

A review – The Present Heaven.

1. It is a place; it is real; it is above.
2. People in the present Heaven retain their personalities, their identities.
3. People in the present Heaven know—at least to some extent—what is happening on earth.
4. They rejoice; they pray; they are aware of time, they can communicate.
5. It is a “far better place” than this earth we are on.
6. Jesus is there.
7. It is not our final Heaven; that will be revealed after the rapture and the final wars.

Stephen was able to see into Heaven when they were stoning him.

Acts 7:55 – 56: *But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶“Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”*

God allowed Stephen to see the present Heaven and it is fully possible that the present Heaven is a physical realm—somewhere in God’s universe.

Do we have intermediate bodies in the present Heaven? We simply do not know.

2 Corinthians 12:2 – 4: *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. ³And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows—⁴was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell.*

Paul was uncertain whether he had a body there or not. Why is it called the third heaven? Paul is using terminology common in that day, which referred to the “blue sky” as the *first* heaven, the “starry sky” as the *second* heaven, and the place where God lived and reigned as the third heaven.

There is at least one physical body in the present Heaven and that is Jesus.

Acts 1:11: *“Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”*

What was Jesus’ resurrected body like?

John 20:19-20: *On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord.*

We will have new bodies which we will receive when Jesus comes to “bring everything under his control.”

Philippians 3:20 – 21: *But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.*

Believers will face a final judgment of works—how well have we stewarded what God gave us? Did we do the good things he put us here to do?

2 Corinthians 5:10: *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.*

This judgment will determine our rewards, which are conditional dependent on our faithfulness.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 18

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. ¹⁴ For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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. ¹⁷ 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. ¹⁸ Therefore encourage one another with these words.

The New Heaven and the New Earth

What is it that you love most about earth?

What is it that you would love to change about earth?

Genesis tells us that God created the heavens and the earth—multiple heavens and one earth—and they were good. Sin ruined everything. Genesis 3 gives us that story, and it's a sad story.

The Bible teaches us that God intends for us to one day enjoy a New Earth.

When the Bible tells us there will be a New Earth, we don't have to imagine some vague and intangible place because we know what an earth is. And we know that we will have a body like Jesus' resurrected body.

"Our ancestors came from Eden. We are headed toward a New Earth. Meanwhile, we live out our lives on a sin-corrupted Earth, between Eden and the New Earth, but we must never forget that this is not our natural state. Sin and death and suffering and war and poverty are not natural—they are the devastating results of our rebellion against God." (Heaven by Randy Alcorn, p. 78)

Romans 8:20-23

For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. ²³ Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies.

God's Redemptive Plan

What does it mean to redeem something?

"To redeem is to buy free, literally to buy back. . . The point of redemption is to free the prisoner from

bondage, to give back the freedom he or she once enjoyed.” (Heaven by Randy Alcorn, p. 87)

If you have accepted Christ as your Savior, your soul and spirit have been redeemed.

Galatians 3:13: *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a pole.”*

Your body will also be redeemed—and we wait eagerly for the redemption of our bodies.

Before the beginning of time, God had a plan to redeem his creation and to redeem a people for his name's sake.

Psalms 106:6 - 8: *We have sinned, even as our ancestors did; we have done wrong and acted wickedly. ⁷When our ancestors were in Egypt, they gave no thought to your miracles; they did not remember your many kindnesses, and they rebelled by the sea, the Red Sea. ⁸Yet he saved them for his name's sake, to make his mighty power known.*

It has been God's plan since before time began to redeem our fallen earth; to give us back the earth he always intended for us to have—a New Earth. And this promise is from of old:

Isaiah 65:17: *“See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”*

Isaiah 66:22: *“As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me,” declares the LORD, “so will your name and descendants endure.”*

2 Peter 3:13: *But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.*

Jesus promised to come back and get us and take us to be with him forever.

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? ³And 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.”*

What is that place—that final place? It's the New Earth—the redeemed Earth.

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. ²I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³And 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. 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.”

We also learn from Revelation 21 that the New Jerusalem will come down out of Heaven from God and it will dwell on the New Earth. We know what a city is, so, it's not difficult to understand that there will be a city on the New Earth—the eternal city, New Jerusalem.

Hebrews 11:10; 13:14: *For he (Abraham) was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. . . For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.*

Hebrews 11:16: *Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.*

Who is “they”? All those people who were still living by faith when they died.

The New Heaven and Earth

Is the New Earth then the final Heaven?

Revelation 22:1 – 5

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb ²down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. ³No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. ⁴They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. ⁵There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever.

What city does this refer to? The New Jerusalem, and the throne of God and the Lamb is in that city. So, we can be assured that God will dwell with us in the New Jerusalem on the New Earth.

Heaven and earth, now separated, will be merged, and the New Earth will also be part of the New Heaven, along with the New Jerusalem.



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It's impossible to picture the New Jerusalem on the New Earth, but sometimes an inadequate picture gives you an image that helps. The New Jerusalem will be the dwelling place of God and the Lamb, their throne will be there, angels, etc.

Keep in mind, it is described as a city and we have some idea of what a city is like.

The Bible gives us a very clear description of the New Jerusalem:

Revelation 21:10 – 12, 16 – 19a, 21, 27

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. ¹¹It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. ¹²It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel.

¹⁶The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. ¹⁷The angel measured the wall using human measurement, and it was 144 cubits thick. ¹⁸The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. ¹⁹The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone.

²¹The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass.

²⁷ Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

- Size and shape: 1400 miles long, wide and high—perfection and completeness. A metropolis of this size in the middle of the United States would stretch from Canada to Mexico and from the Appalachian Mountains to the California border.
- Made of pure gold, like clear glass, with a jasper wall and gates of pearl, reflecting God's glory.
- No temple because the Almighty God and Lamb are its temple. We will have direct, unmediated presence.
- The glory of God will be its light – no need for sun or moon.
- Twelve gates of pearl named for the twelve apostles.
- No suffering, death, crying or pain.
- A perfect, restored Eden where God dwells fully with his people.

Remember the prophetess Anna, a woman in her eighties, who worshiped at the Temple day and night.

Luke 2:36 – 38: *There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. ³⁸ Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.*

She spoke about the “redemption of Jerusalem.”
From “Joy to the World” - a song about the New Earth:

No more let sin and sorrow grow
Or thorns infest the ground
He comes to make his blessings flow
Far as the curse is found.

How far will his blessings flow? As far as the curse is found.

John 14:23: *Jesus replied, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”*

Rather than us going up to dwell with God, he will come down and dwell with us. It was his original plan. Sin interrupted that plan, but God intends that his plan will prevail in the New Earth, and he will come down to dwell with us.

Acts 3:18 – 21: But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. ¹⁹ Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, ²⁰ and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. ²¹ Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.

Peter tells us that Jesus must remain in Heaven—the present Heaven—until the Lord's time when he will restore everything—which was prophesied by the prophets of old.

Closing

“Everything will be glorified, even nature itself. And that seems to me to be biblical teaching about the eternal state: that what we call heaven is life in this perfect world as God intended humanity to live it.” (Great Doctrines of the Bible, Martyn Lloyd-Jones p. 101)

Matthew 25:34: *“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.’”*

From the beginning God created the earth and it was very good. It has been his intention “since the creation of the world” to redeem earth from the corruption of sin, and give us the New Earth for which we were created.

Ephesians 1:7 – 10: *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace ⁸that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, ⁹he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, ¹⁰to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.*

When the times reach their fulfillment—and only God knows when that time is—everything in heaven and on earth will be brought into unity under the rule of Christ.

*This is my Father's earth. O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet.
This is my Father's earth: the battle is not done:
Jesus Who died shall be satisfied,
And earth and Heav'n be one.*

“Heaven is God's home. Earth is our home. Jesus Christ, as the God-man, forever links God and mankind, and thereby forever links Heaven and Earth. . . There will be one cosmos, one universe united under one Lord—forever. This is the unstoppable plan of God. This is where history is headed.” (Heaven by Randy Alcorn, p. 103)

Timeline of the End Times

