

Heaven, Our Ultimate Destination

We all have thoughts of what it will be like

2 Corinthians 2:12

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.

There are many things about Heaven we don't know; in fact, I would say we know very little about Heaven. Heaven, as used in the New Testament, is used both as a plural and a singular with no difference in spelling or meaning. In the Hebrew word, it is used as a singular; however, when transcribed in the Septuagint, it is used as both singular and plural.

For many or perhaps most of us, picture Heaven as this calm, tranquil place where peace and safety are assured to us, but that is not this Heaven, the place of which we currently reside under. Read **Jeremiah 4:19-27, Sorrow for the Doomed Nation**. While we desire to be on the good side of God, we cannot assume He will tolerate man's sin. I have spent many years thinking of God very differently from who He actually is; it is important that we find the balance in our understanding of good and evil and abide by God's way, not our own. Just the title "Father," I tend to think of Him as the protective Father with an abundance of patience as we toddle through life learning to let go of all our earthly understanding, that we begin to view ourselves from Heaven down instead of earth up, to see ourselves as God sees us.

Paul above uses it in the plural when he describes the place to which he was caught up; the Greek word here translates to *Harpazo*, G726. In a physical sense, it refers to the firmament that encompasses the earth. "It separates the waters from above from the waters of the world, beneath. **Genesis 1:6-8. "Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. 8 And God called the firmament Heaven." Psalms 148:4: Praise Him, you heavens of heavens, And you waters above the heavens."**

The ancients thought the heavens were supported by pillars (Job 26:11): "**The pillars of heaven tremble, And are astonished at His rebuke.**" I don't think we would think of Heaven this way, but people did, and some most likely still do. Heaven has foundations. **Job 22:8**, has windows which allow rain to come down from the firmament above, things that come from Heaven, rain, and God sending down blessings. Not only rain and blessings but also, snow, hail, and thunder, all of these were pictured as God opening a window, or windows of Heaven, and sending these things down. **Genesis 7:11: "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, on that**

day all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.”

The discussion of the baseline items that God has established on earth and in Heaven goes on for a few more pages in the Anchor Bible Dictionary. “Heaven contains the storehouses of the wind, the snow, the hail, Job 37:9, 38:22, Psalm 135:7, Jeremiah 10:13. It is also the place in which God sends down signs. Noah was shown a rainbow, the covenant that God would never again flood the entire earth to bring an end to all living creatures, including man, **Genesis 9:12-17. Daniel 6:27, He delivers and rescues, And He works signs and wonders In heaven and on earth, Who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.**

God’s entire creation is often referred to as Heaven and Earth, and it too will, along with man, come under Eschatological judgment one day.

2 Samuel 22:8-14)

“Then the earth shook and trembled; The foundations of heaven quaked and were shaken, Because He was angry. Smoke went up from His nostrils, And devouring fire from His mouth; Coals were kindled by it.

He bowed the heavens also, and came down With darkness under His feet. He rode upon a cherub, and flew; And He was seen upon the wings of the wind. He made darkness canopies around Him, Dark waters and thick clouds of the skies. From the brightness before Him Coals of fire were kindled.

“The LORD thundered from heaven, And the Most High uttered His voice.

Amos 8:1-10,

Thus the Lord GOD showed me: Behold, a basket of summer fruit. And He said, “Amos, what do you see?” So I said, “A basket of summer fruit.” Then the LORD said to me: “The end has come upon My people Israel; I will not pass by them anymore. And the songs of the temple Shall be wailing in that day,” Says the Lord GOD—

“Many dead bodies everywhere, They shall be thrown out in silence.” Hear this, you who swallow up the needy, And make the poor of the land fail, Saying: “When will the New Moon be past, That we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, That we may trade wheat? Making the ephah small and the shekel large, Falsifying the scales by deceit, That we may buy the poor for silver, And the needy for a pair of sandals— Even sell the bad wheat?” The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob: “Surely I will never forget any of their works.

Shall the land not tremble for this, And everyone mourn who dwells in it? All of it shall swell like the River, Heave and subside Like the River of Egypt.

“And it shall come to pass in that day,” says the Lord GOD, “That I will make the sun go down at noon, And I will darken the earth in broad daylight; I will turn your feasts into mourning, And all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth on every waist, And baldness on every head; I will make it like mourning for an only son, And its end like a bitter day.

These words are frightening, and even though we may think ourselves exempt, these are God’s righteous judgments upon the earth. **Revelation 21:1-2: And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.**

Between the here and now and what is to come, we will face many trials; we will continue to face hardships throughout our lives, but we can place our trust in the Godhead to carry us through if we believe.

The Ancient writers believed of the Ascent into Heaven as an invasion of Heaven.

Look here at Psalm 115:16-18: The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD’s; But the earth He has given to the children of men. The dead do not praise the LORD, Nor any who go down into silence. But we will bless the LORD From this time forth and forevermore. Praise the LORD!

Anchor Bible Dictionary states, “In the cosmology reflected throughout most of the Hebrew Bible, mortal humankind belongs on earth, not in Heaven, and death descends below to the netherworld known as Sheol.” If this is true, then it helps to explain why Israel refused the Christ. The idea that the nation did not believe that man could ascend to Heaven prompts one to ponder the teachings of Enoch and Elijah, to name just two. The reason given in is teaching is that they saw man ascending to Heaven as polluting the realm of the divine, being scene as an intrusion.

The Fall of Lucifer

“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, You who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation On the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, To the lowest depths of the Pit. “Those who see you will gaze at you, And consider you, saying: ‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble, Who shook kingdoms, Who made the world as a wilderness And destroyed its cities, Who did not open the house of his prisoners?’

“All the kings of the nations, All of them, sleep in glory, Everyone in his own house; But you are cast out of your grave Like an abominable branch, Like the garment of those who are slain, Thrust through with a sword, Who go down to the stones of the pit, Like a corpse trodden underfoot. You will not be joined with them in burial, Because you have destroyed your land And slain your people. The brood of evildoers shall never be named.

We often study verses such as these and fail to apply any of them to ourselves, and I believe, for good reason, that we have many more facts and proofs that history has taught us. Archaeological findings and other proofs have given us cause to believe in God’s plan for mankind. We say we are not like Satan, not like the Kings, yet in many ways, mankind is exactly like the Kings. We get distracted by many more temptations than they ever had. People forgo God to worship a singer or actor. We treasure the vehicles we need to change out several times in one's life. We hold dear things that one day will come to an end and exist no more. Yes, we can easily become like those kings. This is the reason Jesus said, **Matthew 6:20: But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.**

In this one verse, Jesus has plowed right over much of what we have been studying about how the ancient writers thought and taught and failed to recognize the one true Messiah. What are these treasures? They are those times of contentment, the ease we find once we surrender to the Lord, when we realize Him as the true treasure to be secured in our hearts. How often do we get excited to show something new to our friends when the greatest thing man can ever gain and share is the gift of salvation? Think of pulling up to pick up a friend to go do something for the day, and when he or she gets in the car, you reach down and say, “Hey, look what I grabbed for you today on the way over,” handing them a new Bible? I have honestly done that, and the reward has come back with the evidence that they have begun to study the Bible.

Yes, Heaven is our ultimate destination. Lord, guide us and teach us, grow us in ways that we become more like Your Son, our Christ Jesus. Amen.