



Truth For These Times



7. HEAVEN

Some people regard heaven as a childish fantasy, a mythical afterlife in which the imagination of man has conjured up to compensate himself for the disappointments and sorrows of the present life. Others think of it as a hazy, unreal existence, where white robed ‘saints’ sit on the edges of clouds or rainbows playing golden harps. Still others rejoice in the assurance that heaven is the home of reality and fulfilment – the place of eternal satisfaction and joy. What does the Bible say?

2 Corinthians 12:2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a one was **CAUGHT UP TO THE THIRD HEAVEN.**

Obviously, if there is a third heaven, there must be a second and a first. What are the other two heavens, and what is the third heaven?

Revelation 19:17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the **BIRDS THAT FLY IN THE MIDST OF HEAVEN**, “Come and gather together for the supper of the great God”.

Genesis 1:8 And **GOD CALLED THE FIRMAMENT HEAVEN.** So the evening and the morning were the second day.

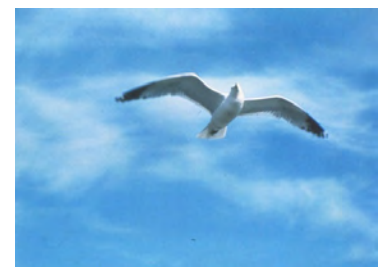
The Bible calls our atmosphere – heaven. In sequence of closeness, this is the first heaven.

Psalms 8:3 When I consider **YOUR HEAVENS**, the work of Your fingers, **THE MOON AND THE STARS**, which You have ordained.

Here is the second heaven – space – where the stars and the planets are.

2 Corinthians 12:4 How he was **CAUGHT UP INTO PARADISE** and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.

Matthew 6:9 **In this manner, therefore, pray: OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN, Hallowed be Your name.**



The First Heaven – the realm of birds and clouds.

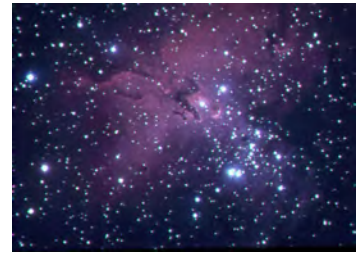
This is the third heaven Paul was caught up to see (see verse 2) and is referred to as paradise. Jesus referred to God’s dwelling place as heaven.

John 14:1-3 **Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. 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.

The followers of Jesus are here assured of a mansion in heaven – God’s dwelling place – Christ Himself promising to prepare a place for His faithful followers.

1 Corinthians 2:9 But as it is written: “EYE HAS NOT SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, nor have entered into the heart of man the THINGS WHICH GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE who love Him.”

To picture the glories of this eternal land is beyond our comprehension. Our wildest imaginations cannot conceive what heaven is really like. We only know God’s promises are sure, and if He has promised these things, and by faith we accept them, then, if we remain faithful, we will one day receive them.



The Second Heaven – the realm of the sun, moon, stars.

Revelation 21:10 And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, THE HOLY JERUSALEM, descending out of heaven from God.

In Revelation chapter 21, John describes in earthly language the beauties of the New Jerusalem. Human speech appears to be inadequate as he reiterates what he has seen in vision – this great city – the New Jerusalem – that God has prepared for His people.

Revelation 21:1-3 Now I saw a NEW HEAVEN and a NEW EARTH, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw THE HOLY CITY, New Jerusalem, COMING DOWN out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Behold, THE TABERNACLE OF GOD IS WITH MEN, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God.”

God has made all things new: a new heaven and a new earth. The New Jerusalem is situated on this earth. God’s headquarters are also transferred to the new earth – transformed into its original Edenic beauty and perfection. God will dwell with the saved and be their God.

Matthew 5:5 **Blessed *are* the meek, For THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH.**

Whilst the Bible promises God’s children a home in heaven, it also promises that the meek shall inherit the earth. At first sight it seems like a contradiction, until we recall that at the end of the millennium, after the cleansing fires have done their work, heaven is actually going to come down to this earth. This planet will become the eternal home of the saved.

Hebrew 11:10,16 For he WAITED FOR THE CITY which has foundations, WHOSE BUILDER AND MAKER IS GOD. But now THEY DESIRE A BETTER, THAT IS, A HEAVENLY COUNTRY. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has PREPARED A CITY FOR THEM.



The Third Heaven – where God dwells.

The home of the saved is called a ‘country’ a ‘better country’, ‘a heavenly country’. The Bible mingles its description of the heaven that now is, with its description of the heaven on earth that will be.

Abraham was promised an inheritance. He was told that he and his seed would be given a land flowing with milk and honey. It is true that God did give the land of Canaan to the Israelites, but Abraham had his sights on something of more value than an inheritance in this life. He looked forward to inheriting the earth in ‘the earth made new’.

Isaiah 65:17 For behold, I create NEW HEAVENS and a NEW EARTH; And the FORMER SHALL NOT BE REMEMBERED or come to mind.

The promise of making all things new is not limited to the New Testament era. The promises were given to God's people thousands of years ago. If God's people had been faithful these promises would have their fulfilment, but because of their backslidden condition, they entered not into God's promised rest. In Isaiah 65 is a mixture of blessings received in this life and the life to come. However the promises were conditional, as are all God's promises. Obedience to God brought life, and disobedience brought death. One of the joys of the new way of life is that the old way, with all of its sorrows and disappointments will be entirely forgotten.



In heaven with Jesus.

Isaiah 65:21-25 They shall BUILD HOUSES and inhabit *them*; they shall PLANT VINEYARDS and eat their fruit. They shall NOT BUILD AND ANOTHER INHABIT; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree, *so shall be* the days of My people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall NOT LABOR IN VAIN, nor bring forth children for trouble; for they *shall be* the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. "It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear. The WOLF AND THE LAMB SHALL FEED TOGETHER, THE LION SHALL EAT STRAW like the ox, and dust *shall be* the serpent's food. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain," says the LORD.

Heaven will be a real place where we will do constructive, enjoyable things. With the energy of eternal youth, the saved will rejoice in worthwhile occupation. So often in this life one builds, but another receives the benefits. This will not be so in the land beyond tomorrow. There will be no vain labour. Death will be abolished forever, even in the animal kingdom. All will be at peace.

Revelation 21:4 And God will WIPE AWAY EVERY TEAR from their eyes; there shall be NO MORE DEATH, nor SORROW, nor CRYING. There shall be no more PAIN, for the FORMER THINGS HAVE PASSED AWAY.

There will be no need of tears, for there is no more death, sorrow, crying nor pain. Life as we know it now will be banished forever.

Revelation 22:4 They SHALL SEE HIS FACE, and His name *shall be* on their foreheads.



We shall see His face.

One of the greatest joys of the Christian who has lived for Christ in this life will be to see the face of the One who he has laboured and lived for. To see the face of a loved one after he has been gone for a long time brings great joy – so it will be when we see His face.

Matthew 17:3,4 And behold, MOSES AND ELIJAH appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."

On the mount of transfiguration Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke with Christ. Peter, James and John recognised these men even though they had never seen them. Under conviction of the Spirit, the disciples were no doubt enlightened. Many remarkable changes take place on the day of resurrection.

It is true that we shall all be changed, but just as the disciples recognised Moses and Elijah, so a loving God will enable us to recognise loved ones.

1 Corinthians 13:12 For NOW WE SEE IN A MIRROR, DIMLY, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.



The righteous raised from the dead at the Second Coming.

We do not fully understand all that lies before us. When Paul speaks of seeing through a glass darkly he is referring to the mirrors used in his day, which consisted of polished metal. At best, only a blurred image was possible. This parallels our life of faith today compared with seeing the realities of heaven in the future. Our knowledge at the present is only partial, but there it will be full, no doubt including the recognition of those we know in this life.

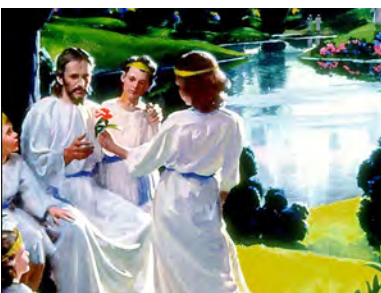
John 5:28,29 Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the RESURRECTION OF LIFE, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.

Heaven begins on the day of resurrection for the righteous. They will be raised to live forevermore, never again to see death, but rather, to receive the eternal rewards.

Matthew 7:21 NOT EVERYONE WHO SAYS TO ME, ‘LORD, LORD,’ SHALL ENTER the kingdom of heaven, BUT HE WHO DOES THE WILL OF MY FATHER in heaven.

Not all who profess Christianity will enter the glorious land – Jesus makes this quite clear. Those who are given a passport to life are those who do the will of the Father. Salvation is free, and cannot be earned, but the evidence of genuine acceptance is obedience to the commandments of God. One who claims to believe, but does not obey God, shows that his conversion is not genuine.

Revelation 22:14,15 Blessed *are* THOSE WHO DO HIS COMMANDMENTS, that they may HAVE THE RIGHT TO THE TREE OF LIFE, and may enter through the gates into the city. But outside *are* dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.



What a wonderful place it will be.

Modern translations say “blessed are they that wash their robes” etc. The result is the same, for those who wash their robes cease to sin, and hence do God’s commandments. Only this class has the right to the city and the tree of life.

Revelation 22:17 And the SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY, “COME!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. WHOEVER DESIRES, LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY.

The invitation is generous and is extended to all. ‘Whosoever’ means you – it means everybody. God wants us to share in the joys of His eternal home. His desire is for all to accept Jesus so they may enter, but only those who choose Jesus and believe in Him enough to obey Him, can enter into the glorious land. God wants you to be here. Will you choose to serve Him today?

Review Sheet – Heaven

Assignment: Read the Bible study carefully before answering the following questions.

1. What heaven is mentioned in 2 Corinthians 12:2?
the _____.
 2. What are the three heavens?
1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____.
 3. What reward is Jesus preparing for faithful Christians? John 14:1-3
In my Father's house _____; I go
_____.
 4. Can we fully comprehend the glories of the eternal land? 1 Corinthians 2:9
YES ___ NO ___.
 5. What is the name of the city that descends from heaven? Revelation 21:10
the _____.
 6. Where will God's people dwell throughout eternity? Revelation 21:1-3; Matthew 5:5
I saw a new heaven and a _____.
 7. What occupations will be engaged in while the children of God enjoy eternal life? Isaiah 65:21-25
They shall _____ ... they shall _____.
 8. What four trials of this life will be abolished in the new earth? Revelation 21:4
1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____.
 9. When does heaven begin? John 5:28,29
Those who have done good, to the _____.
 10. Who receives eternal life? Matthew 7:21
he who _____.
 11. Who has right to the tree of life? Revelation 22:14,15
Those who _____.
 12. What invitation is given to the human race? Revelation 22:17
And the _____, " _____!" whoever desires,
_____.
- Is it your desire to live in God's eternal kingdom? _____.