

HEAVEN

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The Bible does not specifically state that the believer “goes to Heaven” at physical death. Our attention is to be on the Lord of Heaven not on heaven. Nevertheless, Heaven is more real than this world, for heaven is the reality of God.

The great Apostle Paul was “caught up” to see Heaven (II Corinthians 12:2). This is why in Philippians 1:21 Paul stated that living [after salvation] we are to live for Christ not ourselves; and that Heaven [when we die] is a promotion for every believer. Paul literally saw Heaven and he said as a result that physical death (absent from the body) is to be present [face to face] with God (2 Corinthians 5:8). Paul is saying no matter what type of tribulation or suffering we may go through we must keep our mind set (focused) on the reality of the Lord. Some theologians and bible scholars believe that 2 Corinthians 5:8 means that at death we are instantly before the Lord, while others teach that our transmogrify is not instantaneous, but may take a few days. We will look at Scripture regarding this doctrine later in our study. In either case our translation to Heaven will be a glorious one as we shall soon see from Scripture.

HOW DO WE KNOW THERE IS A REAL HEAVEN?

Because Jesus Christ said there was a real House of God (heaven) in John 14:2.

Heaven, the Kingdom of God and God’s House are synonymous terms. Heaven is where God dwells! The Kingdom of God is where God dwells (Matthew 5:16; 12:50; Revelation 3:12; 11:13; 16:11; 20:9). Heaven is where the Second Person of the trinity (Jesus Christ) descended from, at the incarnation (John 3:13, 31; 6:38, 42). Heaven is the seat [throne] of eternity - the City and Kingdom of the Godhead.

After Christ’s resurrection He ascended, passing through the first and second heavens, “far above all the heavens” (Hebrews 4:14; Ephesians 4:10), and was “made higher than the heavens” (Hebrews 7:26). He “sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,” (Hebrews 8:1; 1 Peter 3:22).

The Bible speaks about three heavens: The first heaven is the atmosphere (Acts 14:17); the second heaven is the stellar universe beyond earth’s atmosphere and extending to the end of the known universe. This is also the place where unseen spiritual warfare goes on continuously between angels and demons (Ephesians 6:12). The third heaven “The Throne of the Majesty of Heaven” - God the Father (Hebrews 1:8) is located beyond the known universe to the north according to the Psalms and the book of Isaiah. In this third heaven is found the eternal city of

God the New Jerusalem (Revelation chapters 21-22).

The Third Person of the trinity (Holy Spirit) descended from Heaven at Pentecost (I Peter 1:12).

Heaven is the abode of Angels (Matthew 18:10; 22:30; Revelation 3:5).

Like the Apostle Paul, the Apostle John was allowed to view the eternal city – the New Jerusalem in Heaven in Revelation chapters 21 & 22. These chapters describing the New Jerusalem will be detailed later in our study.

All believers from Adam to the present are in heaven. Everyone who is born again (spiritual birth relating to salvation, John 3:5-9) has a “spiritual citizenship” in Heaven (Philippians 3:20, 21). Deep inside, true believers long to go home to Heaven because we do not like the world, the flesh and the devil. But, we are here to serve the Lord and be living epistles (examples) for Christ. When we pass from this physical body at death (II Thessalonians 5:6-8) we will go home. Heaven is the place where believers possess “every spiritual blessing” (Ephesians 1:3, 20; 2:6; Hebrews 11:16).

WHAT WILL HEAVEN BE LIKE?

“For the Kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.” This statement found in Romans 14:17 refers to our relationship with God through the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. It may also be applied to Heaven. Heaven is full of light everywhere and there will be no shadows for “the light of it is the glory of God” forevermore. God is light and His glorious light casts no shadow. There exists for the believer, perfect peace, perfect righteousness and perfect happiness in Heaven.

“God is perfect in all His ways” therefore, Heaven is perfect. It is perfect beyond imagination – perfect in splendor and majesty and beauty, filled with the Glory of God. You will see true perfection when you open your conscious eyes in glory (Heaven) and see the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8). God’s will is done in Heaven (Matthew 6:20). Everyone in Heaven is completely selfless (totally devoted) to God and our Glorious Savior. There is no ego, no human nature in heaven, only our new nature in Christ. Our eternal life in heaven is beyond anything we could ever dream. Our happiness will be complete because we will be perfect at last.

Heaven is so beautiful and spectacular that God in His omniscience knew he could not reveal too much or we would all be too tempted to go there before our appointed time. So, let us follow Scripture to Heaven. The Bible describes our journey to the Heavenly City of God.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE BELIEVER DIES?

(Death means release from the physical body)

At death, the believer's soul and spirit departs from the physical body and enters an interim body (see 2 Corinthians 5:1-8). Angels will take our hand, comfort and assure us and they will escort us to heaven. This will be the most fantastic journey we will ever take. As we rise vertically through the clouds and atmosphere we realize that we are no longer affected by gravity. We are not afraid of falling and we are in total awe at our newly found vertical freedom. Our ascent is relaxed and unbelievably pleasant as we soar above the clouds and into the universe of planets and stars and galaxies. The Angels look at us with reassurances, smiling with such beauty, charm and love. This is better than a dream that is coming true – it is the reality of life after death.

Apparently we will have more than one escort. There may be several angels involved in our voyage beyond the stars, beyond the universe. Perhaps one will remain with us while the others fight demons who try to prevent our rise to glory. This deduction is based on scripture found in Daniel 10:12-21, where the angel who was sent to aid Daniel was detained (fought with) by the Prince (fallen angel) of the kingdom of Persia for 21 days, but Michael the most powerful of angels came to his rescue. Our journey to Heaven is protected by God and our escorts will keep us safe because no man and nobody can pluck us out of the Father's hand (John 10:28-29; 11:25-26). Our escorts will battle demons to keep us safe. As God has commanded, so shall it be. This will really be cool as we watch *Star Wars* become reality right before our eyes. We can cheer them on without being harmed. God's peace will fill us (Philippians 4:7) and we will not have any fear as we watch the Angels do battle.

What we will experience as we rise to the third heaven is beyond description. Having passed through space and billions of light years we will view in the distance an illumination of light brighter than anything we could ever imagine. The brightness and glory of home – the dwelling place of the Shekinah Glory – Our God and Savior Jesus Christ. There is no sun only the light of His brilliance and glory. The heavenly eternal city called the New Jerusalem is straight ahead.

As we approach the heavenly city we will be speechless with awe. We will enter through a "Gate of Pearl" as we are ushered to the Throne of God where we will at last be face to face with our Great God and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:8). Over our heads we will see the Glory and majesty of God's Throne (Isaiah 35:2). We will collapse to our spiritual knees, overwhelmed at the long awaited look at His loving face. In Ezekiel 1:26-28 we find a description of the view that will bring us to our knees in awe. *"Now above the expanse that was over their heads there was something resembling a throne, like lapis lazuli [a translucent violet blue and green] in appearance; and on that which resembled a throne, high up, was a figure with the appearance of*

a man. Then I noticed from the appearance of His loins and upward, something like glowing metal that looked like fire all around within it, and from the appearance of His loins and downward I saw something like fire; and there was a radiance around Him. As the appearance of the rainbow in the clouds on a rainy day, so was the appearance of the surrounding radiance. Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell on my face and heard a voice speaking.”

This description by Ezekiel is confirmed in Revelations 4:1-3, when the Apostle John saw the same thing: *“After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in Heaven, and the first voice which I heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things. Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne was standing in Heaven, and one sitting on the throne. And He who was sitting was like a jasper stone (clear as crystal) and a sardius (blood-red and orange, like fire) in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, like an emerald (light green) in appearance.”* Jasper sparkles like crystal and sardius is like fire in a diamond stone. Jesus Christ in all His glory is indescribable. Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world and the unique person in the Universe.

A look at Revelation 1:14-16 gives us another description Christ’s Glory: *“And His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire; and His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been caused to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters, and His face was like the sun shining in its strength.”* He is the Absolute and the Most High God.

Next, we are given a guided tour of the New Jerusalem, the heavenly eternal city designed by God for His Son and all the believers in Christ....

THE NEW JERUSALEM – THE HEAVENLY CITY OF GOD

God gives us the specific measurements of the City of God in Revelation 21:15-16. It is 1500 miles in height, width and length. Can you imagine a city 1500 miles high? The light of it is brilliant beyond mere verbal communication; it is the light of Christ’s Shekinah Glory that will forever shine as the only light that will ever be needed in the New Jerusalem. The streets are transparent gold “like glass.”

Revelation 21:10 says that the New Jerusalem will appear like a mountain coming down out of Heaven. From earth looking up it will reach to heaven (second heaven). You may wonder why it is 1500 miles high. Remember we no longer have our body of flesh. We will now be able to move about freely in any direction including up. We can soar vertically up the mountain of God to His very Throne Room without restraint or thought – it will be as natural as taking a step in this body of flesh. A whole new existence awaits the faithful in God’s House of Eternity.

There is a wall surrounding the New City. In Revelation 21:17 God gives us the measurements of this spectacular wall: *“And he measured its wall, seventy-two yards (across or wide) according to human measurement, which are also angelic measurements.”*

In the following verses (Revelation 21:18-21) God details the beauty of this incredible wall - *“The material of the wall was jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. The foundation stones of the city wall were adorned with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation stone was jasper; the second sapphire; the third, chalcedony; the fourth, emerald; the fifth sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, topaz; the tenth, chrysoprase; the eleventh, jacinth; the twelfth, amethyst.”* Can you imagine anything so beautiful?

This incredible wall is an eternal memorial to the twelve Apostles of our Lord. In Revelation 12:14 we read: *“And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.”* The names of the Apostles are: Paul, Peter, John, Matthew, the two James, Philip, Simon, Thomas, Bartholomew, Thaddeus and Andrew. (It is interesting to note that all the Apostles except John were martyred).

The “stones” named in verses 18-20 of Revelations Chapter 21, have been coveted by mankind since ancient times. From the dictionary we learn the color of these beautiful transparent stones, (listed alphabetically):

Amethyst is a clear purple, violet and deep purple.

Beryl is a blue green.

Chalcedony is bluish white.

Chrysolite is yellow and greenish blue.

Chrysoprase is greenish.

Emerald is usually a bright, rich green, but also appears as bluish green, yellow, pink and white.

Jasper is multi-colored, glimmering and bright like fire in a diamond – perhaps it is what we call a diamond today.

Jacinth is red mixed with yellow that appears bright orange.

Sapphire is deep blue to deep purple.

Sardius is brilliant red.

Sardonyx has layers of white and orange-red or reddish brown.

Topaz is bright yellow and white.

These same twelve stones in the wall were also inset on the breastplate worn by the Jewish high priest (Exodus 28:15-29). Dr. Walter Lewis Wilson, M.D., D.D., L.H.D., Bible Scholar (now home with the Lord), and former Pastor-Teacher at Central Bible Church, Kansas City Missouri,

in his book copyrighted 1957, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids Michigan, entitled "*Wilson's Dictionary of Bible Types*," described the Ephod as: "part of a garment to which the breastplate was attached". It is also mentioned in Exodus 25:7. In Isaiah 61:10 it is "the garments of salvation." The ephod contained gold, blue, purple crimson and cotton. These colors and materials represent the glorious characteristics of our Lord Jesus and are imparted and imputed to us when we become children of God through faith in Christ. There is so much that we must learn and understand in Scripture regarding God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, Heaven, Imputation and Salvation. The list of learning is endless. In fact, we will spend eternity ever learning, ever increasing in knowledge of our Savior-God.

There are twelve gates in the wall that surrounds the city with twelve angels and the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel are written on the walls (Revelation 21:12). These twelve names are: Judah, Issachar and Zebulun inscribed over the East gate; Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh over the West gate; Reuban, Simeon and Gad over the South gate; and over the North gate Dan, Asher and Naphtali. All God's children who are written in the Lambs Book of life will pass through these fantastically beautiful gates as we freely come and go from the Heavenly City (Revelation 21:27). Because there are twelve different gates we can deduce that there are at least twelve different streets leading to the center of the city. The streets are formed of the purest transparent gold (Revelation 21:21b). Apparently these twelve streets each contain a river of living water which flows from the Throne of God (Revelation 22:1). "*There is no temple for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it*" (verse 22).

The foundation of this wall consists of twelve stones on which are written the names of the twelve apostles. Therefore, we can deduce that each foundational stone would be 500 miles long with three on each side. Because there are four sides there would be three names inscribed on each of three stones on each of the four walls. This is a memorial to God's Grace and to the twelve in honor of their respective place in God's plan for mankind.

Water is mentioned in Scripture many times referring to salvation and eternal life and here we understand that both salvation and eternal life flow from God as His eternal gift to His redeemed creation. We shall drink freely from these rivers. We shall eat from the "Tree of Life" (Revelations 22:2). There will be twelve trees bearing twelve fruits of unimaginable taste, yielding fruit every month. Perhaps these trees honor the original twelve tribes of Benjamin (Israel) and/or the twelve apostles.

In Isaiah 24:23 God tells us that: "*The moon will be embarrassed and the sun ashamed, for the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and His glory will be before His elders.*"

WHAT WILL WE LOOK LIKE - WHAT WILL WE BE LIKE?

Every believer whose name is written in the Lambs Book of Life will receive a new heavenly body like that of our Savior after we are judged for the works done in the flesh. This judgment is for believers only and has nothing to do with our salvation, but it has everything to do with our rewards for works done in the spirit (filling of the Spirit). This is called the “Judgment Seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Works done in the flesh, without the filling and control of the Holy Spirit, will be burned as wood hay and stubble. The result is cleansing by fire. This is our glorification and now we will receive our rewards and our new glorified body, like Christ’s body.

Apparently, we will resemble our physical selves but at which stage of our previous physical life (age) Scripture does not state. I personally believe that it is our soul that is recognizable even though in this life we cannot see the soul. I believe that somehow there is a sub-conscious link that when we are absent from the body will become conscious so that we now know the real person of the soul. But, whatever our semblance, don’t worry God has everything all figured out – we will be perfect and we will instantly recognize one another!

“Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable” (I Corinthians 15:50). Minus our body, we will never again be tired or weak and weary. We will not suffer any more, nor be sick. In Heaven we will have boundless eternal energy. Gravity will no longer restrain us. We will ascend and descend and transcend the universe just as angels do now. Our body will be like Christ’s body. After Christ rose from the dead His new body could not be restrained. He passed through the stones of the Tomb that encompassed His dead body and through walls in the upper room (see Luke, Chapter 24).

I John 3:2: *“Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.”* Christ appeared to the disciples after His resurrection. See Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19; John 20:11-17. See also Luke 9:28-33 which occurred before the Cross while Christ was teaching His disciples. This is called the “Transfiguration.”

Christ in His new body after the resurrection was recognizable as a human being; He could eat and could be touched: Luke 24: 39-40; John 20:26-28. He could speak and His voice was recognizable even though His body was different. He had a different type of flesh and bone because He could walk through walls and could make Himself disappear and was not subject to gravity as we are (John 20:19; Luke 24:31; Acts 1:9,10).

“For we (believers) know (have confidence) that if the earthly tent (our body, a tent is a temporary dwelling place) which is our house is torn down (dies), we have a building from God, a house (new body like Christ’s glorious body) not made with hands (procreation), eternal in the Heavens. For indeed in this house (body) we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling (new body) from Heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, shall not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave us the Spirit as a pledge. Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.” We should not fear death but anticipate it with the confidence of God’s guarantee. His word (covenant) with the believer is guaranteed by His down payment to us, which is the Holy Spirit in us.

“There are bodies in the heavens, and there are bodies on earth. The glory of the heavenly bodies is different from the beauty of the earthly bodies” (1 Corinthians 15:40. See also 41-58).

GOD INHERENT IN MAN

Deep down inside, every man yearns to know God and be with God (Romans 1:18-20 and Daniel 10:11-13). Romans 1:18-20 - *“For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them (inherent in all mankind); for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse”* (Romans 1:20). Notice that since Adam (creation) man has been aware of God’s attributes; eternal power and divine nature.

PERFECT KNOWLEDGE

All limits to our knowledge will be removed, see I Corinthians 13:12, especially *“face to face”* and *“I shall know fully.”* We will have 100% use of our brain, not the approximate 3% - 10% we have now. Note: Adam was perfectly created and therefore had 100% use of His brain. Mankind only has a tenth of his original mental capacity. But, in our glorified state we will be perfect-minded.

Christ’s glorified name shall be written on our foreheads – (a seal of ownership). We (believers) are His personal property forever. There shall be no more curse; we shall serve Him happily forever and ever (Revelation 5:11-13; 22:3 & 4. See also Revelation 7:9-12; 19:1).

As stated earlier in our study, the Apostle Paul was taken in spirit to heaven for a glimpse, (II Corinthians 12:2). God in His Omniscience gave the great Apostle a look at Heaven because Paul would suffer so much for His Savior and the Gospel. Paul would need tremendous faith and endurance and God knew this brief look would sustain Paul through so much frustration and suffering. Heaven is real! Jesus Christ is real! Eternal life is real! God's Grace (lovingkindness) is real. Take hold of your Savior today and He will never let you go.

The generations of history are full of the faithful witness and testimonies of believers great and small. God, in every generation, raises up believers to carry on His work of the Gospel. Scripture boasts countless references to Heaven. Man is without excuse if he ignores the evidence of things seen and not seen.

In eternity the universe is but one uncharted frontier because there will be a new heaven and a new earth. Knowledge will be unlimited and space travel in our new bodies is just one of many awesome adventures awaiting the believer in Jesus Christ. Life with our Savior will be so cool.

There will be animals in the new Heaven (Isaiah 65:17 & 25). There are horses in Heaven (Revelation 19:11-14).

The Children of God (Church-age believers) will wear white robes for worship which proclaim the Righteousness of God provided by the Cross of our Savior in our place. White robes over glorified bodies with a breastplate of twelve gleaming stones just like in the wall that surrounding the New Jerusalem. Our white robes represent His Righteousness and His Righteousness will be our covering forever and ever (Revelation 7:9). We will know and recognize loved ones in Heaven because our new body will be like Christ's and he was recognizable by His friends and disciples.

Ecclesiastes 9:10 speaks of no activity beyond the grave, but this is a reference to the body of flesh which remains asleep (at rest) until that great day of resurrection and judgment. The Bible on the other hand teaches that the soul does not sleep at death, but joins Christ in heaven (II Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:21-23. See also Ecclesiastes 12:6&7; Luke 16:20-31; 23:42, 43).

There will not be Churches or Temples as we know them, in Heaven, for God and the Lamb of God are the Temple (Revelation 21:20).

Because Heaven is the perfect dwelling place of God it is separated from earth. In Heaven we will be in perfect bliss. We therefore, could not be aware of the hostilities of this life. We become separated unto the Lord from all evil just as we are separated from our God now because of evil and sin.

You may wonder why God allows all this fighting and war on earth and in heavenly places of the universe - it is because there are still human beings that will come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Remember all that God called will come to Christ for God called all those He knew would respond. When the last person called by God, believes in Christ, Christ will come with a mighty shout and receive those living at that time unto Himself (I Corinthians 15:51-58; I Thessalonians 4:13-5:11). If you want to know Christ and go to Heaven, you are probably wondering:

THE LAST, BUT MOST IMPORTANT QUESTION - HOW DO WE GET TO HEAVEN?

Jesus described Heaven as the Father's House: "*In my Father's house (Heaven) are many dwellings places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you (in heaven). If I go (and I do) and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there you may be also. And you know the way where I am going*" (John 14:2-4). Jesus is the only way any one will get to heaven!! There is only one way to heaven – Jesus Christ! Jesus said "*I am the way, the truth, and the life, (eternal life)*" (John 14:6). Jesus made an emphatic statement. Please notice in verse four that Jesus said "*And where I go you know, and the way you know.*" Thomas in verse five said we don't know where you are going so how can we know the way? "*I am the way,*" said Jesus! Thomas apparently was a pouter and a doubter – he definitely had an attitude probably from a lack of self-confidence (Please read John 14:1-9). You cannot get to Heaven unless you go through Jesus. I didn't say that, Jesus said that! Just read the second half of verse six. Now, before we move on....How can anybody misconstrue this emphatic statement? We can only get to Heaven through Jesus Christ! We can only receive eternal life through Jesus Christ! Jesus Christ is the physical manifestation of God! (John 14:7-9). Heresy always revolves around Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is Eternal God! Jesus Christ is Eternal Life! Jesus Christ is the Savior! Jesus Christ is the only way to Heaven! Any church or person who teaches otherwise is teaching satanic doctrine!! Don't forget it and don't have anything to do with satanic doctrine. Jesus is the messiah! Jesus is God incarnate! You must trust the finished work of Christ on the Cross – He died in your place, for you. You can escape condemnation (judgment) by accepting Jesus Christ as your personal Savior right now (John 3:36; Acts 16:31).

Heaven is available to all mankind. Jesus Christ (as God incarnate) came from heaven to earth and he will bring the New Jerusalem from Heaven to earth, literally, at His second coming. Even so come Lord Jesus. Amen!