

## Heaven (#22)

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Many Christians are theologically confused about the concept of Heaven. Who will go there? Who is already there? Do all Christians go to Heaven? How long will we stay there? Is Heaven the final eternal state? What about the Millennium? Will we have bodies in Heaven? Will we be conscious after death? When do we get out glorified bodies? These theological questions are complex and will be answered Scripturally from a Christian Dispensationalist viewpoint.

### Death

Death is normally the prelude to the intermediate states of Heaven or Hell. Exceptions include the translations of Enoch and Elijah into Heaven as well as the future Rapture of the church saints. Also, Paul knew a man who was taken to Heaven while alive when he wrote: *I know a man in Christ...such a man was caught up to the third Heaven*. As an author, I have interviewed several people who claimed to have been taken to Heaven and have recorded their stories in *God Immanent*. My analysis here, however, will be strictly Scriptural.

Medical death is presently controversial with the neurological criteria (brain dead) taking predominance over the cardio-respiratory criteria (body dead). Spiritually there is no controversy. It is the parting of the soul from the body or the immaterial from the material. A few people have even claimed to have seen the soul of a person exit the head upon death. In a perfect world, there would be no death, but the sin of Adam and Eve begot death. *For the wages of sin is death* (Romans 6:23a). For the believer, death of the body is the vehicle to Heaven. Death of the body is not to be confused with spiritual death, eternal death, or the Second Death (Rev 2:11) which will take place in the Lake of Fire (Rev 20:11-15). It is important to remember that Jesus Christ's victory over death has relinquished Satan's control over death. For the believer, this means that Jesus Christ alone causes death<sup>1</sup> (1 Thessalonians 4:14).

### “heaven” and “heavens”

Within Scripture, there are many references to heaven and the heavens such as *God called the expanse heaven* (Ge 1:8) and *In the beginning, God created the heavens* (Ge 1:1). This is a reference to the celestial sky. In this context, the first heaven would be Earth, the second heaven would be the rest of the universe, and *the third heaven* that Paul refers to in 2 Corinthians 12:2 is what Christians normally refer to as Heaven itself.

## ***The Heavens Were Opened***

Twice in the OT (Ezekiel 1:1 and Isaiah 6:1-6) the *heavens were opened*. The major prophet Ezekiel was given a vision while in exile (c 580 BC) of the Shekinah Glory about the throne of God supported by four cherubim (Ezekiel 1:1-28). This vision inaugurated the prophet Ezekiel's commission as another vision did the commission of Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-13). Both major prophets were given a look inside Heaven. The *heavens were opened* five times in the NT. The first was at Jesus' baptism—a fact attested to by all four evangelists (Mt 3:16; Mk 1:10; Lk 3:21; Jn 1:32). It marks one of the few times that Jesus was publicly glorified during his first incarnate mission on Earth. There is also the Stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:56); Peter's vision of the unholy and the unclean (Acts 10:11); the 24 elders, 7 spirits of God, and 4 Cherubim (Rev 4:1-8); and the Second Coming of *Faithful and True* (Rev 19:11). Finally, there is a prediction given to John of a future opening of the heavens to authenticate and glorify his Messiahship (Jn 1:51)<sup>2</sup>. In these visions, the faithful are given a preview of the glories that exist in Heaven.

## **Heaven**

The word "Heaven" defines the short-term location of man's second state. This is the "Heaven" under discussion. Paul refers to this as the *third heaven* in 2 Corinthians 2:12. Since Heaven is a name-place, it will, as a rule of English, always be capitalized.

## **States of Being**

There are three states for God's creation called Man within the Christian view of the Bible. The first is that of his combined and integrated body and soul on Earth, the second is his temporal stay only with his soul either in Heaven or Hell, and third is his eternal stay in the Eternal Order (*new Heaven and a new Earth* of Rev 21:1) or the Lake of Fire (Rev 19:20) with his united body and soul. This trichotomy is not complete, but will suffice for now.

In Man's first state, his body is sinful and unglorified. He was created in the Image of God, but that image has been marred.

In Man's second state, the believer will be divested of his body at death and live consciously with the Lord in Heaven with his glorified soul now perfect in holiness. The unbeliever will be sent to Hell<sup>3</sup> called Sheol in the OT and Hades in the NT without his body.

In Man's third state, the believer will be given his glorified body at the First Resurrection where he will reign with the Lord forever in the Eternal Order. Conversely, the unbeliever will, after the Second Resurrection, be given an unholy body with which to suffer in union with his soul forever in the Lake of Fire along with Satan and the False Prophet who will have preceded them<sup>4</sup>.

Four issues are missing from this timeline: those translated (Enoch and Elijah), those raptured (the church or Bride of Christ), the Millennial saints, and the OT saints.

### Four Issues

Enoch marks the seventh generation in the bloodline from Adam to Jesus Christ. Enoch disappeared from the Earth with the words: *Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him* (Ge 5:24). Elijah, the pre-exilic major prophet, disappeared from the view of Elisha, the heir to his mantle, with the words: *Elijah went up by a whirlwind to Heaven* (2 Kings 2:11b). Both of these men were translated or ushered into the presence of an all-holy God—an absolutely holy God. Since they did not die, they did not part from their bodies, but were given glorified bodies in addition to souls perfect in holiness.

The same will apply to the church when the Rapture takes place on the Feast of Trumpets sometime in the near future. Jesus will return for his bride before the Great Tribulation so that she will not suffer with the sinful and take her to a place already prepared. Jesus said: *I go to prepare a place for you. 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* (Jn 14:2-4). In the Jewish wedding system, the groom goes first to the bride's house (here the raptured in Heaven) and then to the groom's house (the City of Jerusalem during the Millennium on the Feast of Tabernacles after the Second Coming). So, the raptured church saints, like Enoch and Elijah, will be given glorified bodies and souls in the twinkling of an eye. At that same moment, those NT saints who died in Christ will be resurrected and translated to Heaven. The time spent in our homes or mansions in Heaven will be at least seven years for the Great Tribulation and probably a few more years preceding that event. We will return to Earth with the Lord for the Second Coming.

After the Second Coming, the Anti-Christ will have been resurrected and sentenced with the False Prophet to the Lake of Fire where they will be its first occupants for the duration of the Millennium. Meanwhile, Hell will continue as before and Heaven will no longer contain the raptured saints, but will continue to hold the OT saints and the new Tribulation saints. The Earth itself will hold the millennial saints since only those that will die (at the age of 100) will be unsaved. At the end of the Millennium, these saints will receive their glorified bodies.

The OT saints, who died prior to the establishment of the church, who did not see the rapture of the church saints or the resurrection of the NT saints, but who were released upon Jesus' death from Abraham's Bosom in Sheol or Hades<sup>5</sup>, will receive their glorified bodies at the First Resurrection after the Tribulation during the 75-day period. They will then be ready for the wedding ceremony between the groom and the bride of Christ and will assume their individual roles during the Millennium. After the Millennium, the damned, who need bodies for the Lake of Fire, will be resurrected at the Second Resurrection and condemned eternally.

The First Resurrection of the saints can be summarized as follows:

1) Jesus Christ as the First Fruits on the Feast of First Fruits [17<sup>th</sup> Nisan] (1 Cor 15:23)

- 2) Resurrection of the church saints dead in Christ at the Rapture (1 Thes 4:16)
- 3) Resurrection of the OT saints after the Tribulation in the 75-day interval (Is 26:19 and Daniel 12:2)
- 4) Resurrection of the Tribulation saints also in the 75-day interval (Rev 20:4)

### **That Short Interlude in Heaven**

In summary, who have we seen will be in Heaven and how long will they be there?

1) OT saints from Able to John the Baptist have been in Heaven since 3 April 33 AD Julian<sup>6</sup> when Jesus Christ died on the cross and Abraham's Bosom was evacuated from Sheol, and will remain there with their holy souls without bodies until the resurrection of the OT saints after the Great Tribulation during the 75-day interval. So, they have been in Heaven for 1987 years as of 2020.

2) Enoch was translated according to chronologist John P. Pratt on 5 May 3352 BC<sup>7</sup>. He is in Heaven with his glorified body to this day. Elijah was also translated into Heaven possibly in the year 852 BC when Jehoram became king of Israel. He is in Heaven with Enoch and will be present at the wedding ceremony for the Bride of Christ. They will remain in Heaven until the Second Coming. As of 2020, Enoch has been in Heaven 5371<sup>8</sup> years and must be a very wise man at this point. Elijah has been in Heaven for 2872 years as of 2020 is also very learned.

Note: At the Transfiguration (Mt 17:1-13, Mk 9:2-13, Lk 9:28-36) of Jesus Christ, Jesus appeared glorified in his earthly body, with Moses in his spiritual body representing the resurrected saints, and Elijah in his glorified body representing the translated saints.

3) NT saints dead in Christ from Stephen<sup>9</sup> to some unnamed saint just prior to the Rapture, which will occur shortly after the appearance of the Anti-Christ, have been in Heaven with their holy souls some since 33 AD. Stephen has been there for 1987 years. These saints will be resurrected on Earth and translated to Heaven with their glorified bodies to join the raptured church saints and Enoch and Elijah. All will remain in Heaven for at least the seven-year period of the Tribulation and possibly a few more years for that period between the Rapture and the signing of the covenant which starts the Tribulation. So, the NT church saints will have been in Heaven for varying periods from 1987 years to one day were the Rapture to occur in 2010.

4) The Tribulation saints, more properly called Post-Rapture saints since some will die just prior to the Great Tribulation, will enter Heaven with their holy souls. Since they are not members of the church, they will remain there until they are resurrected with the OT saints on Earth after the Tribulation during the 75-day period. [(1290-1260)+(1335-1290)=75 Ref Dan 12:7-12.] So, the Tribulation or Post-Rapture saints will be in Heaven at least 7 years and possibly as long as 25 years<sup>10</sup>.

## What Will We Do in Heaven?

Now that we know who will be there, for how long, and whether we are in our glorified bodies or not, we can answer what it is we will be doing there.

Information about what we will be doing in Heaven comes more from the stories within the Bible than from Scriptural descriptions about what is occurring. First let's look at the Scriptural descriptions.

### Scriptural Descriptions of Heaven

1) In talking to the Philippians, Paul says that being with Jesus Christ in Heaven is **very much better** than being here: *But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the **a** desire to depart and **b** be with Christ, for that is very much better; **24** yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake* (Philippians 1:23-24).

2) In the Book of Revelation, John describes the Post-Raptured white-robed saints who have been slain as follows: *When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw **a** underneath the **b** altar the **c** souls of those who had been slain **d** because of the word of God, and because of the **e** testimony which they had maintained; **10** and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "**a** How long, O **1b** Lord, **c** holy and true, **2** will You refrain from **d** judging and avenging our blood on **e** those who dwell on the earth?" **11** And **a** there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should **b** rest for a little while longer, **c** until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be **d** completed also* (Rev 6:9-11).

Notice that John saw only the souls and not the bodies of the saints in Heaven.

3) Later in Revelation John writes: **16** **a** *They will hunger no longer, nor thirst anymore; nor will the sun **1** beat down on them, nor any heat; **17** for the Lamb in the center of the throne will be their **a** shepherd, and will guide them to springs of the **1b** water of life; and **c** God will wipe every tear from their eyes* (Rev 7:16-17).

4) Finally in Revelation John writes that the saints are to be judged by their deeds: **13** *And I heard a voice from heaven, saying, "Write, **a** Blessed are the dead who **b** die in the Lord from now on!" "Yes," **c** says the Spirit, "so that they may **d** rest from their labors, for their **e** deeds follow with them* (Rev 14:13)."

5) Regarding our physical bodies, Paul has this to say: *For we know that if **1** the **a** earthly **b** tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house **c** not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. **2** For indeed in this house we **a** groan, longing to be **b** clothed with our dwelling from heaven, **3** inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. **4** For indeed while we are in this tent, we **a** groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed*

but to be **b** clothed, so that what is **c** mortal will be swallowed up by life. **5** Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who **a** gave to us the Spirit as a **1** pledge.

**6** Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that **a** while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord — **7** for **a** we walk by faith, not by **1** sight — **8** we are of good courage, I say, and **a** prefer rather to be absent from the body and **b** to be at home with the Lord. **9** Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be **a** pleasing to Him. **10** For we must all appear before **a** the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for **1** his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:1-10).

In the above pericope Paul says man's soul is incomplete without his glorified body (*dwelling from Heaven*) and while he is in this earthly body, he knows that he is temporarily absent from the Lord, but will one day be permanently united with him in his glorified body.

So, in summary, those saints not raptured or translated will not have bodies, but will be at rest in the Lord with no longings and far better off than they were on Earth.

### **Biblical Stories about Heaven**

When Israel's first king of the united monarch sought help from the medium of Endor, this is what we learn from Samuel who was not yet in Heaven, but temporarily residing in Abraham's Bosom: *An old man is coming up, and **a** he is wrapped with a robe...<sup>15</sup> Then Samuel said to Saul, "Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up (1 Sam 28:14-15)?"*

Later in the NT we learn from the story of the rich man and Lazarus: **22** *"Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to **a** Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. **23** "In **a** Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and **\*** saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. **24** "And he cried out and said, **a** Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in **b** this flame.' **25** "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that **a** during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. **26** 'And **1** besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us (Luke 16:22-27).'*

In Chapters 4 and 5 of Revelation, which has a venue in Heaven prior to the Tribulation, there is the mention of 24 elders in white robes which may be 12 from the raptured church and 12 from the resurrected church. This is another proof that the Rapture precedes the Great Tribulation.

*After **a** these things I looked, and behold, **b** a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, **c** like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "**d** Come up here, and I will **e** show you what must take place after these things." **2** Immediately I was **1a** in the Spirit; and behold, **b** a throne was standing in heaven, and **c** One sitting on the throne. **3** And He who was*

sitting was like a *a*jasper stone and a *b*sardius in appearance; and there was a *1c*rainbow around the throne, like an *d*emerald in appearance. *4 a*Around the throne were *b*twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw *c*twenty-four elders *d*sitting, clothed in *e*white garments, and *f*golden crowns on their heads (Rev 4:1-4).

The above scene when *the heavens were opened* shows the elders, who are obviously human and not angelic since they are clothed in white robes, standing around God's throne. Consequently, they must be important enough to deserve this respect and conscious (not experiencing "soul sleep"<sup>11</sup>) as active participants in what is happening.

In summary, we have seen consciousness and pain in Hell, consciousness and rest in Abraham's Bosom, and consciousness, respect, and responsibility in Heaven.

### Satan

Satan sinned on the Earth when it was a mineral garden as told in Ezekiel 28, and when one third of the angelic hosts joined him, sin entered into the world and into Heaven. Because of this, Paul wrote that *the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth* in Romans 8:22. In Hebrews it says: *Therefore, it was necessary for the copies of the things in the heavens to be cleansed with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.* (Heb 9:23). So, by Jesus' death, *the heavenly things themselves* were purified because animal blood could only purify the earthly sanctuary.

### Biblical Summary

All of God's saints, except the millennial saints will pass through Heaven. The OT saints were released from Abraham's Bosom at the death of Jesus Christ and will remain in Heaven until the Second Coming when they will receive their resurrected glorified bodies on Earth and serve during the Millennium. The NT saints dead in Christ first go directly to Heaven and then return to be resurrected during the Rapture where they will receive their glorified bodies and be translated back to Heaven for the wedding of the Bride of Christ. The living church will be raptured and translated directly to Heaven with their glorified bodies where they will remain for a short period and then return at the Second Coming with the entire church. The Post-Rapture or Tribulational saints will go immediately to Heaven and return for the resurrection of their glorified bodies after the Second Coming along with the OT saints to serve during the Millennium. In Heaven we will be conscious, shown respect, and given responsibility.

### Speculation

Since Scripture says so little about what we will be doing during our intermediate state in the third heaven (Heaven), it seems right to speculate that we will not simply be bouncing from cloud to cloud in a state of euphoric bliss. But rather, since Heaven is only an intermediate state, it must also serve as a source of instruction about the knowledge of God and his creation and man's responsibility in that semi-eternal landscape—the immediate landscape being the Millennium. Consequently, my presumption is that those in Heaven will be given instruction for serving and ruling in that period.

Many books have been written concerning the personal stories of Christians who have been taken by Jesus Christ or an angel and given a personal tour of Heaven or Hell. I cannot vouch for any of these books since I do not know the authors. However, one short story in my book *God Immanent* is an account from a woman I have known for many years, who was taken to Heaven while she was dead on an operating table for 8 minutes. It is the story of Ruth Koch and her guided tour of Heaven includes 1079 words of descriptive narrative. Here I will only say that the house in Heaven that Jesus prepared for her did have books.

The Book of Enoch, which is quoted by Jude (Jude 1:14), speaks of the woman called Wisdom<sup>12</sup> in the following manner: “*Wisdom found not a place on Earth where she could inhabit; her dwelling therefore is in Heaven*(Enoch 42:1)”. Enoch too was led through Heaven by an angel. At one point, he made this observation:

*All the holy and the elect sang before him, in appearance like a blaze of fire; their mouths being full of blessings, and their lips glorifying the name of the Lord of spirits. And righteousness incessantly dwelt before him*(Enoch 39:7)

Regarding this continual praise, Enoch says at another point: *While each, one with another, looked towards the Lord of spirits, magnifying and praising without cessation, since praise to them is rest* (Enoch 42:5b)...

Finally, what were the angels (Cherubim, Seraphim, and Ophanim) doing when *the heavens were opened* for Enoch? He describes the following scene in Chapter 40: He beheld an uncountable number of people (*myriads and myriads*) standing before the *Lord of spirits*. Standing at the four sides of the throne of God were four angels *magnifying the Lord of glory*. His angelic guide told him their names. The first, the merciful, patient, and holy **Michael**, blessed the Lord of spirits forever and ever. The second, he who presides over every suffering and every affliction (wound) of the sons of men was **Raphael**, who blessed the Elect One (Messiah) and the elect who suffer on account of the Lord of spirits. The third, he who presides over all that is powerful was **Gabriel**, who petitioned and prayed for those who dwell upon the Earth and supplicate the name of the Lord of spirits. The fourth, he who presides over repentance and the hope of those who will inherit eternal life was **Phanuel**, who expelled the impious angels and prohibited them from entering the presence of the Lord of spirits to hurl accusations against the inhabitants of Earth.

So, if we are to speculate at all, why not use the historic Book of Enoch which was written circa 3500 BC. When we arrive, we will be so overwhelmed that our incessant praise will only seem like rest.



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<sup>1</sup> The only exception here might be the Christian who has been excommunicated after having undergone the four stages of discipline found in Matthew 18:15-20. In this case, the person would be placed back under the control of Satan.

<sup>2</sup> In the first chapter of John, Jesus' titles are 1) Word, 2) God, 3) Creator, 4) Light, 5) Only Begotten God, 6) Lamb of God, 7) Son of God, 8) Messiah, 9) King of Israel, 10) Son of Man.

<sup>3</sup> See Manuscript #4 for a detailed description of Hell.

<sup>4</sup> See Manuscript #1 for the complete story.

<sup>5</sup> Abraham's Bosom: The Apostle's Creed states that Jesus "descended into Hell" after his death on the cross. Actually, he descended into a part of Sheol or Hades called Abraham's Bosom, which was separated from Hell referred to elsewhere as the Pit or Abaddon. There was separation between the two sectors. See Manuscript #4.

<sup>6</sup> 3 April 33 AD Julian is the day Jesus Christ died according to Josephus. The Jewish date is 14 Nisan AM 3793 using Tarek's Universal Converter. <http://members.fortunecity.com/tarek2000/converter80/update85/conv80.html>

<sup>7</sup> John P. Pratt chronology: <http://www.johnpratt.com/items/docs/lds/dates.html>

<sup>8</sup> Calculation:  $3352 + 2010 - 1 = 5361$ . Subtract one because there is no year zero.

<sup>9</sup> Stephen (Acts 7:59) is considered the first to have died in Jesus Christ while the man healed that was congenitally blind (miracle #27 of 35 and the third Messianic miracle) is considered the first confessor (John 9:38).

<sup>10</sup> 25 years: See *God Immanent* chapter on Om Saleem (Manuscript #6).

<sup>11</sup> Soul Sleep: For a refutation see Arnold Fruchtenbaum Manuscript #104.

<sup>12</sup> Wisdom: See Proverbs 1:20.