup> but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.*

**2 Corinthians 5:8** NKJV: *We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.*

There is no indication of this "soul sleep," as some believe.

### **What is Heaven like? Where is it?**

**Genesis 1:1:** *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*

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

**Psalms 19:1:** *The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.*

Heaven is mentioned more than **600 times** in the Bible.

**Psalms 47:8:** *God reigns over the nations; God is seated on his holy throne.*

**Revelation 7:10:** *And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."*

**Psalm 14:2:** *The LORD looks down from heaven on the children of man, to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God.*

**Atmospheric heaven**—the sky with its clouds, birds, oxygen, etc.

**Genesis 1:20:** *And God said, "Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the expanse of the heavens."*

**The heaven of the vast universe** beyond our atmosphere—outer space.

**Psalm 8:3 – 4:** *When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?*

**The highest heaven, the dwelling place of God.**

**Habakkuk 2:20:** *But the LORD is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.*

God never changes but his creations can change, including the earth and the heavens. God will create a New Heaven and a New Earth. That is the final Heaven.

**Revelation 21:1:** *Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.*

**The present Heaven**

At death each human spirit goes to Heaven or Hell. Jesus told the thief on the cross:

**Luke 23:43:** *Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise."*

**Revelation 6:9 – 11:** When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained.<sup>10</sup> They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?"<sup>11</sup> Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the full number of their fellow servants, their brothers and sisters, were killed just as they had been.

This a vision God gave John that gives us a good deal of information about what the present or intermediate Heaven is like. What are some of the characteristics of the present Heaven we learn of this Heaven from this passage?

Since this passage refers specifically to martyrs, we can't be sure it applies to those who are not martyrs, but it gives us some insight into what the present Heaven is like.

"Memory is a basic element of personality. . . We will not be different people, but the same people marvelously relocated and transformed. . . Undoubtedly we will remember God's works of grace in our lives that comforted, assured, sustained, and empowered us to live for him." (*Heaven* by Randy Alcorn, pg 68-69)

"One minute after we die, our minds will be clearer than ever before. . . Death does not change what we know; our personalities will just go on with the same information we have stored in our minds today." (Lutzer, *Heaven and the Afterlife*, p. 223.)

There is much evidence in Revelation that those in the present/intermediate Heaven are aware of and observing what is happening on Earth—to some extent.

**Luke 15:7, 10:** *“I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent... In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*

There is rejoicing in Heaven. Who is rejoicing?

**Revelation 21:4:** *‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’*

The promise of no more tears in Heaven refers to the eternal Heaven, the New Earth.

When we lose a loved one on this earth—one who has placed their faith in Jesus Christ alone—we are parted from them only temporarily. We have not lost them—we know where they are.

### **Closing**

**1 Thessalonians 4:15 – 18:** According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. <sup>16</sup>For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. <sup>17</sup>After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. <sup>18</sup>Therefore encourage one another with these words.

What we do know is that we will be with the Lord forever. Jesus will be there; the Holy Spirit will be there; our Heavenly Father will be there. If that was the only thing we knew about Heaven, it should take away any fear.

*For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10)*

Have you ever asked God: “What good works did you prepare in advance for me to do?”